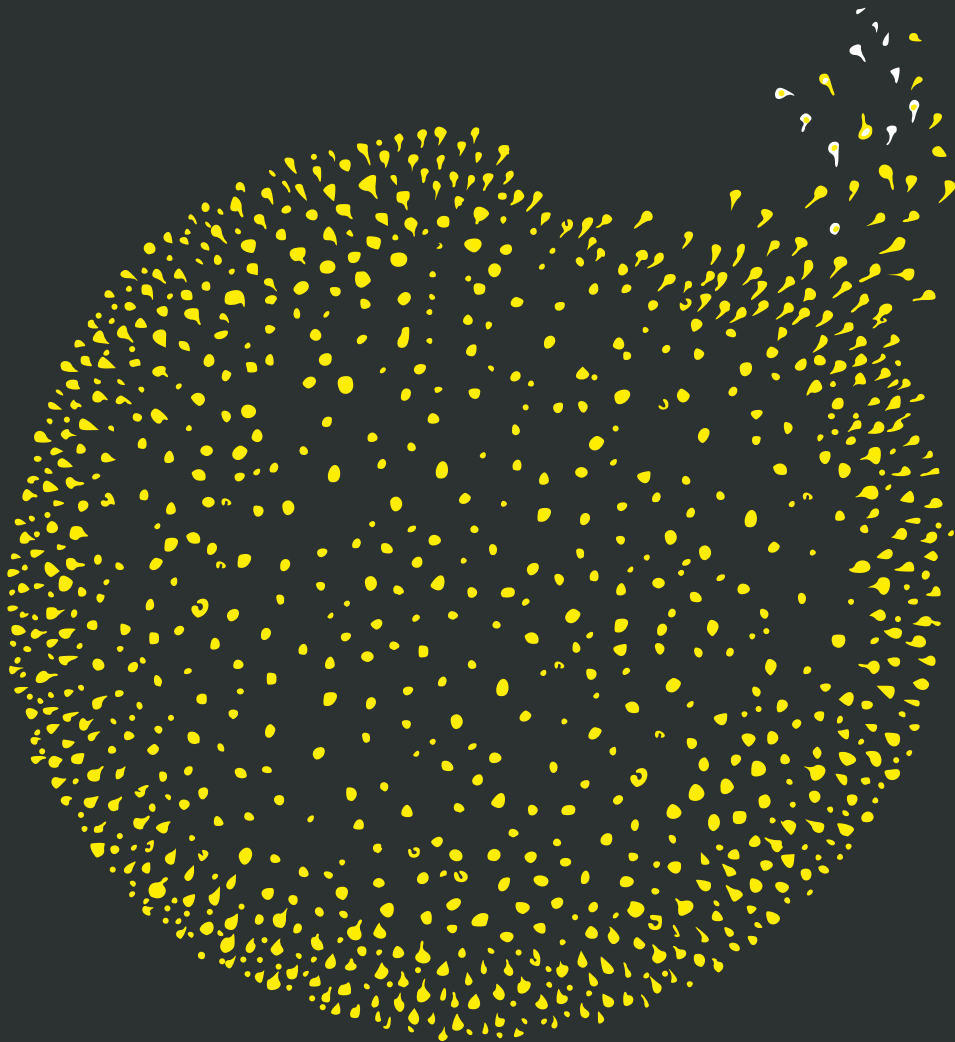


EVA JANSKÁ (ED.)

# **TRANSNATIONAL TRAJECTORIES AND DIASPORA POLICIES**

THE CASE OF CZECHIA IN COMPARISON  
TO POLAND, HUNGARY AND SLOVAKIA



## **Transnational Trajectories and Diaspora Policies**

The Case of Czechia in Comparison to Poland, Hungary and Slovakia

**Edited by Eva Janská**

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# PREFACE

In today's world marked by globalisation, transnationalism, interconnectedness, and the dynamic movement of people across borders, diasporas have become a subject of profound significance. This book examines the intricate tapestry of diaspora policy, studying the unique experiences of Czechia, Poland, Hungary, and Slovakia. Within these pages, we explore the complexities of diaspora engagement, policies, and the impact of these initiatives on the lives of individuals who have found themselves dispersed across the globe.

Central Europe, with its history and diverse cultural heritage resulting from coexistence under the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy and the subsequent emergence of independent nation states in the aftermath of the First World War, has witnessed the dispersal of its inhabitants to the far corners of the world. This book serves as a comprehensive guide to understanding the approaches of the Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary, and Slovakia in managing and caring for their diasporas. The different historical, political, and cultural contexts of each country shape their policies and have created a mosaic of strategies and initiatives.

A significant part of this book is devoted to the Czech diaspora and to the scholarly endeavours that concern it. There are many famous Czech figures who were once part of early diasporas, such as J. A. Komenský and T. G. Masaryk, who are known for their contributions to science, culture, and politics. They have been followed by many other Czechs (formerly Czechoslovaks), who have continued this tradition. The research presented here sheds light on the experiences and transnational ties of Czechs abroad, the challenges they face, and how they maintain their cultural identity while adapting to new environments.

The reader will start this book with an exploration of the national politics of the diaspora in Central Europe and will from there move on to more detailed information about the Czech diaspora in particular, which has been neglected in the wider European discourse. We hope that this research will not only deepen our understanding of the policies of the selected countries and their approach to diaspora, but also foster a better understanding of the interconnectedness of our global society.

In the first place, I would like to thank the Special Envoy for Czechs Living Abroad, Jiří Krátký, who provided the first impulse for our research pro-

ject and remained a meticulous and enthusiastic consultant and supporter throughout its duration, along with all the former and current members of his team at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic. Special thanks go to the Technology Agency of the Czech Republic and the Czech Science Foundation for financing our research projects: TITBMZV919 'Nové přístupy ke koordinaci krajanské problematiky' ('New approaches to expatriate issues') and 22-08304S 'Česká diaspora – multidimenzionální vztahy a podmíněnosti Česka a cílových zemí' ('The multidimensional relations and conditionality of Czechia and host countries through the example of the Czech diaspora'), respectively. I would also like to acknowledge the Fulbright Foundation, thanks to which I started my research on the Czech diaspora using the example of Czechs in the United States.

I would also like to express my gratitude to all the members of the research team, without whom it would have been impossible to complete this work: Kristýna Janurová, Dušan Drbohlav, Zdeněk Uherek, Veronika Beranská, Zdeněk Čermák, Olga Löblová, Markéta Doležalová, Kateřina Zachová, and Tereza Cibulková. I am also extremely grateful to the co-authors of the book, especially Magda Lesińska, Eszter Kovács, Michal Vašečka, and Jiří Hasman, for agreeing to contribute their expertise. Further thanks go to our international reviewers, Ruxandra Trandafoiu and Ivan Dubovický, and our editorial team at Karolinum Press. Special thanks go to Robin Cassling for proofreading this book.

My team and I would like to thank our friends, colleagues, and family members in Czechia and especially worldwide, who helped us to pilot the questionnaires and interview scenarios and contributed to stimulating discussions on the topic of diaspora, often based on their own lived experience. Finally, this book would not have been possible without the generosity of our respondents and interviewees, including individual members of the diaspora from all over the world, as well as the policy stakeholders and representatives of various state and non-state organisations. About a thousand individuals kindly gave their time to contribute to our knowledge of diaspora lives and policies. We hope that we have been able to use their stories so that this book can not only deepen our understanding of the policies that shape diaspora life, but also contribute to a better understanding of the lives and needs of members of the diaspora.

*Eva Janská*  
26 February 2024

# FOREWORD

## CENTRAL EUROPEAN DIASPORAS: REFLECTIONS ON MIGRATION, IDENTITY, AND DEMOCRACY

Emigration can be an expression of an attitude towards dictatorship and of a desire for freedom, an escape from religious or racial persecution, a form of economic migration, or a voluntary departure abroad for family, study, or professional reasons or simply to move someplace a person likes. These and many other reasons and inspirations are behind the emergence and existence of the diasporas of Central European (and other) nations.

Analysing them in terms of their historical development and current state, along with observing recent trends, creates something like a mirror, one that offers a sharp reflection of the history and current situation of individual nations and states. A diaspora is thus often a reflection of the view of the situation at home, expressed by active, courageous, and open-minded people using their 'feet'.

Similarly, attitudes towards, the understanding of, and care for the historical and contemporary diaspora are clear indicators of the current level of democracy and self-confidence of the mother country.

The expert analysis of the diasporas of four Central European countries that this publication provides is a valuable contribution to the understanding of the past and present of Central Europe as reflected and mirrored in individual diasporas. This book is insightful as a comparative study that highlights the great similarities (determined to some extent by a common history) and the surprising differences between the four countries observed here, their diasporas, and the relations of their respective 'metropolises' to them.

The diasporas of all four countries have been undergoing a fundamental transformation since the fall of the communist regime. Long unrecognised in modern history, the era of political freedom and economic emancipation is slowly shifting the significance of the classic diaspora, which formed largely for negative reasons (by people fleeing or leaving in times of need), into the background. A diaspora made up of people with positive personal motivations (such as scientists, doctors, entrepreneurs, athletes, students) is gradually beginning to prevail. Although the voluntary departure of these people is an expression of free will, the reasons for their departure, especially

if it is permanent, are a serious challenge that their countries of origin need to reflect on. The temporary or permanent departure of these people does not, however, have to be a complete loss or disaster for the home country if it can take care of this modern diaspora and motivate them to have an active relationship with their homeland or even return.

I congratulate the lead author and the entire research team on the outcome of this work. The book significantly refines our understanding of the issue and is an inspiration to further explore both our diaspora and ourselves in the image of us we see in our diaspora.

*Roman Bělor*

*26 March 2024*

*Chairman of the Subcommittee on Relations with Compatriots  
Chamber of Deputies of the Czech Republic*

# A BRIDGE TO COMPARATIVE DIASPORA POLICY

Up to three million people around the world claim Czech origin. What could be better proof that the Czech diaspora is healthy and alive? It did not disappear during the four long decades in which it was separated from its motherland during communism (1948–1989), when it was not even possible to mention the diaspora, nor has it disappeared since the Czech borders were reopened after the Velvet Revolution in 1989, as some people mistakenly predicted. The opposite is true. The Czech diaspora is still here, healthy and alive. It has undergone a substantial transformation over the past thirty years, chiefly because of the mobility of young people. It is now modern, healthy, emancipated, successful, and proud again of its democratic motherland.

One of the roles of the modern state is to maintain contact with its expatriates. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) of the Czech Republic and other ministries of the Czech Republic together make their best effort to fulfil this vital role. The most important MFA partners in this field are the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, the Senate Standing Commission for Compatriots Living Abroad, and the Subcommittee on Relations with Compatriots of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Chamber of Deputies of the Parliament of the Czech Republic.

The Czech government has developed several important tools in the past two decades: the financial and technical ‘Programme of Support for Czech Cultural Heritage Abroad’ in 2005; the Office of the Special Envoy for Czechs Living Abroad at the MFA in 2008; and the Interministerial Commission for Czechs Living Abroad, a collective advisory body of the Government of the Czech Republic in 2018. Last but not least, the government also created the user interface ‘Useful information for Czechs living abroad’ in 2019.

As the Special Envoy for Czechs Living Abroad at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, I have now been handling expatriate issues for almost six years. The time spent on this agenda has given me the privilege to see how vital to the future success of this special mission it is not only to look back at the glorious past of the Czech diaspora but also to focus on its future. I would like to say that this future starts now, but the truth is that it already started fifteen years ago, when the first Czech schools abroad were established.

I appreciate the wise decision made by the authors of this book to come up with a new advanced concept for approaching the topic of the Czech diaspora. They have addressed this topic thoroughly by examining it from a contemporary international perspective and setting it in the wider Central European context. I am sure that this is the right way to bring more attention to the topic of the Czech diaspora, not only in the Czech Republic but internationally among students and younger generations.

I am glad that the MFA has been able to count on the work that the research team led by doc. RNDr Eva Janská, PhD conducted in 2021 and 2022 on the research project 'New Approaches to Expatriates Issues' on the needs of the contemporary Czech diaspora, which was commissioned by the MFA and financially supported by the Technology Agency of the Czech Republic. I am especially happy that some of the results of this project were used to prepare this book.

Many interesting books have been written about Czech emigration history, but relatively few of them were written in English or focused primarily or even partly on the future of the Czech diaspora, modern trends abroad, or comparative case studies. The book you have in front of you will surely help to fill in this gap. Dear readers, I wish you pleasant reading.

*JUDr Jiří Krátký MA  
Special Envoy for the Czech Expatriate Community and Expatriate Affairs  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic*



# INTRODUCTION

EVA JANSKÁ

Dynamic changes towards hybridity, liquified homes, and creolisation have reshaped the term 'diaspora' as a modern concept compared to its traditional use as a reference for the Jews in exile (e.g. Cohen 1996; Brubaker 2005). It has more recently become a central concept in transnational analysis (Faist 2010). Other researchers have studied the dispersion of emigrant populations to two or more locations, ongoing orientations towards the 'homeland', and group boundary maintenance (Gamlen 2011; Brubaker 2005). The modern approach to the concept of diaspora is exemplified by Dufoix (2003), who recommends focusing on how and why diaspora communities emerge and dissipate, rather than on whether or not they conform to an ideal type at any given moment.

Academic interest in the cross-border practices and affiliations of migrating individuals has gradually expanded to encompass how states engage with their diasporas and how they formalise, bolster, and make use of this relationship – diaspora policy. Simultaneously, the discourse in many countries has undergone a notable 'diaspora turn', where attitudes towards emigrant populations worldwide have shifted from dismissive or indifferent to celebratory (Ragazzi 2014). States across various regions and economic development levels are increasingly embracing engagement with diasporas as a standard practice (Gamlen 2006, 2014). The rationale behind this trend is multifaceted, often stemming from the belief that incorporating diasporas symbolically and bureaucratically into the state's imagined community benefits the state – or specific in-state stakeholders – in return (financially, economically, politically, and culturally) and extends governmentality (Anderson 1991; Gamlen 2014; Ragazzi 2014).

The study of diaspora policy has gained more attention and significance in recent years, as countries have started to recognise the important role of their diasporas. Unlike in the past, emigrants are no longer viewed as deserters or traitors but rather as valuable contributors through remittances, investments, donations, and tourism. Scholars have focused on the social and political challenges faced by different diasporas and their home countries, as well as on the policies that countries have put in place to engage with their diasporas (e.g. Zeveleva 2019; Zapata-Barrero and Rezaei 2020). Diaspora policy encompasses a range of governmental actions and policies related to a country's diaspora. This includes the establishment of institutions for

diaspora affairs, methods of communication and cooperation with diaspora communities, regulations for financial transfers and cross-border mobility, and the recognition of dual citizenship or ethnic membership for historical diasporas or kin-minorities (Gamlen 2008; Kovács 2017; Ragazzi 2014; Østergaard-Nielsen 2016).

Today the literature on diaspora policy counts numerous single-case studies focused on a particular country (e.g. Brinkerhoff et al. 2019; Mosneaga 2014; Erdal 2016) and comparative studies (e.g. Popyk, Lesińska, and Dambrauskas 2023; Iyi and Umarova 2022). Several authors have also developed typologies and indexes to enable international comparisons and make sense of the multiplicity of policy practices (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004; Gamlen 2006; Ragazzi 2014; Gamlen, Cummings, and Vaaler 2019; Pedroza and Palop-García 2017) or contribute to the evolution of a relatively new research programme, such as the study of diaspora mobilisations in conflict processes (Koinova 2023) or criminal remittances (Paarlberg 2022).

This book offers a comparative look at how diaspora politics are approached in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), with a specific focus on Czechia. The Czech diaspora has been somewhat overlooked in diaspora literature, and this book aims to fill that gap. In addition, it highlights the use of mixed methods in case studies of the Czech diaspora (quantitative vs qualitative). Since the 1990s, following the end of communism, there has been significant progress in Czech diasporic politics. Efforts have been made to enhance cooperation with the diaspora, acknowledge the contributions of both new and established communities to fostering a shared Czech identity, and maintain language skills. However, while relevant policies have been in place for over a decade, some objectives have received less attention. This includes the aim of strengthening ties between the state and the diaspora and cultivating a positive perception of the diaspora among the public. Overall, there has been a noticeable shift from the Czech state taking minimal interest in the diaspora to a gradual strengthening of cultural, legal, and economic ties with the diaspora.

The political and economic changes after 1989 and the subsequent accession of Czechia, Poland, Hungary, and Slovakia to the EU in 2004 and to the Schengen Area in 2007 fundamentally affected the conditions for migration. The gradual minimisation of migration barriers, including the subsequent opening up of the European labour market, led to a new form of migratory behaviour among the population. Economic factors, academic and educational aspirations, and other personal reasons now prevail over political reasons as the main migration motives (Nešpor 2002). At the same time, some former emigrants have returned home to apply the skills and qualifications they acquired abroad. Based on information from various sources and from the national chapters in this book, we can estimate that as many as 17–20 million

people from the four countries that are the focus of this book were living abroad in the years between 2020 and 2022 (although precise numbers are difficult to compare and should be critically examined): 2–2.5 million from Hungary, 1.2 million from Slovakia, 12–15 million from Poland, and 2.5 from Czechia. The governments of Czechia, Slovakia, Poland, and Hungary have been increasingly active in formulating policies that target not only the older, pre-1989 diaspora communities but also new emigrants, choosing policy instruments according to the diasporas' specific political, economic, and social contexts. At the same time, the European Union has been increasingly concerned about the 'brain drain' in some regions, in particular in the case of CEE countries (see, for instance, the 2023 European Commission Communication 'Harnessing Talent in Europe's Regions' – European Commission 2023). Reviewing the activities that governments in the region undertake to foster links with its expatriate populations therefore seems like a timely endeavour.

The first part of the book comprehensively explores the diaspora policies in the four CEE countries. This comparative part aims to provide up-to-date information on diaspora policies in CEE to both academics and the wider professional community interested in the four countries' policies towards their diasporas, including the descendants of earlier migrants. Recently, this topic has been raised more frequently in connection with the political engagement of citizens living abroad (for example, the number of eligible votes from abroad in the most recent Polish parliamentary election in 2023 almost doubled, when 569,000 valid votes were cast from abroad, compared to the number in 2019) and in connection with transferring the knowledge and skills acquired by diaspora members back to their country of origin and the need to preserve the traditions, cultures, and education of compatriots and their descendants in destination countries. Individual chapters of this book focus on the more discussed aspects of diaspora policy in each country. A comparison of the four countries reveals that their diaspora policies are very similar when it comes to the possibility of compatriots participating in elections but differ somewhat in their institutional and political approaches.

The second part of the book is an in-depth exploration of the Czech diaspora and Czech compatriots. It is aimed at both the academic community and the wider public in the Czech Republic (as well as in Slovakia, given that knowledge exchange relevant to policymaking is common between the two countries). We focus primarily on the 'new diaspora', those Czechs who left for other countries after 1990, but the sample of respondents also includes those who left under different conditions and who fled the authoritarian regime in Czechoslovakia. The chapters of this book are thus set in the new context of contemporary emigration from Czechia, where the (freely made) decision to leave can be reversed at any time by returning or re-emigrating to the Czech Republic.

The book has the following structure. Chapter 1 provides an extensive overview of Czech diaspora policy, starting with a brief historical overview of the Czech diaspora, followed by an examination of the terminological nuances associated with the concept of diaspora in the Czech context. Eva Janská and Kristýna Janurová provide a detailed analysis of Czech diaspora policy, spotlighting its key objectives, achievements, and as yet unresolved 'hot topics'. Diaspora policy is scrutinised in the light of a comparative international framework to highlight its distinctive features. The chapter then reviews the institutional and legislative context, providing insight into the structural foundations of Czech diaspora policy. The chapter shows that, despite a relatively insignificant place in the Czech domestic political landscape, occasional setbacks, and delays in goal implementation, Czech diaspora policy has undergone a notable shift towards becoming more responsive to the needs of the diaspora.

Diaspora policy as a global nation-building process is examined by Magdalena Lesińska in Chapter 2. This process can be viewed on different levels: the official narrative about the diaspora; the institutional structure dedicated to the diaspora; the scope of rights that diaspora members are guaranteed (e.g. citizenship for children born abroad, dual citizenship, and/or a simplified naturalisation path for co-ethnics); and the political level (enfranchisement). As a migrant-sending and ethnic kin-state with a large and widely dispersed diaspora, Poland is a good example of this global nation-building approach. The Polish diaspora consists of emigrants (settled mainly in EU countries) and ethnic minorities (mostly in neighbouring countries). In recent years, the nationalist approach of the Polish right-wing government has been externalised. This has been visible not only in official rhetoric but particularly in educational and cultural initiatives aimed at Poles abroad. The chapter is based on an analysis of legislative reports, legal documents, and programmes dedicated to the Polish diaspora, as well as interviews with administration representatives and experts.

In Chapter 3, Eszter Kovács provides an overview of the post-1990 developments in Hungarian kin-state and diaspora policy within the context of external homeland engagement. The narrative posits that, until 2010, the focus of Hungary, as an external homeland, was predominantly on Hungarian minorities in neighbouring countries, with limited attention given to Hungarian diaspora communities. A pivotal shift occurred in 2010 following the resounding victory of the right-wing conservative Fidesz party, marking a turning point where Hungary not only intensified its kin-state policy but also developed a comprehensive policy framework for Hungarian diaspora communities. Kovács looks at the various engagement practices of kin-state and diaspora policy since 2010 and highlights the specific potential of political remittances. While transnational policies towards kin-minorities are

primarily concerned with the political contributions of these communities, practices for engaging with diaspora communities prioritise identity building and reinforcing the homeland–diaspora relationship. The chapter also discusses how recent Hungarian emigrants living in Western European countries largely fall outside the scope of the state’s transnational engagement practices, and how the right to participate in national elections differs for different types of external populations.

In Chapter 4, Michal Vašečka analyses diaspora policy in Slovakia. Until 1993 the Czech Republic and Slovakia formed a single state, Czechoslovakia, and they consequently share many tools and instruments in common in their policies, both towards the diaspora and in other areas. Vašečka describes the preferential treatment given to foreign Slovaks over other foreigners and shows how and why diaspora policies in Slovakia focus on preserving the cultural identity of Slovaks living abroad, regardless of their citizenship. The chapter describes the legislative and institutional background of Slovakia’s diaspora policies and the main developments and features of policies within the sphere of cultural protection and identity building. It analyses the ways in which the country’s diaspora policy programmes have given priority to educational and cultural engagement with ethnically defined Slovak nationals residing abroad. Finally, the chapter critically analyses the background of Slovak diaspora policies and why these policies are driven by the symbolic ties between the diaspora and the homeland.

Chapter 5 opens the second part of the book and focuses on Czechia. In this chapter, Eva Janská, Zdeněk Uherek, and other members of the project’s team discuss the theoretical framing of the second part of the book, selected academic works on the Czech diaspora used as sources of information, data on the size of the Czech diaspora in the world, and the research design the team chose to further study this important group of people who have a specific relationship to the space of their homeland and who often significantly influence its future. This chapter provides a comprehensive description of the Czech diaspora while considering recent research contributions and shedding light on key themes.

Chapter 6 describes the relationship of expatriates to the Czech state, especially their needs and expectations from Czech institutions, providing the project’s sponsor, the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs (which initiated and funded our applied research project in 2020–2022), with sufficient incentives to create new policies towards the diaspora. The authors, Eva Janská, Dušan Drbohlav, and Zdeněk Čermák, analyse the most important problems encountered by diaspora members in their contact with the Czech state based on information from a questionnaire fielded in the research (see Chapter 5). The chapter introduces readers to the basic demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of the respondents, including their geographic

distribution. It then offers a brief overview of the types of contact they have with the Czech Republic, both personal (e.g. with family) and more or less official forms of contact with Czech institutions in their place of residence and Czechia. The core of the chapter then consists of an assessment of compatriots' needs from Czech institutions to support and improve their life abroad or to facilitate the possibility of their return. Particular attention is paid to the social and political involvement of compatriots in the form of their possible participation in elections in the Czech Republic and the problems associated with this.

In Chapter 7, authors Eva Janská, Dušan Drbohlav, Zdeněk Čermák, and Jiří Hasman investigate the dynamics of Czech diaspora engagement and activity through a comparative analysis of groups in the United States/Canada and Germany/Austria, drawing on a similar methodology published in the article by Janská et al. (manuscript), which was written in parallel with the work on this chapter. We draw on data from the questionnaire survey to answer two key questions: what differences in institutional engagement are there between Czech diaspora groups located closer to or a greater distance away from the Czech Republic, and what factors beyond geography influence the level of diaspora engagement. The results suggest the delineation and use of two types of institutional engagement with the diaspora: (1) institutions in the host country oriented towards the country of origin and (2) institutions in the country of origin. This usefully contributes to a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of the transnational practices of the diaspora under study.

The examples of migration biographies presented in Chapter 8, by Zdeněk Uherek and Veronika Beranská, show a somewhat different type of migration than that represented by the main migration streams in Czechia until 1989. The chapter discusses continual individual mobilities, which have been a part of European migration since the Middle Ages but are now gaining in importance and becoming perhaps the most common migration pattern in Europe. The multiple modes of migration and primary integration into the formal institutions of a host country that exist and the phenomenon of corporate diasporas are illustrated through the example of the Czech diaspora. The chapter shows that continual individual mobilities are not only a type of migration but a feature of integration into a new society and an element in the formation of diasporas.

In Chapter 9, Markéta Doležalová and Olga Löblová focus on an important part of the diaspora, academics and scientists, examining factors that impact their decisions around mobility, including return or onward migration. Looking at academics in different career stages (from PhD students to senior scholars), the authors discuss the ongoing institutional and personal ties these academics have to Czechia, their motivations for returning, and

the barriers to doing so. Because of the specific nature of academic work, where multiple mobilities have become part of the academic labour market, the decisions around mobility and potential return are complex and express a tension between the desire for career advancement and the hope for greater stability in both one's career and one's personal life. The chapter draws on a quantitative survey sample (N=198) and a focus group with eight participants and shows that continual/multiple mobility is driven by the specific nature of academic work. Despite this multiple mobility, many academics and scientists abroad try to maintain or develop their professional and personal links to Czechia.

Finally, Kristýna Janurová and Eva Janská summarise in Chapter 10 the parallels and differences in the diaspora policies of four Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries: the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, and Poland. They also highlight the main characteristics of the new Czech diaspora, its transnational relations and institutional involvement.

Taken together, the chapters of this book present an up-to-date overview of diaspora policy today in the four countries of Central and Eastern Europe. They offer a comparison, as well as individual in-depth case studies, of the way the region seeks to maintain links with its populations abroad in a context of increasingly interconnected relations between countries, businesses, and societies.

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# CHAPTER 1

## CZECH DIASPORA POLICY

KRISTÝNA JANUROVÁ & EVA JANSKÁ

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

Czechia's diaspora policy is noteworthy for several reasons. While it has undergone major changes, much like similar policies in other Central and Eastern European countries have, it is absent from the literature on the topic (Janská et al. 2022a; Janská et al. forthcoming; Ragazzi 2014; Kovács 2017; Popyk, Lesińska, and Dambrauskas 2023). Despite a shared history with these countries and the same political and institutional experience within the European Union (EU), Czechia, as a country with positive net migration, faces different migration issues than, for example, Poland or Romania. Ethnically its population is relatively homogeneous (unlike the populations in, for example, Latvia or Lithuania) and it has no significant kin minorities in neighbouring states (unlike, for example, Hungary or Slovakia). Moreover, there has been a substantial increase in the amount of remittances sent to Czechia from Czechs abroad (CZSO 2023). This makes the diaspora an important stakeholder in the development of strategies and policies aimed at people with Czech ties living abroad, which may affect the amount and form of remittances sent.

The current policy documents outlining the Czech state's intentions in relation to the diaspora are the Concept of the Czech Republic's Foreign Policy and the Concept of the Relationship of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Czechs Abroad (Ministerstvo zahraničních věcí ČR 2011). They stress the diaspora's positive role in helping to build the good reputation of Czechia abroad and extoll the benefits of a mutually supportive relationship between the diaspora and the Czech state, including the public. The findings presented in this chapter, and in this book as a whole, show that Czech diaspora policy has come a long way since the 1990s, when a new era of Czech politics began after the collapse of communism. Much of this development has involved improving collaboration with the diaspora and acknowledging the activities of both the new and the old communities aimed at fostering a shared Czech(oslovak) identity and maintaining knowledge of the Czech language. However, even though these policy documents have been in place for more than a decade, not much effort has gone into achieving some of their goals. This is especially true of the aims of strengthening the state-diaspora relationship and nurturing the diaspora's positive image among the public.

In our original extension of Ragazzi's (2014) international comparative typology, Czechia fell into the same country cluster as Slovakia, Poland, and Croatia, which we identified as representative of a new, hitherto undiscussed, and 'cautiously proactive' type of state policy approach to the diaspora (Janská et al. forthcoming). That finding shows that Czech diaspora policy is worth both contextualising and analysing on its own, as an outlying case.

This chapter presents an overview of Czech diaspora policy, starting with a brief history of the Czech diaspora, followed by an outline of the tangled terminology associated with the concept of diaspora in Czech discourse. Czech diaspora policy is illustrated, first, by zooming in on its key goals, achievements, and 'hot topics' and, second, by typologically situating it within a comparative international context. This is followed by an explanation of the institutional and legislative background of Czech diaspora policy. We conclude by arguing that despite the minor significance that diaspora policy has occupied in the Czech domestic political scene and some reluctance and setbacks in effectuating the changes called for by the diaspora, the key stakeholders have gradually achieved a remarkable shift towards consolidating diaspora policy as an integrated system of activities.

## 1.2 THE CZECH DIASPORA IN TIME

The first significant Czech diaspora communities were established in the late 19th and early 20th centuries in connection with economically motivated migration to some European countries (mainly to what is now Austria) and to traditional overseas destinations of immigration (United States, Canada). By the First World War, about 1.2 million people had emigrated from the Czech lands, most of them to the United States, Western Europe, and Russia (Vaculík 2007; Nešpor 2002). While craftsmen, domestic servants, and low-ranking officials headed for Vienna, miners and labourers headed to the mining and heavy industry regions of Westphalia, Saxony, and northern France. Colonisers left for the remote areas of the United States, Canada, and Russia or to the south-eastern frontier of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy (Drbohlav et al. 2010, 11).

Emigration continued in the interwar period, mainly for economic reasons. Between 1920 and 1939, approximately 385,000 people left the country (Drbohlav et al. 2010). In total, an estimated 2 million people of Czech origin were living abroad by that time. More than half of them were in the United States. Significant Czech communities were also living in Austria, Hungary, Germany, Poland, Yugoslavia, Romania, and France (Vaculík 1991).

In the second half of the 20th century, the main migration flows were formed by the politically motivated emigration that followed the communist

coup in 1948 and the occupation of Czechoslovakia in 1968, and that occurred in violation of the communist laws in effect at the time. Between 1948 and 1989, more than half a million people left Czechoslovakia (most of them coming from the area that is now Czechia; see, e.g., Kučera 1994) and expanded the size of the diasporas that already existed – mainly in Western Europe, the United States, Canada, and Australia. Most of these emigrants were (highly) skilled young people of working age with families (Brouček et al. 2017, 31; Drbohlav et al. 2010, 18–20; Nešpor 2002, 41).

### 1.2.1 THE CONTEMPORARY CZECH DIASPORA

The contemporary distribution of the Czech diaspora is the result of long-term development, as the Czech lands were for centuries and until the 1990s predominantly an emigration region (see above). The political and economic changes after 1989 and the associated accession of Czechia to the EU and the Schengen area, in 2004 and 2007, respectively, fundamentally affected the conditions for migration. The gradual reduction of migration barriers in Europe and the opening up of the European labour market to Czech workers have given rise to new migration behaviours. Economic factors, educational aspirations, and other personal reasons prevail among Czechs' current motivations for migration (Janurová 2018; Nešpor 2002).

At present, the Czech diaspora comprises approximately 2.5 million people worldwide. It includes over 900,000 people who were born in what is now Czechia, but also Czech citizens and first- or second-generation and other descendants of Czech migrants, regardless of what their citizenship is, who may have various levels of knowledge of the Czech language (Ministerstvo zahraničních věcí ČR 2012a; UN DESA 2020).<sup>1</sup> The growing importance of the diaspora for Czechia and thus for the development of new diaspora policies is also illustrated by the volume of remittances sent to the country, which in 2020 was double the amount in 2010 (see Chapter 5; CZSO 2023). The largest amounts of remittances come from Germany, the United Kingdom, and Austria.

The number of Czech diaspora communities in Eastern Europe (e.g. the Romanian Banát) declined after the Velvet Revolution in 1989 as a result of return migrations that were partially organised by the Czech state. Conversely, new migration destinations began to emerge in Ireland, New Zealand, and Belgium – specifically in Brussels, where the EU's headquarters are located (Eisenbruk 2009, 10). Some popular 'Western' destinations, such as Australia, the United States, and the United Kingdom, saw continuous growth of their

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<sup>1</sup> See also the interactive map and associated commentary on our project website: <https://www.cestikrajane.cz/>.

Czech (and Slovak) communities (Eisenbruk 2009; Ministerstvo zahraničních věcí ČR 2020). In these latest developments we are observing the formation of a new, modern Czech diaspora that is mobile and building a transnational identity.

The Czech diaspora is the most concentrated in countries that have a long history of Czech immigration: the United States, Canada, Germany, and the United Kingdom.<sup>2</sup> As in many regions in the world where countries share borders (and especially so in the case of the other CEE states represented in this volume), the countries that share a border with Czechia (Slovakia, Austria, Germany, and Poland) occupy a special place as destinations of the Czech diaspora. Here, in addition to geographic (physical) proximity, the shifts in national borders that have occurred throughout history have resulted in some people being in a situation where their country of birth or country of residence officially changed. The territory of Czechia was part of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy until 1918, which is why there is such a large number of Czechs and their descendants on the territory of today's Austria. Similarly, Czechia and Slovakia together formed a single state until 1993, which is why there are many people with mixed Czech and Slovak ancestry living in both states and worldwide. For this and other reasons, it is sometimes difficult to differentiate between Czechs and Slovaks in international migration statistics. Today, there is a large Czech diaspora living in Germany (some 80,000) and in Austria and Slovakia (35–40,000 each) (Ministerstvo zahraničních věcí ČR 2020). Among the four neighbouring states, all of which are also EU Member States, Poland is the only one with a relatively small Czech diaspora, which was formed by both migration and shifting state borders and amounts to around just 3,000 people (Ministerstvo zahraničních věcí ČR 2020).

### 1.3 TERMINOLOGY ASSOCIATED WITH THE CZECH DIASPORA

The concept of 'diaspora', a word originating from the Greek *speiro*, meaning to 'spread', 'scatter', or 'disseminate', was initially applied more narrowly than it is today. Cohen (2008, xiv, 1–2) describes how the scholarly understanding of the term has gradually expanded from only being applied to the Jewish diaspora to being used for other ethnic or religious communities expelled from their homeland by violence, persecution, or oppression (e.g. the African, Armenian, Irish, and Greek diasporas), after which it began to be applied to other populations scattered around the world who migrated for a variety of reasons, and eventually it entered into very broad use as a term to refer to migrants of any

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<sup>2</sup> For more see Chapter 5 and the interactive map on our project website: <https://www.cestikrajane.cz/#>.

nation. Attempts have since been made to re-anchor the term more narrowly. During the 1990s and 2000s, the concept grew in popularity as a result of the transnational turn in the social sciences and a widespread academic interest in cosmopolitanism (Brubaker 2005; Cohen 1996; Gamlen 2008; Vertovec 1999). Nonetheless, despite concerns and scepticism from scholars about overuse of the term (Brubaker 2005, 2017), the concept now tends to be applied to globally dispersed peoples from any nation or ethnic group, including recent migrants as well as long-established migrant communities and ‘kin-minorities’, with certain writers underscoring the importance of the enduring material and emotional ties of diasporas to their countries of origin (Agunias and Newland 2012; Favell 2008; Tedeschi, Vorobeva, and Jauhiainen 2022; Vertovec 1999). It is in this way that the term ‘diaspora’ is used in this book.

‘Diaspora’ is the term that has also come to be favoured in Czech political and academic discourse, thanks to its international usage (e.g. Brouček 2015; Dejmek 2007). However, it still competes for attention with other terms that have been part of the Czech(oslovak) diaspora/emigration vocabulary for decades, if not centuries. Generally, ‘diaspora’ is used to refer to all those who were a part of past and recent migration flows from Czech territory and their descendants who live abroad and maintain ties to Czechia. Sometimes a distinction is made between the ‘traditional/original’ Czech(oslovak) diaspora (those who left before 1989 and their descendants) and the ‘new/modern’ Czech(oslovak) diaspora (those who left after 1989 and their descendants). The problem with replacing the more traditional term ‘compatriots’ (see below) with the term ‘diaspora’ is not only that it is not the most natural term in everyday parlance, but also that, in the opinion of some, the two terms do not refer to the same set of people.

The historical term ‘compatriot’ (*krajan*), generally referring to a person who comes ‘from the same place, region, country, state; a member of the same nationality; a native’ (Havránek et al. 2011), is probably the most commonly used term in Czech discourse to describe a member of the Czech diaspora (Brouček 2015; Jirka 2020). According to Brouček et al. (2019, 15), ‘compatriot’ has been used since the mid-19th century to signify people of Czech origin who settled temporarily or permanently abroad. It was originally used by members of historical ‘compatriot’ associations, which were founded by the Czech diaspora abroad during the period of political oppression in Czechoslovakia as a channel for meetings, sharing information about events in the homeland, and organising political activities.<sup>3</sup> After 1990, however, perhaps

3 According to Brouček et al. (2019, 15), between 1948 and 1989, the term was used in opposition to the politically exiled ‘emigrant’ to denote people with an ‘adjusted’ relationship to the regime in Czechoslovakia. Such people held dual nationality and could go to Czechoslovakia for visits. See also Hanzlík (2002, 297).

as a result of the Czech state's greater (direct) contact with the Czech diaspora and the work of the Department for Expatriate Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic (MFA CR), the use of this term in the vocabulary of some Czech state institutions grew to apply to the new, post-1989 diaspora (and the term 'compatriot association' to the organisations founded by the new diaspora communities). Evidence of the term's domestication in Czech professional and official discourse is found in the Czech name of the Department for Expatriate Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs<sup>4</sup> and the Senate Standing Committee for Compatriots Living Abroad. The Ministry of the Interior uses the term 'compatriot' in a narrower sense, in line with Government Resolution No. 1014/2014 stating that a compatriot is 'any foreigner who has *proven* Czech national origin, or is the child of a parent with Czech national origin, or the child of a child of a parent with Czech national origin'<sup>5</sup> (authors' emphasis) (Ministerstvo vnitra ČR n.d.). In principle that means not every Czech (Czech citizen) living abroad is a 'compatriot', only those who have proven their origin to the Czech authorities and received an official 'certificate of belonging to the Czech community living abroad' issued by the MFA.

Members of the modern Czech diaspora, especially, have been calling for the use of another term in the official discourse (see, e.g., Mezinárodní koordinační výbor zahraničních Čechů 2023; Ministerstvo zahraničních věcí ČR 2011; Brouček 2015). Many consider 'compatriot' an archaic term and do not identify with it. The Senate Standing Committee for Compatriots Living Abroad has therefore begun a discussion on possibly changing its name to reflect the committee's focus on both the original and the modern diaspora (Stálá komise Senátu pro krajany žijící v zahraničí 2017). The Department for Expatriate Affairs prefers 'Czechs abroad' as an umbrella term for all persons of Czech background living abroad (Ministerstvo zahraničních věcí ČR 2011). The International Coordination Committee of Czechs Living Abroad, a non-governmental association that tries to bring together representatives of the older and newer waves of emigration at its regular conferences, also favours the term 'Czechs abroad'. Nevertheless, this expression also has its limits. Some argue that from a purely legal perspective only those members of the diaspora who still have Czech citizenship can be called 'Czechs' and that those who are not Czech citizens but just 'feel Czech' cannot be included in this concept. It is therefore difficult to argue that 'Czechs abroad' includes

4 See Oddělení pro krajanské záležitosti (Department for Expatriate Affairs) in Czech (Ministerstvo zahraničních věcí ČR n.d.-a).

5 The certificate of belonging to the Czech community living abroad is issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs via its Department for Expatriate Affairs (Ministerstvo vnitra ČR n.d.). Authors' translation of the quote from the original Czech.

persons of historical Czech descent who do not have Czech citizenship and may not even self-identify as Czech, even if they acknowledge their Czech heritage and express an interest in having contact with Czechia.

The term 'expatriate', nowadays often shortened to 'expat', refers to a person who resides temporarily or permanently in a country other than his or her home country. The word comes from the Latin terms *ex* ('from') and *patria* ('country, homeland') (Castree, Kitchen, and Rogers 2013). Although this was a neutral term in the past, it currently has problematic connotations. As some authors point out, a tendency to use the term to refer to (highly) skilled persons from 'Western' countries who migrate mainly for professional reasons, while persons who do not fully or partially fit this definition are just called '(im)migrants' (sometimes with a pejorative connotation), 'refugees', or 'migrant workers', has taken root in the literature and in public discourse, and this contributes to the reproduction of unequal power relations between migrants (and non-migrants) from different parts of the world (Kunz 2020, 2023; Fechter and Walsh 2010). This problem is also acknowledged by Czexpats in Science, an association of Czech scientists abroad, which collaborated on the research project that most of this volume is based on (Czexpats in Science n.d.). The word 'expat' is in the association's name primarily because it is catchy and sounds smart. In this book and in the research project it is based on 'expats' is used to refer to migrant Czech scientists, whose experience as a specific, highly skilled, and highly internationally mobile population has in some cases been analysed separately from that of other members of the Czech diaspora.<sup>6</sup> However, we are aware of the problems attached to the term's usage.

An 'exile', 'exiled person', or even a 'political émigré' (*exulant* in Czech) is someone who has been forced to leave his or her homeland involuntarily for religious or political reasons in order to escape danger or threats, such as imprisonment or even loss of life.<sup>7</sup> According to the Concept of the Relationship of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Czechs Abroad (Ministerstvo zahraničních věcí ČR 2012b), the term 'exiles' is primarily used to refer to the people who left Czechoslovakia during the Second World War or during the state-socialist period of 1948–1989, the implication being that their primary reason for leaving their state of origin was political disagreement with the ruling state ideology. Emigrants who were part of the 'post-February wave' (after February 1948) and left Czechoslovakia under what were often very dramatic circumstances referred to themselves as exiles in order to underline the difference between themselves and later migration waves – they crossed the border under very different circumstances and had far more varied

<sup>6</sup> Ackers and Gill (2008) suggest calling this population 'knowledge migrants'.

<sup>7</sup> See s.v. 'exulant' in Havránek et al. (2011).

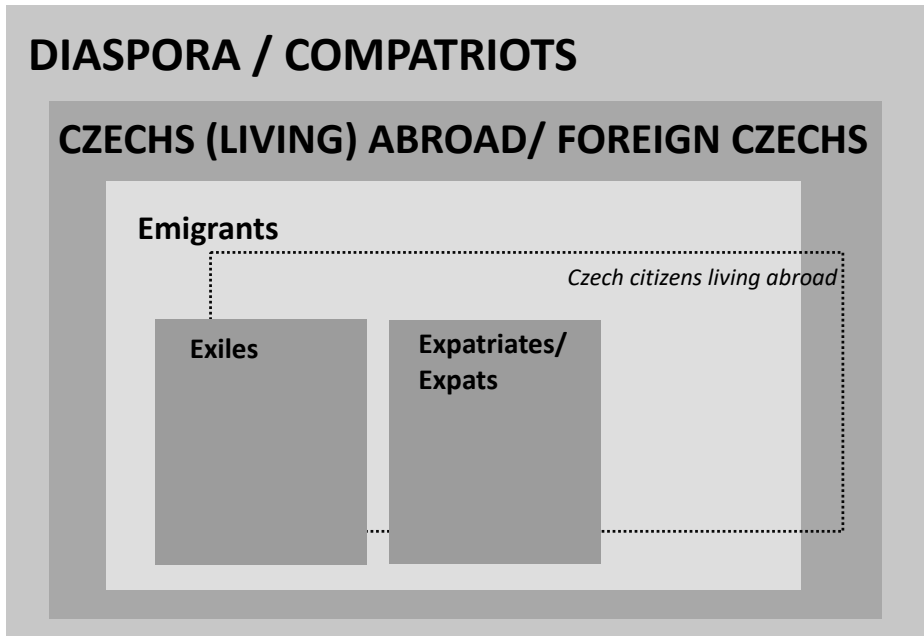
reasons for leaving, including a desire for economic betterment (see, e.g., Tigrid 1990; Štěpán 2011). In our text, we rarely use this term, reserving it for persons who left Czechoslovakia or Czech territory in times of political oppression for political reasons (often because they were forced to do so by the regime, or because of persecution or restrictions imposed on their choice of career, social ties, or lifestyle).

In the international academic discourse, the term ‘migrant’ and the derived expressions ‘immigrant’ and ‘emigrant’ tend to be used in a neutral sense just to express the fact that a person lives outside the territory of his or her country of origin (e.g. De Haas, Castles, and Miller 2019; Ackers and Gill 2008; cf. Feldman 2015). However, in some political contexts these terms have also begun to acquire negative connotations, so some people now refuse to be referred to by them (Kunz 2020). The term ‘migrant’ has recently acquired a negative connotation, especially since the migration crisis that began when there was a surge in the number of migrants entering Europe as refugees, mainly from war-torn Syria, but also from several other Middle Eastern and African countries (Crawley and Skleparis 2017; Collier 2015). Some critics claim that many of these refugees are actually ‘economic migrants’, whom they accuse of migrating to make money or to get easy access to social benefits, rather than actually seeking a safe haven from war, and they blame them for the increased strain on the security and social systems of some European countries. The word ‘migrant’ has thus (temporarily) become almost a pejorative term in public discourse, even in the Czech Republic, which has not been significantly affected by the migration crisis. In the context of state-socialist Czechoslovakia, the term ‘(e)migrant’ acquired similarly negative connotations when persons leaving their homeland (illegally) were labelled traitors to the nation by the ruling party (see, e.g., Tigrid 1990, 47–51). In our text, we use these terms in their neutral sense and in line with the international scholarship on this subject, unless otherwise stated in the specific context.

As the analysis presented here suggests, none of the terms used in connection with Czech migrants and their descendants fully captures the entire population we are concerned with. All the terms are biased in some way, and it would probably be impossible to find a single expression that could be used without qualification to apply to all the people targeted by our project. The scheme in Figure 1 summarises how the terms overlap and relate to each other. In this book, we have decided to stick to the international term ‘diaspora’, even though its use is not without problems.

Individual members of the diaspora are and should be the cornerstone of the state’s entire diaspora policy, which is essentially aimed at them, their needs, their ties to their country of origin, and the potential benefits of these ties for both Czech society (from a cultural and social perspective)





**Figure 1.** A hierarchy of terms used according to their breadth of meaning

and the Czech state (from an economic and political perspective). However, although all members of the diaspora have in common that they (or their ancestors) left their country of origin, in other characteristics (whether we are talking about reasons for migration, occupational orientation, or sociodemographic features) they are almost as diverse as Czech society itself. This diversity also explains why some of them associate with one another and others do not, what kind of ties they maintain to Czechia and how strong they are, and how they relate to the Czech state, its institutions, and diaspora organisations. It is not possible to capture the attitudes and needs of all members of the Czech diaspora in the world. Those who are not interested in contact and purposefully avoid it will always be largely absent from our picture. However, it is valuable for diaspora policy to know both about those who organise and communicate with Czech institutions engaged in diaspora issues and about those who do not want this kind of contact. This chapter and the book as a whole should contribute to getting to know the Czech diaspora in its diversity a little better and should enable Czech diaspora policy to speak to an ever-wider spectrum of people in the diaspora and address their needs.

## 1.4 THE GOALS, ACHIEVEMENTS, AND ‘HOT TOPICS’ OF THE CONTEMPORARY CZECH DIASPORA

Czech diaspora policy has gradually developed since the 1990s, which is consistent with global and regional trends in state–diaspora engagement (Gamlen, Cummings, and Vaaler 2019; Kovács 2017; Popyk, Lesińska, and Dambrauskas 2023). In 1993, individuals who had emigrated when the previous political regime was in power were granted the option to regain their Czech citizenship, which many of them had been stripped of by the regime (Černý and Valášek 1996). In 2014, the option of having dual citizenship was also legally introduced (Zákon o státním občanství České republiky 2013).

Over time education,<sup>8</sup> culture, and, more recently, political participation (particularly remote voting) have become key areas of focus in Czech diaspora policy. These developments have largely been the result of bottom-up initiatives from the diaspora community, but they have gradually won both symbolic and financial support from the Czech state<sup>9</sup> (Janská and Janurová 2020). Over time, this support and cooperation between state institutions and diaspora organisations have become relatively systematised and regular. Although Czech diaspora policy is relatively new, it has developed quite rapidly, as the intensive activities of Czech political institutions and various new and traditional diaspora organisations abroad demonstrate (see also Janská et al. 2022a). However, a number of hot topics remain unresolved. At present, the main issues are the introduction of remote voting, the digitisation of public services, the simplification and activation of communication channels between the diaspora and the state, and a continuous and targeted effort to develop and promote a good and realistic image of the Czech diaspora in Czech society (Janská et al. 2022a, 2022b, 2022c, 2022d).

Remote voting, which has already been introduced (in the form of postal voting) in Slovakia and Hungary, has been on and off the table for almost a decade in Czech diaspora policy circles, as a solution to the diaspora’s complaints about the geographic and administrative barriers to voting, which currently can only be done in person at selected types of representative authorities abroad or in Czechia (Kandalec 2013; Janská and Janurová 2020; Janská et al. 2022a, 2022b, 2022c, 2022d). Compared, for instance, to Poland, where the dominant strategy has been to enable as many citizens abroad as possible to vote by rapidly increasing the number of polling stations abroad,<sup>10</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Here education refers to learning the Czech language and maintaining knowledge of Czech(oslovak) history and culture.

<sup>9</sup> In these matters the Czech state is mainly represented by the Department for Expatriate Affairs at the MFA and the Senate Standing Committee for Compatriots Living Abroad.

<sup>10</sup> See Lesińska in this volume.

Czechia allows only certain types of representative authorities to serve as polling stations, with tragicomical repercussions for international voters who sometimes have to travel thousands of kilometres to reach the nearest voting location.<sup>11</sup> The Senate Standing Committee for Compatriots Living Abroad (see below), the Department for Expatriate Affairs at the MFA, and individual politicians have to varying degrees been advocating for remote voting for a long time. An international initiative recently launched by the Czech diaspora titled ‘We Want Remote Voting’ (Chceme volit distančně 2022) intensified the pressure on Czech institutions, which prompted a debate in Parliament and among the general public. Opponents of remote voting think that it compromises the secret and liberal nature of the vote as inscribed in the Czech Constitution, and they question the right of people to take part in the political life of the country left behind and speculate about whether the diaspora would prioritise some parties over others (Pancíř and Berný 2022; Stonjeková 2023; Vrlák 2021; Bumba 2024). While some proponents of the idea would prefer the introduction of online voting, postal voting<sup>12</sup> is currently being put forth as a compromise solution to the demand for remote voting, since it promises to be safer (in the sense of a lower risk of personal data misuse) and is more likely to be accepted by all the relevant stakeholders (Pecháček 2012; Ministerstvo vnitra ČR 2019). The issue of postal voting was more strongly reflected in the electoral programmes of some political groups for the first time in the parliamentary elections held in October 2021.<sup>13</sup> However, legislation to allow postal voting has repeatedly failed to pass the Chamber of Deputies, and at the time of this book’s publication this effort remains at a dead end (Novela zákona o volbách do Parlamentu ČR 2021).

Calls for a higher degree of digitisation and the simultaneous de-bureaucratisation of public services are being heard with increasing frequency among both the resident public in Czechia and the diaspora. The added benefits for the latter group, however, are obvious (Janská et al. 2022a, 2022b, 2022c, 2022d). It must be noted that a significant number of public services have already been digitised in Czechia and the process to digitise more is ongoing.

Our research also highlighted the need to simplify communication channels between the diaspora and the state. This not only involves the use of

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11 Posts from members of the Facebook group ‘Češi a DEMOKRACIE v zahraničí’ [Czechs and DEMOCRACY abroad] (n.d.).

12 Postal voting is a form of voting that is carried out on official printed election ballots that are sent to a designated state authority by post using a double-envelope system, which facilitates both identification and anonymity at the same time.

13 See the election programme of the SPOLU (“Together”) coalition (ODS, TOP 09 and KDU-ČSL (SPOLU 2021), and the election programme of the coalition of the Czech Pirate Party and the Mayors (Piráti a Starostové 2021).

simpler modes of communication but also requires that state representatives become more open and less formal in their approach to getting to know and listening to the diaspora (Janská et al. 2022a, 2022d).

The fourth hot topic mentioned repeatedly by members of the diaspora in our empirical research, as well as by policy stakeholders, is the long-term need for a continuous and targeted effort to promote a good and realistic image of the Czech diaspora in Czech society, which would neither just praise celebrities and famous Czechs abroad, nor support the sense of suspicion and contempt towards ‘emigrants’ that was sown by communist ideology in the past and is still sometimes present in public opinion today (Janská et al. 2022b, 2022c; see also above). Members of the diaspora generally want the Czech public to view them as equals – in the sense of the possibility of their returning to Czech society and its labour market and their potential to contribute knowledge and skills. The reluctance and ambivalence that characterise Czechia’s relationship to its diaspora are connected with the fact that the status of the diaspora is not explicitly addressed in any of Czechia’s key legal documents, in contrast, for instance, to other CEE states, which recognise the diaspora in their constitutions (see the remaining country chapters in this volume; Kovács 2017). In addition (and perhaps as a consequence of the lack of any legal treatment of this issue), key political representatives rarely speak about the diaspora. This is a major difference to the political scene in the other three Visegrád countries, most notably Poland, where the notion of a ‘global nation’ figures prominently in the political discourse, as Lesińska demonstrates in another chapter in this volume.

#### **1.4.1 THE PLACE OF CZECH DIASPORA POLICY IN COMPARATIVE TYPOLOGIES**

Based on the overview of Czech diaspora policy presented here and the detailed analysis of the policy that we have discussed elsewhere (Janská and Janurová 2020; Janská et al. 2022a, 2022b, 2022c, 2022d), we can consider the policy mechanisms, rights, and provisions that are specific to Czechia in an international context. To date, only a handful of authors have devised and systematically analysed typologies and indexes that can be used to compare the diaspora policies of individual states and groups of states (see especially Levitt and De la Dehesa 2003; Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004; Gamlen 2006, 2008; Ragazzi 2014; Kovács 2017; Pedroza and Palop-García 2017). These typologies and indexes generally tend to classify states into groups on a continuum ranging from generous/very engaged to dismissive/condemnatory states on the basis of how much recognition they give to their diasporas, how many rights they grant them, and what obligations they require of them. Most of the classification tools then class diaspora policies according to type as sym-

bolic, cultural, social, economic, citizenship, and administrative, with some classifications including more subtypes and others fewer.

Looking at Czech diaspora policy via this lens provides us with a picture of the country's position in a global context. It shows that Czechia applies policies targeting its diaspora that correspond to all the types named above, some of them very intensively, some to a limited degree. The country's symbolic policies mainly involve the conferences and seminars organised regularly to discuss issues of importance for the Czech diaspora. Another example is the idea of a Diaspora Day. While this idea has not yet been approved by the Parliament of the Czech Republic, a proposal for such a day was submitted to the Chamber of Deputies in the 2017–2021 parliamentary term, and 4 February, the day of Jan Amos Komenský's departure for exile, has been chosen in an online open-access poll and announced by the government as the day to commemorate Czechs living abroad (Ministerstvo zahraničních věcí ČR 2021; Kuchyňová 2021). A key part of symbolic policies is the representation of the diaspora at the state level. As explained in the next section, Czechia does not have a standalone ministry or agency for Czechs abroad. The idea of a single agency has been floated as a solution to the fractionalism in the provision of information, as well as to the long-term problem of the lack of any clear-cut expression of the relationship between the state and the diaspora, which was noted above (Janská et al. forthcoming).

Czechia's cultural policies focus mainly on the preservation and fostering of linguistic and cultural heritage and on policies relating to religion. As mentioned above, Czechia's primary diaspora-oriented policies concern linguistic and cultural heritage. The funding system that supports both traditional and new diaspora organisations and helps them to maintain their libraries and monuments and to run various cultural events is already a routine form of the state's recognition of the Czech diaspora's activities (Janská and Janurová 2020; Cibulková 2023). Also, the relevant state departments nowadays regularly communicate and cooperate with the many Czech schools and grassroots diaspora organisations abroad, some of which have gradually set out on a more formal path of providing education that is officially recognised by Czech education law (see §38 in the Education Act in Czech: *Zákon o předškolním, základním, středním, vyšším odborném a jiném vzdělávání* 2004). The work done by these schools, their representatives, and government officials alike in effectuating this has been enormous. Despite this, our research shows that the demand for Czech schools abroad is still not saturated – in some areas they are hard to access and parents consequently end up teaching their children Czech themselves (Janská et al. 2022b, 2022c). The issue of the transferability of education attained abroad to Czech schools has also not yet been resolved. Besides this, the Czech state sends teachers to Czech diaspora communities abroad and lecturers in Czech Language and

Literature to universities worldwide. The religious aspect of cultural policy is represented by religious missions run by the Czech Bishops' Conference in various locations around the world, sometimes in cooperation with the Slovak Catholic Mission (Česká biskupská konference 2016). These missions not only fulfil a spiritual purpose, they also serve both religious and non-religious members of the Czech diaspora as a source of support and provide occasions and spaces for get-togethers and festivities. They operate in both historical and new destinations of the Czech diaspora. Also, the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren maintains close relations with Czech Evangelical congregations abroad, which operate especially in the traditional communities in Ukraine, Croatia, Romania, Serbia, and Poland (Českobratrská církev evangelická 2016).

The degree to which Czechia engages with the diaspora on social and economic policies is rather limited. Through state-funded organisations, Czechia offers students and academic staff financial support and helps them find scholarships for study and research abroad, which are funded from both international and local sources (DZS 2022), but there is no policy that is specifically aimed at securing their return or utilising the skills they have gained upon return. While grassroots movements such as Czexpats in Science seek to connect Czech scientists abroad, they are not much concerned with the matter of Czech scientists returning to Czechia. Czechia does not offer investment schemes or specialised financial transfer services that would address diaspora needs, such as facilitating the transfer, use, or investment of remittances. Even though remittances represent a significant financial gain for the Czech economy in a statistical perspective, they are hardly a hot topic in the discourse surrounding the diaspora. Our interviewees seldom referred to remittances (Janská et al. 2022b, 2022c).

The state's social security programmes are not designed to target the diaspora and the domestic resident population separately, they are aimed at the entire population residing in Czechia and/or contributing to the social security system (Kropáčová 2014). Pensions are the key exception, as they can be drawn even by people who reside abroad, as long as a person was gainfully employed in Czechia/Czechoslovakia and made payments to the health and social insurance systems. Other social security transfers that can be paid to people living abroad are primarily guided by state responsibility allocation stipulated by EU law and bilateral agreements with other states (Janská and Janurová 2020; Cibulková 2023).

In the area of citizenship, Czechia scores quite high in a global comparison – at least *de iure*. With some exceptions, the state does not restrict or monitor the movement of its citizens across state borders (Česká národní rada 1993; Trestní řád 1961), it has allowed its citizens to hold dual citizenship since 2014 (Zákon o státním občanství České republiky 2013), and Czechs

abroad can vote in person in elections to the Chamber of Deputies<sup>14</sup> and in the presidential elections (Ministerstvo vnitra ČR 2021). The MFA issues a certificate of membership in the Czech diaspora on the basis of proven Czech origin. Holders of this certificate may apply for permanent residence in Czechia ‘for other reasons worthy of special consideration’ (Ministerstvo vnitra ČR 2023), which, in effect, simplifies the path to Czech citizenship for them. In addition, a draft amendment of the Citizenship Act that offers the offspring of emigrant former citizens an easier path to Czech citizenship has recently entered the legislative process (Návrh poslanců ... 2013). As noted above, members of the diaspora interested in participating in Czech elections still feel that the issue of voting abroad has not yet been satisfactorily resolved. Unlike in some of the states that engage most with their diaspora, in Czechia questions of political representation and enabling the diaspora’s participation in a broader range of election types remain issues that are not likely to be addressed anytime soon.

In the administrative policy dimension, Czechia nowadays has a rather extensive legislative and institutional apparatus to deal with diaspora issues (see below). It allows its citizens to migrate and return and the only reporting obligations relate to their participation in the social and health insurance systems and not to relocation per se. However, some policy stakeholders, as well as the diaspora, view this liberalism with regard to emigration as a deficit, pointing to the fact that the state has only a limited capacity to monitor the size of the diaspora in different places and, in effect, also a limited capacity to get in touch – for the purpose of networking, lobbying, emergencies, or other reasons – with those individuals who do not show an active interest themselves (Janská et al. 2022a). Also, most of the contact with the diaspora remains on an administrative level (sorting out funding applications, monitoring the activities and contact details of diaspora organisations, etc.) and little of it is in the form of political acknowledgement (e.g. key politicians speaking to and about the diaspora at important moments observed by the public; Janská et al. 2022a).

## 1.5 THE INSTITUTIONAL AND LEGISLATIVE BACKGROUND OF CZECH DIASPORA POLICY

Czechia has no state authority that is exclusively dedicated to diaspora issues. However, individual ministries have departments or offices that deal with diaspora issues within the scope of their portfolio (Janská and Janurová 2020;

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14 I.e. the lower house of the Parliament of the Czech Republic (Poslanecká sněmovna).

Brouček et al. 2017). Similarly, the diaspora is not explicitly mentioned in the constitution or in other key legislative documents, unlike in many other countries (e.g. all three of the other CEE states discussed in this book; see also Kovács 2017<sup>15</sup>). Instead, it is addressed in conceptual documents that are not legally binding (Ministerstvo zahraničních věcí ČR 2015b; Ministerstvo zahraničních věcí ČR 2011).<sup>16</sup>

The first contact point for Czechs living abroad who need to get in touch with the state on official matters is usually the consular departments of the representative authorities abroad, which are accountable to the Consular Department of the MFA. The list of services that consular departments provide includes the usual consular agenda: issuing or renewing passports and birth, death, and marriage certificates;<sup>17</sup> helping Czechs in situations where they may require consular assistance (illness, accidents, arrest or custody, limitation of personal freedom, loss of travel documents or financial resources, death, natural and human-made disasters).<sup>18</sup> Ambassadors and consuls also, with varying frequency, organise social events for the diaspora and inform them about relevant issues.

The Department for Expatriate Affairs (Oddělení pro krajanské záležitosti Ministerstva zahraničních věcí České republiky) is a department of the MFA that has for a long time (since 1990) served as the key policy stakeholder in diaspora affairs, dealing exclusively with diaspora issues in all their breadth. As well as being responsible for various administrative tasks, the office's role also includes fostering state–diaspora relations on a more general basis, strengthening international and economic relations with host countries via cooperation with the diaspora, and promoting a positive image of the diaspora in Czechia. The office supports diaspora organisations by providing funding in support of their activities and providing opportunities where they can network and increase their visibility (conferences, ceremonies, and a website). It also collaborates with the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports in running an educational programme designed to teach the Czech language abroad, especially in traditional diaspora communities. It is the contact point for people who wish to apply for a certificate of belonging to the Czech community living abroad, which can be used as a supporting document if the person then applies for permanent residence in Czechia. The office also chairs the Interministerial Commission for Czechs Living

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15 According to the analysis by Kovács (2017), the diaspora is addressed in the constitutions of Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, Romania, and Hungary.

16 See also the introduction to this chapter.

17 Czech citizen ID cards can only be issued by municipal authorities in Czechia. No other documents (driving licence, health insurance card, etc.) can be used as identification documents in Czechia.

18 See § 17 in the Foreign Services Act (Zákon o zahraniční službě 2017).



Abroad (Ministerstvo zahraničních věcí ČR 2015a, 2017), which was established recently in order to pool and coordinate the diaspora-related agendas of individual ministries.

The Interministerial Commission for Czechs Living Abroad (Meziresortní komise pro Čechy žijící v zahraničí) was established as an advisory body to the Department for Expatriate Affairs of the MFA. It aims to improve information-sharing and cooperation between public authorities and other public institutions on issues pertaining to the diaspora and gradually to create a unified online information pool (Ministerstvo zahraničních věcí ČR n.d.-b) enabling Czechs abroad to access information more easily on administrative, financial, and other official matters in Czechia or relating to their potential return.

The Senate Standing Committee for Compatriots Living Abroad (Stálá komise Senátu pro krajany žijící v zahraničí) is as an advisory body to the Senate of the Czech Republic that focuses exclusively on diaspora issues (Senát Parlamentu ČR 2017). It initiates parliamentary discussions on amendments to laws that impact the diaspora, and it participates in diaspora-related expert conferences and roundtables. The committee's achievements include initiating the legal process to allow dual citizenship in 2014, allowing nationals abroad to collect newly issued passports at honorary consulates in 2015, and proposing a legal amendment that made completing education at a branch of the Czech School Without Borders equivalent to having studied the same subjects at a primary school in Czechia.

The Subcommittee on Relations with Compatriots (Podvýbor pro styky s krajany; see Poslanecká sněmovna Parlament ČR 2024) is part of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Chamber of Deputies of the Parliament of the Czech Republic, which regularly discusses compatriot issues, participates in and organises diaspora-related events, and maintains relations with other relevant stakeholders. The composition and activities of the subcommittee depend on the current composition of the Chamber of Deputies and change with each parliamentary election. How interested and able the MPs involved in specific compatriot issues are in these issues and in getting them on the floor for parliamentary discussion fluctuates and depends on the MPs' personal interests and the interests of their party (Janská et al. 2022a).<sup>19</sup>

The Czech Centres (Česká centra) are a contributory organisation of the MFA that promotes Czechia abroad (Czech Centres n.d.). The network of Czech Centres engages in public diplomacy, promoting cultural events, and fostering external economic relations and tourism. The Centres sometimes

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<sup>19</sup> The Subcommittee was involved in introducing a draft amendment of the Citizenship Act into Parliament, which makes the road to Czech citizenship easier for the offspring of emigrant former citizens (Návrh poslanců ... 2013).

also serve as hubs for Czech nationals abroad, offering them a way of staying connected with Czechia through cultural initiatives.

The International Coordination Committee of Czechs Living Abroad (Mezinárodní koordinační výbor zahraničních Čechů) is a civic association that provides space for meetings and dialogue between Czechs living in different parts of the world and with the Czechia-based population. The committee organises gatherings, conferences, exhibitions, the regular 'Important Czech Woman in the World' award, and other events and issues publications. The biannual International Compatriot Conference, taking place in Prague, is a large event that is regularly attended by diaspora representatives, public administration staff, and academics.<sup>20</sup>

The Czechoslovak Institute for Foreign Affairs (Československý ústav zahraniční / ČSÚZ), an NGO, is 'an independent and voluntary association that strives for the broad development of contacts with associations, societies, and persons with origins in the countries of former Czechoslovakia who live permanently abroad and with their descendants, regardless of political or religious orientation'.<sup>21</sup> The mission of the Czechoslovak Institute for Foreign Affairs is to support the Czech and Slovak diasporas in maintaining ties with their country of origin, national awareness, and language skills, as well as to assist organisations and individuals in establishing economic cooperation. The ČSÚZ cooperates not only with Czechoslovak diaspora organisations but also with state authorities, schools, other organisations, and individuals. At present, its main activities are concerned with providing financial and material support to Czechoslovak diaspora organisations around the world. The membership base of the ČSÚZ currently numbers about 300 persons, among them are prominent figures and members of the general public living in the Czech Republic or abroad. Their activities are financed mainly by membership fees and donations and, in exceptional cases, by state subsidies.<sup>22</sup> These funds are used, for example, for the purchase of material support for Czech primary and kindergarten schools abroad – for example, in Austria (Vienna) and Croatia (Daruvar, Končevice) – and for the development of these schools' facilities or for the purchase of new musical instruments and costumes for regional diaspora performance ensembles. It also supports the publication of compatriot publications and magazines and hosts conferences and debates.

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**20** See the website of the International Coordination Committee of Czechs Living Abroad (Mezinárodní koordinační výbor zahraničních Čechů n.d.).

**21** See the website of the Czechoslovak Institute for Foreign Affairs (ČSÚZ n.d.).

**22** Interview with the head of the organisation on 19 October 2022. See also Ministerstvo finance (2022).

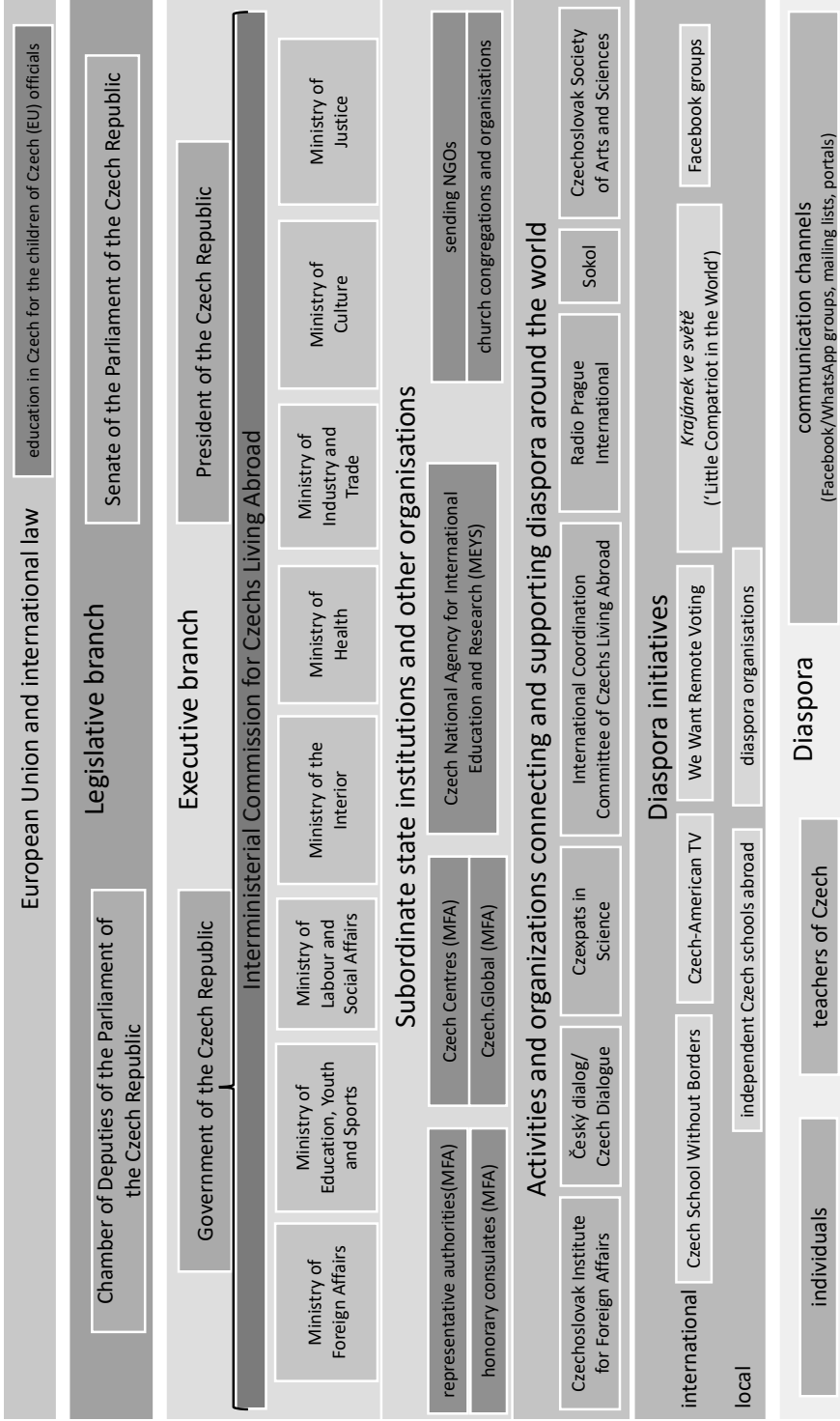


Figure 2. Stakeholders in Czechia's diaspora policy

The ČSÚZ was founded in 1928 as an independent but state-supported organisation. It was established at the initiative of President T. G. Masaryk to register compatriots abroad and to provide cultural assistance to the diaspora in gratitude for the role they played in the activities that led to the independence of Czechoslovakia. During its almost 100 years of existence, the institute has gone through several different periods in connection with political developments in Czechoslovakia and, after the state split into two countries, in Czechia and Slovakia. After 1945, it continued to operate, with brief interruptions, as part of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs until 1988 (Nešpor 2017).<sup>23</sup> In the state-socialist period, its activities were limited and it focused on 'organising our compatriots abroad'.<sup>24</sup> In 1990, its activities were revived by a few enthusiasts who continue to work for the ČSÚZ on a voluntary basis to this day.

Figure 2 presents a picture of the complete network of Czech diaspora policy stakeholders and the connections between them, with individual members of the diaspora at the bottom and national and supranational institutions at the top. It is important to note that this diagram is a simplification and does not reflect a fixed hierarchy. Instead, it should serve as a starting point for analysing the roles of various actors that are emerging or disappearing from the diaspora scene and their evolving relationships. The diagram includes a longer list of actors than have been discussed here, as this chapter does not allow for such an in-depth overview.<sup>25</sup>

## 1.6 CONCLUSION

This chapter explored Czech post-1989 diaspora policy in all its breadth, reflecting on the size of the Czech diaspora worldwide, post-socialist political developments, and the complex meshwork of terminology relating to the diaspora. We showed that Czech diaspora policy has evolved rapidly over the past three decades and, perhaps even without the key stakeholders noticing, it has gradually come to encompass the whole thematic range of policy areas that policy analysts have identified as characteristic of any robust diaspora policy approach (e.g. Ragazzi 2014; Pedroza and Palop-García 2017). However, even though through this lens Czechia scores high in checklist terms, as it is able to 'tick off' items in all the relevant analytical categories (e.g. having official structures to deal with diaspora issues, allowing dual citizenship,

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23 See s.v. 'Československý ústav zahraniční (1928–1941)' [Czechoslovak Institute of Foreign Affairs 1928–1941] in Nešpor (2017).

24 An interview with the head of the organisation on 19 October 2022.

25 The complete list is covered in an earlier text (Janská et al. 2022a).

supporting diaspora activities, or organising discussion events), it has not been as effectual in symbolic and representative terms – it has not been as successful at bringing its achievements in diaspora policy and in relation to the diaspora as such to the attention of the general public and showcasing their importance.

The key ‘hot topics’ of Czech diaspora policy that this chapter identified as still unresolved are remote voting, the digitisation of public services, the simplification and activation of communication channels between the diaspora and the state, and a continuous and targeted effort at promoting a good and realistic image of the Czech diaspora in Czech society (Janská et al. 2022a, 2022b, 2022c, 2022d). While digitisation is an inevitable process, driven by the need to fulfil the standards and demands of the modern-day way of life and what is being called for by the public as a whole (not just the diaspora), including political representatives, remote voting has been a controversial topic of debate for years. Given the failure of previous government and grass-roots initiatives that have tried to introduce remote voting, it still looks to be a long way from becoming a reality. The issue of simplifying communication channels between the diaspora and the state overlaps with two other issues, one being the speed of the digitisation process and the other being the symbolic significance on the political level of the state’s relationship to the diaspora (i.e. how important a priority it is for the politicians in Parliament at a given moment).

The need to promote a positive and realistic image of the diaspora in Czechia relates to the fact that Czechia’s relationship to the diaspora is not expressed in any official legal form – hence the long-term lack of any political articulation of this relationship. This results in the continuous neglect or even dismissal of the diaspora by key political representatives and the general public, despite the fact that the diaspora has the symbolic power to act as unofficial ambassadors in Czechia’s name around the world and that it also contributes significantly (and can contribute even more) to the Czech economy through both tangible (financial remittances) and intangible (skills, knowledge, values) resources.

The potential to overcome this situation and utilise the resources that the diaspora has to offer rests with key political representatives and depends on their priorities and the prevailing political atmosphere, which could make such change possible in the context of other (perhaps more visible and pressing) domestic issues. It is a question whether a standalone government institution devoted to diaspora issues or a legislative anchoring of the diaspora’s position would help to resolve this issue.

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# CHAPTER 2

## BUILDING THE GLOBAL NATION: DIASPORA POLICY IN POLAND

MAGDALENA LESIŃSKA

### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

Poland, like other countries in the Central and Eastern European region, has a long history of emigration, marked by successive waves of exodus. From the mid-19th century onwards, emigrants from Poland headed mainly for the countries of Western Europe and North and South America, and the reasons for their departure were primarily slow economic development and a lack of prospects at home. In turn, the border changes that followed the successive world wars in the 20th century, accompanied by dynamic population processes and migration flows, resulted in the emergence of large kin-minorities living in Poland's neighbouring countries, such as Lithuania, Belarus, and Ukraine. In the 1990s, after the fall of the Iron Curtain, a political and socio-economic transformation took place, which led to the re-emergence of traditional emigration routes (in particular to Germany and the United States).

Another turning point in the history of the formation of the Polish diaspora was Poland's accession to the European Union (on 1 May 2004), which was immediately followed by a large wave of economic emigration and gave rise to a new form of mobility. This migration wave was characterised not only by intensity and by the new destinations it moved to (such as Norway and Ireland), but also by the different profile of the emigrants, most of whom were young and educated. They used the right of free movement, which allows EU citizens to legally reside and work anywhere in the EU, and moved to the more developed 'old' EU Member States in search of better educational opportunities, jobs, and higher incomes.

This chapter will present a general overview of the Polish diaspora and Polish state policy on Poles abroad. Individual sections of the chapter focus on the history of Polish settlements, the main normative approach of Polish diaspora policy, and the institutional framework and selected areas of Polish diaspora policy. The chapter shows that the main goal of Polish diaspora policy is to build the global Polish nation by maintaining and strengthening national identity and promoting Polish language and culture among Poles residing in other countries. Key elements at the centre of the Polish diaspora policy, namely education, the 'Pole's card', and enfranchisement (external voting), are described here in greater detail.

## 2.2 AN (HISTORICAL) OVERVIEW OF THE POLISH DIASPORA

As a result of the migration and population processes mentioned above, Poland has a large diaspora dispersed all over the world, which was created both by successive waves of emigration and by changes in national borders. In general, three groups can be distinguished in the Polish diaspora: (1) the 'traditional' diaspora, which was formed by waves of emigration during the 20th century; (2) kin-minorities, most of whom live in neighbouring countries; and (3) emigrants who left the country after 2004, who can be colloquially described as the 'new' diaspora or the post-accession diaspora (Popyk et al. 2023).

It is difficult to obtain reliable data on the size of the Polish diaspora. The Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs estimated that the diaspora is made up of approximately 12–15 million people (Ministerstwo Spraw Zagranicznych n.d.). It should be emphasised, however, that the majority of this group consists of people for whom Poland is the homeland of their parents or grandparents, who have symbolic ties to the country, and who do not hold Polish citizenship.

Among the three aforementioned diaspora groups formed through history (the traditional diaspora, kin-minorities, and the post-accession diaspora), the largest is the 'traditional' diaspora, which is often referred to as 'Polonia'.<sup>26</sup> The largest number of members of the Polish diaspora live in the United States, where 9.6 million people declared Polish ancestry in a survey conducted in 2012. There are approximately 1 million diaspora Poles living in Canada, 1.5 million in Brazil, 120,000 in Argentina, 170,000 in Australia, and 30,000 in South Africa (Ministerstwo Spraw Zagranicznych n.d.). They are a highly diverse group of people. Some of them (especially first-generation emigrants) maintain close relations with Poland, but in subsequent generations these ties can become purely symbolic and be limited to people just knowing that Poland is the country of origin of their ancestors.

The second of these groups consists of Polish minorities in neighbouring countries; this group is referred to (including in official documents) as 'Poles in the East'. As a result of the border changes after the Second World War, Poland lost territory to what are now present-day Belarus, Lithuania, and Ukraine, leaving many Poles outside Polish territory. It is estimated that about 1 million people of Polish origin currently reside in these countries, including about 200,000 Poles in Lithuania, about 300,000 in Belarus who de-

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<sup>26</sup> The term commonly used for Polish communities abroad is 'Polonia' (traditionally applied to the Polish population in the United States). In official documents, however, the term that is usually applied is 'Polonia and Poles abroad', which is broader and includes Polish emigrants and Polish minorities in addition to people of Polish origin.

clare Polish nationality, and 144,000 in Ukraine (the data are from before the war that began in 2022; Ministerstwo Spraw Zagranicznych n.d.). In addition to the concentrations of Poles in these neighbouring countries, mention must also be made of the descendants of Poles who were deported to Kazakhstan and other Asian countries at the turn of the 20th century, who have been the target of a repatriation policy since the early 1990s (Grzymała-Każłowska and Grzymała-Moszczyńska 2014). It is also worth noting that the size of the Polish communities in Eastern Europe is regularly decreasing, undoubtedly influenced by assimilation processes that are observed in successive generations. Only a minority of people in this group have Polish citizenship. Polish kin-minorities, like Hungary and its kin-minorities, have been a priority target of diaspora policy since the early 1990s.

The third group mentioned above, the post-accession diaspora, consists of approximately 2.3 million people (according to the latest estimates from the Central Statistical Office on the number of persons staying abroad for more than three months), which is approximately 6% of the country's population (CSO 2021). The vast majority of these people – approximately 1.9 million (including 1.3 million in EU Member States) – reside in European countries. The largest concentrations of Polish nationals were recorded in Germany (706,000), the United Kingdom (678,000), the Netherlands (135,000), and Ireland (114,000). The distribution of Polish emigrants across EU countries has changed over time, though only slightly. In recent years, according to the Central Statistical Office, a decrease in the number of temporary emigrants from Poland was recorded in Italy, while an increase was observed in the Netherlands and Norway (CSO 2021). It can be assumed that these changes are influenced by factors related to the economic situation in the destination country and by individual migration plans.

The latest massive wave of emigration since 2004 has triggered a change in Polish diaspora policy. The appearance of new and numerous Polish communities in European countries, who had left primarily for economic reasons, presented the Polish authorities with a new challenge. The post-accession diaspora consists of a 'transnational' model of migrants, who often visit Poland, remain interested in the economic and political situation in Poland, and still have Polish as their primary language (Lesińska et al. 2014). Consequently, the most important challenges for policy makers have been to encourage Poles residing abroad to maintain ties with Poland, to retain their identification with their country of origin, and to inspire younger generations to learn the Polish language and culture.

## 2.3 BUILDING THE GLOBAL NATION – THE MAIN APPROACH OF DIASPORA POLICY IN POLAND

Poland's approach to the diaspora can be analysed as a 'global nation policy', a concept introduced by Francesco Ragazzi (2019), according to which the diaspora is seen as part of a country's global nation and legal solutions are created and actions are taken to build and sustain ties between the diaspora and the country of origin and to integrate the diaspora into the state-national community. Using this approach, global nation-building activities are undertaken on a number of levels, the main ones being symbolic (promoting a positive narrative about the diaspora and its ties to the country of origin), legal (giving legal status to its members, e.g. by granting citizenship to children born abroad, accepting dual citizenship, or issuing an 'ethnic card' – a document confirming a person's ancestry), and political (ensuring political representation, allowing Polish citizens to vote even if they live abroad).

Many states, especially those with a large diaspora, have active policies towards diaspora groups. The reasons for these policies are manifold and depend on the economic, political, and identity relations between the diaspora and the country of origin (Gamlen et al. 2013; Koinova and Tsourapas 2018). First, the diaspora is often treated primarily as a source of financial remittances. Sending states attempt to encourage the diaspora to engage economically with the country of origin by sending money, making investments, and providing professional expertise (Brinkerhoff 2018; Newland 2010). The economic relationship between the diaspora and the country of origin is of great importance, especially for developing countries, where the amount of transfers sent from abroad can often account for a dozen or more percent of the country's GDP (World Bank 2019).

Second, the diaspora is equally as often seen as a source of soft power, its role being particularly important in the context of building relations between the country of origin and the states in which members of the diaspora are settled, who are considered a lobbying force for the country of origin's interests (Shain and Barth 2003). Rey Koslowsky refers to the process of drawing on the help of the diaspora to realise the interests of the country of origin in the international arena as the 'globalisation of domestic politics', meaning the transfer of policy from the national to the international level and the inclusion of the diaspora in its implementation (Koslowsky 2004).

Another particularly interesting explanation of the country of origin's engagement with the diaspora in the context of global nation-building is an identity-based explanation. The diaspora is seen as an integral part of the national community, as (part of) an 'imagined community' whose unity is based on a common origin, culture, language, and history (Anderson 2016). Unlike economic or political relationships, the relationship between the di-

aspora and the country of origin based on identity and culture and a belief in a common ancestry proves to be very durable – it is reproduced and lasts for generations. It is worth noting that the identity-based approach to this relationship is the prevailing one, and not just in Poland (see Chapter 4 on Slovakia). The essence of the diaspora phenomenon has been very aptly described by Yossi Schain and Aaron Barth (2003), who point out that the diaspora exists outside state structures and, at the same time, inside the national community. Building a ‘global nation’ that includes those who live outside the borders of the state (emigrants, kin-minorities, and descendants), as well as the citizens living within the state’s borders, requires the implementation of specific policies and actions that target the diaspora and sustain identity relations.

Many scholars have pointed out that the overarching goal of diaspora policy is the integration of the diaspora into the structures of the country of origin. Although it is variously referred to as the ‘policy of external belonging’ (Brubaker 2010), the ‘embracing policy’ (Gamlen et al. 2013), the ‘global nation policy’ (Ragazzi 2014), and ‘political incorporation’ (Collyer 2014), all these terms refer to the same process: the symbolic and real inclusion of the diaspora into the political community. Activities leading to this goal are carried out on a number of levels, among which it is possible to distinguish those of a symbolic, legal, and political nature.

## **2.4 THE ‘HOT TOPICS’ OF POLISH DIASPORA POLICY: EDUCATION, ETHNIC CARDS, AND ENFRANCHISEMENT**

### **2.4.1 SYMBOLIC POLICIES AIMED AT THE POLISH DIASPORA**

Symbolic policies aimed at the diaspora include activities to promote a positive narrative about the diaspora as an integral part of the national community. This is achieved, among other ways, through the state’s official ‘diaspora days’, the existence of various media dedicated to the diaspora, ceremonial celebrations of national holidays with the participation of representatives of the diaspora, and regular references to the diaspora in official speeches by key politicians. In Poland, 2 May was selected as the Day of the Polish Diaspora and Poles Abroad. There is a dedicated TV channel (TV Polonia) for emigrants and kin-minorities that broadcasts programmes in the national language. The channel’s official role is integrating the Polish diaspora, promoting a positive image of Poland and Poles, and maintaining Polish identity through the dissemination of Polish culture, history, and language. It is co-financed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. An example of concrete action to reinforce the symbolic narrative of the global national



community was the media campaign announced in 2019 by the Polish authorities under the slogan ‘There are 60 million of us’, a message stating that the Polish national community consists of 40 million Poles at home and 20 million abroad.

A positive narrative about the diaspora is important, but of much greater importance are the concrete legal solutions taken to maintain the formal and identity ties of diaspora members to their country of origin. A country of origin may grant certain benefits to diaspora members living outside its borders, such as preferential access to citizenship or an ethnic card – a special certificate that proves ethnic belonging to the nation. In the sections that follow, selected areas of Poland’s diaspora policy will be presented in detail, such as the system of education abroad, ethnic cards, and diaspora enfranchisement, which represent the cultural, legal, and political dimensions of the process of global nation-building.

#### **2.4.2 THE EDUCATION SYSTEM ABROAD**

Supporting education in the Polish language abroad is one of the main priorities of diaspora policy in Poland. The main aim is to establish ties with diaspora members by ensuring access to Polish-language learning and Polish culture and transmitting the history and traditions of the country of origin. These activities are aimed at the superior purpose of strengthening ethnic identity and national awareness among Poles abroad. The education system abroad is especially important in the case of the post-accession diaspora, which is characterised by an increasing number of children and youth, who migrate with their parents. Additionally, the growing number of children born to Polish parents abroad has increased the size of the child and youth diaspora, who are the main targets of education activities (Popyk 2022).

The main institution dedicated to education abroad is the Centre for the Development of Polish Education Abroad (ORPEG), which is subordinate to the Ministry of National Education. The official mission of ORPEG is to shape and sustain a sense of national identity among Poles living abroad by teaching the Polish language, history and culture to children and young people in Polish, facilitating young Poles’ eventual return to the Polish education system, promoting Polish culture, and providing methodological and content-related support for teachers teaching the Polish language (ORPEG n.d.). The centre runs Polish schools at Poland’s diplomatic missions; in 2023 there were 74 Polish schools in 36 countries teaching the Polish national curriculum. ORPEG also offers Polish children living abroad with innovative learning curricula, Polish textbooks and teaching aids (such as online handbooks for children), online and distance learning courses, and advisory services and professional training for teachers working abroad to support the teaching of the Polish

language. As well as the Polish schools run by ORPEG, there are also 'Polonia Schools', which are established by diaspora organisations, Polish parishes, or parents' associations. Their aim is to teach the standard Polish school curriculum and support the learning of Polish culture and traditions in the Polish language.

In 2022 a new institution was established, namely the Institute for the Development of the Polish Language. The institute's tasks include initiating and carrying out activities concerning the promotion of the Polish language, supporting the cultivation of Polish traditions and the value of the Polish language as a mother tongue, and promoting the Polish language as a mother tongue among Poles at home and Poles living abroad. It also supports initiatives and educational and scientific projects aimed at deepening the knowledge of the Polish language and popularising Polish as a foreign language (Instytut Rozwoju Języka Polskiego n.d.). The establishment of the new institution was met with criticism, according to which it duplicates the work of already existing institutions, such as ORPEG described above.

Supporting educational initiatives has always been a priority of Polish diaspora policy, which has also been reflected in the budget allocated to these activities. Each year almost half of the financial resources of the annual grant programme called 'Polonia and Poles Abroad' (described in detail below) are dedicated to the education system abroad (e.g. for the maintenance and support of the operations of Polish preschools and schools abroad, the implementation of educational initiatives, scholarships for ethnic Polish students to study in Poland, and incentives to attend the Polish schools abroad).

### 2.4.3 'THE POLE'S CARD'

Ethnic cards are a legal and political instrument used by the state of origin for co-ethnics residing abroad. The most important purpose of these cards is to provide legal confirmation that a person belongs to the Polish ethno-national community by ancestry and thereby to build and reinforce the diaspora's symbolic identity relations with the country of origin. In Poland the nation community is conceived of primarily in essentialist terms, as an ethno-national community, linked with the country of origin by ties of identity, memory, and culture. Hence, the Pole's Card is one of the practical tools the state uses to create a 'global nation' and unite the community of co-ethnics spread across national boundaries (Sendhardt 2021).

The Pole's Card was introduced in 2007 and was defined as 'a document confirming membership in the Polish Nation' (*Ustawa z dnia 7 września 2007 r. o Karcie Polaka 2007*). According to the law, persons eligible to obtain a Pole's Card are these who do not have Polish citizenship or a permanent

residence permit on Polish territory and live in one of 15 post-Soviet republics (in 2019 eligibility for the Pole's Card was expanded to ethnic Poles living all over the world). In order to obtain a card a person must: (1) demonstrate a relationship to Polishness through at least a basic knowledge of the Polish language and knowledge and cultivation of Polish traditions and customs; (2) submit a written declaration of belonging to the Polish nation in the presence of a consul or another authorised person; (3) prove that at least one parent or grandparent or two great-grandparents were of Polish nationality or had Polish citizenship or present a certificate issued by a Polish diaspora organisation confirming active involvement in activities for the benefit of the Polish language and culture or for the Polish minority over at least the past three years.

Initially, the rights enjoyed by holders of a Pole's Card included a free-of-charge entry visa into the territory of Poland, a free-of-charge residence permit, the right to work and study in Poland, the right to register and run a company in Poland, free access to healthcare in Poland (in emergency situations) (Gońda and Lesińska 2022b). Over the years, however, the *Pole's Card Act* has been amended several times and the range of benefits provided by the Card has been broadened. The Act's new provisions include measures to facilitate integration in Poland (a monthly cash benefit paid over the first nine months after arriving, financial assistance to rent an apartment, access to Polish language courses and vocational courses), and the possibility of obtaining Polish citizenship after one year of uninterrupted residence in Poland. The Pole's Card has thus become an instrument of migration policy encouraging card holders to settle and integrate in Poland (*Ustawa z dnia 7 września 2007 r. o Karcie Polaka 2007*).

It is worth noting that ethnic cards have also been adopted in other countries, inter alia, in Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, and Ukraine, but in no other country is the range of entitlements for card holders as wide as in Poland. Among the factors that contributed to the evolution of the Pole's Card Act is the fact that right-wing parties, whose political programmes make strong references to the Polish nation as an ethno-cultural community that exists even beyond the country's borders and to the state's moral obligation to take care of the Polish minorities who live across the Eastern border (Gońda and Lesińska 2022a; Nowosielski and Nowak 2017). Amendments to the act were followed by an unprecedented surge of interest in obtaining the card. By 2020, the Pole's Card had been granted to over 200,000 ethnic Poles, most of them from Belarus and Ukraine. Thus, over the years it has become not only a tool of diaspora policy to help Poles abroad maintain ties with the state of origin, but also an efficient instrument that has significantly increased the rate of Poles' immigration to Poland (Gońda and Lesińska 2022b).

#### 2.4.4 ENFRANCHISEMENT

Activities of a political nature represent another level of the state's global nation-building and are directed at involving the diaspora in the political life of the country of origin through enfranchisement. Poland is among the countries that grant citizens residing abroad the right to vote and participate in elections in their country of origin and to cast their vote abroad (without having to return to Poland on voting day). Emigrants from the most recent waves of migration, primarily those who left the country in the last two decades (after accession to the EU in 2004), form the largest share of voters voting abroad.

Polish citizens may participate in parliamentary and presidential elections irrespective of whether they are residing permanently or temporarily outside the country. The main prerequisite for participating in the elections is that they are registered on the electoral register, which is compiled before each election on the basis of individual applications from voters who want to cast their vote outside the country. Polling stations are usually set up for non-resident citizens at diplomatic missions and at the headquarters of Polish organisations in other countries. Although their number and location vary, they have now significantly increased in number: while in 2005, there were 161 such polling stations, in the 2023 elections Poles abroad could vote in as many as 417 locations. The increase in the number of polling stations was most notable in certain EU countries that had become destination countries for post-accession emigrants – for example, the number of polling stations in the UK (the main destination country of post-accession emigrants) increased from 3 in 2005 to 77 in 2023. The objective of this initiative was clear – to enable as many citizens abroad as possible to vote in the Polish elections.

Poland has an assimilated representation election system where votes cast abroad are added to one particular constituency in the capital city. In practice, this means that in case of the Sejm (the lower house of Parliament), constituencies created abroad are included in the Warsaw I constituency, which is one of 41 constituencies in the country. Elections to the Senate (the upper house of Parliament) are held in 100 single-mandate constituencies, and the votes of voters abroad are included in constituency no. 44 (a constituency in Warsaw). This arrangement means that non-resident citizens vote together with residents of the capital city for the same list of candidates. Although the system is easy to manage (external votes are collected and directly transferred to the domestic electoral district in Warsaw), it may also be criticised because votes from abroad could cause a change in the election result of an electoral district in the capital where the result would differ from what it would have been without the external votes (Ellis 2007).

The massive wave of emigration of Poles after 2004 led to an increase in the number of votes cast outside the country. The biggest difference in the number of non-resident voters between elections was recorded in the parliamentary elections in 2005 and 2007, when the number of people voting outside the country more than quadrupled (from 35,000 to 148,000). A record level of interest in the country's elections was observed in the 2023 parliamentary elections, when more than half a million votes were cast abroad and the Polish media reported long queues outside external polling stations in many cities across Europe (Lesińska 2023). The high level of election participation among Poles abroad has been widely commented on and may lead to a discussion about changing the electoral system and creating a constituency dedicated to voters abroad.

## 2.5 THE NORMATIVE AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK OF POLISH DIASPORA POLICY

Government programmes that set out the priority objectives and areas of Polish diaspora policy have been regularly formulated since the early 1990s. The binding document is the Government Programme for Cooperation with the Polish Diaspora 2015–2020. The content of the document proved so uncontroversial that it remained unamended by successive governments even after the document had expired. The programme emphasises the five main and common objectives of Polish policy towards the diaspora, which are:

- (1) supporting the teaching of the Polish language and culture and increasing the level of knowledge about Poland among Poles living abroad and their children;
- (2) preserving and strengthening Polish identity and providing ethnic Poles with opportunities to participate in Polish culture while residing abroad;
- (3) strengthening the position of Polish communities by increasing their performance, their level of participation in public life in their countries of residence, and their knowledge of their rights;
- (4) supporting the return of Poles to their homeland and creating incentives for people of Polish origin to settle in Poland;
- (5) fostering the cooperation of Polish communities abroad with Poland by developing youth, scientific, cultural, economic, and sports programmes.

The objectives listed above have not changed much since the 1990s, and the constancy of the Polish authorities' diaspora policy priorities should be considered a strength of the policy. The same cannot be said of the institutional structure. Over the past decade, as many as three different institutions have been responsible for diaspora policy: the Senate, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Prime Minister's Office. These institutional

shifts were strictly politically motivated. The right-wing government first transferred the responsibility (along with the budget) for diaspora issues from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Senate. However, when the opposition took power in the Senate in the next elections, the Office of the Government Plenipotentiary for the Polish Diaspora was created in the Prime Minister's Office. Officially, the mission of the Plenipotentiary is to support Polish communities abroad and assist them in sharing the Polish heritage, language, traditions, and culture with Poles abroad. The priorities of the Plenipotentiary are 'to take care of the good name of Poland; build a pro-Polish lobby abroad; pass on the Polish language to future generations; pass on Polishness in the form of national heritage, traditions, culture, and religion' (See the Government Plenipotentiary for the Polish Diaspora – Serwis Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej n.d.-a).

The network of state institutions that carry out activities aimed at the Polish diaspora is very extensive and includes 20 different institutions. It comprises, in addition to the above-mentioned Office of the Government Plenipotentiary, ministries and various institutes and offices. The most important of these are:

- The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the main task of which is to provide care and consular assistance to Poles abroad. It is also responsible for supporting activities among Polish diaspora communities and it represents Polish national minorities with regard to their rights under bilateral treaties and international law.
- The Ministry of Education and Science, which, inter alia, finances and supervises the Polish education system abroad. It is subordinate to ORPEG – the Centre for the Development of Polish Education Abroad – and the Institute for the Development of the Polish Language.
- The Ministry of the Interior and Administration, which performs tasks to support repatriates and holders of the Pole's Card.
- The Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, the responsibilities of which include the protection of cultural heritage abroad, care for places of remembrance, and support for Polish archives, libraries, and museums located outside Polish territory.
- The Ministry of Sport and Tourism, which supports the organisation of sports events in Poland for the Polish diaspora, including sports tournaments.
- The Institute of National Remembrance, which is responsible for memorial sites abroad and historical research on the history of the Polish diaspora.
- The Office for War Veterans and Victims of Oppression, which supports the organisation of ceremonies and provides financial assistance for veterans residing outside Poland.

- The Central Statistical Office, which maintains a database of Polish organisations and institutions abroad (<https://polonia.stat.gov.pl>).

Other institutions that the government document tasked with responsibilities in relation to Poles abroad include: the Ministry of Health, the Office for War Veterans and Victims of Oppression, and the Institute for Polish-Hungarian Cooperation (which organises events with the participation of Poles living in Hungary). The government also exercises official oversight over research institutes analysing the situation of Poles in various countries, such as the Western Institute (which conducts research on Poles in Germany), the Central Europe Institute (which conducts research on Polish minorities in the region), and the Centre for Eastern Studies (which monitors the situation of Polish minorities in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe).

The aforementioned institutions are provided with funding from the state budget. According to information from the Government Plenipotentiary for the Polish Diaspora, in 2022 this funding amounted to over PLN 580 million, or approximately EUR 130 million (a 50% increase from 2021) (Serwis Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej n.d.-b). The main financial instrument for supporting the implementation of policy towards the diaspora is the 'Polonia and Poles Abroad' programme, a grant programme that funds the projects of diaspora organisations in partnership with institutions registered in Poland. The most important partners in this programme are quasi-governmental institutions, such as the Polish Community Association, the Aid to Poles in the East Foundation, and the Freedom and Democracy Foundation. These institutions are non-governmental organisations that were created at the initiative of the government and act as intermediaries and partners for diaspora organisations in this programme.

The programme website states: 'The aim of the program is to provide real support from the Polish State to the Polish diaspora, for their activities, and for the joint work of Poles at home and Poles abroad for the good of our Homeland' (Serwis Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej n.d.-c). The grant programme is announced each year and there is a list of areas of activity that applications for funding must be engaged in. In the 2022 competition, there were six such areas: (1) education (including the maintenance and functioning of Polish schools and kindergartens abroad); (2) Polish diaspora organisations' activities to promote the good image of Poland abroad; (3) developing the infrastructure of Polish diaspora organisations around the world; (4) the Polish media; (5) Polish diaspora events abroad and in Poland; (6) charity activities (including providing assistance to Poles in the East and in South America and humanitarian actions). These areas were identical (or very similar) to the areas covered in previous years. In the last competition in 2023, a new area of activity appeared: the Polish diaspora's support for war reparations to Poland (which is in line with the right-wing government's foreign policy towards Germany).

To present the institutional infrastructure dedicated to the Polish diaspora, it is also necessary to mention information about two parliamentary commissions. There is the Commission for Liaison with Poles Abroad in the Sejm (the lower house) and the Committee for Emigration and Contacts with Poles Abroad in the Senate (the upper house). Both committees meet regularly and discuss current issues relating to the Polish diaspora.

## 2.6 CONCLUSION

The process of 'global nation-building' involving the diaspora is particularly evident in the case of countries with a long history of being a sending country and a kin-state in which there is a significant number of emigrants and kin-minorities. The idea of a 'global nation' is visible in Poland in the form of the symbolic actions that the Polish diaspora engages in and the official narrative about the diaspora. The priority areas of development within Polish diaspora policy are the education system abroad, legal regulations (issuing the Pole's Card), and political regulations (enfranchisement). The country's main approach to the Polish diaspora can be described as nation- and culture-centred. The main focus is on maintaining national identity, teaching the Polish language, and supporting access to Polish culture. This approach is rooted in the common conviction that Poles living abroad are an essential part of the Polish nation.

The appearance of the post-accession diaspora after Poland joined the EU in 2004 resulted in some changes in the policy aimed at Poles abroad. The state made some structural and legal changes relating to the development of consular infrastructure, especially in European countries, and the network of Polish schools abroad, along with expanding access to the Pole's Card to persons of Polish origin living all over the world, increasing the number of polling stations available during elections for non-resident citizens who want to vote from abroad. The most developed area of diaspora policy is the education of Polish children and youth abroad, which remains a key interest of the Polish authorities. These activities are consistent with the priorities of state policy, which are the promotion of the Polish language and culture and maintaining and strengthening the national identity of Poles living abroad.

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# CHAPTER 3

## HUNGARIAN DIASPORA POLICY

ESZTER KOVÁCS

### 3.1 INTRODUCTION: HUNGARIAN DIASPORA POLICY CONTEXTUALISED

Hungarian minorities living in Slovakia, Romania, Serbia, and Ukraine – communities that became minorities as the result of the dissolution of historical Hungary due to 20th-century border changes – have been an important concern for Hungarian governments since the democratic transition, although the major focuses, goals, and means of kin-state policy of conservative and left-leaning governments have differed significantly. Interestingly, however, diaspora (or emigrant) Hungarian communities in the West (that were formed with the great emigration waves of the 20th century) received barely any attention from Hungary until 2010, despite the fact that their number is roughly the same as that of the ‘historic’ Hungarian minorities living in neighbouring countries. The total number of Hungarians living in Hungary’s neighbouring countries is close to 2 million, and, according to an estimate from the Hungarian government, the number of Hungarians in the West is also around 2 million.<sup>27</sup>

The Hungarian government’s attitude towards the diaspora changed significantly in 2010 with the landslide victory of the right-wing, conservative Fidesz party. After 2010, Hungarian kin-state activism entered an intensified phase, and the government started to dedicate special attention to the diaspora communities as well. This shift was above all marked by the decision to grant Hungarians abroad the possibility to obtain Hungarian citizenship, which was followed by the introduction of external voting rights for dual citizens. These rights are not restricted to the historic Hungarian communities living in neighbouring countries but are open to diaspora Hungarians as well. Simultaneously, diaspora Hungarian communities also began to be the target of greater attention in government discourse and policies after

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27 Just like in the Polish case, the Hungarian government’s estimate defines the Hungarian diaspora in the broadest sense. Its definition includes people with any kind of Hungarian heritage (e.g. people claiming Hungarian heritage in the US census but not having any effective ties to Hungary) as well as recent emigrants. Therefore, the 2 million estimate should be accepted with reservations.

2010. The government's discourse stresses that 'every Hungarian matters' and that diaspora Hungarians constitute an equal part of the 'unified' and 'cohesive' Hungarian nation. Actual government practices in the field of kin-state politics, however, clearly differentiate between the 'transborder' (or historic) Hungarian communities and the diaspora (or emigrant) communities.

Recent Hungarian emigrants constitute a third category of Hungarian population abroad. Hungary experienced an upswing of emigration trends in the early and mid-2010s. This wave of emigration was the result of the opening up of the EU labour market, the existence of a significant wage gap between Eastern and Western European countries, and the economic recession in Hungary following the 2008 crisis. While statistical data on the estimated number of Hungarian emigrants in Western European countries vary widely, there may be several hundreds of thousands of Hungarians living temporarily or settled permanently abroad. Despite the considerable number of recent emigrants in Western Europe, they do not appear to be an integral part of Hungarian diaspora policy in either the discourse or actual engagement practices.

Hungarian minority communities based in Slovakia, Ukraine, Romania, and Serbia are politically active and organised, have strong and effective ties to Hungary, and can easily be mobilised through their ethnic parties. For this reason, their votes in Hungarian elections represent a potential political resource and can thus mean political remittances for the state. On the other hand, the direct political remittance potential of the Hungarian diaspora communities is less obvious. Their ties to Hungary are more symbolic and cultural, and their organisations are of a civil and not a political nature. Therefore, their votes in Hungarian elections have less potential; they represent a much weaker direct political resource for the state (Kovács 2020).

In this chapter I provide a concise introduction to Hungary's diaspora policy in the context of a comparative analysis of Central East European states' diaspora engagement. First, I give a short introduction to the different types of Hungarian population groups abroad. I then elaborate on how Hungary has related to its kin-minorities in neighbouring countries since 1989/1990, and how the country paid only sporadic attention to its diaspora in that period until recently. Lastly, I address the developments of the post-2010 era, which brought about an intensified phase of kin-state policy activism, and, alongside this and for the first time in the post-1990 era, a strong diaspora policy as well.

To compare how Hungary engages with Hungarian kin-minorities and Hungarian diaspora communities, the chapter discusses government practices: legal acts, government programmes, institutions, and policy papers.

## 3.2 INTERPRETING KIN-STATE AND DIASPORA POLICIES IN THE HUNGARIAN CONTEXT

### 3.2.1 KIN-STATE AND KIN-MINORITIES

The states in Central and Eastern Europe have in common that, as a result of 20th-century border changes and more recent state dissolutions, they have significant kin-minorities in their neighbouring countries or in the wider region. During the communist era, the issues of these minorities were not addressed in any way by their kin-states, as the official ideology did not allow transnational nationalist engagements of any sort. After the democratic transition and the consolidation of the new states, Central European governments immediately reached out to and started to engage with their kin-minorities, most often acting as ‘protective external homelands’ (Žilović 2012).

The term ‘kin-minority’ denotes those national or ethnic minorities that were created through border changes or state dissolution (Waterbury 2010, 18). Wolff (2002, 4) uses the term ‘external minorities’ to describe kin-minorities as ‘minorities that, while living on the territory of one state (host-state) are ethnically akin to the titular nation of another, often neighbouring, state (kin-state)’. In the Hungarian case study, the term kin-minority is used to describe the ethnic Hungarian groups that live in Slovakia, Ukraine, Romania, and Serbia. These groups have been living as ethnic minorities since the dissolution of historic Hungary in 1920.<sup>28</sup>

Kin-state is the term used to describe the kin-minority’s ‘homeland’ (i.e. the country which claims historic, cultural, linguistic, or religious affiliation with the kin-minority). One of the first authors who tried to conceptualise kin-minorities likened the phenomenon to family ties and, thus, described kin-minorities as ethnic or national ‘relatives’ of the kin-state (Walzer 1984). However, as the term ‘homeland’ is associated with emigration, it is misleading to describe the kin-minority’s kin-state with that term. Yet, ‘homeland’ is frequently used in kin-state politics to refer to the kin-state because it represents a strong emotional connection and affinity between the state and the minority. Kin-state policy or politics is the term that describes the kin-state’s projects, programmes, politics, and relations with its kin-minority. Kin-state politics should be regarded as a conglomerate of different policies and regulations: foreign, educational, and cultural policies; nationality and electoral law; financial support provided for the kin-minority, etc. (Csörgő 2011). The aim of these policies is to provide political and financial support for the kin-minority’s nation-building, to influence the ‘self-perception’ of the

<sup>28</sup> The minority status of these communities was interrupted in the interwar era, when, for a short time, Hungary gained back some of the territories it had lost.

minority (Kántor 2006), to promote cross-border interaction, and in many cases to enable co-ethnics to move to the kin-state through preferential naturalisation procedures (Csörgő 2011).

### 3.2.2 DIASPORA AND DIASPORA POLICY

While kin-state politics are relevant mostly in the context of Central and Eastern European countries, the other central notions in this chapter, namely, diaspora and diaspora politics, are more global phenomena. While the definition of kin-minorities is rather straightforward, in the case of 'diaspora' there is a varied understanding of the concept. As Dufoix argues, the term 'diaspora' has gone through significant changes in recent decades (Dufoix 2011). The initial definition was based on the classic example of the Jewish diaspora, and it entailed dispersion, exile, traditions, and the eventual wish to return to the homeland. As the concept evolved, different authors applied different criteria to define the essence of diasporas (Esman 2009; Safran 1991; Clifford 1994; Cohen 1997; Bauböck 2010), but all of these definitions were slightly different variants of the classic example and focused on emigration as the essential ingredient. A contrasting approach to diasporas was offered by Stuart Hall through the cultural identity concept, where the essence of a diaspora community lies not in its relationship to the homeland, but in the cultural reproduction and reinterpretation of the community's heritage (Hall 1990).

A new approach to understanding the concept of diaspora has been evolving since the 1990s as the result of intensified labour migration. In this new approach, the term does not have to entail experiences of exile, nor does it require the idea of homecoming. The 'diaspora option' (Meyer et al. 1997) has emerged as a counterpoint to the notion of the 'brain drain' and it emphasises the advantages and potential that the homeland can gain from the mobilisation of highly skilled expatriate networks abroad (Østergaard-Nielsen 2003). Studies on diaspora policies directly or indirectly apply the 'diaspora option' approach in order to develop potential typologies and models for diaspora policies (Gamlen 2006; Gamlen 2014; Ragazzi 2014; Délano and Gamlen 2014; Tiwari 2013).

Utilising the potential of the diaspora is an idea that is applicable to all 'layers' of the diaspora in its broader sense. The 'diaspora as a resource' approach is now widely used and addressed in international migration organisations, and many countries of origin have moved in this direction of outreach since the late 20th century. This approach incorporates all kinds of diaspora populations as target groups: recent labour migrants, scientific diasporas, and further generations of migrants who are attached to the original homeland only by descent. Rogers Brubaker's contribution to the understand-

ing of the term also resonates with this approach, since he suggests that, instead of conceptualising diasporas as groups or (closed) ethno-cultural entities, one should rather talk about diasporic ‘stances’, ‘projects’, or ‘claims’ (Brubaker 2005). Brubaker’s definition is, thus, very useful for a state-centred examination of and research on diaspora politics. He points out that instead of setting out the criteria for what makes a diaspora, the emphasis should be on how the homeland constitutes its diaspora, what projects it formulates to engage the diaspora, and how the ‘claimed members’ (Brubaker 2005, 12) of the diaspora react to these calls from the homeland. Brubaker’s contribution to understanding what a diaspora is and, through that, to understanding a state’s diaspora policy, provides the theoretical underpinnings of this chapter as it examines how and why the Hungarian government tries to engage with its (putative) diaspora population.

### **3.3 TYPES OF CO-ETHNIC GROUPS ABROAD: KIN-MINORITY, DIASPORA HUNGARIAN COMMUNITIES, AND RECENT EMIGRANTS**

#### **3.3.1 KIN-MINORITY HUNGARIANS**

Like Poland (see Chapter 2 by Lesińska), Hungary has large co-ethnic communities abroad, which were created either through border changes in the 20th century or by successive waves of emigration. The first type are kin-minorities, while the second type are diaspora or emigrant communities.

Hungarian kin-minorities came into existence with the Treaty of Trianon that concluded the First World War for Hungary and created the new borders of the Hungarian state. As a result of these new borders, millions of ethnic Hungarians became citizens of the countries neighbouring Hungary. Although for a short period of time during the interwar years Hungary gained back some of the territories it had lost in 1920, the 1945 settlement of the Second World War reaffirmed the earlier border changes and, with that, the minority status of the Hungarian communities in neighbouring countries (Romania, Czechoslovakia, Ukraine, Yugoslavia). In the communist era, minority communities did not have the proper means to maintain their institutions, and through them, their language and culture.

After the democratic changes in Central and Eastern Europe, Hungarian minority communities started to mobilise themselves on an ethnopolitical basis. Since 1990, all Hungarian minority communities have had political organisations in their respective countries, with the primary aim of representing the interests of the Hungarian community in the given state (Kántor 2013). According to the most recent census results, the four largest ‘transbor-

der' Hungarian communities number approximately 1 million in Romania, 420,000 in Slovakia, 184,000 in Serbia, and 150,000 in Ukraine (Pro Civis Polgársi Társulás 2022; Romanian National Institute of Statistics 2022; Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia 2023; Kapitány 2015).

### 3.3.2 DIASPORA HUNGARIANS

The history of Hungarian diaspora communities is considerably different from that of Hungarian kin-minorities. The first significant wave of emigration from the territory of Hungary started at the end of the 1880s, when the great economic recession reached Austria-Hungary. Most of these emigrants settled in the United States. The outbreak of the First World War put an end to Hungarian economic emigration, but soon after the end of the war emigration started again, though on a much smaller scale. In the interwar period, many educated people left the country, and many ethnic Hungarians who had become residents of neighbouring countries following the post-war border changes also fled to the West. The next significant wave of emigration began at the end of the Second World War, and some years later in 1947 the establishment of the communist government again forced thousands of Hungarians to leave the country (Borbándi 2006).

Another large number of Hungarians left the country following the suppression of the Hungarian Revolution of 1956. Between 1956 and 1960, approximately 200,000 ethnic Hungarians emigrated, most of them to the United States and a smaller amount to Canada, Australia, and Western Europe. The emigrants of 1956 were in a large part fleeing from the persecutions following the suppression of the revolution, but the number of those who did not actually participate in the revolution but seized the opportunity to leave communist Hungary behind in and after 1956 was more significant. Further steady but not particularly substantial emigration occurred after the 1960s, and it continued after Hungary's transition to a democratic state as well. After Hungary's EU accession, migration to Western European countries accelerated. Today, there is still a very high rate of labour migration to EU countries (foremost to the United Kingdom, Germany, and Austria), and new forms of transnational formations can be observed among the newest emigrant (or diaspora) communities (Papp Z. 2010; Papp Z. et al. 2023).

The number of Hungarians in the diaspora can only be estimated, but not determined exactly, for various methodological reasons (e.g. a lack of data on second and further diaspora generations and on return migration, or the different statistical methods used in receiving states). Despite methodological concerns, the number of Hungarians in the diaspora has been estimated by the Hungarian government to be around 2–2.5 million (Kucsera and Kulcsár-Szabó 2011, 35; Prime Minister's Office, State Secretariat for Hungar-



ian Communities Abroad 2016). This number, however, has to be interpreted within the context of diaspora policy; the Hungarian government applies the broadest concept possible to define who constitutes part of the Hungarian diaspora.<sup>29</sup> Here, Brubaker's remark on the concept of a diaspora has to be referred to again; this number of members of the Hungarian diaspora reflects the Hungarian government's 'claim' (Brubaker 2005) on a putative diaspora population.

Based on the above introduction, the difference between the two kinds of Hungarian groups abroad is evident. Hungarian kin-minorities in neighbouring countries have been an important concern for post-1990 Hungarian politics, and those communities – through family ties, work and educational opportunities, the accessible Hungarian-language media, and simply the geographic proximity – have continued to exist with close ties to Hungary. In contrast, Hungarians in the Western diaspora have had weaker contacts with Hungary, and they have been living in a more remote reality from the homeland. Furthermore, while in the past 25 years the Hungarians in neighbouring countries have been the subject of many studies in the humanities and social sciences, there have been few such projects devoted to the diaspora. For this reason, there is very limited scientific knowledge about the Hungarian diaspora population.

### 3.3.3 RECENT EMIGRANTS

In addition to Hungarian kin-minorities and diaspora Hungarians, recent emigrants constitute a third large group of the Hungarian population abroad. Contemporary emigration from Hungary is hard to quantify (Blaskó 2015). National statistical data provided by home and host countries capture only one side of a transnational relationship. In Hungary, nationals who emigrate are officially obliged to register their emigration with the respective authority in Hungary or with a Hungarian consulate; however, only a marginal proportion of emigrants do so.<sup>30</sup> For example, official Hungarian statistical data suggest that the number of Hungarians who left Hungary in 2012 was under 15,000, while mirror statistics from receiving countries showed almost 80,000 new Hungarian immigrants that year (Blaskó et al. 2014, 353). Host countries use different methods to monitor their immigrants: some countries define immigrants by citizenship, while others do so by place of

<sup>29</sup> See, e.g., Papp (2008) on the methodological concerns of counting the Hungarian diaspora in the United States.

<sup>30</sup> The obligation concerns only those who emigrate permanently; those who plan to work abroad only temporarily are not obliged to register. In practice, however, many emigrants who plan to work abroad temporarily end up staying in a foreign country for several years or even decades.

birth. The same methodological concern applies to the UN, the World Bank, and the OECD, which usually include in their data on Hungarian nationals people who were born in Hungary decades ago or left the country as children (e.g. after the Hungarian Revolution of 1956). Other problematic points relate to seasonal or commuter workers, whose number is also difficult to estimate, and to the absence of a uniform statistical methodology across countries that makes it impossible to compare the number of Hungarian nationals abroad in host countries.

The emigration potential in Hungary has been growing steadily since 1990. It peaked in 2012 and then decreased until 2014. In 2013, an unconventional research project carried out by the Hungarian Statistical Office sought to provide a more precise estimate of the number of Hungarians abroad by focusing on households. The research found that, at the beginning of 2013, there were 350,000 Hungarian nationals living abroad. It also found that emigrants from Hungary are overwhelmingly young people: 25% of them are under the age of 30 and 63% are under 40. Moreover, they have a level of education that is higher than the national average. The majority of recent emigrants live in European countries, with the top three host countries being Germany, the United Kingdom (UK), and Austria. The economic remittances of Hungarian emigrants are moderate, but they amount to the biggest contribution to national GDP among the Visegrád countries (c.f. Chapter 4 by Vašečka).

Since 2014, the migration potential of Hungarians has fluctuated between 9% and 11% (Sik and Szeidl 2016). Based on Hungary's data on registered emigrants, their number peaked in 2015, and while there was a slight drop in the number of emigrants between 2019 and 2021, the trend of high emigration numbers continued again in 2022 (Központi Statisztikai Hivatal n.d.).

### 3.4 HUNGARY AS A KIN-STATE SINCE 1990

While by the late 1980s the issue of Hungarian minorities had become an increasingly prevalent topic among reform communists in Hungary (Bárdi 2004), kin-state policy as an official state policy did not exist before the democratic transition. The first democratically elected government after 1980, namely the conservative Hungarian Democratic Forum party (Magyar Demokrata Fórum, MDF), was committed to engaging and reaching out to Hungarian minorities abroad. One iconic step taken in the new era was the amendment of the constitution in 1989, during which the following statement was inserted into the basic law of the country: 'the Republic of Hungary bears a sense of responsibility for what happens to Hungarians living outside of its borders and shall promote and foster their relations with Hungary'

(‘A Magyar Köztársaság Alkotmánya’ 1989). It should be noted that, even though this article of the constitution talks about ‘Hungarians living outside of Hungary’s borders’, in practice Hungarian governments until 2010 focused primarily and almost exclusively on Hungarian kin-minorities and not on Hungarians in the Western diaspora.

Hungarian communities abroad became a crucial focal point of Hungarian politics after 1990. The MDF government, led by József Antall, applied a human rights and minority rights approach in its policy towards Hungarian communities abroad and dedicated great efforts to promoting the standardisation of an international regime for the protection of minority rights, especially within the framework of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) (Bárdi 2004). The issue of Hungarian diaspora communities in the West, however, was barely addressed in the government’s programme.

The first government after 1990 also created the institutional framework of Hungarian kin-state politics. In the first years, the government body responsible for policies affecting Hungarian communities abroad in the Prime Minister’s Office was the Secretariat for Hungarian Communities Abroad, which in 1992 was replaced by the Office for Hungarian Communities Abroad (Határon Túli Magyarok Hivatala, HTMH; Mák 2000). This government body was responsible for coordination, monitoring, and analysing policies and maintaining dialogue with Hungarian communities abroad. As well as creating the government unit responsible for the policies towards Hungarian communities abroad, the Antall government also established a public foundation (Illyés Alapítvány) to manage the financial support for these communities. Another significant step was the creation of the TV channel ‘Duna’ (Danube), which broadcast (and still broadcasts) Hungarian-language programmes in Hungary’s neighbouring countries. All these institutions were elements of Hungary’s support for Hungarian minorities in neighbouring countries. However, Hungary did not have a comprehensive strategic or institutional framework to support or engage with the Hungarian diaspora communities in the West.

The institutional foundations of Hungarian kin-state politics created by the Antall government remained solid throughout consecutive Hungarian governments, but the approach to these communities and the intensity of kin-state politics varied significantly from government to government. While the Antall government’s commitment to Hungarians abroad had a strong moral feel to it and that government saw Hungary’s responsibility for these communities as a ‘historic national mission’ (Bárdi 2004, 69), the socialist government between 1994 and 1998 took a less symbolic and rather more pragmatic approach to the matter. A major step taken by the socialist government between 1994 and 1998 was the signing of the Basic Treaties

with Slovakia and Romania.<sup>31</sup> The conclusion of the Basic Treaties was, in the socialist government's argumentation, the precondition for peaceful neighbourly relations and for Hungary's integration into Europe, which indirectly served the interest of Hungarian kin-minorities. Like the Antall government, the Horn government, from 1994 to 1998, did not systematically engage with Hungarian diaspora communities either.

The conservative government coalition (the first Orbán government) between 1998 and 2002 took a more proactive stance in Hungarian kin-state politics than the moderate and rather reactive preceding socialist coalition (Bárdi 2004). It was at this time that two 'milestones' of Hungarian kin-state politics were reached: the adoption of the Hungarian Status Law in 2001 and the creation of the Hungarian Standing Conference (Magyar Állandó Értekezlet, MÁÉRT), an institutional forum for dialogue between Hungary and Hungarians abroad. The Hungarian Status Law (Act LXII 2001) can be considered a quasi-citizenship law, and it falls into the category of so-called benefit laws/patriot laws/special laws that are typical for the Central Eastern European region. These laws regulate the 'status' of co-ethnics abroad, usually by granting them certain benefits in their homeland, and in certain cases by issuing some kind of certificate that proves the ethnic belonging of the co-ethnic person abroad (Kántor 2004; Weber 2002). The Hungarian Status Law was not the first such law in the region – Slovakia adopted its own status law in 1997 and Romania in 1998. However, the Hungarian Status Law was the first one that caused tensions in bilateral relations and that acquired international attention (Csergő and Goldgeir 2004; Venice Commission 2001). It is important to note that the applicability of the Hungarian Status Law was territorially limited: it only applied to Hungarians in neighbouring countries. Hungarians in the diaspora were not eligible to hold the status of 'Hungarian abroad'.<sup>32</sup>

Besides the adoption of the Status Law, another novelty of the first Orbán government was the institutional development of kin-state politics. This government consolidated the consultation forum between Hungarian MPs and minority Hungarian representatives by setting up the Hungarian Standing Conference. From 1999, the Hungarian Standing Conference convened once a year with the participation of MPs from the Hungarian Parliament, members of the Hungarian government, and minority Hungarian organisa-

**31** See the Treaty on Good-Neighbourly Relations and Friendly Cooperation between the Republic of Hungary and the Slovak Republic, 19 March 1995 (UN Peacemaker 2023) and the Treaty between the Republic of Hungary and Romania on Understanding, Cooperation, and Good Neighbourhood, 16 September 1996 (United Nations Treaty Collection 2023).

**32** Benefits laws in Central Europe differ in their territorial effects. The Hungarian and the Polish laws apply territorial criteria, while others (Slovak, Serbian, and Croatian) do not and are thus open to both the kin-minority and to the diaspora. See Kovács (2017).

tions that have parliamentary or provincial representation in their respective countries (in neighbouring countries) in order to discuss current issues and problems. It must again be noted that the Hungarian Standing Conference primarily served as a platform of dialogue between Hungarian politicians and Hungarian minority politicians in neighbouring countries, because only one representative of the diaspora was invited to the forum, and the issues discussed at the meetings almost exclusively concerned the kin-minority communities (Kántor 2002).

The intensified phase of Hungarian kin-state politics of the first Orbán government came to an end with the formation of the socialist-liberal government coalition in 2002. The two major events in the kin-state politics of this coalition (2002–2010), the failed referendum on dual citizenship in 2004 and the discontinuation of the Hungarian Standing Conference, created a tense relationship between the left-wing Hungarian government and the Hungarian communities abroad.

Since 1990 there has occasionally been a public discussion of the idea of opening up Hungarian citizenship to Hungarians abroad. In 2004, a referendum was initiated by a Hungarian civic organisation, the World Federation of Hungarians (Magyarok Világszövetsége, MVSZ), to grant external citizenship to Hungarians abroad. The campaign before the referendum caused long-lasting grievances between Hungarians abroad and the then-governing parties in Hungary, as the governing socialist and liberal politicians encouraged voters to reject the idea of dual citizenship. The government played a 'welfare-chauvinist' card by claiming that the new Hungarian citizens abroad would pose a huge threat to the system of social and welfare (pensions, healthcare) benefits enjoyed by resident Hungarian citizens. On the other hand, right-wing and conservative parties campaigned in support of the idea, saying that granting dual citizenship to Hungarians abroad is a national duty in order to express solidarity with those 'parts of the nation' who are forced to live in another country. The relationship of the then-governing parties and Hungarians abroad deteriorated after this campaign, which more than ever before turned Hungarian kin-minorities into a polarising issue within party politics. After the referendum (which ultimately failed, as turnout did not reach the minimum threshold for a valid referendum), the Hungarian Standing Conference was not convened again because of the tense relations between the government and Hungarians abroad, and until 2010 Hungarian kin-state politics was basically limited to economic cooperation in the border regions (in the framework of EU funding).

While none of the post-1990 Hungarian governments until 2010 made any great effort to engage with the Hungarian diaspora communities in the West, Hungarian diaspora organisations have always favoured right-wing governments. The reason for this is simple. Most of the active diaspora organisations

were formed by emigrant Hungarians who fled Hungary either after the Second World War or after the failed Hungarian Revolution of 1956. Consequently, these emigrants had strong anti-communist feelings, found it hard to cooperate with left-wing Hungarian governments, and considered leftist politics communism's successor after the democratic transition (Borbándi 1996). Moreover, diaspora organisations have always been very sympathetic to Hungarian minorities living in Hungary's neighbouring countries; therefore, these communities have supported the right-wing governments' proactive policies towards those communities.

### **3.5 HUNGARIAN KIN-STATE AND DIASPORA POLICY AFTER 2010**

#### **3.5.1 THE LEGAL AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK**

The landslide victory of the conservative, right-wing Fidesz party led by Viktor Orbán in 2010 ushered in a new era in Hungarian kin-state politics, which is characterised by heightened nationalistic rhetoric, a previously unseen level of proactivity, and extensive institutional reform in the field. A comprehensive Hungarian diaspora policy was also introduced in 2010. The most significant step taken in the new era was the amendment of the Act on Citizenship, which enabled non-resident ethnic Hungarians to apply for Hungarian citizenship. The amendment of the Act on Citizenship was the very first legislative act that the newly elected parliament passed, which can be interpreted as the symbolic start of a new, intensified era of kin-state politics. The amendment made it possible to obtain Hungarian citizenship without permanent residence in Hungary if two criteria are met: applicants have to prove that one of their ancestors was at one time a citizen of Hungary, and they must have a command of the Hungarian language. The amendment of the Citizenship Act fits into the broader Central Eastern European context of external citizenship regimes, as most of these countries offer fast-track naturalisation policies for co-ethnics living abroad (Pogonyi, Kovács, and Körtvélyesi 2010).

The amendment of the Act on Citizenship (often referred to as 'dual citizenship for Hungarians abroad') became the flagship project of the second Orbán government's kin-state policy. In the first few years following the introduction of dual citizenship, statistics on the number of people applying for Hungarian citizenship were systematically published, and leading politicians (ministers, state secretaries) regularly attended citizenship oath ceremonies. The measure itself was represented in political speeches as a long-awaited redemption, as compensation for the painful 2004 referendum (which at the

same time became the symbol of left-wing parties' betrayal of the nation). Therefore, the law on preferential naturalisation had a twofold agenda: it served to secure the potential voting of newly naturalised Hungarian citizens abroad (Pogonyi 2017), and at the same time it became a tool to solidify the national image of the Fidesz government and, in doing so, to reinforce the support of the domestic electorate that is sympathetic to transborder Hungarian communities (Waterbury 2016).

Soon after the amendment to the Act on Citizenship, Hungary's electoral law was amended as well, and voting rights were extended to non-resident citizens. Under the amended electoral law, parliamentary elections now take place in a one-round, two-ballot system: 106 MPs are elected from single-member electoral districts in the first ballot, and 93 parliamentary seats are allocated by combining the second ballot, which is cast for party lists, and the 'wasted votes' from the first ballot. Citizens who are residents of Hungary can cast both ballots; however, citizens who are not residents of Hungary can only vote for the party lists. Citizens resident in Hungary can only vote in person, while postal voting is available for non-resident citizens (i.e. the newly naturalised dual citizens).

The new external citizenship policy has clearly had an effect, as by 2023 roughly 1.15 million people had become naturalised Hungarian citizens (Magyar Nemzet 2023). Statistics show that the overwhelming majority (95%) of these citizenship applications came from the neighbouring countries of Hungary (Központi Statisztikai Hivatal 2017), meaning that the kin-minority communities were very receptive to the opportunity to obtain Hungarian citizenship. For applicants living in Ukraine and in Serbia, Hungarian citizenship obviously has a practical value as it provides them with EU citizenship and, with that, freedom of movement and the opportunity to find jobs in EU countries. For Hungarians in Romania, by contrast, just like Hungarians in the diaspora, Hungarian citizenship is mostly of emotional or symbolic importance and comes with fewer practical advantages. Citizenship applications from the diaspora number around 130,000, which shows that the interest in obtaining Hungarian citizenship is remarkably lower in the diaspora than it is among the Hungarian minorities living in Hungary's neighbouring countries.

In addition to dual citizenship and external voting rights, the Orbán government also introduced several other measures and reforms in its kin-state and diaspora policy after 2010. First, a state secretariat was set up to be in charge of kin-state policy.<sup>33</sup> Additionally, the deputy prime minister, Zsolt Semjén, became responsible for the government's policy for Hungarian com-

33 The State Secretariat was part of the Ministry of Public Administration and Justice between 2010 and 2014, and since 2014 it has been part of the Prime Minister's Office.

munities abroad. In terms of financial support, existing foundations were replaced by an entirely new organisation, the Bethlen Gábor Fund, which is now the only public body to which Hungarian organisations, institutions, and individuals abroad can apply for funding. The financial allocations to Hungarians abroad have been growing steadily since 2010 (Átlátszó Erdély 2017). The State Secretariat for Hungarian Communities Abroad defines specific themes for each year and thereby determines the kinds of projects external Hungarian communities can apply to get funding for. For example, 2012 was the year of minority Hungarian kindergartens, 2017 the year of Hungarian family businesses abroad, 2018 the year of Hungarian families abroad, and 2020 the year of strong communities (Kulhoni Magyarok n.d.).

### 3.5.2 ENGAGING THE DIASPORA

Although kin-state policy has been a central concern of Hungarian governments since 1990, it is interesting that the Hungarian diaspora communities, the number of which is basically equal to the number of kin-minorities in neighbouring countries, received very little attention from the homeland before 2010. It was not until the 2010s that a structured policy for diaspora engagement was introduced, and this policy's measures were inserted into the logic and structure of the enhanced national kin-state policy ('Policy for Hungarian Communities Abroad...' 2011). One of the central mottos of post-2010 kin-state politics has been the promotion of a 'unified and single Hungarian nation', which in the government's interpretation refers to the spiritual and symbolic unification of the nation, without any revisionist (territorial) claims, and in which there is room for all Hungarians, regardless of where they live.

In 2010, when the Hungarian Standing Conference convened anew for the first time since 2004, the government decided to set up a separate consultative forum exclusively for diaspora organisations: the Hungarian Diaspora Council. With that measure, the coordinating bodies of kin-minority Hungarians and diaspora Hungarians were separated. As noted above, before 2010 the Hungarian Standing Conference served as a consultation forum between Hungarian parliamentary parties and Hungarians abroad – both minorities and the diaspora – but the issues of Hungarian minorities were given priority. The establishment of the Hungarian Diaspora Council marked official acknowledgement of the different character and needs of and different approaches to be taken to the two kinds of 'Hungarians abroad'. Thus, it can be claimed that Hungarian kin-state and diaspora politics became separated from each other in institutional terms after 2010. The Hungarian Diaspora Council convenes once a year. Its participants are invited by the government. Most of the old and well-established Hungarian diaspora organisations



around the world are members of the Diaspora Council, but representatives of newly established emigrant organisations are not.

Diaspora policies differ from kin-state policies not only in institutional terms but also in their objectives and programmes. One of the initial steps of diaspora engagement policy was the launch of the Hungarian Register (*Nemzeti Regiszter*), a virtual database for Hungarians worldwide, which also published a weekly newsletter on Hungarian politics in both Hungarian and English. Its primary aim was to reconnect with those who had lost contact with the homeland and give them an up-to-date picture of the country. However, this project was not very successful, nor did it last very long, and eventually it was essentially replaced by the website of the State Secretariat.

Another new form of engagement was the cultural revitalisation programme (*Kőrösi Csoma Sándor Programme*) launched for the diaspora, within the framework of which young Hungarians travel to diaspora organisations for six to nine months and help them in organising cultural events, heritage cultivation, and language education. The programme was welcomed with great enthusiasm and satisfaction by diaspora organisations. Other key programmes include one that focuses on the cultivation of tangible heritage, the *Julianus* programme, which aims to record all Hungarian examples of commemorative sites and phenomena worldwide (streets named after Hungarians, statutes, plaques, etc.), and the *Mikes Kelemen* programme, which ran from 2014 to 2022 and was designed to collect personal collections of books and journals in the diaspora. All of these programmes convey the symbolic message that the Hungarian diaspora matters, and that the Hungarian government maintains a certain kind of responsibility for diaspora Hungarians as well. The core idea of Hungarian diaspora policy programmes, much like Slovak diaspora engagement practices, is to strengthen the cultural ties between Hungary and the diaspora. In Gamlen's (2006) definition, Hungary primarily practices a capacity-building type of diaspora engagement.

The *Kőrösi Csoma* revitalisation programme undoubtedly became the flagship project of Hungarian diaspora policy. The programme started in 2013. That year, 50 young people travelled to diaspora host organisations, and the government doubled the number of participants in the second year. The types of host organisations in North America, Latin America, Western Europe, Australia (and New Zealand), South Africa, and Israel are diverse: they include Hungarian schools, parishes, Hungarian cultural houses and community centres, libraries, scout groups, folk dance groups, and other associations. What they have in common is that most of them are 'old' diaspora organisations, which means that they were founded by emigrants from the big emigration waves of the 20th century, not by emigrants who left Hungary in the last 30 years.

The Hungarian government also supports several initiatives that originated in the diaspora itself. ReConnect Hungary, a Hungarian birthright programme, has been running since 2012 with the aim of reaching out to the younger generations of the oldest Hungarian diasporas – the American and Canadian ones. It follows the same logic as Israeli diaspora tourism projects (Kelner 2010). The programme was created by some New York-based leaders of the Hungarian diaspora, and it enjoys the financial support of the Hungarian government. A similar, slightly newer heritage tourism project (Rákóczi Szövetség Diaszpóra Tábor) that is also supported by the Hungarian government targets more recent generations of the diaspora and seeks to connect them with Hungarians living in the Hungarian minority communities in the neighbouring countries of Hungary.

In 2016, the State Secretariat for Hungarian Communities Abroad drafted a strategy document for a diaspora policy that was then adopted by the Hungarian Diaspora Council later that year. The document is titled ‘Hungarian Diaspora Policy – Strategic Directions’ and it defines the strategic goals of Hungarian diaspora policy as locating, addressing, supporting, engaging, and linking the diaspora to Hungary. However, instead of actually outlining strategic plans, goals, and tools, the document is much more of an organised presentation of existing diaspora programmes and thus seems to serve the purpose of justifying the programmes that were already launched without any special planning work beforehand.

In connection with the above-described diaspora engagement projects, it needs to be emphasised again that they target older, established Hungarian diaspora communities (mostly the communities of emigrants from 1945 and 1956<sup>34</sup>) and not recent Hungarian emigrants who left the country in the past few decades and mostly live in Western European countries. The issue of recent emigrants sporadically and very briefly appears in some of the government’s documents on diaspora policy. The diaspora projects that have been launched since 2010 do not reflect the needs of recent emigrants. Similarly, the government’s discourse on the Hungarian diaspora does not address recent emigrants. Thus, recent emigrants in fact do not constitute an integral part of the government’s diaspora policy and strategy. The State Secretariat responsible for kin-minority and diaspora Hungarians does not deal extensively with recent emigrants’ affairs; the only exemption is the increasing support for Hungarian Sunday schools in the newly emerging Hungarian communities in Western Europe and other places.

The reasons behind this distinction between Hungarian communities abroad are not quite clear and are empirically hard to prove, but it is an issue

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34 See the section on the different kinds of Hungarian communities abroad.

often addressed in public discourse and by political actors in opposition parties. They claim that the Hungarian government applies a double standard in relation to Hungarian communities abroad: while the government supports Hungarian minorities and old diaspora communities and facilitates their participation in Hungarian elections through postal voting, it ignores recent emigrants and complicates their participation by only allowing them to vote in person (at consulates or back in Hungary). This leads us to the last section of the chapter: the political remittances of external Hungarian populations.

### **3.6 A 'HOT TOPIC' OF DIASPORA POLICY: THE POLITICAL REMITTANCES OF THE EXTERNAL POPULATION**

Based on the tense relations between left-wing parties and Hungarians abroad since 2004 and the nationalistic politics of Fidesz between 1998 and 2002 and especially after 2010, it was widely expected that newly enfranchised non-resident citizens would overwhelmingly support the governing Fidesz party. The first elections that took place after citizenship extension to Hungarians abroad were held in 2014 and they confirmed initial presumptions: 95% of those non-resident citizens who cast a vote did indeed vote for the governing Fidesz (Herner-Kovács, Illyés, and Rákóczi 2014). However, of the roughly 500,000 new citizens who had acquired their Hungarian citizenship by 2014, only a little over 200,000 registered to vote in the Hungarian elections, and the number of votes from abroad that were valid was 128,429. This number of votes meant one parliamentary seat for the party, which in the 2014 elections was not decisive.<sup>35</sup> The breakdown of non-resident citizens' votes in the 2018 and 2022 elections was very similar to what was observed in the 2014 election: in 2018 the number of valid non-resident votes was 225,471, and 96% of them were cast for Fidesz; in 2022 these numbers were 268,766 and 93.5%, respectively. Non-resident votes contributed to one to two parliamentary seats in the 2018 and 2022 elections.

The composition of external votes in the 2014, 2018, and 2022 national elections showed a clear difference between the political remittance potential of Hungarian kin-minorities in neighbouring countries and that of the Hungarian diaspora. In all three elections, the majority of external votes were cast by Hungarian minorities living in Romania and Serbia, whereas the postal votes cast in the larger Hungarian diaspora communities (United States, United Kingdom, Austria, Germany) ranged from a couple of hundred to a few thousand. In 2022, 121,645 votes were received from Romania and

<sup>35</sup> There have been elections in Europe in which external voters had a decisive effect on the results; Italy and Romania both faced such a situation (Pogonyi 2014).

44,729 from Serbia, while the number of votes received from countries with larger Hungarian diaspora communities was again much lower: 394 from the United States, 546 from Canada, 608 from the United Kingdom, and 2,966 from Germany. These data show that the level of political participation of the old Hungarian diaspora communities in Hungarian elections is negligible.

The fact that Hungarians in neighbouring countries have greater electoral power and potential than the diaspora does has several explanations. First of all, Hungarian kin-minorities are more invested in what is on Hungary's political agenda than are the diaspora Hungarians, who live farther away. Transactional practices are part of the everyday life of Hungarians in neighbouring countries: they are just as informed about Hungarian politics as they are about the politics of their own country; they closely follow Hungarian offline and online media; and commuting between Hungary and their own country for work or education is an everyday experience. Furthermore, Hungary has an almost thirty-year tradition of acting as the protective external homeland of these communities. Even before 1990, Hungary had an apathetic (neither friendly nor hostile) relationship to those communities. Moreover, Hungarian minorities in neighbouring countries are politically active communities, with well-established and politically integrated ethnic parties that have good relations with the Hungarian government. Thus, these communities are easily mobilised through their political organisations. In all three of the post-2010 elections, Hungarian ethnic parties in neighbouring countries played an active role in encouraging minority Hungarians to vote in the Hungarian parliamentary elections and effectively helped the Hungarian government parties' campaign in their respective communities (Pogonyi 2017, 8). For all of these reasons, Fidesz's campaign efforts have been highly successful in the Hungarian communities in neighbouring countries, and these communities have shown overwhelming support for the ruling Fidesz party in Hungarian national elections.

By contrast, Hungarians in the diaspora exhibit weaker political identification with the homeland. Hungarian emigrants were considered enemies and traitors by Hungary before 1990. Even after the democratic transition, unlike the Hungarians in neighbouring countries, diaspora communities were not explicitly considered co-ethnics in need of the external homeland's protection. Moreover, there is a difference in the intensity of the two transnational groups' identification with the homeland. Ethnic boundaries in kin-minority communities are constructed and fluid, but they are even more fluid and constructed in the diaspora (Brubaker 2005; Bauböck 2010). Especially after the second generation, the typical pattern of identification among people in the diaspora is what Gans describes as symbolic ethnicity (Gans 1979), where ethnic heritage is most often passed on through symbols and traditions, but not through actual involvement or engagement with the

homeland's actual political reality. The fact that Hungarian diaspora communities are cultural rather than political communities makes it challenging for the homeland to reach out to them with political projects.

The second explanation for the greater political significance of kin-minorities is that the organisations of the diaspora, unlike those of the Hungarian kin-minorities, are civic and cultural rather than political organisations. They are not democratically elected bodies and therefore they do not represent the Hungarian diaspora in a political sense. As a result, they do not have the legitimacy to act on behalf of the diaspora community, and, eventually, to work as partners of the Hungarian government. Their potential in political mobilisation is therefore rather limited.

A third reason that hinders the effective political mobilisation of these communities is that diaspora members are scattered all over the world, and they do not live in cohesive ethnic blocs. These factors contribute to the fact that Hungarian diaspora communities have very limited political remittance potential compared to that of the Hungarian kin-minorities.

The potential political remittances of the third type of external population, recent emigrants, is, however, less obvious. As discussed above, Hungarian citizens who are not residents of Hungary (i.e. most of the naturalised minority Hungarians) can vote by mail in the national elections, while Hungarian citizens who are residents of Hungary can only vote in person, even if they are not living in Hungary at the time of the elections. This means that Hungarian emigrants who have not cancelled their residency in Hungary must either visit Hungary at the time of the national elections or travel to the closest Hungarian consulate in their host country if they wish to cast a vote. Having to show up in person at a consulate to vote is obviously much more inconvenient, so it is not very surprising that the number of in-person votes at Hungarian consulates was relatively low in the last two elections: it was roughly 46,000 in 2018 and 57,000 in 2022. This regulation definitely presents an interesting contrast to the case of Poland. As explained in Chapter 2, Poland has taken a very different approach to the political rights of recent emigrants: the number of external polling stations has grown considerably in countries with large Polish communities over the past two decades in order to facilitate the political participation of Polish migrants.

The diaspora's (presumed) support for certain parties in the homeland elections is a common issue in the Central Eastern European region (see Chapter 1 by Janurová and Janská). In Hungary, opposition parties have been discussing how the system of external voting in Hungary is unfair as it puts emigrants who maintained their official resident status in Hungary in a disadvantaged position. In the opposition's argumentation, the governing party applies a double standard to Hungarian communities abroad; while it

facilitates the participation of Hungarian minorities and old diaspora communities in Hungarian elections through postal voting, it ignores recent emigrants and complicates their participation by only allowing them to vote in person (at consulates or back in Hungary). According to the opposition, the reason for the double standard is that while Hungarian minorities and the old diaspora overwhelmingly support the government (as the results of the last three election indicate), recent emigrants probably do not favour the governing party. This hypothesis was recently confirmed by a survey: a study by the 21 Research Center in Budapest showed that a few months before the Hungarian national elections of 2022, 43% of Hungarian migrants said that they supported an opposition party, while only 11% supported the governing Fidesz party (21 Kutatóközpont 2022).

### 3.7 CONCLUSION

This chapter aimed to outline the post-1990 developments of Hungarian kin-state and diaspora policy, with a primary focus on the more intense phase of diaspora relations since 2010. It discussed the important milestones of Hungary's post-1990 kin-state and diaspora policy and argued that until 2010 Hungary as an external homeland focused almost exclusively on Hungarian minorities in neighbouring countries, whereas Hungarian diaspora communities received barely any attention. This changed significantly in 2010. After the landslide victory of the right-wing, conservative Fidesz party, not only did Hungary start to pursue a more active kin-state policy, but it also began to develop a comprehensive policy framework for Hungarian diaspora communities.

The engagement practices of kin-state and diaspora policy after 2010 differ from each other, and the potential political remittances of kin-state and diaspora policy are different, too. While the transnational policies aimed at kin-minorities are prompted by an interest in the political remittances of those communities, the programmes for engaging with the diaspora communities focus primarily on identity-building and strengthening the relationship between the homeland and the diaspora. There are several explanations for this difference. First of all, the historical contexts of homeland-kin-minority vs homeland-diaspora relations are different. In the case of Hungarian kin-minorities, Hungary has a longer tradition of acting as a protective external homeland (since 1990). Hungarian emigrants were considered enemies and traitors by Hungary before 1990, and even after the democratic transition diaspora communities were not explicitly considered co-ethnics in need of the external homeland's protection. Second, there is a clear difference in the two transnational communities' identity. While Hungarian kin-minorities are

politically active and organised communities with strong and effective ties to Hungary, Hungarian diaspora communities' ties to Hungary are of a more symbolic and cultural nature.

On the other hand, both kin-state and diaspora policies are integral parts of the post-2010 government's nationalising discourse. The basic idea is that the current government acts in the interest of a 'single, united Hungarian nation', and every Hungarian, no matter where they live, forms a part of this nation. Therefore, the opening up to the Hungarian diaspora communities – which had been neglected since 1990 – is a logical step towards completing the government's narrative about the Hungarian nation. Hungarian diaspora engagement practices are potentially an important source of indirect political remittances as well: the nationalist narrative and symbolic aspects of kin-state and diaspora policy aim to reinforce the support of the nationalist, right-wing electorate of the governing parties, which could be competed for by other radical right-wing parties in the domestic political scene.

This chapter also discussed how Hungarian emigrants living in Western European countries are largely ignored by the state's transnational engagement practices, and how the right to participate in national elections is different for the different types of external populations.

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## CHAPTER 4

# DIASPORA POLICIES IN SLOVAKIA: THE LONG SHADOW OF AN ESSENTIALIST APPROACH TO A NATION

MICHAL VAŠEČKA

### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

The approach to Slovaks living abroad, at both the institutional and non-institutional levels, is influenced by the protection of the ethnicised Slovak primary group, no matter where Slovaks live and what their recent citizenship status is. In this respect, Slovakia is a good example of a country where policies connected to the principles of citizenship are deeply ethnicised and based on essentialist approaches.

However, modern citizenship is inherently egalitarian and since the dawn of modernity it has been almost universally attractive to all segments of society (see Faulks 2000; Castles-Davidson 2000; Brubaker 1992). In its egalitarian mode, citizenship developed within the liberal tradition and it has proved to be a powerful idea – it recognises the dignity of the individual but at the same time reaffirms the social context in which the individual acts. In the liberal tradition, citizenship is understood as part of an evolutionary process towards a more rational, just, and well-governed society. Citizenship can therefore be characterised as a membership status that comes with a package of rights, duties, and obligations, and that implies equality, justice, and autonomy. Citizenship itself can be thin or thick; a rich sense of citizenship can only be achieved when the contextual barriers to its performance are recognised and removed (Faulks 2000).

Liberalism, as the dominant ideology of citizenship, has stressed the egalitarian and universal nature of this status. Nevertheless, from the outset citizenship has been closely bound to the institution of the nation-state. Since the 19th century, citizenship has only been meaningful in relation to the nation-state. Citizenship derives its power from the nation-state, which represents an often-uneasy symbiosis of ethnic and civic elements. Naturally, countries differ significantly in terms of the level to which they emphasise ethnic or civic elements (see Manning and Sanchari 2010).

Modern citizenship, according to Rogers Brubaker (1992), ought to be egalitarian, democratic, socially consequential, sacred, national, and unique. While the first three of these attributes (egalitarian, democratic, socially consequential) strictly follow the civic tradition, the others (sacred, national, unique) are ethnic in nature. The first three attributes are present in every

concept of modern citizenship and are found in all modern states. Differences between states therefore reside in the presence or absence of ethnical attributes. In all Central European countries, citizenship is to a certain extent regarded as sacred, national, and unique, although there are, naturally, differences between them. Slovakia certainly ranks among the countries with a more ethnicised approach to citizenship.

Preferential treatment of 'foreign Slovaks', or expatriate communities, is by far the best example of an ethnicised understanding of citizenship. The Slovak law on 'Foreign Slovaks' shows that foreign Slovaks have in many respects become an untouchable group, and their unique status within the Slovak legal system has not been criticised by any relevant political or social group in Slovak society since the changes in 1989 (see Surová 2016). This, however, is not a sign of intellectual failure but rather a perfect example of the dominance of a primordial and ethnical conception of the nation in Slovakia (Vašečka and Žúborová 2020).

This chapter provides an overview of diaspora policies in Slovakia. It describes the preferential treatment given to foreign Slovaks in comparison to other foreigners. The chapter depicts how and why diaspora policies in Slovakia focus on the preservation of cultural identity among Slovaks living abroad, no matter their citizenship. The text therefore describes the main features of policies and their development within the sphere of cultural protection and identity-building. The chapter analyses the ways in which the country's diaspora policy programmes give priority to the educational and cultural engagement of ethnically defined Slovak nationals residing abroad. The text also describes the legislative and institutional background of diaspora policies in Slovakia. Finally, the chapter critically analyses the background of Slovak diaspora policies and why these policies were inspired by symbolic ties between the diaspora and the homeland.

## 4.2 AN OVERVIEW OF DIASPORA POLICIES IN SLOVAKIA

Laws dealing with 'foreign Slovaks' have been amended twice since 1989 – after Hungary passed its Law on Hungarians living abroad (the so-called Status Law) in 2001 and after Slovakia's entry into the European Union in 2004. Issues related to the diaspora were never widely discussed nor controversial at the national level. This is due to the essentialist consensus there is on the 'natural connections' that exists between Slovaks living in Slovakia and Slovaks living abroad, an idea that is supported by the active involvement of 'foreign Slovaks' in homeland affairs.

The rights of so-called foreign Slovaks are guaranteed by the National Council of the Slovak Republic in conformity with Act No. 70/1997 on For-

eign Slovaks, who unofficially are also often referred to as 'Foreign Slovaks'. Foreign Slovaks are people to whom such status can be granted because they are Slovak citizens in a foreign country or are of Slovak ethnic background and have Slovak cultural and language awareness. Under this law, up to third-generation descendants of Slovaks are eligible to apply for the status of Foreign Slovak. Applicants must prove that they are Slovak citizens or of Slovak ethnic origin by presenting supporting documents – such as a birth certificate, baptism certificate, registry office statement, and proof of Slovak citizenship or a Slovak permanent residence permit.

Applicants for the status of Foreign Slovak must prove their Slovak cultural and language awareness based on their current activities (in the sphere of culture and based on language skills), on the basis of testimony from a Slovak compatriot organisation active in the region where the applicant lives or testimony from at least two Foreign Slovaks living in the country where the applicant resides. Applicants must submit a written application to obtain the status of Foreign Slovak to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the Slovak Republic or abroad at a mission or a consular office of the Slovak Republic. The Slovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs will decide on the application within 60 days of its submission. If the application is approved, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs will, through the Representation of the Slovak Republic closest to the applicant, issue a Foreign Slovak Card identifying the applicant as a Foreign Slovak.

In the sense outlined above, the provisions of the Act on Foreign Slovaks are fairly advantageous for this category of aliens and grant them various exceptions and benefits when they are in Slovakia. Most holders of this status who use it to legalise their stay in Slovakia aim to obtain an official job in the country. The large numbers of Slovaks with this status who are from the former Yugoslavia are represented by students at universities, of which there are around 60 to 100 a year. Ethnic Slovaks from Ukraine are largely employed in the construction industry, engineering, and services.

The status of Foreign Slovak has become more clearly established in legal and institutional terms over the past two decades since 2002. In accordance with the new Act on Foreign Slovaks introduced in 2005, the Office for Slovaks Living Abroad was established. It operates both symbolically and legally on behalf of an endogamic, tribally defined group: it was created for the traditional Slovak diaspora, not for those who are outside Slovakia after having recently migrated. Legal and institutional provisions of this kind, however, are in contradiction with a modern understanding of citizenship.

### 4.3 STATISTICS ON THE SLOVAK DIASPORA

In accordance with Act No. 474/2005, state institutions recognise three categories of Slovaks living abroad. The first group is defined by their historical connection with the Slovak nation. These Slovaks are predominantly 'autochthonous Slovaks' living in Central and Eastern Europe (Hungary, the Czech Republic, Croatia, Serbia, Poland, Ukraine, and Romania).

As far as the size of the Slovak national minorities living in Central and Eastern Europe is concerned, the number of Slovaks living in these countries is estimated to range from 162,578 in the Czech Republic (2021) to 41,730 in Serbia (2021), 29,881 in Hungary (2021), 10,300 in Romania (2021), an estimated 6,700 in Ukraine (2021), 3,688 in Croatia (2011), and 5,000 in Poland (2021) (Úrad pre Slovákov žijúcich v zahraničí 2023).

The second group of nationals who live abroad and are recognised as part of the Slovak diaspora reside predominantly overseas, mainly in the United States and Canada. Large-scale migration from the Slovak Republic to these countries took place mostly in the period between 1880 and 1930. These are third- and fourth-generation descendants from this much earlier wave of migration and they have weaker ties with the Slovak Republic. Another factor that weakens ties is the difficult and unclear bureaucratic procedure for obtaining Slovak citizenship. The Office for Slovaks Living Abroad estimates that there are 1,200,000 people in the Slovak diaspora living outside the Central European region: 594,844 in the United States (2020), 72,285 in Canada (2016), an estimated 30,000 in Argentina, and as many as 70,000 in Israel (Úrad pre Slovákov žijúcich v zahraničí 2023).

The third group of Slovaks living abroad is formed by the communities living in EU15 countries. This category, defined by the Office for Slovaks Living Abroad as 'Western European', is rather broad and unclear. The diaspora in these countries grew in the period after the fall of the Iron Curtain and after EU enlargement. Slovak communities are found even in countries where they were never active before – for example, in Spain, Italy, the Netherlands, Ireland, and the United Kingdom. It is a widespread practice among Slovaks living in Western Europe to maintain their temporary residence status in the Slovak Republic, which means they are still counted as citizens of the Slovak Republic and might return to Slovakia at some point in their life. As far as the number of Slovaks living in 'Western Europe' is concerned, there are as many as 129,290 in the United Kingdom (2022), 63,621 in Austria (2020), 58,235 in Germany (2018), 20,581 in Switzerland (2021), and up to 10,000 in various other EU countries (Úrad pre Slovákov žijúcich v zahraničí 2023).

## 4.4 REMITTANCES FROM THE SLOVAK DIASPORA

As Fang and Wells highlight (2022, 20), diasporas have been the subject of growing research by economists in recent decades. Fang and Wells have pointed out that diasporas can be a significant source of capital for their homelands, including financial capital, human capital, and social capital, through the transfer of information and knowledge. Epstein and Heizler (2016) argue that diasporas play a particularly important role in how nations interact with one another – for instance, through trade agreements.

The remittances from the Slovak diaspora, however, do not form an important part of the national economy, the way they do for many countries in Central and Eastern Europe. But within the context of the Visegrád countries they are not insignificant, mostly owing to recent migration and the brain drain from Slovakia. Overall, as OECD data show, remittances and migration are linked. In OECD countries remittances had been reaching record highs before the Covid-19 pandemic (low- and middle-income countries were receiving USD 554 or EUR 503 billion in remittances in 2019). EU and non-EU OECD countries together were the source of 55% of all global remittances (EMN 2020, 1).

As noted by Kabat, Cibak, and Filip (2020, 619–620), among Visegrád countries the largest share of remittances, as a percentage of GDP, went to Hungary (3%), while Slovakia's remittances reached 2.1% of GDP. For the Czech Republic and Poland, the shares were slightly smaller (1.6% and 1.3%, respectively). Kabat, Cibak, and Filip (2020, 620) calculated that, as for the destination of these finances, households in Slovakia received total transfers in 2018 of more than USD 2.21 billion, and since 2004 the total was over USD 26 billion. Of this amount, more than 87% were transfers from EU countries, mainly the United Kingdom, Czech Republic, Germany, and Austria.

The volume of outflow remittances from Visegrád countries was significantly smaller than the volume of remittances received. In 2018, the volume of remittances sent from the Czech Republic was USD 2.758 billion, while USD 1.011 billion was sent from Hungary, USD 7.094 billion was sent from Poland, and USD 0.385 billion was sent from Slovakia. The total volume of remittances sent from Slovakia for the entire period of 2000–2018 amounted to USD 2.3 billion (Kabat, Cibak, and Filip 2020, 620). The authors conclude that the inflows of remittances to Visegrád countries indicates a different pattern, with Hungary and Slovakia receiving the most.

## 4.5 LEGISLATIVE PROVISIONS CONCERNING THE DIASPORA

Two main official documents regulate relations between Slovakia and its diaspora. The first one is Act No. 474/2005 on Slovaks Living Abroad (often translated into English as the Act on Expatriate Slovaks), which came into effect in 2005 and defines what state institutions can do for Slovaks abroad and the main policies of engagement with nationals living abroad (Konceptia... 2015). The second document is the Declaration of the State Policy of the Slovak Republic in relation to Slovaks living abroad for the period 2016–2020. This document does not contain any commitment on the part of state organisations and institutions to create special policies, programmes, or services to respond to the needs of nationals living abroad. But the document insists that it is important for Slovakia to engage in the areas of culture and education and to define key institutions, organisations, programmes, and grant schemes that cover these areas of interest (see Surová 2018).

In addition, Act No. 474/2005 sets out important principles for the treatment of the Slovak diaspora. First, the principle of equal treatment prohibits discrimination in the provision of state assistance on the grounds of gender, race, skin colour, language, faith and religion, political or other beliefs, social origin, wealth, descent, or other statuses. Second, the principle of territoriality states that Slovak institutions must respect the territorial sovereignty and integrity of the state of which the Slovak living abroad is a citizen and the territory in which the Slovak living abroad resides. And third, the principle of a 'specific approach' means that the cultural objectives of Slovak diaspora policies must be adapted to the specific needs of Slovaks living in different countries (Vašečka and Žúborová 2020).

The preferential treatment of Foreign Slovaks over any other group of foreigners noted above involves a series of exceptions and specific benefits that those who hold Foreign Slovak status can enjoy on the territory of the Slovak Republic even if they do not have Slovak citizenship. For instance, Foreign Slovaks do not require a visa to enter the territory of the Slovak Republic and have the right to permanent residence. Similarly, the status of Foreign Slovak comes with the right to apply for admission to any educational institution in Slovakia, apply for employment without a work permit, and apply for Slovak citizenship. Foreign Slovaks also benefit from a waiver on the specific restrictions on acquiring property that otherwise apply to foreigners in Slovakia. Overall, Foreign Slovaks can use this status as an instrument to obtain legal residence and employment in Slovakia (*Správa za rok 2016 o štátnej politike vo vzťahu k Slovákom žijúcim v zahraničí* 2016).

Over the years, ethnic Slovaks have become active in different economic sectors of the Slovak economy, whether they are from Romania (e.g. agriculture, mining, and construction), the former Yugoslavia (e.g. higher education),



or Ukraine (construction, service industry). As the Slovak Republic has faced a shortage of labour since 2017 and the unemployment rate has reached historically low figures, discussions have started on the need to motivate Slovaks living abroad to return. Consequently, in 2017 the Government of the Slovak Republic prepared a strategic document called the ‘Complex Action Plan for the Return of Slovaks Working Abroad to Slovakia’. The document focuses mainly on promoting the state portal for seeking employment on the official websites of the Slovak consulates abroad. This service is meant to provide Slovaks living abroad with easier access to employment offers. The document has been criticised for being vague and formal and for not considering practical solutions and measures. Therefore, although the activities described in the document were supposed to start at some point in 2018, the document has never been introduced into Parliament and has not been followed by any further action. Similarly, the financial stimuli that the government put in place to attract Slovaks back home drew interest from only a handful of Slovaks living abroad (Vašečka and Žúborová 2020).

As far as electoral rights are concerned, Slovak nationals living abroad can vote by mail, stand as a candidate in parliamentary elections, and vote in referenda. Citizens who reside permanently abroad must send a request by mail to the Department of Elections, Referenda, and Political Parties at the Ministry of the Interior to register on a dedicated electoral roll. Applicants must include with this request a photocopy of their Slovak nationality certificate, a photocopy of part of their Slovak passport, and a statement in the Slovak language that they are not permanent residents in Slovakia (see Surová 2016; Vašečka and Žúborová 2020).

## 4.6 DIASPORA POLICIES AND RIGHTS

As mentioned in section 4.3, the most important dimension of Slovakia’s diaspora policies is aimed not at providing services to Slovak nationals living abroad, but rather at strengthening ties at the cultural level. Slovak diaspora policies promote a vision of citizenry that is based on cultural affinities; they favour ethnic Slovaks abroad no matter what their citizenship is (Vašečka 2008). In this respect, Slovak policies on social protection for citizens living abroad are weak and rarely exceed the obligations required by the EU. Ethnic Slovaks, once they move to Slovakia, have preferential access to labour and social protection services over other foreigners. Diaspora policies consider return a precondition for obtaining access to most rights.

In a symbolic sense, however, there are numerous examples of diaspora policies outside of social protection provisions. Since 1993, the Day of Slovaks abroad (5 July) has been celebrated annually and it is included in the national

calendar of celebrations. Another example is the 'Conference of the Slovak Republic and Slovaks Living Abroad' that is organised annually. Slovak Institutes, which promote Slovak culture abroad and fall under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, provide the Slovak diaspora with additional opportunities for engaging with Slovak culture. Slovak Institutes can be found in Prague, Berlin, Budapest, Jerusalem, Moscow, Paris, Rome, Warsaw, and Vienna. Religious institutions are an important part of the life of the Slovak diaspora and Slovak parishes are active in many countries. However, the Slovak Republic as a secular state is not officially involved in their activities.

In terms of Slovakia's investments into scientific networks and efforts to prevent the brain drain, the country implemented the Support Scheme for Returning Professionals from Abroad in 2018–2020. As a result of this, 26 Slovak scientists returned to the country. A proposal to continue this activity did not pass the interministerial comment procedure in 2019 and no similar scheme is currently being implemented.

The Slovak Constitution states that Slovak citizens are guaranteed the right to leave the territory of Slovakia. This right may be restricted only for reasons of protecting national security, public order, or the rights of others. There are no mobility restrictions for citizens.

The state's opposition to dual citizenship changed in 2022 (Amendment to Act No. 40/1993 Coll. on Citizenship). Slovaks no longer lose their Slovak citizenship after receiving foreign citizenship if they can prove they were living in another country for at least five years. Between 2010 and 2022 as many as 3,622 Slovak citizens lost their Slovak citizenship because they had become citizens of another country (Ministry of the Interior 2022). Citizenship does not follow the *ius sanguinis* principle and cannot be obtained through ethnic or religious belonging. Nevertheless, the Citizenship Act waives the eight-year residency requirement for foreigners who have an ancestor who was born in Slovakia. In this case, the criterion used is territorial and ancestral citizenship, not ethnic or religious affiliation. For persons who hold a Foreign Slovak Card, the requirement is just three years of residence in Slovakia or, alternatively, having made a significant contribution to the community of Slovaks living abroad.

As noted in section 4.2, to recognise Slovaks living abroad Slovakia issues Foreign Slovak Cards. This card is intended for Slovaks abroad who do not have permanent residence in Slovakia and are citizens of Slovakia or do not have Slovak citizenship retain Slovak national awareness. As for social benefits, the conditions governing eligibility depend on the type of benefit and there are none that specifically favour Foreign Slovaks. The provision of material hardship assistance and state social support is usually conditional upon a person actually residing or being a permanent resident of Slovakia. The sickness and pension insurance schemes allow voluntary participation

for anyone who applies, including non-residents. It is therefore possible for members of the diaspora to participate in these social security institutions, but they are not privileged in any way, and it and their status as Foreign Slovaks does not bring them any substantial benefits in this area.

Beyond EU regulations, there are no specific programmes or policies for Slovaks living abroad in unemployment. Consulates may help Slovak nationals abroad in a situation of unemployment, but, as stated above, this is not a legal obligation, and it mostly involves providing nationals with information or helping them contact their family. Various diaspora organisations make it part of their mission to help nationals living abroad with employment issues and they may also receive financial support from the Office of Slovaks Living Abroad for doing this work.

The Slovak healthcare system is based on mandatory health insurance contributions. Every individual with permanent residence in Slovakia is required to contribute to the system and Slovak nationals who reside in another EU Member State naturally benefit from EU provisions in this area. Compared to other social protection dimensions, ethnic Slovaks with a Foreign Slovak Card have no preferential access to healthcare and need to be insured with a commercial insurance company, as public insurance is for residents only. This means that anyone with a Foreign Slovak Card who comes to Slovakia and does not have health insurance must pay for any medical care received in the Slovak Republic. Students with a Foreign Slovak Card studying at Slovak schools and universities, however, are an exception to this, as stipulated in Act No. 250/2011 on health insurance, and can access public health insurance.

As well as being allowed to apply for temporary residence in Slovakia without giving a reason for their stay, people who have a Foreign Slovak Card do not have to provide any other administrative documentation or evidence of financial resources for their stay in Slovakia. Unlike other third-country nationals, who must obtain a permanent residence permit, ethnic Slovaks have immediate access to two types of benefits after receiving the right to temporary residence – access to the use of state kindergartens, public schools, and universities free of charge, and immediate access to the child allowance scheme.

Slovaks abroad with a Foreign Slovak Card can benefit from the provisions of Act No. 474/ 2005 Coll. and get subsidies to send their children to study at the postsecondary level in Slovakia. Upon request, Slovakia will pay the full tuition fee for children, along with accommodation and meals for Foreign Slovak cardholders, an opportunity mostly utilised by ethnic Slovaks living abroad in third (i.e. non-EU) countries and by Slovak kin-minorities from neighbouring countries that are not members of the EU.

All above-mentioned provisions have highlighted a central feature of the Slovak diaspora policy: it grants preferential treatment to Slovak autochtho-

nous communities abroad. Together with the Hungarian status law, this is the best example of an ethnicised understanding of a 'core group' and broadly of citizenship as well. The laws on 'foreign Slovaks' show that this group has become a privileged subgroup within the diaspora and enjoys the most attention from the homeland. In this sense, the fact that their unique status within the Slovak legal system has not been criticised by any relevant political or social group in Slovak society is very indicative of the ethnical definition of the nation that is widely shared (Vašečka and Žúborová 2020).

#### 4.7 INSTITUTIONAL BACKGROUND OF DIASPORA POLICIES IN SLOVAKIA

The term 'Slovaks living abroad' was used for the first time in 1992 in the Constitution of the Slovak Republic: 'The Slovak Republic shall support the national awareness and cultural identity of Slovaks living abroad, support the institutions established to achieve this purpose and relations with their home country' (*Ústava Slovenskej republiky* 1992). However, the first legislation that dealt with the issues of Slovaks living abroad did not come into effect until 1997. The rights of 'foreign Slovaks' are guaranteed by the National Council of the Slovak Republic in conformity with Act No. 70/1997 on Foreign Slovaks (*Zákon o zahraničných Slovákoch* 70/2005). A Foreign Slovak is a person to whom such status can be granted on the grounds that he/she is a Slovak citizen residing in a foreign country or he/she is of Slovak ethnic origin and has Slovak cultural awareness and language skills. Any such person who wishes to obtain the status of Foreign Slovak must apply for the special Foreign Slovak Card. For this law, an expatriate Slovak is someone with direct ancestors up to the third generation that held Slovak citizenship. Applicants for this status must prove their Slovak citizenship or Slovak ethnic origin by presenting supporting documents – such as birth certificates, baptism certificates, registry office statements, and/or a proof of citizenship or permanent residency permit.

The most recent legislative act, Act No. 474/2005 Coll. (*Zákon o Slovákoch žijúcich v zahraničí a o zmene a doplnení niektorých zákonov* 474/2005) on Foreign Slovaks, came into effect in 2005 and replaced Act No. 70/1997 Coll. on Foreign Slovaks. This more recent legislation defines Slovaks living abroad according to two characteristics. First, they can be individuals living abroad who do not have Slovak citizenship and are a citizen of another country but want to claim Slovak citizenship and show interest in promoting or maintaining Slovak culture abroad. This would include individuals claiming Slovak citizenship through direct ancestry. Second, this legislation defines as Foreign Slovaks also those who live abroad, do not have Slovak citizenship and are citizens of

another country, but who declare Slovak ethnicity, display Slovak identity or ancestry, and are interested in their Slovak heritage. However, these people do not have to show an interest in applying for Slovak citizenship. According to the latest report of the Office for Slovaks Living Abroad, more than 2,000 Foreign Slovak Cards were issued to non-nationals in 2017, mostly to individuals attracted by the possibility of entering the Slovak labour market. Applicants were from Serbia (1,646), Ukraine (355), the United States (6), Russia (5), and Bosnia and Herzegovina (4) (Vašečka and Žúborová 2020).

Diaspora policies in Slovakia are therefore predominantly focused on issues of culture and identity. Various institutions in Slovakia share the responsibilities for and cooperate on implementing the policies described in the preceding section. At the national level, the official institution responsible for engaging with Slovaks living abroad is the Office of the President of the Slovak Republic. The President's role in interactions with Slovaks living abroad is to cooperate with diaspora representatives on cultural heritage protection and on enhancing cooperation with diaspora communities. For instance, the President of Slovakia has the prerogative to grant state honours to Slovak figures living abroad.

The Office for Slovaks Living Abroad, created in 2005, is the central actor in Slovakia's diaspora infrastructure. It is considered 'the central government authority for relations between the Slovak Republic and Slovaks living abroad, and state support to Slovaks living abroad' (2005, 3). For this reason, coordinating diaspora policies with other ministries is one of its three core missions. The other two are conducting joint activities with ethnic Slovak associations in all countries and documenting the life and activities of Slovaks living abroad. The Office for Slovaks Living Abroad is in Bratislava and its budget is directly connected to the budget of the Office of the Government of the Slovak Republic. The office is headed by a chair who is nominated by the Government of the Slovak Republic for a five-year term.

As Surová (2016) suggests, despite the diversification of the Slovak diaspora in recent years, the Office for Slovaks Living Abroad is still very much focused on protecting the traditions and heritage of the traditional Slovak diaspora living in neighbouring countries that constitute autochthonous minorities in those countries. The focus on this population has attracted criticism from non-governmental organisations, academia, and the media, which highlight other issues relating to the migration of Slovaks that the office does not treat as a priority, such as the brain drain or the depopulation of marginalised regions of Slovakia (Surová 2016).

One of the office's main activities in support of Slovaks abroad concerns the financing of activities abroad that focus on education, research, information, and culture. Organisations abroad can apply for subsidies to conduct activities in these areas. This focus on cultural and symbolic activities means

that their impact on the socioeconomic conditions of Slovaks abroad is not necessarily obvious. Indeed, the support for these kinds of activities is primarily aimed at improving cultural relations and historical ties between the diaspora and the Slovak Republic. This perception is reinforced by the office's support for publishing activities, broadcasting in the Slovak language abroad, educational events, activities to enhance cooperation between Slovak nationals living abroad and the homeland, and the promotion of cultural heritage. In the area of education, the office finances the establishment and activities of Slovak schools and educational centres and the purchase of pre-school equipment for Slovaks living abroad that can respond to the social needs of communities abroad (Vašečka and Žúborová 2020).

## 4.8 CONCLUSION

The notion of self-determination in Central and Eastern Europe was primarily founded on the 19th-century concept of nationalism. Unlike Western Europe and the United States, which were inspired by the ideas of the Enlightenment and individual freedom, the Central and Eastern European concept of self-determination was characterised by the primacy of a group defined by its ethnic, cultural, and linguistic features (see, e.g., Raška 2014).

Castles and Davidson (2000) suggest that the idea of civic inclusion, based on active democratic citizenship, can only be sustained on the condition that the cultural community is replaced by a political community. First, the state should be separated from the idea of the nation and replaced by a fully democratic state based upon the open and flexible coexistence of all citizens. Second, and this is an even greater challenge, forms of political participation need to be invented that go beyond the borders of the state. Group cultural belonging, while it should not be ignored, cannot be the sole grounds for living together within a state formation. New forms of belonging together should be based upon both principles of individual equality and collective difference (Castles and Davidson 2000)

Consequently, there are several structural changes that Central European countries need to make. First, there is a need to redefine national identity to include space for unifying universalistic principles. Second, there is a need to shift from an ethno-cultural to a legal-political definition of a nation. Third, there is a need to redefine the core basis of solidarity so that it rests on postmodern citizenship instead of ethnicity (Vašečka 2008). These changes will certainly not happen in Central Europe in a short-term perspective. The absence of any discussion, active policies, and legislative changes relating to a de-ethnicised concept of citizenship could, however, work against the interests of the EU. And this has been happening in Poland, Hungary, and

Slovakia since the changes of 1989. Joppke and Morawska (2003) suggest that de-ethnicised citizenship is certainly not happening everywhere and show that it is an exclusively Western phenomenon, while the countries of Central Europe may eventually follow sometime in the future.

The preferential treatment of Slovak autochthonous communities abroad is by far the best example of an ethnicised understanding of a 'core group' and broadly of citizenship as well. The Hungarian Status Law is a well-known and much-discussed example of the preferential treatment of foreign citizens, and here we have seen an example of a similar Slovak law on 'Foreign Slovaks', who over the years since 1989 have become an untouchable group. The fact that their unique status within the Slovak legal system has not been criticised by any relevant political or social group in Slovak society is not a sign of intellectual failure but rather a perfect example of the dominance of a primordial and ethnical conception of the nation.

As Surová (2016) highlighted, the highest law in Slovakia, the Constitution of the Slovak Republic, clearly distinguishes the Slovak nation from other nations that form national minorities or other ethnic groups in Slovakia. She also devotes attention to the definition of the Slovak national language in the Constitution. The Constitution defines the 'Slovak language as the most important feature of distinctiveness of the Slovak nation, the most esteemed value of its cultural heritage, and an articulation of the sovereignty of the Slovak Republic' (Ústava Slovenskej republiky 1992, 11). In other words, the diaspora holds almost the same status as Slovaks living in the homeland. The status enjoyed by diaspora Slovaks in this sense is more symbolic, capable of stimulating a sense of belonging to the nation, rather than automatically entailing any advantages in terms of a better life, social services, or protection (Vašečka and Žúborová 2020).

Individuals who have the Foreign Slovak Card are no different from other European citizens living or working in Slovakia or other European countries. What is different is when these nationals come from third countries and are automatically treated in Slovakia as if they were European citizens.

At the same time, the Slovak diaspora plays a crucial role in the sense of cultural belonging, and Slovak institutions are providing financial resources to strengthen ties with the Slovak diaspora, especially through education and culture. Instead, Slovak institutions and the diaspora, however, are in legal terms operating in a way that prioritises an ethnically defined group, which is in sharp contradiction to the idea of active citizenship and can interfere with national policies and civic participation in government affairs. It is more than obvious that these kinds of legal and institutional provisions are inconsistent with the idea of modern citizenship.

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# CHAPTER 5

## THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK, PRELIMINARY DATA, AND RESEARCH DESIGN FOR COLLECTING DATA ON THE CZECH DIASPORA

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### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

The terms ‘transnationalism’ and ‘diaspora’ have come to analytical prominence in the context of changing patterns of international migration. Although these terms appeared in the literature in the first decades of the 20th century,<sup>36</sup> their regular use in academia in the study of migration only began to occur in the late 1980s and early 1990s, first in the sense of considering historical contexts in broader than national frameworks (Tyrrell 1991), then as a way of anchoring individuals and groups in frameworks that involve several state formations. They were developed in response to the fact that international migrants increasingly live in more than one nation-state simultaneously, motivating them to create, maintain, and become embedded in various linkages that attach them to multiple countries. The Czech diaspora is no exception, as its character has changed since 1990, when Czechs began to be able to travel freely (unlike in the state-socialist period).

While the reasons for emigration before 1989 are well described in the literature, little is known about the new Czech diaspora after 1989, especially in the context of contemporary transnationalism and its relation to the country of origin in the form of financial and social remittances and cultural, political, and social ties. The Czech diaspora refers to both historical and present-day emigration (or long-term migration) from Czechia and the former Czechoslovakia and the Czech lands. The prevalent transnational behaviour of current migrants suggests that there is no strong need for permanent resettlement and that indigenous (already established) migrant communities are not the main targets of new migrants (Janská and Janurová 2020; Pařízková 2011; Vavrečková and Hantak 2008).

In this chapter, we discuss the theoretical framing (of our research on the Czech diaspora), selected scholarly literature on the Czech diaspora that we initially worked with, the data on the size and location of the Czech diaspora

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<sup>36</sup> The term ‘transnationalism’ was popularised by the American writer Randolph Bourne, who used it more in the sense of a cosmopolitan way of thinking that is not confined to a narrow local framework and draws inspiration from different milieus (Uherek 2017).

in the world, and, finally, the research design we chose to further study this important group of people who have a specific relationship to the space we live in and who often significantly influence its future.

## 5.2 CZECH DIASPORA AND RECENT CONTRIBUTIONS TO DIASPORA RESEARCH

Most of the existing studies on the diaspora that were done in Czechia are qualitative. The frequently researched topic is ethnic identification and integration, which has been studied, for example, by researchers from the Institute of Ethnology of the Czech Academy of Sciences. Most recent studies have focused on the Czech diaspora in Eastern European countries, such as Romania, Ukraine, Belarus, and Kazakhstan, with subsequent re-emigration to the Czech environment. These studies developed knowledge about the sudden changes in social capital during its transfer from one country to another and about changes in the meanings of various practices and skills in their cross-border communication (e.g. Beranská 2019; Beranská and Uherek 2017; Uherek and Beranská 2015; Jech et al. 1992; Janská and Drbohlav 2001). Integration processes affecting Czechs in Southern Europe have been explored using the example of Bosnia and Herzegovina, where in the context of changing social and political conditions they were observed to be non-linear, disintegrating over time, followed by a sharp increase of ties to Czechia (Uherek 2011).

Other sources of information on Czech migration after 1989 include Brouček et al. (2017, 2019) and studies about Czech citizens of Roma origin in Canada (Uherek 2018) and the United Kingdom (Doležalová 2021). Other topics that have been studied include migration and return migration potential after Czechia's EU accession (e.g. Vavrečková 2006; Vavrečková and Hantak 2008; Vavrečková, Musil, and Baštýř 2007), migration motives (e.g. Pařízková 2011), and integration and transnationalism (e.g. Janurová 2018). A more recent study analysed home country policies related to social protection, consular protection, and the political participation of the diaspora (Janská and Janurová 2020). An overview of key institutions and policies showed that targeting the diaspora has not been a key concern for the Czech authorities or political parties in past decades, especially when it comes to social protection. This attitude may have been influenced by several factors: the low emigration rate (which did not lead to severe brain drain fears or a reduction of the labour force); a possible mutual reluctance on the part of the state and the diaspora to (re)establish relations after 40 years of communism, during which migrants were persecuted and denigrated; and a general *laissez-faire* attitude to migration in the first decade after the fall of the communist regime

in 1989, when the political scene was going through an overall transformation (Nešpor 2002).

While a few studies have focused on specific aspects of Czech migrants' lives (e.g. Janurová 2018; Pařízková 2011; Vavrečková and Hantak 2008; Vavrečková, Musil, and Baštýř 2007), there are not many publications on contemporary Czech diaspora policies (Brouček et al. 2019). Brouček et al. (2017), Janská and Janurová 2020, and Janská et al. (2022) were the first to study the contemporary Czech diaspora in selected countries and examine its needs and relationship to the Czech state.

It is well known that migrants send home financial remittances for various purposes. While we have quite detailed information on the type and nature of migration and remittances sent by Czech immigrants in the United States a century ago (see, e.g., Dubovický et al. 2003; Vaculík 2007), and we can relatively accurately estimate and further specify the financial and social remittances sent by foreign workers in Czechia to Moldova (see Drbohlav et al. 2017) and Ukraine (Janská et al. 2017), we know very little about how current Czech migrants abroad behave in terms of sending financial or material and social remittances (money, goods, or newly gained 'know-how') to their country of origin. More attention should be paid to this research in the future.

### **5.3 BLURRING THE BOUNDARIES BETWEEN TRANSNATIONALISM AND THE DIASPORA**

Dynamic changes in the direction of greater hybridity, liquified homes, and creolisation have led to a modern understanding of the diaspora concept that goes beyond its traditional use to describe the Jews in exile (e.g. Cohen 1996; Brubaker 2005). Old and new notions are used to categorise diasporas, such as the causes of migration or dispersal, cross-border links, and the degree of integration into settlement countries (Sheffer 1986; Safran 1991; Cohen 2019; Bauböck and Faist 2010). Reis (2004) distinguishes between the classical diaspora based on the Jewish archetype and contemporary diasporas characterised by transnationalism and globalisation (broadly used as expatriates or transnational communities - Hugo 2006; Vertovec 1999; or Kaplan 2017). The latter understanding of diaspora has become a central concept in transnational analysis and we have therefore also adopted it in our research (Bauböck and Faist 2010).

Other researchers have studied the dispersion of emigrant populations to two or more locations, ongoing orientations towards the 'homeland', and group boundary maintenance (Gamlen 2011; Brubaker 2005). A more modern approach to the concept of diaspora is exemplified by Dufoix (2003), who

recommends focusing on how and why diaspora communities emerge and dissipate, rather than on whether or not they conform to an ideal type at any given moment.

The definition of diasporas used by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the Migration Policy Institute (MPI) is informed by the length of stay and ties. In this way, diasporas include '[e]migrants and their descendants, who live outside the country of their birth or ancestry, either on a temporary or permanent basis, yet still maintain effective and material ties to their countries of origin' (Agunias and Newland 2012, 15; see also Baldassar et al. 2017). New attempts to use the concept of modern diaspora in contemporary transnational studies combine diaspora characteristics and transnational concepts to examine, on the one hand, how active relations and ties are maintained with the mother country through processes of interacting with a variety of home/host state institutions and to focus, on the other hand, on institutional engagement and integration in the country of destination (Tan et al. 2018; Gamlen 2011). This interconnection of the two concepts brings greater dynamism and flexibility to the study of diasporas (e.g. transnational communities, transnational territories, etc.; see Bruneau 2010), although we recognise that diasporas may be transnational, and transnational communities may not necessarily be diasporas.

In using the term 'new/modern diaspora', we understand it to mean the more intensive transnational practices of migrants (e.g. Jones 2022) that occur through transnational social channels, such as social interactions and exchanges that transcend the political and geographic boundaries of one nation (Itzigsohn 2000). A wide range of phenomena can be described as transnational practices, including political (e.g. Ostergaard-Nielsen 2003), social, cultural, and economic activities (e.g. Vertovec 2009; Itzigsohn and Saucedo 2002). Many Czechs have a deep involvement in these links and exchanges, whereas others participate in them only occasionally. Some members of this transnational diaspora engage in economic exchanges, some are part of its political or sociocultural links, and others only symbolically experience the transnational links.

The role of diasporas in the national development of both the origin and the destination countries has increasingly been recognised as important (e.g. migration and development issues), and in this context, the developmental effects are better understood from a transnational perspective that focuses on migrants' lives in and attachments to multiple territories (Tan et al. 2018; Vertovec 1999).

A phenomenon that until now has been described mainly in terms of migration networks that transcend national borders (Massey and España 1987) acquired new, expanded meanings. Anthropologists Glick-Schiller et al. (1992) introduced the term transnationalism to refer to how migrants

establish social fields that cross geographic, cultural, and political borders. This interdisciplinary embrace of the term yielded some of the most influential publications on transnationalism, including Portes et al. (1999) and Faist (2000). The concepts of transnationalism and the modern diaspora extend the focus of research on migration and development from the destinations where international migrants reside and from the issue of human capital transfer to encompass the transnational linkages in which the diaspora and other actors are situated. Particularly in the second decade of the 21st century, we have seen attempts to broaden the topic of cross-border connections and, above all, to free it from the polarity of nationalism versus transnationalism as two alternatives that exclude any other forms of connection (Waldinger 2015). The study of cross-border connections in all their diversity, including the theme of the absence of connections where they might be expected to exist (Nowicka 2020), is an objective to which we adapted our research design.

Since the beginning of the 1990s, many researchers have focused more on the increasing intensity and scale of the circular mobility of persons, goods, and information triggered by international migration (Vertovec 2009; Düvell and Vogel 2006). The different forms of contact with family members and others in the immigrants' country of origin led researchers to study not only what happens in the destination country but also the interconnections migrants have with their country of origin, what forms these ties take, and how much of an influence they have not just on family matters but also on broader societal and political issues from afar. Migrant associations and homeland links are among the most recent topics of scholarly interest (e.g. Hugo 2006; Cohen 2019; Safran 1991; Morad and Della Puppa 2019; Zhou and Liu 2016).

## **5.4 THE NUMBER OF CZECHS ABROAD AND THE ISSUE OF DATA AVAILABILITY**

Czech expatriate communities differ according to when and why their members went abroad (see more in Chapter 1). Before November 1989 the prevailing reasons for out-migration were political and economic; after that most people left for economic and other personal reasons (Jirásek 1999; Nešpor 2002). Many migrants have since also returned, making use at home of the skills and qualifications obtained abroad (Hovorková 2016 in Janská and Janurová 2020). While from Western countries it was mainly individuals, born in Czechia, who returned, from Eastern Europe and Central Asia entire enclaves of people who had lived abroad for several generations moved after 1990 (Beranská and Uherek 2021; Uherek and Valášková 2006).

Obtaining relevant data on migration movements is generally very difficult. Data from different sources vary, largely as a result of the different calculation methods used. One fundamental difference is whether we count as Czechs abroad all persons who have Czech citizenship or also persons who actively claim to be of Czech or even Czechoslovak origin. The statistics may also completely omit Czech citizens who have been living abroad for a long time but have not informed the Czech state that they reside abroad (Kostelecká et al. 2008, 22; Drbohlav et al. 2010, 24–28).

Available estimates of the number of Czechs abroad rely on estimates from Czech diplomatic missions abroad, which usually draw on a mixture of sources (host country government statistics, their own estimates, research, etc.). In some of these figures, it is hard to differentiate between people of Czech and Slovak origin owing to their historical cohabitation in one state. According to various estimates (Ministerstvo zahraničních věcí ČR 2012; UN 2017), 2.5 million people<sup>37</sup> of Czech origin are currently living abroad, including 962,153 Czech citizens,<sup>38</sup> which is equal to 8.5% of the population of Czechia (Ministerstvo zahraničních věcí ČR 2012; UN 2017).

By contrast, the Czech Statistical Office reports that there were 494,890 Czechs living abroad in 2022. These data are collected from administrative sources and their quality depends on whether or to what extent citizens report a change of residence. If a person moves abroad and does not report it to the authorities at home, he or she is not included in the statistics. The real number of Czechs living abroad may therefore be an order of magnitude higher (CZSO 2023a).

Data from the national statistical offices of the destination countries are also not entirely satisfactory, and the methodologies used to calculate them may also differ. Some statistical offices publish data on the number of foreign-born persons (e.g. Australia, Germany, and France) and others publish data on foreigners who have a different nationality or claim a different nationality (e.g. New Zealand). The sources the data come from also vary. Some countries rely on national population registers, others draw their data from censuses or labour market surveys (DESTATIS 2022; Office for National

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**37** This rough estimate is based on a wide range of sources, including official statistics from individual target countries and multinational organisations, qualified estimates from embassies in destination countries, and expert studies. The number of compatriots thus includes Czech citizens worldwide, persons born in the Czech Republic, persons who have Czech as their native language, and persons claiming Czech origin, even if they are descendants several generations removed from an ancestral Czech emigrant.

**38** This figure includes only persons born on Czech territory and living abroad and in rare cases the number of Czech citizens residing in some countries. It therefore does not include the Czech diaspora or 'compatriots', in the broader sense used by the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs and in this publication - i.e. including persons who claim Czech origin who are already several-generation descendants of Czech migrants.

Statistics 2021; Australian Bureau of Statistics 2021; Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment 2022; Insee 2021; United States Census Bureau 2019). Data published by international organisations including the OECD (OECD Stat 2022) and the MPI are compiled from national statistics and national estimates. Table 1 illustrates how much estimates of the number of Czechs abroad vary. It presents the numbers for countries that have the largest Czech diaspora communities and shows the estimated numbers according to several different sources. Taking as an example the number of Czechs in Germany, we can see how the figures differ depending on the source of the data and on how the given institution defines the target population. The number of Czech expatriates in Germany, which has long ranked just behind the United Kingdom in terms of the size of the post-1989 diaspora, has been increasing in recent years, partly as a result of the restrictions that Brexit placed on migration to the United Kingdom. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) (2020) estimates that there are around 80,000 Czech compatriots in Germany. According to the results of the regular German micro-census and information from the German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, the number of Czech migrants (persons with Czech citizenship and/or persons of migration origin with ties to the Czech Republic) living in Germany is around 200,000. The UN's figure for Germany is fundamentally out of line with all the other statistics and is a significant overestimate, as it claims there are more than 500,000 people living in Germany who were born in the Czech Republic. This figure, which is based, among other things, on the results of the 2011 German census, is equal to 55% of the total number of Czech-born people living outside the Czech Republic, which seems like a gross overestimate when compared to other major destination countries. A closer analysis of this figure reveals that 84% of this number is made up of people aged 65+, a significant proportion of whom appear to be displaced Germans and others who were born in the borderlands and were affected by the post-Second World War border changes. These people, therefore, are not Czech migrants or their descendants.

Although the aggregate data presented above are likely biased by the different methodologies used by the statistical institutions that compiled them in individual countries and by the range of people included in these statistics, they can – subject to correction by other sources – be used as a guideline to the global distribution of the Czech diaspora and its activities. There is also an interactive map that provides an idea of where the largest concentrations of expatriates are (<https://www.cestikrajane.cz/>).



**Table 1.** The size of the Czech diaspora overall and in selected countries

| Source of data                       | Total  | Australia                         | New Zealand                   | Germany  | France                           | United Kingdom  | United States  |
|--------------------------------------|--|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------|--|----------------------------------|---|--|
| ČSÚ (2022)                           | 494,890  | 31,502                            | 2,467                         | 96,430   | -                                | 63,134  | 51,744   |
| UN DESA (2019)                       | 911,388  | 13,796                            | 1,374                         | 502,609  | 9,514                            | 35,906  | 81,926   |
| National statistics                  | -  | 12,200<br>(2020 – place of birth) | 1,203<br>(2021 – nationality) | 117,000–200,000<br>(2020 – people with migrant background) | 7,700<br>(2018 – place of birth) | 36,000<br>(2020–2021 – place of birth)<br>33,000<br>(nationality) | 68,312<br>(2019 – place of birth in Czechia /Slovakia) |
| MFA                                  | 200,000–250,000<br>Czech citizens<br>2–2,500,000<br>Czech origin | 27,000–35,000                     | 6,000–00                      | 80,000<br>(2020)   | -                                | 40,000  | 1,300,000<br>(Czech origin)                            |
| OECD – FB by country of birth (2022) | -  | 11,860 (2021)                     | 2,361 (2018)                  | 121,000  | 8,333                            | 36,000<br>(2021)  | 27,539 (2014)  |
| OECD – FB by nationality (2022)      | -  | -                                 | -                             | 63,280   | 4,675                            | 33,000 (2021)   | 13,896 (2021)  |
| Migration Policy Institute (2020)    | 1,026,000  | 14,000                            | 3,000                         | 603,000  | 9,000                            | 46,000  | 110,000  |

Source: Adjusted according to Cibulková (2023).

### 5.4.1 REMITTANCES

Another and equally important piece of information for identifying important destination countries and the presence of the Czech diaspora in those countries is data on remittances (Ionescu 2006, 62–65), which can have an impact on the development of the destination country's economy (Gamlen 2008a, 850–851; Gamlen 2014, 181; Tan et al. 2018, 9; Østergaard-Nielsen 2016, 149). However, as with the number of people living abroad (see above), it is not possible to obtain accurate data on the total volume of remittances sent to the Czech Republic (Solimano 2003). The data published by the CZSO (2023a), for instance, only capture remittances sent through formal channels. It is very difficult to obtain any record of remittances that are sent informally – for example, in the form of cash or goods (Solimano 2003; Drbohlav et al. 2022; Cibulková 2023). The growing importance of remittances for Czechia and thus for the development of new policies aimed at the diaspora is demonstrated by more reliable data from the World Bank, which show a rapid increase since 1993 from USD 138 million to 4.15 billion in 2022 (WB 2023b). The largest amounts come from Germany, the United Kingdom, Ireland, Austria, and the United States. But if we set the data on the number of Czechs in individual countries within the context of the data on remittances sent, we see that the volume of remittances sent from the United States and Australia, where the more traditional expatriate communities are located, is relatively small in relation to their diaspora numbers. On the other hand, large amounts of remittances per capita flow to the Czech Republic from New Zealand and Germany.

Obtaining accurate data on the exact number of Czechs living abroad is generally challenging, and this complicates the development of more efficient diaspora policies (Ionescu 2006, 62–65). The most comprehensive approach is to amalgamate diverse sources to ensure that the resulting data are as accurate as possible.

#### **BOX 1. THE KEY DESTINATION COUNTRIES**

United States (USA): cca 1.6 mill. people of Czech origin (1.3 mill. of Czech origin and 0.3 mill. of Czechoslovak origin; United States Census Bureau 2019)

Canada: cca 105,000 people of Czech origin and cca 40,000 of Czechoslovak origin (Statistics Canada 2018)

United Kingdom: cca 100,000 people according to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2020)

Germany: 63,280 Czech citizens (in 2023, the last census), 117,000 of whom are Czechs who migrated themselves and 217,000 are people of Czech origin (Destatis)

Austria: 65,000 people (UN in 2019)

Switzerland: 40,000–50,000

France: 30,000 (Ministry of the Interior 2020)

Australia: 31,000

Spain, Slovakia, and Italy currently host comparable numbers of Czech migrants, estimated to be in the range of 20,000 to 25,000 (Janská et al. 2021) (for more see [www.cestikrajane.cz](http://www.cestikrajane.cz)).

## 5.5 RESEARCH DESIGN FOR THE STUDY OF THE CZECH DIASPORA IN MIGRATION CONDITIONS

The current circular migration and the confluence of migration and mobility are conditions that prevent us from being able to capture migration from the Czech Republic by just studying historical enclaves or active members of the diaspora in local associations abroad. In addition to these sources of information, it is necessary to develop a way of capturing as many as possible of the growing number of Czechs who are living outside the Czech Republic but are not in contact with other members of the Czech diaspora, as these persons may have strong transnational ties and be an active element in cross-border exchange.

To gather comprehensive information, we developed a comprehensive research methodology that incorporates both quantitative and qualitative approaches. This involves using tools such as surveys and interviews, with an emphasis on questionnaires, observational techniques, and active participation.

### 5.5.1 THE QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY

Since it is impossible to create a random sample of the diaspora for data collection, we created a platform to facilitate the widest possible distribution of our questionnaire. The questionnaire was sent out using MailerLite, and we also asked the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Czexpats in Science network to distribute the questionnaire through their networks. Through the involvement of Czexpats in Science we were able to target a selection of Czech scientists with international careers, who completed a set of additional questions. Some questionnaires were also distributed personally by all the individual researchers involved in our research project through their own networks and activities (conferences, their own contact database, etc.). We also sent the questionnaires to Czech Clubs, distributed them through relevant Facebook groups, and used paid advertising targeting Czech Facebook users located abroad with the default language set to Czech.

The questionnaire survey was conducted between May 2021 and September 2021 and a total of 985 questionnaires were collected. After discarding

incomplete and duplicate questionnaires 940 remained. The questionnaire included 99 items. Some questions, however, were used to filter respondents without the required characteristics. Therefore, each respondent answered fewer than 99 questions. Specific questions were included for Czech-born scientists abroad that concerned their work and possible employment in Czechia. A total of 198 respondents completed the questions for expats in science (see Chapter 9 for details). The questionnaire took approximately 30 minutes to complete. It was anonymous, and anonymity was also promised to the respondents in the cover letter, which explained the purpose of the research and listed the institutions that conducted the research and the website where the respondents could learn more about the research. The data were analysed by partner institutions, not the institution that fielded the survey, thereby ensuring the anonymity and independence of the data.

There was no pay to respondents to complete the questionnaire. There was some possible reward and motivation for respondents in that, after completing the questionnaire, they were able to select and download publications issued by the Institute of Ethnology of the Czech Academy of Sciences and the Faculty of Science of Charles University.

In addition to the basic passport questions, the questionnaire also asked respondents which country they live in and how long they have been abroad. It, therefore, made it possible to sort respondents not only by age, education, gender, marital status, and children in the family but also by location and length of stay abroad.

The core of the questionnaire consisted of questions about the motivation for going abroad, the respondent's employment abroad, language skills, the language of communication in the family, contact with other members of the diaspora, and the nature of the respondent's contact with Czechia, whether the respondent expects to return to the Czech Republic and under what conditions. A separate battery of questions was devoted to communication with Czech authorities abroad, remittances, and the issue of the children's education. Given the ongoing discussion about postal and electronic voting in the Czech Republic and among compatriots, a part of the questionnaire was reserved for questions about political participation and the possibility of compatriots abroad voting in the elections for representative bodies in the Czech Republic. In addition to closed and semi-closed questions, the questionnaire also included open questions where respondents were able to comment freely on any worries and difficulties they have in life and what obstacles they see to returning to Czechia or integrating into the society of the destination country. At the end of the questionnaire, the respondents were thanked for their participation and offered the opportunity to continue to communicate with the researchers and to participate in qualitative research in the form of in-depth interviews. A large part of the sample used to collect qualitative data was constructed this way.

### 5.5.2 IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS

The qualitative, in-depth interviews focused on certain themes that were raised in the questionnaire survey. Communication partners selected for the interviews were from the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, the United States, France, and Germany. Based on the results of the questionnaire survey, we identified the most important discussion themes and then formulated relevant questions. The questions were formulated in a way that would allow for dialogue and create space for a free-flowing discussion with an expected length of 20–45 minutes. The interview questions covered the following topics: (1) Motivations for living abroad and ideas for the future (whether or not to return to Czechia); (2) Relationship to the Czech Republic (contacts, memories, property, sentiments, feeling at home); (3) Contact with institutions and their assessment (embassies, consulates, diaspora organisations, institutions in Czechia); (4) An estimate of the current and potential benefits that the Czech Republic has or could have from the diaspora's transnationalism and from Czech compatriots abroad (economic, cultural, and political benefits and knowledge). During the interview, respondents were allowed to suggest other topics they wanted to discuss.

### 5.5.3 FOCUS GROUP

The questionnaire survey and the additional questions aimed at the scientific community then formed the basis of a focus group discussion that was held with eight scientists living abroad. The focus group was part of the qualitative research and was aimed at scientists abroad as a specific population of expatriates. In principle, this group is similar to other highly educated and highly mobile groups of expatriates (e.g. officials in international organisations, multinational companies, and NGOs). In this population, mobility is very closely tied to a person's profession, which influences both the decision to emigrate and to potentially return to the Czech Republic and affects how much or whether a person cooperates with Czech colleagues and the Czech public sphere. The focus group with the scientists was therefore held in addition to and not in place of the semi-structured interviews. The focus group was organised around professional and career questions, through which we interpreted the compatriot-scientists' relationship to the Czech Republic and their needs. The questions were prepared after a preliminary analysis of the questionnaire survey so that they would reflect the main issues raised by the scientists in their survey responses.

The eight participants in the group were selected by the Czexpats in Science team. They were drawn from the wider community of Czech scientists abroad whom Czexpats in Science knows about, and not just from the group

of survey respondents, who can be assumed to be more interested in cooperation with the Czech Republic or in returning because they are in contact with the Czexpats in Science organisation. The team paid special attention to contacting potential participants who were not connected to the organisation and to capturing participants in different career stages. The focus group took place online on 31 March 2022 via Zoom, and it lasted 1 hour and 40 minutes (this was shorter than the standard live focus groups because online focus groups make it more difficult for participants to concentrate).

As well as focus groups, we also included, where possible, observation and personal participation. We carried out surveys in Germany, the United Kingdom, the United States, and New Zealand.

#### **5.5.4 DATA LIMITATIONS**

The quantitative data we are working with comes from the most extensive questionnaire survey ever conducted among the Czech diaspora, which used every possible means to reach its members. We also collected a large amount of qualitative data with substantial narrative value. However, the data are not representative, in a statistical sense, as we do not have a complete record of all diaspora members or any other instrument with which to conduct random sampling. This limits the range of mathematical and statistical operations that can be performed on the sample. Although we reached out to the diaspora in many ways, ultimately a significant role was played by self-selection, that is, by diaspora members' own activity and their decision to complete the questionnaire. This logically tends to lead to an overrepresentation of people who want to say something, are active, use written and electronic communication, find our questions understandable, and are interested in communicating with Czech academic institutions. In this sense, the data set is clearly skewed towards persons who were born in Czechia, are familiar with Czech conditions and institutions, have Czech as their native language, and have secondary and higher education. Conversely, there is an underrepresentation of those members of the diaspora who were born abroad, feel themselves to be Czech but do not have Czech as their mother tongue, older people, and people who do not use electronic communication. A limitation of the questionnaire is that it targeted people over 18 years of age and people who had been living abroad for more than six months – anyone abroad for less than six months could not complete the questionnaire. The survey also did not include potential members of the diaspora who might feel Czech but were not of Czech origin or born in Czechia, such as partners of Czechs in mixed marriages.

## 5.6 CONCLUSION

In our investigations, we were not just pursuing narrow intellectual, academic interests, as we also sought to implement the results of the research in practice and to engage in a discussion with institutions in Czechia that work with Czech compatriots. In our view, these institutions are part of the transnational space that compatriots move in. We have therefore produced three research reports,<sup>39</sup> which we have submitted to the executive and legislative bodies of the Czech Republic. The biggest discussion devoted to the Czech diaspora took place in the Chamber of Deputies of the Parliament of the Czech Republic in November 2022 and included the research team, Czech politicians and policymakers, and the interested public (see, e.g., the Executive Report at <https://www.cestikrajane.cz/>).

The following chapters in this book are based on the survey, in-depth interviews, and focus groups discussed above: the quantitative survey was used (as a source for the research presented in Chapters 6 and 7, the qualitative data were used for Chapter 8 (primarily data from the in-depth interviews) and Chapter 9 (the focus group).

This study on the Czech diaspora and contemporary research on diaspora issues provide insight into diverse facets of the life, mobility, and transnational connections of Czechs abroad. This work builds on existing research, particularly qualitative analyses focused on ethnic identification and integration, and offers a fresh perspective on the Czech diaspora in light of recent changes, especially in Eastern Europe.

In the field of transnationalism and diaspora studies, we present a dynamic view that blurs the boundaries between these concepts and emphasises how modern conceptions of the diaspora have moved beyond traditional uses of the term. Our approach to defining a new diaspora builds on the more intensive transnational practices of migrants and identifies a range of such phenomena, from economic to cultural and political activities.

In the section above concerning data on the Czech diaspora, we underscore how difficult it is to acquire accurate migration data. It is hard to estimate the number of Czechs abroad because of the various methodologies

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39 Report 1: Výzkum možností koordinace krajanské politiky; (Research on the possibilities of coordination of compatriot policy); Report 2: Výzkum potřeb krajanských komunit v jednotlivých zemích z hlediska udržení jejich vazeb na ČR (Research on the needs of compatriot communities in individual countries in terms of maintaining their ties to the Czech Republic); Report 3: Výzkum potřeb krajanských komunit ve vybraných zemích z hlediska udržení jejich vazeb na ČR: Velká Británie, Austrálie, Nový Zéland, USA a Německo (Research into the needs of expatriate communities in selected countries in terms of maintaining their ties to the Czech Republic: the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, the United States, and Germany).

used in different countries and the difficulties associated with identifying diaspora communities. Our work stimulates discussion of the need for more precise data sources, particularly on the role of the Czech diaspora in the economic and cultural development of the country.

The research design of this study combines quantitative and qualitative approaches, which yielded a rich body of information on the motivations, transnational ties, and needs of Czech expatriates. We employed a broad range of methods – a survey, interviews, and observations – that allowed us to explore the Czech diaspora in its diversity and complexity.

Despite the limitations associated with the data collection – our sample is not statistically representative and is mostly the product of self-selection – this study constitutes a valuable contribution to understanding the contemporary challenges faced by the Czech diaspora. It underscores the need for further research in this area. We are confident that our efforts will lead to a deeper understanding of the role of the Czech diaspora in today's globalised society and enhance the dialogue between the diaspora and the Czech Republic.

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# CHAPTER 6

## **THE EXPECTATIONS AND NEEDS OF THE CZECH DIASPORA TOWARDS THE CZECH STATE: FROM A SURVEY PERSPECTIVE**

EVA JANSKÁ, DUŠAN DRBOHLAV, & ZDENĚK ČERMÁK

### **6.1 INTRODUCTION**

The reciprocal relationship between the diaspora and the home country is one of the fundamental defining elements of today's understanding of the diaspora as a transnational community (Tan et al. 2018). These relationships are important both for the formation and functioning of the diaspora itself and for the mother country, which can be enriched through remittances in a range of areas, from economic and political to social and cultural. It is thus in the interest of the state to maintain relations with the diaspora and to promote its development and sense of belonging to the mother country.

In this chapter, we will therefore focus on the issue of the relationship of compatriots to the Czech state and, in particular, on the needs and expectations they have towards Czech institutions. This chapter will highlight the most important areas of problems that diaspora members encounter in their interactions with the Czech state using information from an online questionnaire (see Chapter 5). In the first part, we describe the demographic and socioeconomic features of the questionnaire's respondents, including their geographic distribution. This is followed by a brief overview of their contact with the Czech Republic, both on a personal level (e.g. with family) and on a more or less official level with Czech institutions in the place where they live and in the Czech Republic. The core of the chapter is then devoted to an assessment of what compatriots need from Czech institutions to ease and improve their life abroad or the possibility of their return. Special attention is paid to the social and political engagement of compatriots through their potential participation in elections in the Czech Republic and to the problems associated with this.

### **6.2 THE DEMOGRAPHIC AND SOCIOECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS OF MEMBERS OF THE CZECH DIASPORA**

In addition to the traditional closed questions that make up the majority of the questionnaire, we also included a few open-ended questions that allowed respondents to comment freely in their response. The survey was fielded

between the end of May 2021 and the end of September 2021, and we received a total of 940 fully completed questionnaires from respondents (more details on the questionnaire design, survey method, and interpretive limitations are discussed in Chapter 5). We subjected selected data from the questionnaire survey to simple analysis in the form of descriptive statistics. This involved, first of all, evaluating the most important structural features that could be used to assess the nature of the respondent population. At the same time, for some of the evaluation questions, we obtained general information about the respondents and their attitudes towards various issues, especially in relation to the Czech Republic and its institutions.<sup>40</sup>

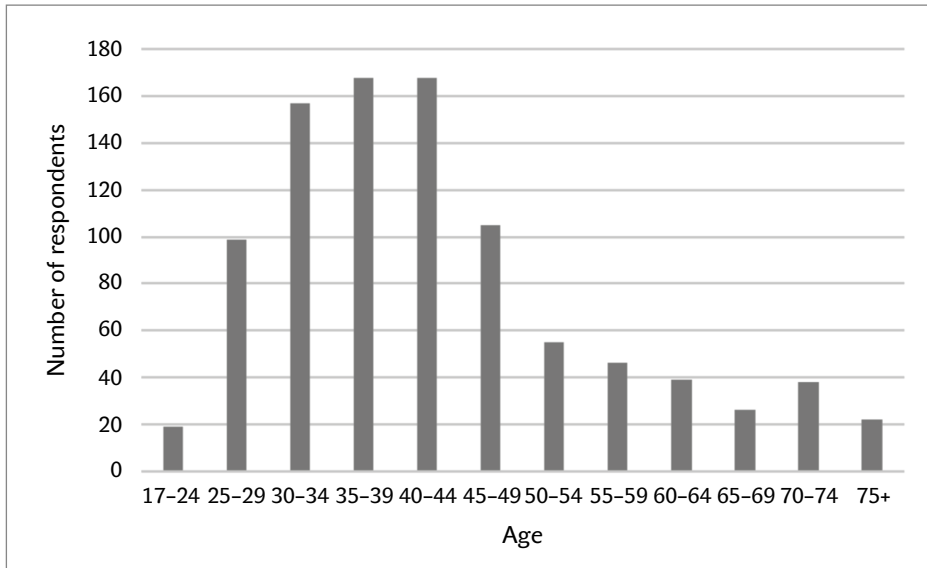
The open-ended questions were used to assess the possibility of the migrants returning, the role of the state in this process, the life of compatriot communities, and the issue of correspondence voting. These questions were answered by between a quarter and a half of the respondents in the total research sample. The responses were quite varied and were coded into roughly eight or nine groups for better processing. A number of respondents cited several reasons in their response to questions such as whether they were planning to return home, so we worked with the numbers of categorised responses rather than the numbers of respondents in the evaluation. In addition to assessing and interpreting the shares of each response category (see below), we present some direct responses from respondents typical of the issue for illustrative purposes.

The sample of respondents who took part in the online survey cannot be considered representative (see Chapter 5). Nevertheless, the shares of respondents by the countries in which they currently live offer a fairly good picture of the current geographic distribution of Czech expatriates. Respondents from a wide range of about 90 countries participated in the survey. The countries that the largest shares of respondents in our sample live in largely coincide with the countries that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs estimates have the largest communities of Czech expatriates (Chapter 5). The top three countries were the United Kingdom (166 respondents), Germany (163), and the United States (143). There were also between 10 and 50 respondents representing Czech communities in the other countries (the 15 largest).

Demographic and socioeconomic characteristics are among the basic features of a population. Among the respondents to our survey, the majority were women (68%), which is probably related to their greater communicativeness and therefore willingness to participate in the research. The age composition shows that the highest share of respondents were between the ages of 30 and 44 (over half of the respondents – Figure 1). In terms of marital

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40 More detailed results of the questionnaire survey are part of the Research Report (Janská et al. 2022).



**Figure 1.** Age structure of respondents (N=940)

status, over 70% of respondents were married or living with a partner, while 15% were single or unmarried. The composition by educational attainment was significantly influenced by the fact that to help find respondents we cooperated with the Czexpats in Science organisation, an organisation aimed at young Czech scientists abroad (see Chapter 5). This fact is reflected in the composition of the research sample, in which 31% of the respondents had a master's degree and 24% even had a PhD degree. In terms of employment, private sector workers dominated (about one-third of respondents), followed by civil servants (less than one-fifth of the research sample). Respondents who were studying also made up a significant group (about one-tenth).

Approximately 60% of the respondents had children, and in 80% of cases the children were living with them abroad. About half of the children were of school age. One-fifth of the children attended organised Czech language courses. Only 16% of respondents said that it was not possible to enrol their children in a Czech school. This finding suggests the potential for respondents' children to return to the Czech education system and thus increases the possibility of the respondent moving (back) to the Czech Republic in the future.

The number of respondents logically decreases with the reported length of stay abroad. About 46% of them said they had been living abroad for less than 10 years, 28% for 11 to 20 years, and 26% for more than 21 years. Thus, the research sample mainly captures people who left the Czech Republic after 1989 and are characterised by a different type of migration behaviour, the type associated, for example, with the concept of the new/modern diaspora

(see Chapter 5). The main motive respondents cited for leaving the Czech Republic was not political, but for work and private reasons, and in the case of scientists, in order to pursue a scientific career or for education.

### **6.3 THE TRANSNATIONAL RELATIONS OF DIASPORA MEMBERS TO CZECHIA**

The main part of the questionnaire focused on evaluating the relations of compatriots to the Czech Republic. Such relations include direct contact with family and friends (visits, online communication, remittances) and relations with institutions and informal associations in the country of residence (e.g. Czechoslovak embassies, expatriate associations) and in the Czech Republic (mainly various state and public administration bodies: municipal and city authorities, labour offices, social insurance administration, health insurance companies, etc.).

Considering the nature of the respondents in terms of their length of stay abroad, including a significant proportion of students and young researchers, the high intensity of their contact with the Czech Republic is not too surprising. About 80% of respondents reported that they visit the Czech Republic at least once a year and more than half of them are in online contact with their family several times a week. The high number of direct visits they reported making to the Czech Republic is connected, of course, to the location of the respondents and thus their geographic distance from or proximity to the country: two-thirds of the respondents were living in a European country, while 23% were living in a country directly neighbouring the Czech Republic. A specific indicator of the relationship between the source country and the country of residence is remittances. In terms of financial remittances, i.e. money earned abroad and sent home (usually to immediate or extended family), it turns out, not surprisingly, that Czechs do not support their family members in the Czech Republic with remittances (19% of respondents were sending remittances). The main reason for this is that the Czech Republic belongs to the group of developed countries with a relatively high standard of living, and therefore sending remittances to the Czech Republic is not necessary, unlike the case in many less developed countries. Therefore, the earnings of Czech expatriates mostly go to consumption and investments.

While expatriate associations are an important institution for maintaining ties with the country of origin, it appears that only about one-third of the respondents had frequent or at least sporadic contact with such associations or participated in their events. Among those respondents who were in contact with expatriate associations, two-thirds rated these forms of contact as excellent or very good. On the other hand, 59% of respondents had no contact



with Czech expatriate associations in their new country of residence. Similarly, attendance at Czech schools abroad was low – a full 69% of respondents had had no direct communication with a Czech educational institution in the past five years. This, however, does not correspond to the possibility that children could enter these schools given their reported knowledge of Czech. It is possible that the children were learning at home, or that they were still young and did not yet have to attend school, or that there were problems with school accessibility. Those who were in contact with a Czech school were very satisfied with the communication, with about two-thirds rating the communication very positively – as excellent or very good.

Czech state and public institutions are an integral part of the links that exist between compatriots and their country of origin. In a way, they represent the relationship of the state to the compatriot communities and thus enable the direct implementation of state policy towards these communities. The institutions operating directly abroad, i.e. primarily the embassies of the Czech state, are the first line of contact with Czechs abroad. Compatriots turn to them primarily to deal with various official matters such as passports, ID cards, birth certificates, etc. A large share of the respondents did not rely on Czech embassies very much or did not seek them out – 44% of respondents had had direct communication with the consular section of the Czech embassy in the destination country only once a year at most during the last five years and 40% had had no communication at all. However, this may also indicate the relative self-sufficiency of the Czech diaspora. Among those who communicated with the consular section of the Czech consulate in their destination country, there were more who were satisfied than dissatisfied with their experience. Contact with the embassy was even less frequent than contact with their consular sections among expatriates: 22% of respondents had communicated directly with the Czech embassy in their destination country at most once a year during the last five years and a full 68% had had no contact with the embassy.

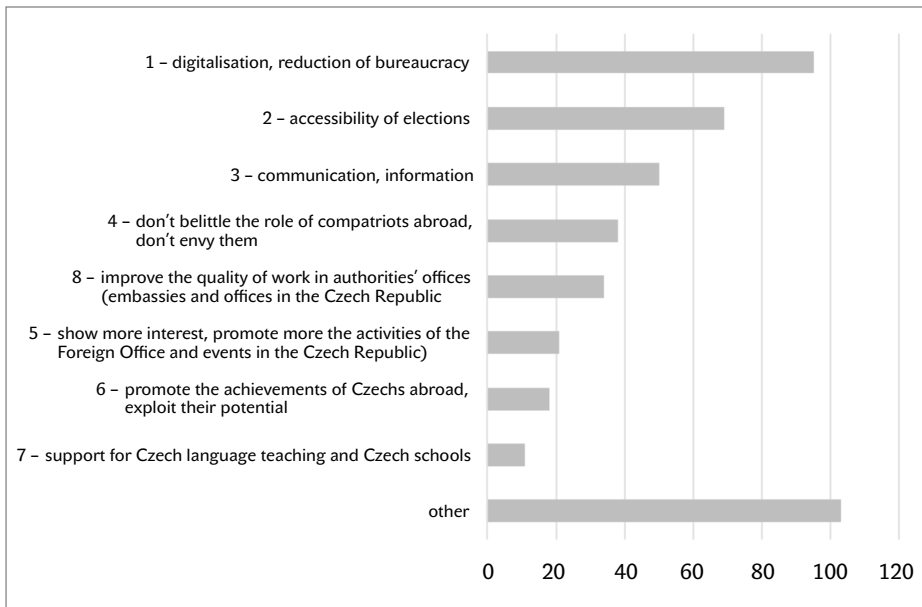
A smaller proportion of respondents reported being in contact with institutions in the Czech Republic. About one-half of them said that they had been in contact with local authorities in the Czech Republic and a similar number had been in touch with a health insurance company in the Czech Republic to deal with some problem. For other institutions, the number of respondents who reported any contact drops significantly below 30%.

#### **6.4 ASSESSING WHAT THE CZECH DIASPORA NEEDS AND EXPECTS FROM THE CZECH STATE**

In examining the needs and expectations of expatriates towards the Czech Republic, we based our assessment primarily on an open-ended question

aimed at improving the Czechs state's relationship to these communities (Figure 2). We summarised the diverse range of responses into the following broad recommendations:

- Less bureaucracy, more computerisation, digitalisation, make it easier to find services and make the provision of services clearer, faster, and more accessible;
- Make voting easier and more accessible to Czech citizens abroad; allow electronic, correspondence, and remote forms of voting;
- Provide more information, more and better communication;
- See compatriots abroad as equal partners, do not disparage their role, envy them, or discriminate against them;
- Show more interest, be more proactive, be more accessible, and do more to promote the activities of embassies and events in the Czech Republic;
- Promote the achievements of Czechs abroad, appreciate and exploit their potential, try to attract them back to the Czech Republic, and make more use of their experience for the development of the Czech Republic (involvement in government, business, foreign contacts, expert activities, etc.);
- Expand the availability of accredited online instruction in the Czech language and other courses about the Czech Republic for adults and children; more diverse support for Czech schools and teachers abroad;



**Figure 2.** Number of responses to the question 'In what ways do you think the Czech Republic's relationship with compatriots abroad could be improved?' (N=357, number of responses = 437)

- Improve the quality of work at the Czech consulates and embassies (better staff, friendlier opening hours, shorter waiting times for appointments, kinder behaviour, more empathy and respect); similarly, improve the quality of the work with Czech citizens living abroad in institutions in the Czech Republic.

The battery of questions focusing on the quality of the work of Czech institutions that expatriates come into contact with is also to some extent indicative of what their needs and expectations are. There were two problems that were most frequently mentioned. The first and more or less general problem relates to the quality of the staff of these institutions. Some compatriots criticise the unwillingness, incompetence, and sometimes even arrogance of staff at these institutions (20% of responses):

‘The approach to the client, especially the communication and the willingness to help, especially at the office, if you don’t know something, they look at you like you’re from outer space, they are usually unwilling to help and are arrogant.’

‘A human approach, and not acting from a position of power or a position of strength or superiority. The concept of an equal relationship, i.e. a partnership between a Czech institution and a citizen, or between a Czech doctor and a patient, is unfortunately still an unknown thing in the Czech Republic.’

‘Better communication would certainly be great. I often find that when I contact someone from the Czech authorities, I get a rude answer, which unfortunately is not very helpful. It would certainly also be a big plus if it were possible to solve certain problems online – through some sort of verified portal – as it is not always possible to go to the Czech Republic to visit the office in person.’

The second problem relates to the previous one and is about expanding the possibility of online (‘digital’) relations with the authorities. In many of the answers (25%) this was also presented as a solution to the bureaucracy of institutions:

‘What is dealt with by the authorities in the Czech Republic abroad can all be dealt with comfortably from home online. Maybe the Czech Republic could also start thinking about an online portal and simplifying the process for people living outside the Czech Republic.’

‘Better training for electronic communication and improving its use. Even though officially it is often possible to send documents and applications via a data box, it happens that officials don’t read these messages, don’t respond to them, or they don’t get into the right hands. You then have to call the authorities to see if they have received your documents properly and if that’s enough to take care of things.’

## 6.5 THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE DIASPORA TO POLITICAL LIFE IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC: THE ISSUE OF VOTING

An important finding is the relatively high interest among compatriots in current events in the Czech Republic, with a strong focus on political activities. A total of 70% of respondents said they follow news and events in the Czech Republic once or more a week. One-half of the research sample reported they were interested in politics in the Czech Republic and another quarter were somewhat interested. Therefore, it is not surprising that the most frequently voiced demands of respondents from the Czech state include improving the possibility to participate in elections through Czech representative bodies abroad (see Figure 2). The biggest obstacle to participating in elections, in the view of respondents, is the long distance they have to travel to the place where they have to register to vote and then actually vote.

‘Going to a polling station, which is sometimes more than 100 km away, is not environmental, it’s inefficient and it costs a lot of money. It’s not fair.’

‘Registration at a polling station abroad is done in person and has a deadline of a few weeks before election day. Those who live further away will not consider making two trips to the consulate or remember to do it in advance. At the very least, it should be possible to change your polling place via a data message.’

In response to the question ‘What could be improved in the election procedure to make it easier for you to vote?’, respondents clearly supported introducing any form of remote voting – whether by correspondence or on-line. Of those who answered this question (N=666), over 70% of respondents were in favour of this option:

‘There should be no more ignoring Czechs abroad with the right to vote. We should be able to vote by correspondence.’

These results may contribute to a discussion on the merits of postal voting for Czech expatriates abroad. The absence of this form of voting may also be an important reason for the relatively low turnout in the last elections in the Czech Republic, which was around the time of the survey – 59% of respondents did not participate in the presidential elections and 63% did not participate in the parliamentary elections.

## 6.6 POTENTIAL RE-EMIGRATION: BARRIERS AND LIMITS

Returning to one's homeland, though hard to define in the current era of transnational migration, can be an important expression of people's relationship to their country of origin. At the same time, it can be expected that a state's policy towards its diaspora will support return migration, especially in terms of potential returnees' re-entry into the domestic labour market and their ability to contribute their knowledge and skills to its development.

In our research sample, we identified a relatively high proportion of respondents for whom returning might be an option. More than half of the respondents can be regarded more or less as potential return migrants (those who when asked about returning responded definitely yes – 16%, maybe yes – 12%, don't know – 24%), while only 15% said that they are not considering a return to the Czech Republic. In addition to a wide range of factors that influence the use of this potential, the activities of the state play a significant role in this field. Therefore, we asked respondents what the main obstacles to their returning to the Czech Republic were and how the Czech state could facilitate their return.

If we asked more broadly what would make the decision to return easier, a large part of the answers focused on structural changes in the Czech Republic. By far the most common response was 'change in the social/political situation' (21% of all responses, N=499). Here reference was often made to the names of individual politicians and the overall direction of the country – for example, the issues the country's foreign policy focuses on. Respondents often criticised the orientation 'towards the East', but some, on the other hand, were bothered by membership in the European Union. Among social phenomena, sexism, the closed nature of Czech society, and the absence of same-sex marriages were criticised. The following answers as to what would make deciding to return easier fell into this category:

'A change in political conditions in the Czech Republic, more openness of the Czech Republic towards the world.'

'If the admirers of oligarchs and undemocratic regimes would disappear.'

'Lower property prices, [better] quality food, less pro-Brussels politics - more pride in the Czech nation.'

'The mind of Czech citizens ... they're looking at each other's plates, gossiping, the mentality of the nation simply has to be "further" developed ...'

'The promotion of marriage and adoption by same-sex couples.'

'If the Czech political scene would become a bit more cultured, the situation of minorities would improve, sexism and envy would disappear, and people would not look at me enviously or through their fingers just because I lived somewhere else for a while.'

The next most common category of responses to this question relates to 'adequate job opportunities' (16%). This response was often shared by scientist respondents, but not exclusively. Responses often linked the existence of job opportunities to financial remuneration (but these also form a separate category below). Here are some examples of the responses people gave:

'Employment opportunities in the field, recognition of years of service outside the EU.'

'Knowing that I can find a well-paid job in the field.'

'The possibility for further advancement in my field, a job - I am a professional diplomat with 15 years of experience including several long-term missions and working on missions for OBSE UNHCR.'

The next most common category of responses as to what might induce people to return is about 'better social policies (including housing policies)' (10%). Frequently raised topics here include housing affordability and support for families with children, pensions, and health issues.

'More support for young families with children.'

'Conditions for our child who has special needs.'

'The possibility of getting a mortgage and the availability of housing, nursery schools, or playgroups for very young children (under 3).'

'Stability and security of pension provision.'

'If there was a better school system ....'

The last significant category is 'administrative support/less bureaucracy' (8%). Respondents mention the need for clear, up-to-date information, especially in the areas of health insurance, taxes, the social system, but also information about jobs.

When we asked more specifically how the Czech Republic could make it easier to return, we received answers that could be classified into three main categories:

- (1) The availability of online applications with the necessary information, online access to process various documents, less bureaucracy, better communication with the authorities (16% of the total number of responses, N=265);
- (2) An equal salary level (in the Czech Republic), a better economic situation, incentives (16%);
- (3) Working in the industry/networking, the possibility to work in the industry, and greater transparency in hiring procedures (15%).

Interesting results were also provided by respondents who are not yet considering returning. Their decision to stay where they are is mostly based on reasons that are personal or generally have to do with their satisfaction with the place where they live (this is the view of approximately three-quarters of those who expressed an opinion, N=387). We included these reasons in the following categories: 'Children's education, background, contacts, family, housing'; 'I am at home here, I have lived here for a long time'; 'Better quality of life, I am happy here, we are better off here'; or 'Better opportunities, work reasons, salary'.

A smaller number of reasons related to a negative view of the situation in the Czech Republic. These views fall into the following types of categories: 'Political situation, shameful political scene', 'Sexism, racism, mentality, morality', or 'Corruption, bureaucracy'.

## 6.7 CONCLUSION

As we already stated above, the results of the questionnaire survey cannot be considered fully representative given the way that the respondents were selected. They relate primarily to the sample we selected, which is likely to deviate in several ways from the real composition of the diaspora (especially its structure by age, gender, education, and length of stay abroad). Nevertheless, some of the robust findings may help to identify the problems that the diaspora most often faces in relation to the Czech state. The most strongly voiced demand of respondents was for an increase in the efficiency of the work of the Czech authorities, both in the place where they live (at the embassies) and in the Czech Republic. Criticism was directed at the extensive bureaucracy, the low level of digitisation of services, and the limited flexibility. For expatriates abroad, these general requirements relating to the functioning of the state and public administration and, in particular, to ensuring the provision of services are of particular importance. Therefore, terms such as computerisation or digitisation often appeared in the suggestions for improvement. The issue of accessibility is also linked to the next most com-

mon request, which relates to the possibility of remote voting. Respondents in our survey expressed a relatively high level of interest in political events in the Czech Republic and the possibility of voting is of great importance to them. Other frequent themes in the respondents' requests related to education in the Czech language and in Czech culture and making efforts in the homeland to overcome the underestimation or even devaluation of the role of compatriots in Czech society. At the same time, the demands Czech compatriots have of the Czech state authorities as identified in this research are reflected in a number of formal and informal activities they engage in, which is creating pressure to shape Czech expatriate policy from the bottom up (see also Chapter 1 in this book). An example in this respect can be found in compatriots' efforts to bring about the introduction of correspondence voting, to which Czech political representatives are currently responding. The Czech Republic presently lags behind many other Central European countries in making it possible for Czech expatriates to vote from abroad (see the chapters on expatriate politics in Slovakia, Poland, and Hungary in this book).

In connection with the possibility of returning to the Czech Republic, problems of a macrostructural nature were most frequently mentioned: dissatisfaction with the economic situation in the Czech Republic and, as a result, concerns about finding a job in the Czech labour market, as well as criticism of the political and social situation in the Czech Republic (including references to low levels of tolerance, a lack of openness to the world, or even a low level of national pride). In addition, returning depended on there being a reduction of bureaucracy, increased transparency, and administrative support for moving back to the Czech Republic. A key factor mentioned in various contexts for not yet having returned was the unacceptable level of remuneration for work (where the human capital at the respondent's disposal is left insufficiently utilised). A return would lead to a significant, and therefore mostly unacceptable, decline in income and, therefore, the individual's or family's standard of living.

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# CHAPTER 7

## THE INSTITUTIONAL ENGAGEMENT OF THE CZECH DIASPORA: A COMPARATIVE CASE STUDY OF CZECHS IN AUSTRIA AND GERMANY VERSUS NORTH AMERICA

EVA JANSKÁ, DUŠAN DRBOHLAV, ZDENĚK ČERMÁK, & JIŘÍ HASMAN

### 7.1 INTRODUCTION

The developed world has more limited knowledge about the institutional involvement of its diasporas than the developing world. Czechia is an example of a developed country whose new diaspora's transnational practices are primarily focused not on sending remittances but rather on various conditionalities, on the various influential factors that we will discuss in our analysis, such as institutional engagement. Diasporas from wealthier countries behave differently than those from countries that are less developed in terms of their relative affluence and freedom to travel across borders, resulting in varied levels of engagement with host and home institutions. The geographic proximity of migrants to their country of origin is a factor in this that should also be taken into consideration.

This chapter aims to demonstrate how engagement can be examined by comparing the Czech diaspora in the United States & Canada and in Germany & Austria (for more examples, see Janská et al. forthcoming). Utilising data from our own survey (see below), we address two primary inquiries: How do the Czech diaspora groups that are geographically close to and distant from Czechia differ? What factors, aside from geographic distance, influence the level of institutional engagement among the diaspora?

The data for this study derive from an online questionnaire survey conducted among Czechs residing abroad (for more details on methodology and methods, please see Chapter 5). From a total of 940 respondents representing more than 40 countries, we specifically selected 413 individuals living in the United States (N=143), Canada (N=58), Germany (N=163), and Austria (N=49). For the analysis, we identify two types of institutions in which the diaspora may engage: (a) hostland institutions (country of origin-oriented) and (b) homeland institutions in the destination country. This approach, in our opinion, contributes to a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of the transnational practices of the Czech diaspora.

This analysis in this chapter ties in with the already cited study by Janská et al. (forthcoming). We attempt to answer the same research questions using the same methodology and methodical approaches. However, the fundamental difference is that the set of countries in the above-cited study included all 940 'global respondents' from all over the world, divided into five separate groups, whereas here we focus on just two groups of countries. The results of this 'narrower' analysis can also then be compared to the results for the 'total global group' and then the appropriate conclusions can be drawn.

Our study draws on the existing body of literature in transnational studies, which aims to understand the complex relationships that migrants have with both their origin and destination countries. The main focus of our research is migrants' involvement with institutions in their home countries. This transnational practice, while similar to sending remittances, visiting the home countries, or making plans to return, is unique and separate from those activities. In addition to considering individual-level characteristics commonly studied in the literature, such as socioeconomic status and migration histories, we also examine the impact of geographic distance on the level of institutional engagement. Through our perspective, which is rooted in social geography, we contribute to the field of transnational studies by offering insights into migrants' varying degrees of institutional involvement. We are convinced that the conclusions we have reached (via a multivariate linear regression analysis) are important for both basic and applied research.

The attractiveness of a destination country for migration is determined not just by its location – its proximity to or distance from the source country – but also by other attributes of a structural nature, such as historical, socioeconomic, cultural, political, bureaucratic-institutional, and others. Below, we will highlight the specific structural differences between the two groups of countries selected for analysis, and then, from a more general perspective, we will approach the importance and specificity of geographic location.

## **7.2 KEY FACTORS BEHIND THE LEVEL OF MIGRANTS' ENGAGEMENT**

### **7.2.1 STRUCTURAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN GEOGRAPHICALLY CLOSE AND DISTANT DIASPORAS – UNITED STATES & CANADA VS GERMANY & AUSTRIA**

For our research, we selected two groups of countries with a significant Czech diaspora: the United States and Canada on the one hand and Germany and Austria on the other. The two groups are primarily distinguished by their

geographic distance from the country of origin, but they are also different in terms of their migration history, their migration and integration policies and practices, and other economic, social, and political factors that influence migration and integration processes and the establishment and functioning of diasporas.

The United States and Canada are traditional immigrant states, the establishment and further development of which are closely tied to migration and integration processes. Although the conditions of immigration to the United States have gone through alternating periods of restriction and relaxation, migrant communities have always formed a significant part of the population in various ways. With 50 million immigrants (defined as foreign-born persons), the United States ranks first in the world today. This number represents about 15% of the country's total population. In Canada this share is even higher at 21.8% (UN 2020). In Germany and Austria, by contrast, emigration trends prevailed until the middle of the 20th century. Between 1816 and 1914, 5.5 million people emigrated from Germany to the United States alone (Bade 1995). It was not until the 1950s that the situation gradually began to change, with an increase in labour immigration. Nevertheless, Germany was not considered a country of immigration in political documents (e.g. bilateral treaties) until the 1990s, as immigration to the country was deemed to be work-related and temporary (Borkert and Bosswick 2011).

The different historical experiences these two groups of countries have had with immigration have led to them to adopt different approaches to dealing with migration and integration issues (see, e.g., Alba and Foner 2017). However, the differences in the political development of both groups of countries are even more pronounced. While the United States and Canada have long been classified as traditional democracies with strong liberal elements and as places where the relationship of migrants to the state is built on civic principles, Germany has gone through several undemocratic periods of governance in its history, and, above all, the relationship of migrants to the state has long been built on the principle of ethnicity (Barša and Baršová 2005). There are also differences in the labour market, which is an important factor influencing migration. Both the United States and Canada score high in the rankings of labour market flexibility, and this greater flexibility makes it easier for newcomers to find employment. In contrast, Germany and Austria are characterised by a high level of labour market protection because of the strong welfare state and trade unions in these countries (CIPD 2015).

In both groups of destination countries there are many people today who claim to be of Czech origin. Although the history of Czech immigration in both cases goes back to the 18th or 19th century, relations with Austria and especially Germany are marked by significant discontinuity in the first half of the 20th century because of political developments in the region. Thus,

unlike the situation in the United States and Canada, in Germany the current Czech expatriate community has a shorter history and does not engage in the various expatriate activities that the older diasporas traditionally engaged in. The strongest migration wave from the region of what is today Czechia to the United States occurred in the period between the mid-19th century and the beginning of the First World War. Currently, there are over 1.2 million people of Czech origin in the United States and another 220,000 who claim Czechoslovak origin; 64,000 were born in the territory of today's Czechia or Slovakia (US Census Bureau 2021). The long-term development of the Czech community in Canada is similar to that in the United States. Currently, about 99,000 people in Canada claim to be of Czech origin and another 33,000 claim Czechoslovak origin; 19,500 of these people were born on the territory of what is now Czechia (Statistics Canada 2022). Austria has a unique position among the selected countries as until 1918 it was joined with what is now Slovakia in a single state.

There are currently 34,600 persons in Austria who were born on the territory of present-day Czechia (Statistik Austria 2022). The industrial regions of Germany were already the target of emigration from the Czech lands during the 19th and early 20th centuries, before this migration flow was interrupted, as noted above. Some renewal of movement only occurred in connection with politically motivated emigration during the period of communist rule. Czechia's current migration relations with Germany and Austria have been significantly shaped by the geographic proximity of all three countries and their participation in the Schengen Area, where there are minimal migration barriers.

## 7.2.2 GEOGRAPHIC DISTANCE

The concepts of geographic/spatial distance and proximity have been subjects of ongoing interdisciplinary research and debate. The focus of these discussions is generally on identifying and understanding the factors that can mitigate the impact of objective physical distance. Scholars have explored this topic in various thematic contexts, including transportation, telecommunication, digital technologies, social structures, urban development, and economic clustering. For example, Simini et al. (2012), Burger, van Oort, and Linders (2009), Ellison, Lampe, and Steinfield (2009), Nilles et al. (1976), and Boschma (2005) have all contributed to these discussions.

In addition to those concepts, psychologists have explored the multi-faceted nature of the concept of distance (Simandan 2016). Construal-level theory (Trope and Liberman 2010) also holds significant relevance for our study on migration. This theory offers a fundamental insight into the relationship between our distance from a reference point and the quality of our

mental representations, asserting that the more distant (in terms of time, space, sociality, or hypotheticality) the world we are imagining is, the more abstract our mental representation of it becomes (Simandan 2016, 251). By delving into the subjective experiences of individuals and exploring not just ‘physical distance’ but also three non-spatial dimensions – temporal, social, and hypothetical – we can develop a more realistic understanding of how the integrated unity of distance (or proximity) impacts mental processes and, indeed, human behaviour.

To sum up, when analysing the role of geographic distance to compare diasporas in two differently distant regions, we need to take into account more than just the absolute (physical) distance from the country of origin. We must also acknowledge the importance of other non-spatial factors that determine migrants’ ideas, approaches, and behaviour, mainly various ‘structural factors’ including the type of welfare state and migration and integration experiences, policies, and practices.

In addition to physical distance, there are also socioeconomic and cultural influences (Guarnizo, Portes, and Haller 2003; Itzigsohn and Saucedo 2002), and transnational connections (Levitt 2001; Vertovec 1999) that can be key factors in explaining the extent of migrants’ institutional involvement (see, e.g., Ahmadov and Sasse 2016).

### 7.2.3 SOCIOECONOMIC AND CULTURAL FACTORS

Socioeconomic and cultural elements significantly influence the nature and extent of transnational engagement. Factors such as education, occupational status, and marital status are linked to the quality and depth of transnational activities. For instance, studies on the Lithuanian diaspora (Brinkerhoff, McGinnis Johnson, and Gudelis 2019) indicate that education, income, and professional employment positively correlate with increased participation in ethnic associations.

Exploring the diaspora–education connection, Brooks and Waters (2021, 558) introduced the concept of ‘knowledge diasporas’, which are communities made up of highly educated and skilled citizens who reside abroad while maintaining strong ties with their home country. These individuals, possessing significant skills and education, demonstrate a propensity for transnational living and active involvement in the societal progress of their home country. They effectively transmit innovations (referred to as social remittances) back to their country of origin (e.g. Levitt 1998). Simultaneously, many of these individuals integrate well into the host society, often holding influential positions in the labour market.

Regarding gender’s role in this context, the evidence is inconsistent. For instance, Guarnizo and Chaudhary (2014) examined the determinants of

transnational political engagement among contemporary Latin American migrants in Spain and Italy, shedding light on gender's varied influence. Their findings suggest a gendered pattern of migration dominated by highly educated men, and they show that integration and transnational engagement are contrasting processes. Specific gender aspects, social identity, assimilation, and transnationalism were also highlighted in the context of Polish migration to the EU (Erdal and Lewicki 2016).

A substantial body of knowledge exists on the correlation between language and ethnic identity (Jaspal and Coyle 2010). Broadly, it is apparent that most diaspora communities consider their native language a crucial marker of identity and a fundamental tool for preserving their social and cultural identity (Gharibi and Mirvahedi 2021). Moreover, proficiency in the native language facilitates potential communication with the country of origin itself (Hundt 2019), influencing both personal and formal interactions and, indeed, impacting the likelihood of a potential return to the homeland as well.

Participation in transnational sociocultural activities, such as homeland-related festivals, sports, and music events, serves to reinforce a diaspora's connections with its country of origin. Beyond the well-documented inverse relationship between the level of transnationalism and length of stay (Smith 2001; Jones and De la Torre 2011), engagement in these activities is also shaped by immigrants' demographic traits, employment status, and experiences of discrimination in their destination countries (Itzigsohn and Saucedo 2002).

#### 7.2.4 TRANSNATIONALISM

Migrants' involvement in transnational activities linked to their home country encompasses a range of behaviours and practices. Depending on the research focus and the specific migrant cohort under examination, various scholars have conceptualised transnationalism in different ways, ranging from people's emotional connections with the country of origin to the frequency of remittance sending.

For instance, Baldassar, Pyke, and Ben-Moshe (2017) assessed identity and community bonding within the Vietnamese diaspora through measures such as visits home, political engagement, and remittance contributions. While the Vietnamese diaspora is characterised by horizontal connections with other diaspora members across different nations, rather than vertical ties with their home country, a contrasting scenario unfolds in the Chinese context. Zhou and Liu (2016) discovered that broader societal influences at both the national and diasporic community levels intricately shape immigrants' transnational processes. Those who actively participate in transnational activities often do so through diasporic organisations. The emerging Chinese diaspora

maintains emotional as well as material connections with China, even as they focus on establishing themselves in their destination country.

Certain behaviours are, however, widely acknowledged across the literature as transnational practices. They most notably include making visits to the home country, maintaining contact with it, sending remittances, and displaying an interest or becoming involved in the political affairs of the homeland (Ahmadov and Sasse 2016; Jones 2020). In this study, to specifically examine transnational institutional engagement, we examine institutional involvement separately from other transnational behaviours and practices, such as visits, contacts, or political interest in the home country (e.g. Castañeda, Morales, and Ochoa 2014).

### 7.3 PROPOSITIONS

Building on the studies set out above as well as other research, we test the following propositions in this chapter: (1) Czech migrants' institutional engagement in both their destination and origin countries are shaped by: (a) individual attributes (education, employment, family status, age, gender, frequency of Czech language use); (b) migratory characteristics (length of residence abroad, motives for migration, etc.); and (c) the migrants' level of transnationalism. (2) Knowledge of the Czech language plays a significant role in the degree of engagement in both countries – the destination country and Czechia. (3) A shorter distance from the home country (Czechia) and related direct connections to the homeland result in a higher level of transnationalism (realised as direct visits) and, by contrast, in less contact with the homeland being mediated through institutional engagement in the destination country.

### 7.4 METHODOLOGY, METHODS, DATA

#### 7.4.1 THE QUESTIONNAIRE

The data in this chapter are based on an online questionnaire survey of Czechs living abroad. Out of N=940 respondents from more than 40 countries, we selected only those respondents who were living in the United States (N=143), Canada (N=58), Germany (N=163), and Austria (N=49) (total N=413). The data were collected between May and September 2021. The mandatory criteria for taking part in the survey were: (1) being a Czech or of Czech descent (including first and subsequent generations, i.e. people with and without Czech citizenship); and (2) living in the host country for a minimum of six months.

The questionnaire was fielded in the Czech language in order to recruit only respondents who still speak or understand Czech. It was distributed online through a link on the project website. Four methods were used to find respondents. First, we gathered data from the websites of various relevant institutions, such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport of the Czech Republic. Second, we utilised our own databases from previous research and the database of experts and scientists available from the Czexpats association. Third, we used the crawling method, which involves machine data collection from websites, whereby we extracted from pre-defined areas on the Internet as many relevant contacts as possible. We collected approximately 91,000 contacts in total using this method. Unfortunately, it proved to be unsatisfactory as only about a thousand of these contacts were found to be relevant, and only a small number of them returned the questionnaires. The final method of data collection was through a campaign on Facebook. We targeted people living abroad (outside Czechia) using Facebook in the Czech language on an iPhone. An email with information on the project and a request to fill in the questionnaire was sent to the contacts identified in this way. It took an average of 40 minutes to complete the questionnaire. The sample collection aimed to gain as wide a spectrum of Czech migrants as possible, although this approach had clear limitations in terms of obtaining a fully representative sample (see Chapter 5).

#### **7.4.2 VARIABLES**

The questionnaire consisted of several parts. First, we asked for the basic characteristics of the respondents, which we then entered into the analyses as explanatory variables. These were the socioeconomic and demographic characteristics of the respondents (Table 1) and attributes associated with respondents' migration history (Table 2).

The remaining parts of the questionnaire focused on the key concepts pursued in our research. Since, as latent variables, they cannot be measured directly, each of them was surveyed through a number of items. The first of these items examines the level to which respondents behave transnationally (Table 3). Next, two types of institutions or organisations in which the diaspora is active are analysed (both of them are bottom-up and top-down). Hostland institutions with a connection to Czechia are one type of institution – Czech migrants engage with the institution voluntarily, and these are people who are interested in maintaining their ties to Czechia and the Czech language and culture (Table 4). Homeland institutions are the second type of institution in which the diaspora is active. These are institutions that exist in the country of origin and their mission, at least in part, is to help compatriots abroad maintain ties to the homeland by actively engaging with the diaspora. (Table 5).



**Table 1.** Socioeconomic and demographic characteristics

|   |                         | USA/Canada |           | Germany/Australia |           |
|---|-------------------------|------------|-----------|-------------------|-----------|
|   |                         | N          | %         | N                 | %         |
| Age                                       | 30 years and under      | 26         | 12.9      | 31                | 14.6      |
|   | 31 - 45 years           | 89         | 44.3      | 81                | 38.2      |
|   | 46 - 60 years           | 49         | 24.4      | 60                | 28.3      |
|   | more than 60 years      | 37         | 18.4      | 40                | 18.9      |
| Gender                                    | Female                  | 127        | 62.9      | 155               | 72.8      |
|   | Male                    | 75         | 37.1      | 58                | 27.2      |
| Lives with a partner                      | No                      | 47         | 23.5      | 74                | 35.2      |
|   | Yes                     | 153        | 76.5      | 136               | 64.8      |
| Has children                              | No                      | 75         | 37.1      | 71                | 33.3      |
|   | Yes                     | 127        | 62.9      | 142               | 66.7      |
| Place of residence                        | Country or smaller town | 92         | 45.6      | 129               | 60.6      |
|   | Metropolis              | 110        | 54.5      | 84                | 39.4      |
| Education*                                | Secondary or less       | 50         | 24.8      | 95                | 44.6      |
|   | University              | 96         | 47.5      | 75                | 35.2      |
|   | Postgraduate            | 56         | 27.7      | 43                | 20.2      |
| Relative economic level                   | Low                     | 1          | 0.5       | 3                 | 1.4       |
|   | Rather low              | 10         | 5.0       | 6                 | 2.8       |
|   | Average                 | 92         | 45.5      | 117               | 54.9      |
|   | Rather high             | 75         | 37.1      | 77                | 36.2      |
|   | High                    | 24         | 11.9      | 10                | 4.7       |
| Employment status                         | Non-working             | 63         | 31.2      | 65                | 30.5      |
|   | Employee                | 114        | 56.4      | 128               | 60.1      |
|   | Entrepreneur            | 25         | 12.4      | 20                | 9.4       |
| Economic sector                           | Manufacturing           | 25         | 12.4      | 26                | 12.2      |
|   | Other services          | 79         | 39.1      | 78                | 36.6      |
|   | Social services         | 62         | 30.7      | 74                | 34.7      |
|   | Science and research    | 36         | 17.8      | 35                | 16.4      |
| Frequency of Czech language use (index)** |                         | Mean       | Std. dev. | Mean              | Std. dev. |
|   |                         | 0.61       | 0.19      | 0.62              | 0.18      |

\* As the level of education was measured on a scale with six categories, it enters into the regression analysis as a continuous variable.

\*\* This index was constructed from seven items: frequency of Czech language use at home, frequency of Czech language use at work, reading Czech books, watching Czech TV, communication with relatives in Czechia, communication with Czech friends in the host country, communication with offices in Czechia. It was standardised as a scale from 0 to 1.

**Table 2.** Migration characteristics

|                             |                                 | USA/Canada |      | Germany/Australia |      |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|------------|------|-------------------|------|
|                             |                                 | N          | %    | N                 | %    |
| Czech citizenship           | No                              | 16         | 7.9  | 21                | 9.9  |
|                             | Yes                             | 186        | 92.1 | 192               | 90.1 |
| Length of stay abroad       | 10 years or less                | 79         | 39.1 | 102               | 47.9 |
|                             | 11 – 20 years                   | 43         | 21.3 | 38                | 17.8 |
|                             | More than 20 years              | 80         | 39.6 | 73                | 34.3 |
| Ever lived in Czechia       | No                              | 5          | 2.5  | 1                 | 0.5  |
|                             | Yes                             | 197        | 97.5 | 212               | 99.5 |
| Plans to return to Czechia  | Definitely not                  | 28         | 20.4 | 43                | 25.7 |
|                             | Rather not                      | 60         | 43.8 | 57                | 34.1 |
|                             | Rather yes                      | 28         | 20.4 | 45                | 26.9 |
|                             | Definitely yes                  | 21         | 15.3 | 22                | 13.2 |
| Reasons for leaving Czechia | Political                       | 35         | 17.3 | 22                | 10.3 |
|                             | Labour (education)              | 47         | 23.3 | 63                | 29.6 |
|                             | Private                         | 63         | 31.2 | 92                | 43.2 |
|                             | Education (academic/scientific) | 50         | 24.8 | 34                | 16.0 |
|                             | Other/combination               | 7          | 3.5  | 2                 | 0.9  |

**Table 3.** Variables measuring the level of transnationalism

|   |                              | USA/Canada |      | Germany/Australia |      |
|---|------------------------------|------------|------|-------------------|------|
|   |                              | N          | %    | N                 | %    |
| Frequency of visits to Czechia              | Less than once in five years | 22         | 10.9 | 3                 | 1.4  |
|   | Once in 5 years              | 12         | 5.9  | 5                 | 2.3  |
|   | Once in 2 years              | 48         | 23.8 | 6                 | 2.8  |
|   | Once a year                  | 83         | 41.1 | 24                | 11.3 |
|   | Once in 6 months             | 35         | 17.3 | 97                | 45.5 |
|   | Once a month                 | 2          | 1.0  | 63                | 29.6 |
|   | More than once a month       | 0          | 0.0  | 15                | 7.0  |
| Frequency of contact with family in Czechia | Never                        | 6          | 3.0  | 9                 | 4.2  |
|   | Several times a year         | 26         | 12.9 | 48                | 22.5 |
|   | Several times a month        | 59         | 29.2 | 50                | 23.5 |
|   | Several times a week         | 111        | 55   | 106               | 49.8 |

|  |                               | USA/Canada |           | Germany/Australia |           |
|--|-------------------------------|------------|-----------|-------------------|-----------|
|  |                               | N          | %         | N                 | %         |
| Frequency of contact with friends in Czechia | Never                         | 8          | 4.0       | 7                 | 3.3       |
|  | Several times a year          | 74         | 36.6      | 103               | 48.4      |
|  | Several times a month         | 58         | 28.7      | 47                | 22.1      |
|  | Several times a week          | 62         | 30.7      | 56                | 26.3      |
| Frequency of following news about Czechia    | Several times a month or less | 26         | 12.9      | 21                | 9.9       |
|  | Several times a month         | 43         | 21.3      | 39                | 18.3      |
|  | Several times a week          | 53         | 26.2      | 48                | 22.5      |
|  | Daily or every other day      | 80         | 39.6      | 105               | 49.3      |
| Remitting money to Czechia                   | No                            | 148        | 82.2      | 151               | 80.3      |
|  | Yes                           | 32         | 17.8      | 37                | 19.7      |
| Frequency of remitting money to Czechia      | Once a year                   | 15         | 46.9      | 8                 | 21.6      |
|  | 2-3 times a year              | 9          | 28.1      | 4                 | 10.8      |
|  | Every 2 months                | 3          | 9.4       | 6                 | 16.2      |
|  | Every month or more often     | 5          | 15.6      | 19                | 51.4      |
| Interest in Czech political life             | Absolutely not                | 9          | 4.5       | 5                 | 2.3       |
|  | Rarely                        | 22         | 10.9      | 21                | 9.9       |
|  | Sometimes                     | 30         | 14.9      | 20                | 9.4       |
|  | Partly, yes                   | 54         | 26.7      | 50                | 23.5      |
|  | Yes                           | 87         | 43.1      | 117               | 54.9      |
| Participation in the last Czech elections*   |                               | Mean       | Std. dev. | Mean              | Std. dev. |
|  |                               | 0.19       | 0.31      | 0.30              | 0.37      |

\* This index was based on whether the respondent participated in presidential, house, senate, or municipal elections. It was standardised as a scale from 0 to 1.

**Table 4.** Variables measuring the level of engagement with hostland institutions (DIM)

|  |              | USA/Canada |      | Germany/Australia |      |
|--|--------------|------------|------|-------------------|------|
|  |              | N          | %    | N                 | %    |
| Contact with other Czechs in destination country | No           | 20         | 10.0 | 57                | 26.9 |
|  | Yes          | 181        | 90.0 | 155               | 73.1 |
| Contact with organisations                       | No           | 86         | 42.8 | 155               | 73.1 |
|  | via Facebook | 16         | 8.0  | 15                | 7.1  |
|  | Yes          | 99         | 49.3 | 42                | 19.8 |

|   |                       | USA/Canada |      | Germany/Australia |      |
|---|-----------------------|------------|------|-------------------|------|
|   |                       | N          | %    | N                 | %    |
| Taking part in Czech-run social activities          | No                    | 98         | 48.8 | 166               | 78.3 |
|   | Yes                   | 103        | 51.2 | 46                | 21.7 |
| Embassy (contact intensity on non-consular matters) | No                    | 131        | 65.5 | 152               | 72.7 |
|   | Max. once a year      | 46         | 23.0 | 50                | 23.9 |
|   | More than once a year | 23         | 11.5 | 7                 | 3.3  |
| Czech cultural centres (contact intensity)          | No                    | 162        | 81.0 | 188               | 89.1 |
|   | Max. once a year      | 22         | 11.0 | 13                | 6.2  |
|   | More than once a year | 16         | 8.0  | 10                | 4.7  |
| Diaspora associations (contact intensity)           | No                    | 111        | 55.5 | 170               | 80.6 |
|   | Max. once a year      | 25         | 12.5 | 20                | 9.5  |
|   | More than once a year | 64         | 32.0 | 20                | 9.5  |

**Table 5.** Variables measuring the level of engagement with homeland institutions (HI)

|  |                       | USA/Canada |      | Germany/Australia |      |
|--|-----------------------|------------|------|-------------------|------|
|  |                       | N          | %    | N                 | %    |
| Activities in Czechia                                    | No                    | 160        | 79.6 | 169               | 79.7 |
|  | Yes                   | 41         | 20.4 | 43                | 20.3 |
| Assets in Czechia  | No                    | 58         | 32.4 | 71                | 37.0 |
|  | Yes                   | 121        | 67.6 | 121               | 63.0 |
| Czech health services (contact intensity)                | No                    | 114        | 57.0 | 119               | 56.7 |
|  | Once a year or less   | 69         | 34.5 | 57                | 27.1 |
|  | More than once a year | 17         | 8.5  | 34                | 16.2 |
| Czech tax office (contact intensity)                     | No                    | 140        | 70.0 | 143               | 68.8 |
|  | Once a year or less   | 54         | 27.0 | 59                | 28.4 |
|  | More than once a year | 6          | 3.0  | 6                 | 2.9  |
| Czech Social Security Administration (contact intensity) | No                    | 160        | 79.6 | 154               | 72.6 |
|  | Once a year or less   | 38         | 18.9 | 35                | 16.5 |
|  | More than once a year | 0          | 0.5  | 19                | 9.0  |
| Czech education institutes (contact intensity)           | No                    | 139        | 69.2 | 153               | 73.6 |
|  | Once a year or less   | 33         | 16.4 | 27                | 13.0 |
|  | More than once a year | 29         | 14.4 | 28                | 13.5 |

|  |                       | USA/Canada |      | Germany/Australia |      |
|--|-----------------------|------------|------|-------------------|------|
|  |                       | N          | %    | N                 | %    |
| Special Commissioner<br>(contact intensity)                  | No                    | 185        | 92   | 202               | 96.7 |
|  | Once a year or less   | 9          | 4.5  | 5                 | 2.4  |
|  | More than once a year | 7          | 3.5  | 2                 | 1.0  |
| Senate Diaspora<br>Committee<br>(contact intensity)          | No                    | 188        | 94   | 207               | 99.0 |
|  | Once a year or less   | 9          | 4.5  | 0                 | 0.0  |
|  | More than once a year | 3          | 1.5  | 2                 | 1.0  |
| Czech<br>municipality<br>institutions<br>(contact intensity) | No                    | 123        | 61.8 | 98                | 46.9 |
|  | Once a year or less   | 67         | 33.7 | 85                | 40.7 |
|  | More than once a year | 9          | 4.5  | 26                | 12.4 |

All three latent variables were measured by aggregate indexes as follows: variables in the questionnaires (Table 6) were standardised as a scale from 0 to 1, and the values obtained were then averaged. As a result, we got three indexes, where 0 denotes the minimum transnationalism/engagement theoretically possible and 1 denotes the maximum.

**Table 6.** The operationalisation of the transnationalism and engagement indices

| <b>Index of transnationalism</b>  |
|---|
| Frequency of visits to Czechia  |
| Frequency of contact with family in Czechia   |
| Frequency of contact with friends in Czechia  |
| Frequency of following news about Czechia   |
| Remitting money to Czechia  |
| Interest in Czech political life  |
| Participation in the last Czech elections   |
| <b>Index of hostland institutions (DIM)</b>   |
| Contact with any other Czechs, with any Czech organisations, and attending any Czech events |
| Contact with various Czech institutions in the destination country*                         |
| <b>Index of homeland institutions (HI)</b>  |
| Having any activities and assets in Czechia   |
| Contact with various Czech institutions in Czechia**  |

\* Embassy in non-consular matters, Czech cultural centres, diaspora associations

\*\* Czech health services, tax office, Czech Social Security Administration, educational institutions, Special Commissioner, Senate Diaspora Committee, municipality institutions

### 7.4.3 METHODOLOGICAL AND METHODICAL NOTES

In accordance with the research aims, the empirical section consists of two parts. In the first one, we present a comparison of respondents from both groups (United States & Canada vs Germany & Austria) in terms of their selected demographic, socioeconomic, geographic, and migration characteristics as well as of their transnationalism and engagement parameters. As all of these characteristics are categorical, Cramer V was used to show us the extent of the differences between the two groups. The values can range between 0 and 1; higher values indicate bigger differences between the two groups.

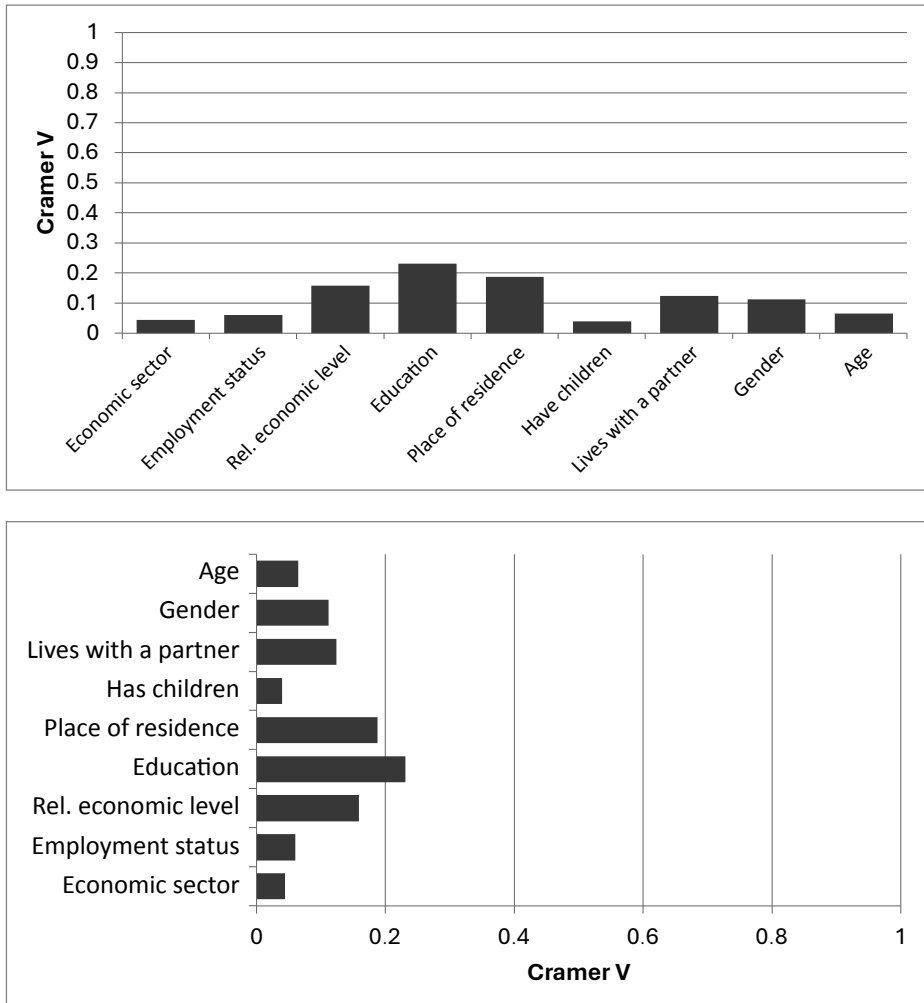
In the second part, two sets of models were calculated using multivariate linear regression analysis to determine the relationships between the variables of interest. In the first set, the index of engagement in the host country was the dependent variable, while in the second set this variable was set as the independent variable and the index of engagement in Czechia was the dependent variable.

The transnationalism index and other selected relevant respondent characteristics, as discussed in the theoretical section, were included in the models as explanatory variables. In both sets, the models were first calculated for the two groups separately to compare the different relationships in the different immigration contexts. Then a model that included the entire sample was calculated, with the destination country set as a dummy variable, allowing the magnitude of the differences between the two groups to be assessed. Before the analyses, standard procedures were performed to check that the assumptions of the linear regression analysis were met; as a result, two variables (economic sector and age) were dropped owing to multicollinearity. Only variables that exhibited some relationship to the dependent variables in the preliminary bivariate analysis were entered into the regression analysis. The standardised regression coefficients are reported in the final tables.

## 7.5 RESULTS

### 7.5.1 SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES BETWEEN TWO GEOGRAPHICALLY DISTANT DIASPORAS – THE UNITED STATES & CANADA VS GERMANY & AUSTRIA

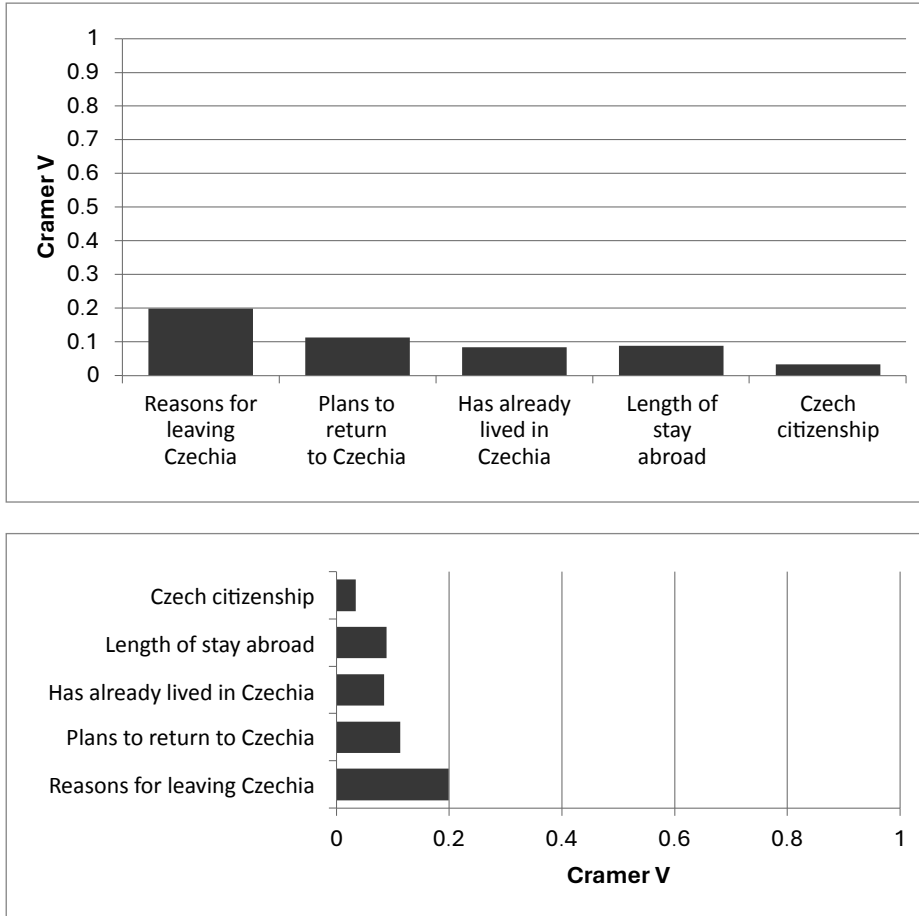
As for the selected socioeconomic and demographic characteristics, the values of Cramer's V show that the differences are not substantial. Nevertheless, the following facts are worth mentioning: in our sample and in a given comparative perspective a much larger proportion of the American



**Figure 1.** Effect size of the differences between the two regions – socioeconomic and demographic characteristics

respondents are university graduates, and the majority of respondents live in large urban areas (Table 1, Figure 1). We should, of course, take the first fact into account when analysing and interpreting results relating to our main research questions.

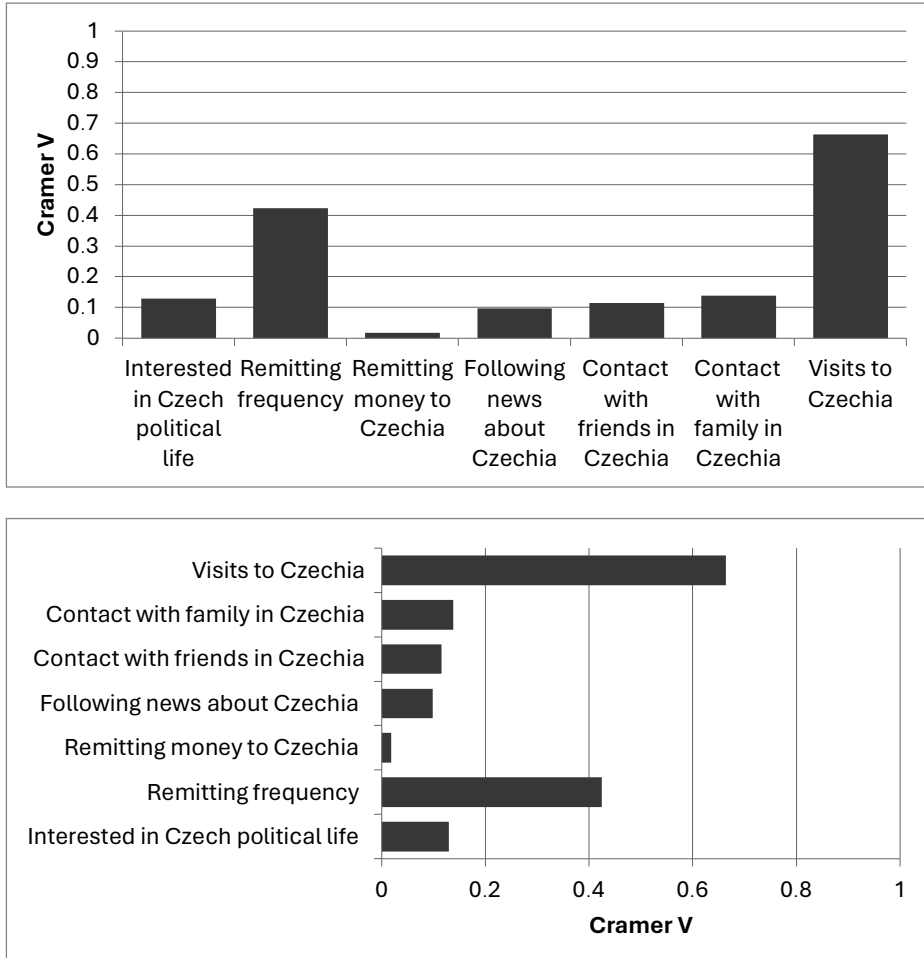
Regarding migration characteristics (see Table 2 and Figure 2), the biggest difference between regions is in the reasons for migration, with political reasons being more important for the respondents in the United States & Canada than for the group living in Germany & Austria.



**Figure 2.** Effect size of the differences between the two regions - migration characteristics

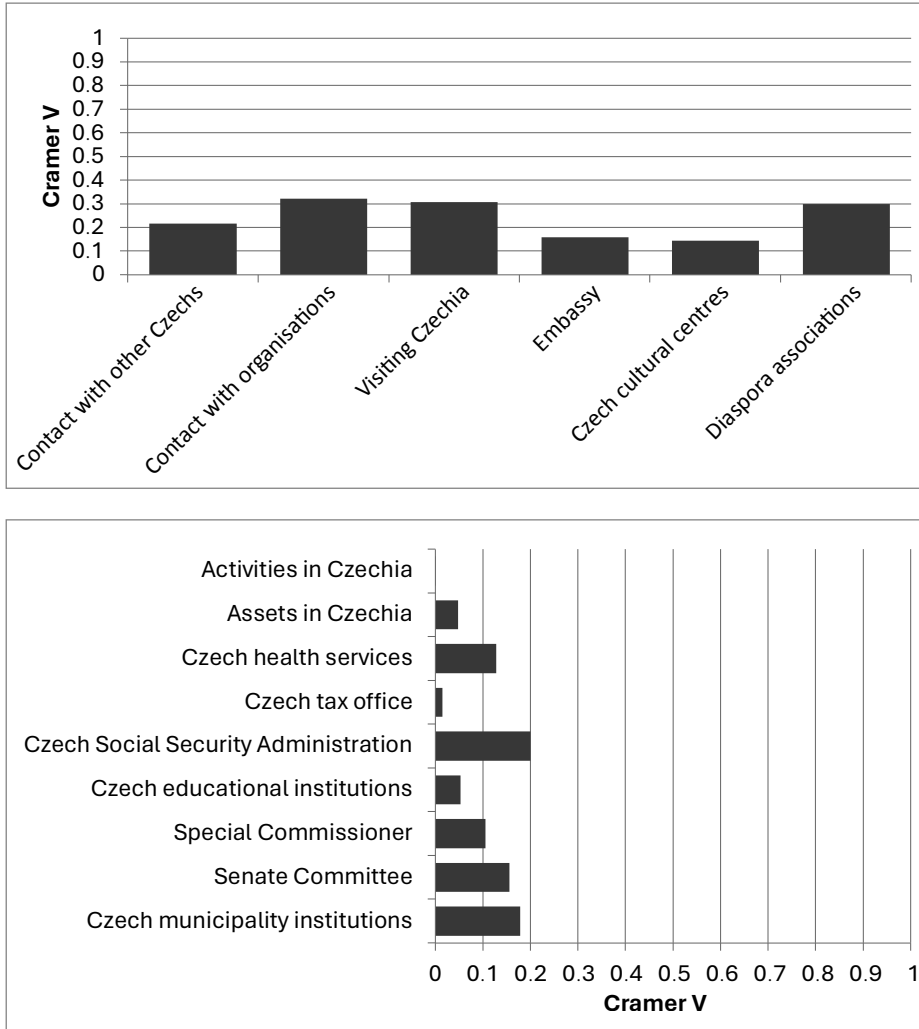
In the case of transnationalisation (Table 3, Figure 3), there are, logically, large differences in the frequency of visits to Czechia. More frequent visits to Czechia are made by the respondents from Germany & Austria, given the geographic location of these countries. There is also a difference in the frequency with which respondents send remittances, where, again, the European respondents significantly dominate over the American respondents. This is probably because of the greater importance economic interests hold as the reason for emigrating among the Czech diaspora respondents in Germany & Austria compared to those in the United States & Canada.





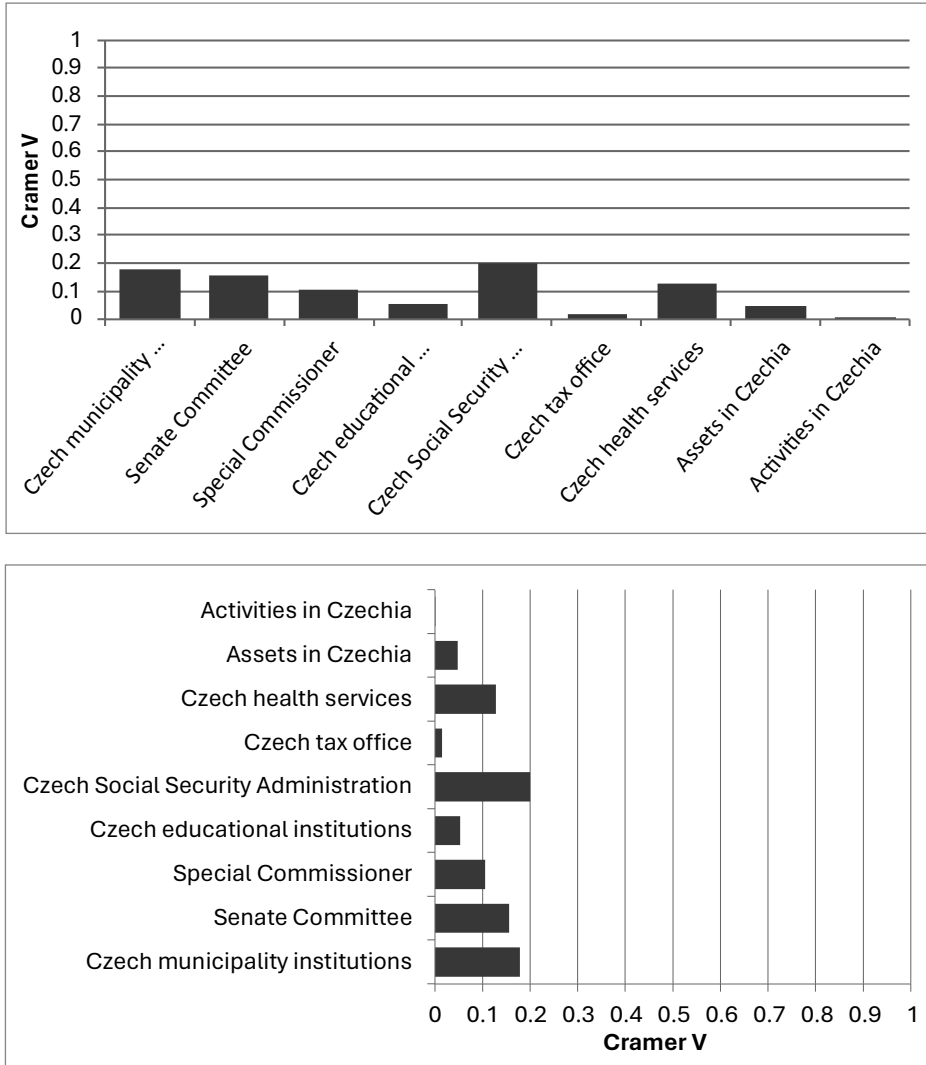
**Figure 3.** Effect size of the differences between the two regions - transnationalism characteristics

Voluntary involvement in compatriot (Czech-related) institutions in the destination country of migration is much more typical for respondents from the United States & Canada than for those living in Germany & Austria (Table 4, Figure 4). The main reason for this is probably the greater geographic distance, which prevents frequent direct contact with the home country and, as a result, encourages the fulfilment of this need through greater contact with other Czechs in the country of residence, stronger ties to Czech organisations, attendance at Czech events, and more intensive involvement in Czech associations in the country of residence. For respondents from Germany & Austria, there is no such need, as it is easy to have direct contact with Czechia, even for short periods of time, given the country's proximity.



**Figure 4.** Effect size of the differences between the two regions – level of institutional engagement in the destination country

The differences between the respondents in the two country groups are generally smaller when it comes to the level of institutional involvement in Czechia (Figure 5). Logically, greater involvement with the Czech social security administration system and with the local authorities in Czechia is partly evident for the group of compatriots from Germany & Austria (Table 5); again, this is due to how easy it is to make a direct visit to Czechia.



**Figure 5.** Effect size of the differences between the two regions – level of institutional engagement in Czechia

## 7.5.2 THE FACTORS BEHIND MIGRANTS' INSTITUTIONAL ENGAGEMENT

The table below (Table 7) summarises the main results of the regression analysis (each column corresponds to one model). The strength of the relationships was measured using standardised regression coefficients. The first two models elaborate on the two pairs of countries separately and allow for a comparison of how the factors influencing the level of engagement differ. The third model then analyses the whole set together and also shows

to what extent the level of engagement is determined by which destination country the respondent is located in (Germany & Austria dummy variable).

The relatively high coefficient of determination in the last row shows that all the models have relatively satisfactory predictive power (29%–40% of the explained variability of the dependent variable). Education and the frequency of Czech language use plays a large role in explaining engagement in the destination country in both groups of countries, as do the length of stay in the destination country and possible plans to return to Czechia in the case of North American countries, while in the case of Germany & Austria living in a large city also increases engagement. If we combine the two groups, the frequency of Czech language use, level of education, and length of residence in the destination country again appear to be crucial. However, the destination country is also important: respondents in Germany & Austria have lower levels of engagement in the destination country than respondents in the United States & Canada.

Engagement in Czechia is conditioned differently – it depends on different factors in each of the two country groups (the first two columns and models) and in the aggregate (third column and model), and the predictive power of the models is satisfactory once again (between 32% and 44% of the explained variability); see Table 8. In other words, those with highly transnational practices are the most institutionally engaged in Czechia. For

**Table 7.** Factors associated with institutional engagement in the destination country

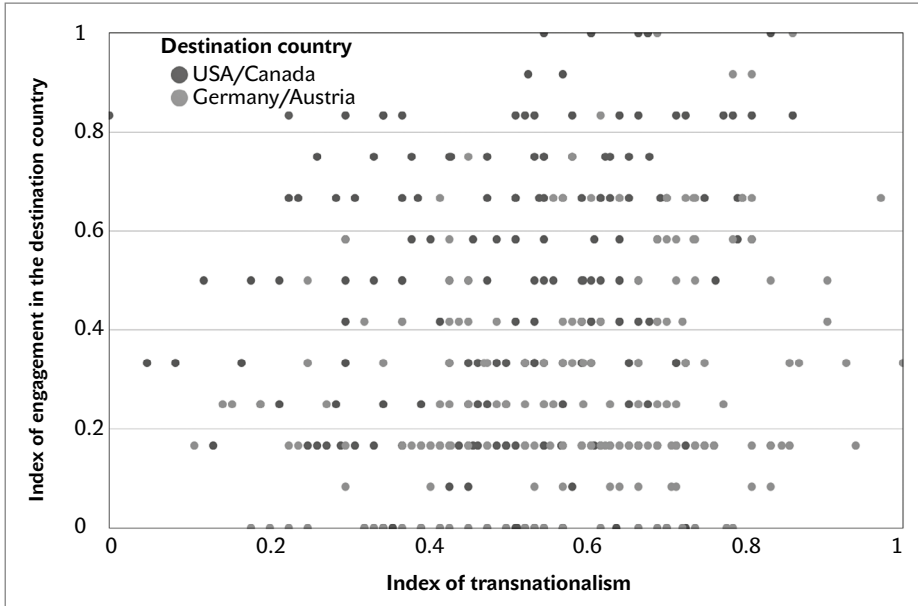
|   | USA/Canada | Germany/Austria | Both regions |
|---|------------|-----------------|--------------|
| Place of residence – metropolis         | 0.077      | 0.232           | 0.164        |
| Gender – male                           | -0.162     | -0.045          | -0.083       |
| Education                               | 0.284      | 0.215           | 0.216        |
| Has children                            | 0.174      | 0.035           | 0.094        |
| Total length of stay abroad             | 0.316      | 0.195           | 0.227        |
| Total length of stay in Czechia         | -0.044     | -0.066          | -0.056       |
| Plan to return to Czechia               | 0.250      | 0.066           | 0.110        |
| Frequency of Czech language use (index) | 0.374      | 0.245           | 0.312        |
| Relative economic level                 | -0.041     | -0.003          | -0.012       |
| Index of transnationalism               | -0.092     | 0.137           | 0.055        |
| Germany/Austria                         | -          | -               | -0.262       |
| R2 (%)                                  | 40.2       | 28.8            | 37.6         |

**Table 8.** Factors associated with institutional engagement in Czechia

|   | USA/Canada | Germany/Austria | Both regions |
|---|------------|-----------------|--------------|
| Place of residence – metropolis         | -0.094     | 0.056           | -0.001       |
| Gender – male                           | 0.002      | 0.218           | 0.110        |
| Education                               | 0.168      | 0.188           | 0.194        |
| Has children                            | 0.056      | -0.014          | 0.012        |
| Total length of stay abroad             | -0.101     | 0.033           | -0.038       |
| Total length of stay in Czechia         | 0.064      | -0.112          | -0.034       |
| Plan to return to Czechia               | 0.140      | 0.203           | 0.159        |
| Frequency of Czech language use (index) | 0.031      | 0.092           | 0.056        |
| Relative economic level                 | -0.030     | 0.069           | 0.013        |
| Index of transnationalism               | 0.291      | 0.287           | 0.295        |
| Index of DIM                            | 0.124      | 0.084           | 0.121        |
| Germany/Austria                         | –          | –               | 0.083        |
| R2 (%)                                  | 32.4       | 44.0            | 35.3         |

the group of German & Austrian compatriots, the importance of gender is also apparent: men and people who plan to return to Czechia tend to be more involved in Czech institutions. In terms of the intensity of engagement with homeland institutions, respondents in the two country groups seem to differ little.

In the next step, we further investigated how the Czech diaspora's transnational practices related to its institutional involvement in the destination countries and in Czechia. We found that only engagement in the destination countries is significant for further monitoring. Figure 6 shows a higher concentration of respondents from North America in the third quartile, while the majority of respondents from Europe are in the second quartile. Thus, the higher intensity of institutional engagement in destination countries is associated with lower levels of transnationalisation among respondents in geographically remote countries (United States & Canada). Institutional engagement here substitutes for being in the mother country. The opposite, however, is observed for respondents in countries that are geographically close to Czechia (Germany & Austria), where a higher degree of transnationalisation is associated with lower institutional engagement.



**Figure 6.** The relationship between the level of transnationalism and engagement in the destination country

## 7.6 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Our results indicate that defining and using two types of diaspora engagement with institutions – (1) hostland (country of origin-oriented) and (2) homeland institutions – usefully contributes to a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of the transnational practices of the Czech diaspora.

An online questionnaire survey conducted in 2021 on a sample of 413 respondents provided important information on the structure and principal features of the attitudes and behaviour of the Czech diaspora in two groups of countries – the United States & Canada (N=201) and Germany & Austria (N=212). Although the sample was not (and could not have been) representative (e.g. we purposely overestimated highly educated and qualified respondents; see Chapters 5 and 9), this analysis is nevertheless the first of its kind to describe the current Czech diaspora in detail and to identify the factors that importantly influence its institutional involvement in destination countries and in Czechia. The study therefore also enriches the limited knowledge on the diasporas of developed democratic countries. Another innovation is that the analysis considered geographic distance, where the conditionalities sought are analysed and then compared between a group of countries that are very distant from Czechia (United States & Canada) and a group of countries directly neighbouring Czechia (Germany & Austria).

The sample of the Czech diaspora in our research can be summarised as highly educated, with a higher proportion of women and a relatively very good standard of living. Approximately two-thirds of the total sample have children and work. The vast majority have Czech citizenship and have lived in Czechia during their lifetime; more than a third have been living in the destination country for more than 20 years, and a fifth migrated before 1989 – this is consequently more or less an analysis of the new Czech diaspora. About two-thirds have some property in Czechia, only one-fifth sends remittances, and about one-half are in contact ‘several times a week’ with family back in Czechia. Only a seventh of the sample plan to return to Czechia.

As for the propositions formulated at the start of this chapter, the first of them was demonstrated to be true: migrants’ engagement in the destination countries and in Czechia are conditioned by diverse factors. In the linear regression models investigating the conditionality of the factors that determine migrants’ engagement in the destination countries, the frequency of Czech language use (clearly confirming the second proposition; see also Hundt 2019) and educational attainment (Brinkerhoff, McGinnis Johnson, and Gudelis 2019; Zhou and Liu 2016; Brooks and Waters 2021) are the factors that dominate in both sample regions and in the overall model. For the United States & Canada respondents, length of stay and plans to return to Czechia are the factors that matter; for the Germany & Austria sample, respondents from large cities are more engaged.

The conditionalities for the level of migrants’ institutional engagement in the homeland (Czechia) are dominated by the importance of transnationalism, and this is reflected in the overall model as well as in both country groupings. In the case of the German & Austrian groups, the intensity of the relationship to Czechia is stronger for men and for those planning to return to Czechia. This confirms our third proposition: proximity to Czechia reduces the need to participate in Czech culture (in the broadest sense) through voluntary engagement (in Czech-oriented activities) in the destination countries. Conversely, physical proximity – enhanced by free movement within the Schengen Area – allows for frequent direct contact with Czechia. This is also demonstrated by the analysis, which shows that the respondents in Germany and Austria have a higher level of transnationalisation than respondents in the North American sample, particularly in terms of the frequency of visits, the frequency of remittances, and a declared strong interest in political life in Czechia, but also in terms of maintaining a strong connection to the local authorities and the social security system in Czechia. It seems that the migration of respondents in nearby Germany and Austria is more economically based and oriented, in contrast to the North American sample, where work and private reasons for migration are more common.

The greater weight of economic factors in nearby countries, especially in Germany, is also evident from the total amount of remittances sent from individual countries to Czechia by migrants. In 2021, the amount of remittances sent from Germany alone amounted to USD 2.6 billion, which was equal to about 59% of all remittances sent to Czechia in that year (KNOMAD n.d.). The volume of remittances sent from the other three countries was an order of magnitude lower: 3.4% from Austria, 10.9% from the United States, and 2.2% from Canada (based on KNOMAD 2022<sup>41</sup>). Thus, despite the weaknesses of this indicator (in particular, we do not take into account relative indicators and not all remitters fit our definition of diaspora), it is clear that the economic factors influencing the relationship between the Czech diaspora in Germany and Czechia are quite strong (see also Chapter 5)

On the other hand, the diaspora in the United States & Canada, being very distant from Czechia, more frequently reported political and educational gain as the reasons for migration. Moreover, the greater difficulty involved in making direct visits forces them to replace direct contact with Czechia with ties to compatriots in the hostland, which they do through voluntary engagement with Czech-oriented institutions in the destination country, such as compatriot associations and attendance at Czech events, and through informal contact with other compatriots. It is only speculation to hypothesise that the differences in diaspora behaviour described above may also to some extent reflect differences in the length and continuity of the Czech diaspora's existence in the two groups of countries. Macrostructural (historical, cultural, institutional arrangements, and social specifics) differences in the overall concept of migration and integration – a traditionally more welcoming stance in North America and a less welcoming one in Germany & Austria – may also come into play.

As already mentioned, we worked with a not fully representative sample. First, only those respondents willing to fill out the questionnaire appear in the sample. Second, we were better able to reach some specific groups (e.g. expats in the field of science; see the methodology sections in Chapters 5 and 9) that have very different characteristics from the total population. This resulted in a higher proportion of women and highly educated respondents, such as those with a postgraduate education. Third, having a questionnaire in the Czech language necessarily shifted the sample towards those whose connections to the mother country were still relatively strong. In any case, a lack of data for the total diaspora population prevents us from comparing

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41 All numbers are in current (nominal) US dollars. These estimates are based on the methodology developed by Ratha and Shaw (2007). The remittance data are for 2021, disaggregated using the host country and origin country incomes and the estimated migrant stocks from 2021. For more data and the caveats attached to this estimate, see KNOMAD (n.d.).



our sample with that of the ‘reference total’. This limits the generalisability of the results, which should thus be treated with caution (particularly when comparing results for both groups), and, therefore, we are also not presenting the statistical significance of our results.

There is also a practical application of the findings from our analysis, the basic conclusion being that, although we often see ‘Czechs living abroad long-term’ as a homogeneous group, we should always take into account their often distinct differences and the conditioning of their behaviour by various factors or factors of varying intensity. On the other hand, we can also identify some ‘more general patterns’ here. For one, it is clear that with higher levels of education and more frequent use of the Czech language, the engagement or intensity of the connection to Czechia and Czechs in various formal and informal forms increases in the destination country of migration, albeit with different final effects among different Czech compatriots (here using the United States, Canada, Germany, and Austria as examples).

This conclusion is reinforced by the fact that these relationships appeared to be similarly significant when this sample of two groups of countries was expanded to include other members of the Czech diaspora in many other countries around the world, and the total sample of the analysis then amounted to 940 respondents (see Janská et al. forthcoming).

It is thus logical what hypothesis needs to be further tested, namely, that education and the use of the Czech language are universals that strengthen a varied but enduring relationship that Czech compatriots have to their homeland – Czechia. These two drivers – the highly educated as ‘agents of change’, in the sense that they spread Czech culture and have strong ties to the homeland, and the Czech language, specifically the learning, teaching, and education associated with it – could, among other things and after further examination, become important pillars of a newly constructed Czech compatriot policy. We believe that the education of diaspora members and the frequency of use of the mother tongue play an important role in connecting the state and its compatriots abroad.

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# CHAPTER 8

## CONTINUOUS INDIVIDUAL MOBILITIES AND NEW FORMS OF INTEGRATION: THE EXAMPLE OF THE CZECH DIASPORA

ZDENĚK UHEREK & VERONIKA BERANSKÁ<sup>42</sup>

### 8.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter is based primarily on qualitative data. It builds on the concept of transnationalism discussed in Chapter 5 and works with the data sample mentioned in that chapter. By working in detail with expat narratives we can deepen the insights drawn from the quantitative investigations. While the quantitative data offer a primarily synchronic snapshot of the status quo, this chapter presents a diachronic picture of multiple mobilities through a qualitative analysis of individual migration biographies. It asks what type of migration was localised by these biographies, explores in depth the motivations of migrants, and shows the influence motivational factors have on integration strategies.

Recognising that the position of the researcher significantly influences the responses of his or her interview partners, our initiating query is directed at the position of the researcher in this project, followed by a specification of the research questions addressed in this chapter. The chapter then goes on to present the results and conclusions.

### 8.2 WE CERTAINLY DO NOT RECOGNISE ALL THE LAYERS OF DIASPORIC INTEGRATION: THE DISCURSIVE LEVEL FROM WHICH THE PRESENTED DATA COME

On 27 August 2005, I and a group of Czechs from South Carolina visited a multicultural festival organised by the Czech diaspora in Gernik, Romania. This diaspora community is famous for having perfectly preserved and maintained their Czech language and customs since the beginning of the 19th century, when their ancestors left Czechia. The Czechs from South Carolina no longer spoke Czech. However, when they were searching for where their ancestors had come from in the Czech Republic, they discovered that they had not moved to the United States from Bohemia at the beginning of the 20th century, as they had initially thought, but from Gernik, in the Banat region of Romania,

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42 Work on 50% of this chapter was done with the support of the Institute of Ethnology of the Czech Academy of Sciences, RVO: 68378076.

so they decided to visit their distant relatives there. The Czechs from Gernik warmly welcomed their distant kin at the festival, although they could not say much to each other without the help of intermediaries. Czech folklore groups from Banat, dressed in traditional Czech folk costumes, performed at the festival alongside other minority groups – Germans and Hungarians. The locals watched and had a good time, including the older women in colourful traditional scarves, which they also called folk costumes or ‘kroj’. A delegation from the Czech Embassy in Romania and representatives of the People in Need organisation<sup>43</sup> were also present. When the official programme was over, the performers from the different minorities and their Romanian neighbours continued to enjoy themselves and dance together. They had added Romanian songs in their repertoire, which every one of them knew and, therefore, enjoyed the most. As it grew darker, and with alcohol, the performers switched to Romanian pop music. By that time, they were in civilian clothes. The dancing was accompanied by singing. I was left as one of the few spectators not dancing and perhaps one of the last foreign guests. I realised that if I had not been present at the official part of the performance, I would not have been able to recognise that I was not watching Romanian youth having fun but members a minority group – the Czech minority from Gernik and their friends.

(Paraphrased excerpt from an entry from the fieldnotes  
of Zdeněk Uherek, 27 August 2005)

Similar situations can be observed relatively often in various forms, and metamorphoses of this type have been described in many texts. One of the earliest and most famous such texts was produced by Edmund Leach and dealt with the subtle Kachins from the Northeastern Myanmar Highlands (Leach 1954). Edmund Leach studied these metamorphoses in the context of changes in the social or political organisation of groups. However, groups can also change their cultural profile when the conditions in the environment change (Beranská and Uherek 2016, 2021). In the paraphrased section above, we observed a change occurring within a cultural setting. However, if we move away from the still objectivist optics of Edmund Leach and instead we frame the situation in reference to Berger and Luckmann’s sociology of knowledge (Berger and Luckmann 1966), it becomes questionable whether any change did occur at all. After all, the people who were dancing knew Romanian pop music before they took off their folk costumes. At school and among their classmates, they had become familiar with Romanian culture in its many forms, and they naturally adopted one of these forms that entered the public space they were in. And this form certainly includes music, dance,

43 People in Need – Člověk v tísni – is a Czech non-profit organisation established in 1992, which provides aid in humanitarian disasters and was also active in Gernik at this time, helping to build a road to the village and create employment opportunities to prevent the depopulation of the village (see <https://www.peopleinneed.net/who-we-are/about-us#our-profile>).

and a large part of the majority language. If anything had changed, then it was only that the dancers had ‘danced out’ of the reality constructed by the researcher and revealed to him yet other dance skills of which he was previously unaware.

This is nothing unusual, and the entry above is not intended as some kind of shocking revelation, or to imply that the audience of the official programme had somehow been deceived. After all, any reasonable person would be able to see that the costumes were new and had been shipped from the Czech Republic sometime within the past ten years and that the ‘costumes’ worn by the older women spectators were factory-made pieces of clothing locally purchased and manufactured in Romania sometime between the 1930s and the present. Gernik residents would confirm this information. Indeed, no one would think that the garments of their ancestors from the early 19th century, when they moved to Banat, had lasted or that they had reproduced the intricate Czech costume pieces in their new homes in Romania. It is even more to be admired that the Czechs in Gernik are striving for socially constructed authenticity and that young people there are learning about a traditional minority culture that even most contemporary ethnologists and anthropologists in the Czech Republic are not familiar with, let alone able to reproduce.

Everyone in our complex urbanised world has many faces, and it is a hallmark of complex cultures that we recognise only some of the statuses and roles of our conversational counterparts. A surprising finding when we read older research reports on Czech culture in Romania is that there is no mention of this dualism or complexity. Excellent field researchers such as Olga Skalníková, Vladimír Scheufler, and Jaromír Jech did not know about it or did not want to know about it. Or did they simply not care about it in the excitement about their discovery of Czech villages in Romania? After all, they wanted to enrich Czech ethnography with other Czech realities, not to study manifestations of Romanian culture. In any case, when studying diasporas, we have to remember that there exist many discursive levels that we will never discover and that we may only gain an inkling of from vague indications. However, we might expect that in a new environment members of the Czech diaspora would establish a certain status among the other culture’s population, adopt their values and norms, share their worries and concerns, and base their life strategies, business, and other activities on local discourses, which they then sometimes surprisingly transfer to different environments (Uherek and Beranská 2015). Therefore, right at the beginning of this chapter, it is important to state what discursive level we were operating in during our fieldwork and what information we were working with.

We entered the diaspora as ‘strangers’. We were not relatives of their members. We were nationals of the country from which our communication

partners or their ancestors had left for some reason. Our communication counterparts knew that we would publicly disseminate information about them, even though we would withhold the names of individual actors. It is therefore necessary to recognise that any message from the diaspora members must have been governed by a certain intention and self-control.

When we contacted some respondents for the first time – particularly given that we were working on a project supported by the Technological Agency of the Czech Republic discussed in more detail in Chapter 5 of this book – we were in the position of a partner organisation of the state administration, and our project was aimed at improving relations between the Czech state and diasporas abroad. Although our communication partners shared a wide range of information with us, they quite logically adopted the role of experts advising us on what to improve in relations between the diaspora and Czech state institutions. The interviewees were in the role of certified institutions for knowledge and information processing, which academics are to some extent in any case, and our narrators were in the position of experts producing information.

The sample was created using a combination of purposive and snowball sampling methods but prevailing through a process of self-selection. The diaspora was approached for interviews, and those who were interested were interviewed. Our sampling steps created a pool of people who were interested in saying something. We assume that they found the communication in the form of an interview meaningful and that they needed or wanted to maintain their connection to Czechia. This data set is not a statistically representative picture of the Czech diaspora. It reflects the interests of those who wanted to communicate and who have an active interest in what is happening in the Czech Republic and want to share their views with Czech institutions.

### 8.3 INITIAL PREMISES AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The motivations for going abroad have changed throughout the history of Czech emigration. In 2010, Stanislav Brouček published an article titled 'Emigration and the Emergence of Czech Communities' (Brouček 2010) on the server *Krajané.net* that essentially offered a chronological outline of Czech emigration. This periodisation, in line with the empirical research of Iva Heroldová, begins with the religious exile of the 16th–18th centuries (Heroldová 1971), which was directed mainly to neighbouring Protestant countries. This exile migration was followed by emigration overseas and to Tsarist Russia and by internal colonisation within the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy moving into Banat, Slavonia, Bosnia, and other destinations. Stanislav Brouček also mentions migration to France and other Western countries and,

in the 20th-century interwar period, to the Soviet Union. After the Second World War, large-scale departures for political and economic reasons to destinations around the whole world were recorded. To conclude this overview Brouček notes that the new migration that has been occurring since 1990 no longer leaves for economic or political reasons but because of the need to gain foreign experience (study, work, etc.) (Brouček 2010).

Previous research on migration abroad has focused on the main emigration flows that have led to visible demographic changes in Czech society. For these emigration flows, it is possible to trace their direction and identify the distinct motivations of the participants. Alongside these, however, there have been many minor migration episodes that could be described as *continuous individual mobility*, which consists of individual departures, return migrations, journeys abroad ‘for experience’, for education and knowledge, to practise a particular craft or trade, or to work in seasonal labour, and other migration events.

The main migratory flows up to 1990 that Stanislav Brouček outlines, and other scholars have as well, were usually permanent in nature. They occupy a clearly marked place in Czech national history and can be identified by the push-pull mechanisms that have been described by Donald J. Bogue (Bogue 1952), Everett Lee (Lee 1966), and many others. *Continuous individual mobilities* also have identifiable reasons, but these reasons are much more like personal stories, which can only in some cases be generalised. These migratory episodes do not converge on a single destination, and their motivations vary greatly. Despite their individualisation, however, *continuous individual mobilities* can involve large numbers of people and have been of great social and cultural significance for the European area. Historically such mobilities included migrations of members of the nobility, migrations in search of education, migrations of craftsmen and artisans, migrations to the great cities of the Austrian Empire and to Vienna in particular to learn domestic skills, and migrations of entrepreneurs to acquire new knowledge, which was an essential element of cultural transfer. Today, we only know about the mobilities of prominent figures with published biographies, but whole construction companies, musical ensembles, and sections of craft guilds used to move around this way. Without this migratory movement, for example, no urban network would have developed in the Czech lands, Czechia would not have become the largest producer of silver in Europe, and the country would not have had much of its own material and spiritual culture.

*Continuous individual mobilities* have never lost their importance, but they have received little attention. Now, however, as European and global integration unfolds, these mobilities are coming to the fore and becoming, for European society at least, the most important migratory movements. They are interpreted as blurring the distinction between migration and mobility



(King 2002) or are talked about as multiple migration movements that include return migration (Harney and Baldassar 2007; Carling and Erdal 2014; Recchi and Favel 2019; Tedeschi, Vorobeva, and Jauhiainen 2020; Erlinghagen et al. 2021), or they are conceptualised as circular migration (GCIM 2005) or the mobility turn (Faist 2013). Given the nature of the data available to us, our working input assumption is that the data we use in this analysis primarily contain the subjects of these *continuous individual mobilities*, and in the context of this assumption we ask:

- What is the motivation for this type of migration and with whom is it negotiated?
- What is the decision-making process behind this migration?
- How is the actual transfer to the new destination handled?
- How do people implement their migration plans in the destination country and decide whether to stay there or not, and if they decide to stay, how do they integrate there?
- What are the specific factors involved in a diaspora's formation and its integration into a new environment in the destinations of continuous individual mobilities?

## 8.4 METHODOLOGY

### 8.4.1 SAMPLE

In this paper, we work primarily with qualitative data supported by two quantitative questionnaire surveys conducted in 2021 (940 collected questionnaires) and 2023 (669 collected questionnaires). The qualitative data consist of 110 interviews conducted in 2022 and 2023 with respondents living in the United States (24 interviews), Germany (19 interviews), France (12 interviews), the United Kingdom (35 interviews), Australia (6 interviews), New Zealand (13 interviews), and Ireland (1 interview); for more on this see Chapter 5. In all but one case, the interviews involved respondents born in Czechia, with Czech citizenship, and with relatively strong ties to the country of origin. Most of them had secondary and university education and they often had skilled or highly skilled occupations. A smaller proportion of them (approximately 7%) were also entrepreneurs. Therefore, the attitudes and opinions presented here predominantly belong to the social elite or so-called highly skilled migrants (OECD 2008), who are very important as communication partners of the Czech Republic and have yielded significant material and symbolic benefits.

### 8.4.2 DATA COLLECTION AND EVALUATION

We use a mixed methodology in this text. The starting point of the analysis is the qualitative data collected from the sample described above in interviews conducted face-to-face in seven cases and online in the rest. After completing the interviews, we coded the responses to the interview themes with simple numerical coding and processed some of the codes using SPSS 29.0.1.0 software. In addition to the coded responses, we also work here with the individual stories of the respondents – their migration biographies. We derived these migration biographies from biographical narratives, or what are called life histories in the sense of Paul Thompson's (1978) methodology, and we understand these narratives in the context of this article as shared experiences, similar to observations, made primarily by the narrator – a parallel we derive mainly from Kathryn Marie Dudley's (1998) analysis. However, we are not working with whole biographical narratives but only parts of them – the migration biographies (Boldt 2012; Wahl et al. 2022). We understand these migration biographies as the respondents' narratives about their lives contextualised by their migration experience, that is, by the experience of leaving and going abroad, the experience of a new environment, and the relationship to the original place of origin. We assume that biographical narratives are almost always contextualised by a central motif or 'plot'. The sequence of events available for the narrator's biography derives its logic from the plot, which creates a temporal configuration that carries meaning (Ricoeur 1984–1988). In the migration biographies we are working with, this plot arises at the interviewer's instigation – for example, when the interviewer asks: 'Why did you move to the country where you now live? What led you to do this?' Given that the interviewer has previously introduced him/herself as an academic studying the Czech diaspora abroad, the collaboration between the narrator and the interviewer produces a biographical narrative in which the plot is a migration experience rendered in a manner appropriate to the interviewer's presumed preunderstanding and through the sub-questions that the interviewer further asks to satiate the need for sufficient detail to be able to interpret the biography him/herself. These sub-questions may be aimed at ascertaining what the most significant events that preceded and led to migration were, whether the dialogue partners intended to continue working in their current job, whether they needed further qualifications for their current work, whether their country of origin seems different to them than it did before migration, what they miss most, whether they are satisfied with their lives, and so on. The proposed initial questions are further refined by sub-questions arising from the story itself and the atmosphere during the dialogue.

## 8.5 RESULTS

### 8.5.1 DECISION PHASE AND THE MOTIVATION TO MIGRATE

The results of the interviews show that continuous individual mobilities are now highly institutionalised. Rather than being purely individual decisions or the result of family decisions, they frequently result from a negotiation between the individual (migrant) and the institutions. Institutional incentives from schools, companies, trainers, evaluation commissions, and brokerage offices are transposed into individual needs – the need to gain knowledge, foreign experience, or a reference for a foreign internship on a CV. In the decision stage prior to migrating, the individual weighs whether to migrate and then the positives of each destination. In the decision stage, the individual may be motivated to achieve what others in his or her category have achieved or to do even better. Institutional and other incentives for mobility can be rejected but there is often a relative deprivation effect; individuals worry that they will be sacrificing some of their own worth if they do not take advantage of the incentives. Individuals still in the stage of deciding to migrate specify what they expect from migration. At the same time, institutions can increase the incentives to do so, by offering better prospects, increasing financial benefits, and offering scholarships, cheap tuition fees, and the possibility to work while studying.

Example 1: Respondent 726 (qualitative survey) described in detail the choice of school he attended. He graduated from the Czech Technical University in Prague and chose the University of Auckland for his PhD for the following reasons: (a) he wanted to study abroad and gain new (foreign) experience; (b) he did not want to go to Europe, but to a more distant destination with which there is little experience in the Czech Republic; (c) he did not want to go to the United States, because everyone goes there and he would not bring back anything new from the United States; (d) he wanted to go to a country with advanced technology. Given the respondent's criteria, the only options were Canada, Australia, and New Zealand; (e) Canada's climate is unfriendly and it is expensive to study in Australia, so the choice fell on New Zealand. He found a company there that would pay for his tuition, and in return he would work for the company for a year after completing his PhD.

Sometimes it is the action or movement of an employer that initiates an individual migration (in the past, when members of the nobility moved they were followed by their musicians, tailors, maids, clerks, artists, architects, etc.). Similarly, churches still initiate missionary journeys; national and industry trade bodies likewise send representatives abroad. Employees frequently move between branches of their employer, soldiers and mili-

tary experts and their families must also frequently relocate, and so forth. Sometimes people make multiple moves in which private and professional interests are intertwined.

Example 1a: Respondent 710 (qualitative research) on a business trip in Germany (institution-initiated mobility) met a US military officer (institution-initiated mobility). She had her wedding in the Czech Republic (personal unique story), and since then has already moved five times with her family within the United States owing to her husband's employment (another multiple migration initiated by an institution). She returns to the Czech Republic for holidays (linking the source and destination countries through migration for private reasons).

### **8.5.2 TRANSFER FROM THE SOURCE COUNTRY TO THE CURRENT COUNTRY OF RESIDENCE**

Only in some cases of continuous individual mobilities do the migrants know in advance whether the migration is temporary or permanent. In the qualitative survey, 15.5% of respondents answered unequivocally that they were not considering returning, and 13.7% responded unequivocally that they wanted to return to Czechia. Other responses touched on some condition or circumstance that their return would depend on. As a rule, the respondents were not on their first stay abroad, and the possibility of moving back to the Czech Republic at any time allowed them to avoid adopting any rigid opinions on whether they would do so.

Example 2: A man started an internet business in the Czech Republic after 1989, but the business environment there was increasingly aggressive and corrupt. After EU accession in particular it required a lot of work, vigilance, and stress to be successful in his field of business. Therefore, he decided to partly switch fields and started to consider doing business abroad. His idea that he might find business opportunities outside the Czech Republic was confirmed by a visit to New Zealand, where he went on holiday and met the brother of a friend. (The man had initially considered several possible ways of changing his life and going abroad was one of many options.) After his holiday, he returned to the Czech Republic and spent a year shutting down his company in the Czech Republic and preparing to go abroad (if migrants are not under enormous pressure from circumstances, they can usually prepare for their stay abroad so that they do not enter an environment that does not suit them; if they find they do not like their destination, they can generally reverse their decision). A year later, he went to New Zealand to start an IT business. He felt much more comfortable in the business environment there than in the Czech Republic. After six years of doing business in New Zealand, he tried the business environment in the Czech Republic again. He discovered

that nothing substantial had changed and that New Zealand was more business-friendly for him (a widespread reaction from people who have relocated is that after some time they need to find out if they made the right decision. In the case of employed persons, a parallel response is that they return to the country of origin after the end of their contract and only then decide whether or not to live abroad). The man in Example 2 has been in business in New Zealand for 17 years and has no intention of changing this now (that decision came after six years of residence and further attempts to try out the Czech environment).

### 8.5.3 THE IMPLEMENTATION OF PLANS IN THE DESTINATION COUNTRY

Continuous individual mobilities are characterised by a great variety of intentions, which can be both long-term and temporary. The survey revealed such long-term goals as living with a partner from abroad or building a career abroad, while temporary goals included trying something new, learning a language, studying, and gaining experience or practice, etc.

In the case of continuous individual mobilities with temporal goals, it can be expected that achieving a given goal will be followed by another decision-making process where individuals weigh the options and offers that further influence their life trajectory.

Example 3: A man, 35 years old, went to Australia through the Erasmus Programme during his bachelor studies at the Czech Technical University. He found the Australian educational environment very friendly and he got an opportunity to work during his studies. After Erasmus, he returned to the Czech Republic and completed his bachelor's studies. His positive experience in the Erasmus Programme played a role in his decision on where to do his master's studies. He therefore went to the University of Sydney to pursue his master's and doctoral degrees. The fact that he had already been involved in research and teaching activities at the University of Sydney when he was a student played a role in his decision to pursue research there after his doctoral studies. He therefore accepted an offer and began working there on developing teaching programmes for students (the university offered him a job that was continuously linked to his existing professional activities). Further decisions about his future were influenced by the fact that he got married in the country where he was studying. The man is now considering what institutions could help his child learn the Czech language and develop a relationship with Czechia. The example shows that decision-making processes, can be influenced by both personal and professional motives, which are intertwined.

#### 8.5.4 INTEGRATION INTO THE NEW ENVIRONMENT AND TIES TO THE SOURCE AND DESTINATION COUNTRIES

Global societies are complex and structured wholes. People are unevenly integrated into the different segments of these complex structures, regardless of whether they are immigrants or autochthons. Many academicians have attempted to formulate criteria and conceive of degrees of integration (acculturation, assimilation). Landecker's model of four types of integration – cultural, normative, communicative, and functional (Landecker 1951) – has persisted for a relatively long time. The European Commission measures integration according to the following indicators, which further operationalises: (1) language skills, (2) integration into the social system, (3) acceptance of the country's social norms, (4) qualifications and skills to obtain appropriate employment, (5) feeling like a member of a (nationality) society (Eurobarometer 2022). The difficulties involved in operationalising and interpreting these indicators are obvious. Of course, what matters most for an individual's actions is the person's own sense of integration and satisfaction with his or her social status, which reflects not only the above-mentioned criteria but also, above all, the individual's values, norms, plans for the future, sense of security, satisfaction, and subjective perception of his or her quality of life. Given that an individual cannot integrate into all of society equally, it is also necessary to include in the calculation which part of society the individual is likely to integrate into. At the same time, integration into a particular segment of the new society does not preclude remaining tightly integrated into some segments of the source country's society. On the contrary, the concept of transnationalism is based on the principle of the multi-segmental integration of individuals in several countries.

Example 4: Respondent 705 in the qualitative research went to the United Kingdom as an au pair after finishing high school. She returned to the Czech Republic when her contract ended. However, since she had economic knowledge from high school and had good communication skills in the language of the target country after her stay in the UK, she decided a few years later to try to find a more qualified job there. She started working as an accountant in a bank in the United Kingdom. Her job, therefore, matched her existing qualifications. She also started working with the Czech community there, co-running a Czech school. She thus became integrated into not just the British labour market but also the Czech diaspora in the United Kingdom. At the same time, she started to study for a Bachelor of Laws degree in the UK – to increase her qualifications. At the time of the interview, she was working in the non-profit sector on refugee issues. In 2022, she had mainly non-European clients, but during her time there she also had clients from the Czech Republic and, therefore, communicated with the Czech authori-

ties. She travels regularly to Czechia, where she has a small house (private property in the source country). She feels at home in the Czech Republic and in the United Kingdom, where she married a man who is also of emigrant, non-British origin. Dual residency would suit her: summers in Czechia and (the milder) winters in the UK.

The example presented here illustrates different types of integration in which institutional integration plays a significant role in building and maintaining interpersonal contacts in both the source and destination countries.

### **8.5.5 PROFESSIONAL (CORPORATE) DIASPORAS AS A FORM OF INTEGRATION INTO A NEW ENVIRONMENT**

If an institution initiates the departure abroad, it is likely that it also creates the conditions for institutional integration in the destination space. A typical example is school attendance abroad, where a student primarily integrates into foreign student collectives and education facilities, which become the starting point for integration into other types of environments. While the initiators of migration facilitate integration into the institutional setting, migrants have to manage their integration into other milieus on their own. Chris Shore described such a situation from an anthropological perspective when he started his research in Italy and found it challenging to overcome the university's international 'diasporic' environment and gain insight into Italian everyday life (Shore 1999).

Current definitions of 'diaspora' are very broad (Vertovec 1999; Vertovec and Cohen 1999; King 2002; Georgiou and Silverstone 2006; Bauböck and Faist 2010; Marinova 2017; Uherek 2017; Cohen 2019; Tabar 2020; Weinar 2020). As a rule, they do not state that a diaspora should necessarily be made up of persons of the same nationality or ethnicity. They also do not assume mutual personal interactions among all diaspora members. The characteristic frequently cited as defining a diaspora is dispersion from the country of origin and cultural proximity, which may be enhanced by shared (migration) experience. However, the migration experience is not necessarily a direct, personal experience, it can also be passed on generationally. Most examples of diasporas involve people from technologically less developed countries in more developed countries, where they form stigmatised groups with strong solidarity ties at the personal level (Marinova 2017). However, this does not negate the existence of other types of diasporas, where institutional and corporate relations may be intertwined with ties towards the country of origin. A professional diaspora, however, may include smaller units emerging from a country-of-origin-related belonging.

Example 5: Respondent 713 is a specialist in computer graphics. He graduated from the Czech Technical University and obtained his PhD in the United

States. He asked a professor of Czech origin to supervise his doctoral thesis and, with the professor's consent, was accepted into a doctoral programme in the United States, but it was primarily because of his knowledge and skills that he was admitted. He completed his PhD and obtained employment in Silicon Valley in northern California. During the interview, he expressed the opinion that he was gradually drifting away from Czechia since it would be difficult to find adequate employment there. He also said that he thinks California is a beautiful place and that he takes cycling trips to learn more about it. He maintains contact with the Czech Republic both because he has family and friends there whom he is in touch with and because there are other Czechs and Slovaks at his workplace. They speak the language of their origin country among themselves, and this way he is able to maintain his Czech. Many groups communicate in their mother tongue at his workplace and Czechs are just one relatively small group there who do this.

## 8.6 DISCUSSION

The above examples of migration biographies describe a somewhat different type of migration than that of the main migration streams from Czechia before 1989. It is also a type of migration to which only a very individualised and subjectivised version of the push-pull mechanism can be applied. However, even in the cases described here the efficiency of migration can be measured, and one can talk about migration flows (Lee 1966), but in a very generalised way that is difficult to apply to individual examples. These are migrations to various destinations and individual migratory episodes, which correspond to the nature of a globalised postmodern society with relatively easily traversed borders and institutionalised integration instruments in geographically distant places. As society changes, shifts also occur in the meaning of integration and diaspora, with professional and corporate diasporas as a platform for community life abroad. As Example 5 shows, rather than compatriot loyalty, in many cases we might more accurately speak of compatriot sensibility, where people are aware of their mother tongue and the context in which they grew up, but their cooperation with each other is determined not by the fact that they share the same country of origin, but because they work in the same company on the same tasks and at the same time deal with the same life issues, concerning, for example, family, children, and housing.

The nature of the world today also necessarily determines the understanding and measure of what the benefits of migration are for an origin country. These benefits cannot simply be mechanically measured as the sum of the state's investments in individuals and the number of returnees, as they



also include the impact that the presence of its citizens abroad has on the Czech Republic. When, for example, Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk returned to Czechia from his sojourns abroad to use his foreign experience and connections for the benefit of Czechoslovakia, surely this return outweighed the loss of hundreds of other emigrants who never returned. But they, too, played their part in their destination countries. Moreover, our data show that the integration of Czechs into the segments of foreign societies in which migrants from Czechia found employment generally required additional investments made by the migrants themselves at their destination.

## 8.7 CONCLUSION

The data we obtained through the sampling steps described in the methodology section confirm our initial assumption that the individual migration cases we studied mainly fall into the category of *continuous individual mobilities*. Such mobilities are not an entirely new phenomenon, but in the era of globalised postmodern society they are beginning to occur on a larger scale and are thus more visible. At the moment, we cannot unequivocally say what share of the total emigration from Czechia is represented by this type of migration. Migration is also still occurring for economic reasons or family reunification, and until the middle of the first decade of the 21st century we also frequently encountered asylum seekers (Uherek 2018; 2022). However, we would argue that the importance of continual individual mobilities is increasing, and it is comparable in nature to the forms of migration described as taking place between Western European, US, and Commonwealth countries since the 1980s (Salt 1983–1984, 1992; Findlay 1993; King 2002; Guhlich 2017; Recchi and Favell 2019). This migration is characterised by individual motivations, an important role in which is played by cognition, personal development, and environmental factors. The decision-making processes involved in choosing to migrate and selecting a destination are significantly influenced by formal institutions. Educational institutions and corporations especially influence migration decisions through the incentives they offer. They are also important segments into which migrants integrate at their destination. The move to the destination is well-planned and usually occurs in stages. The form of institutional presence in migration also shapes the specificities of the diasporas formed by continual individual mobilities. The formation of professional or corporate diasporas plays a significant role here. These diasporas are united by cooperation, competitiveness, and solidarity, while more vaguely delineated ethnic or compatriot diasporas were characterised more by social sensitivity than everyday cooperation: affection, sentiment, the need for one to see other people sometimes – for instance,

before Christmas – who come from the same place, the need to maintain one’s mother tongue.

The topic of continuous individual mobilities raises many questions and invites a broader comparison, which will be discussed in future studies.

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# CHAPTER 9

## INTERNATIONALLY MOBILE CZECH ACADEMICS: WEIGHING THE REASONS TO STAY ABROAD OR RETURN HOME

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### 9.1 INTRODUCTION

During the last three decades, there has been a significant increase in the mobility of workers, students, tourists, goods, technologies, and knowledge on a global scale, a consequence of an increasingly interconnected global capitalist economy. Czechia is no exception to this trend. Since the fall of the Iron Curtain in 1989 and, later, the accession of Czechia to the EU in 2004, Czechs have taken the opportunity to travel abroad, either as tourists or for the purpose of work or study (Brouček et al. 2017). Increased mobility for work and study has had implications for the national economy and the local and national labour market, as well as a wider societal impact. This transformation and intensification of mobility has been reflected in academia and higher education. Whereas some mobility has always been present in academia, for a long time academic mobility was sporadic and limited. But in the last three decades it has become systematic, multiple, and transnational (Kim 2008, 2010). Mobility in academia/higher education has become the norm rather than the exception (Council of Europe 2009, in Robertson 2010). This chapter looks at the international mobility of Czech academics and scientists, many of whom have used the increased mobility opportunities to start and/or establish their careers abroad.

The chapter is based on a mixed methods study we conducted among Czech academics with at least six months of international experience.<sup>44</sup> The data discussed in this paper were collected as part of a wider project, ‘New Approaches to Diaspora Policy’, commissioned by the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs<sup>45</sup> (see Chapter 5 for more details). The wider project looked at the needs of Czechs living abroad and their experiences of interactions with the Czech state. We targeted Czech academics and scientists and collected additional data focused on academic trajectories, collaboration, and motivations for potentially returning to (or working with colleagues in) Czechia. Looking at academics in different career stages, from PhD students to senior academics (using a quantitative survey sample N=198 and a focus group with eight

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<sup>44</sup> The majority of our respondents had long-term international experience.

<sup>45</sup> Grant number: TITBMZV919.

participants), this chapter discusses the reasons and motivations for staying abroad or moving back to Czechia.

To contextualise the Czech academic ‘diaspora’<sup>46</sup> and the motivations for international mobility, we start with a discussion of the wider context in which academic mobility is embedded. The wider changes in academic funding structures and the academic labour market are some of the conditions that facilitate, or hinder, mobility. The chapter considers three main factors that influence considerations and decisions around mobility. These are the academic labour market and economic opportunities and inequalities, the wider societal structure (including educational policies), and personal and professional relationships. When we look at the wider context and structures that facilitate academic mobility and mobility flows, we find that, according to our data, individual decisions around mobility, while embedded in these wider structures, are shaped by social relationships – personal/familial, professional, and wider societal relations, by which we mean the societal and political context that shapes interactions in the public space.

## 9.2 ACADEMIC MOBILITY AS ‘HIGH SKILL’ MIGRATION

The opportunities for and barriers to academic mobility are embedded in the wider framework of political and economic relations and they consequently change and shift in response to changing global political and economic developments (Kim 2009; Fahey and Kenway 2010b). In his classic book on migration and work, Piore (1979) argues that migrants’ relationship to their host country, and their employment there, is purely instrumental, because migrants intend to invest their earnings from the host country back in their home country. Other migration scholars built on Piore’s argument to create the concept of ‘a dual frame of reference’, where the conditions in the host society are compared to and assessed in relation to the conditions in the home society (Waldinger and Lichter 2003). Under the ‘dual frame of reference’, migrants are more willing to take on low-paid or precarious work in the host country because, compared with conditions in their home country, it offers higher earnings and/or better opportunities (Waldinger and Lichter 2003). Kõnõnen (2019) critiques this approach and argues that it is immigration regulations that contribute to migrants’ acceptance of poor working conditions and that these regulations are an integral part of a migrant’s ‘frame of reference’ around employment decisions. While these debates around migrant precarity have been used mainly in discussions about migrants

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<sup>46</sup> Whether Czech academics who live and work abroad can be referred to as a ‘diaspora’ is uncertain, but for the purpose of this paper we use this term to refer to our target research group.

in low-paid work, and migrant academics are ‘highly skilled’ migrants, we nevertheless use this same lens to look at migrant Czech academics. There are two reasons for this: first, their main motivations for moving abroad are better economic opportunities and career advancement achieved through the accumulation of social, cultural, and reputational capital as symbolic capital (Bourdieu 1986); second, academic mobility is increasingly becoming characterised by precarity affecting both employment and the ability to stay in the host country (which is often tied to employment). We argue that because of the specific nature of the academic labour market, which is increasingly becoming characterised by precarious working conditions and multiple mobility, the potential for employment security and long-term career prospects create another frame within which decisions around mobility and settlement are situated.

Increased integration within the European Union (EU) has led, at the EU policy level, to a greater emphasis on mobility as a way to achieve excellence through ‘knowledge exchange’ (Silova 2009). The Bologna process, initiated in 1999, aimed to synchronise and align education systems across Europe in order to facilitate mobility and make, for example, the transfer of foreign qualifications and student mobility easier (discussed in Kim 2010). However, differences between national educational and employment policies persist, as do economic inequalities between regions and countries, and this influences the direction of mobility flows (Bilecen and Van Mol 2017). Student mobility forms a large proportion of the mobility in academia/higher education (Robertson 2010) and differs from the mobility of other academics (researchers, lecturers, scholars). Students are not deeply embedded within academic networks, their reasons for studying abroad are likely to be highly individual, such as gaining experience living abroad or getting better job opportunities by earning an international degree, and much of the student mobility is temporary (Robertson 2010). However, the increased mobility of students has contributed, for example, to an increase in the number of courses being offered in English (Ackers 2008), which in turn has helped give rise to the conditions that shape the mobility of academics. Our research sample includes PhD students because, despite being students, they are likely to be at the start of their career in academia/science and are in the course of building their longer-term professional (and social) networks. Additionally, our research sample includes early-career, mid-career, and senior scholars who initially moved abroad to obtain their PhD. This move abroad shifted their career trajectory, because they established their professional and social networks abroad, rather than building them in Czechia. We discuss this further below.

While mobility has always been an integral part of academia and knowledge exchange, it has increased significantly since the start of the 21st

century (Bilecen and Van Mol 2017; Kim 2009). According to the Institute of International Education (2016, cited in Bilecen and Van Mol 2017, 1243), the international mobility of academics increased globally from 89,634 in 2005 to 124,861 in 2015, with the number of internationally mobile students also sharply increasing in the past decade.<sup>47</sup> At a policy level, mobility and the internationalisation of academia tends to be seen as positive and as increasing the opportunities for knowledge exchange, collaboration, and competitiveness, as we noted above in reference to the Bologna process (Robertson 2010). At the same time, others have described the negative impact that increased academic mobility, which has become almost an expected part of academic life, can have on scholars themselves (see, e.g., Ivancheva et al. 2019; O’Keefe and Courtois 2019) and on wider academia. The link between mobility and ‘excellence’ is not straightforward (Ackers 2008) because multiple mobility can limit a scholar’s ability to develop their own research and build wider professional networks and establish themselves in the wider professional and educational environment. Additionally, European policy ‘tends to conflate different forms of mobility and promotes the use of the concept as a proxy for internationalisation, excellence and competitiveness’ (Ackers 2008, 413). As Ackers (2008) and others point out, it is not mobility in itself that creates excellence, even though increased competitiveness can contribute to excellence.

Despite this emphasis on internationalisation and openness in academia, local/national conditions, such as economic inequalities and fewer resources in the post-socialist region (and elsewhere), may limit opportunities for internationalisation (Fahey and Kenway 2010a, 2010b). For example, Puzo (2023) shows that internal processes in Lithuanian universities, such as the need to complete forms in Lithuanian and the lack of transparency around financial remuneration, limit the potential for internationalisation and contribute to feelings of precarity and uncertainty among international academics there. The need to complete administrative forms in Lithuanian also means that international academics end up spending a significant amount of time on required administrative tasks. While our research focuses on Czech academics and factors that inform their decisions whether to potentially return to Czechia or stay abroad, Puzo’s (2023) example is relevant. Barriers to internationalisation may act as a deterrent for academics with international experience, and those academics who have a foreign partner are likely to encounter similar administrative issues similar to those mentioned by Puzo’s respondents.

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47 According to UNESCO (2015), the number of international students rose from 2.8 million to 4.1 million between 2005 and 2013 and to 6.4 million in 2020 (UNESCO Institute of Statistics 2022).

## 9.2.1 CHANGES IN ACADEMIC STRUCTURES AND EMPLOYMENT

In her article about the post-socialist transformations of educational systems in the former Soviet bloc, Silova (2009, 302) notes that one of the main commonalities of the educational transformation in EU accession countries was their 'explicit use of Western European references in creating new educational spaces'. The countries that aspired to join the EU also tended to adopt the language of Western European countries to signal their effort to 'return to Europe' (Silova 2002) and to align their educational systems and policies with Western European ones, in an attempt both to achieve what was seen as a higher quality of research and education (Muliavka 2019) and to attract funding and increase mobility opportunities. In some EU accession countries (including Czechia), new educational policies were adopted, but they were not (properly) implemented in practice (Silova 2002) – for example, the situation of the Roma in the Czech Republic has not improved even after EU accession and the educational segregation of Roma is still a widespread problem. Even though the participants in our survey did not mention the Roma or segregation in education (and Silova's focus was on education as far back as the elementary level), it could be read from their responses that there was criticism of the wider education system that educational policies and reforms have not been sufficiently or properly introduced in practice. In addition, our research shows that wider societal norms and values – such as inclusion and equality, which are likely to impact issues like educational segregation – also shape an academic's decisions about potentially returning to the Czech Republic. The reforms in educational policies in post-socialist countries described in the literature and discussed above and the orientation towards the 'West' with the idea of 'returning to Europe' also influenced developments in the Czech education system. At the same time, while there is rhetoric about greater internationalisation in Czech academia, certain policies and practices limit the potential to make it more open to internationalisation, as we noted above in the discussion of Puzo's (2023) case study. Our data show a lack of clarity about the pay scales and salaries offered by Czech institutions,<sup>48</sup> a lack of clarity about recruitment processes, and a lack of openness in some institutions towards academics who are working or have worked abroad. We discuss this further below.

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**48** Median pay varies across institutions and across disciplines in the Czech Republic, but when compared to equivalent wages in other countries (notably in the 'West'), the wages of Czech academics are significantly lower, while the housing costs are high. For more information (see Ministerstvo školství, mládeže a tělovýchovy 2023). In 2023, the Czech government announced plans to reduce the funding allocated to science and research, which is likely to have a negative impact on Czech academia. In response to the government's plans, the Czech academic union has taken industrial action.



Internal changes within the Czech education system and academic labour market occurred alongside wider changes in academia. Changes in the academic labour market are embedded in the neoliberal shift to a more managerial style of higher education governance, which is characterised by increased competition for external funding, increased use of fixed-term contracts, and a rise in casualisation and greater precarity for junior academics and women (Kim 2010; Ivancheva et al. 2019). The recent changes in the structure of higher education institutions have resulted in an increased division of labour within academia (Kim 2010). In an article that analyses transnational academic mobility, Kim (2010) identifies three main types of mobile academics. The first type is formed by ‘academic intellectuals’ who have established positions and are able to develop new paradigms and make conceptual contributions to disciplinary debates and theories (Kim 2010, 579). The second type is made up of ‘academic experts’ who tend to move from project to project as researchers with ‘transferrable methodological skills’. The third type consists of ‘manager-academics’ who work in senior management roles (e.g. university vice-chancellors or faculty deans) rather than in traditional positions of academic leadership. There is also a fourth type of academic, adjuncts on teaching-focused contracts and other teaching staff who are employed on an hourly-paid temporary basis (though this type of academic may be less mobile).

Out of these, ‘academic researchers’ tend to be the most mobile, as their reliance on fixed-term contracts often necessitates mobility when starting a new job. This is partly linked to the current funding structures of funding higher education and research. The majority of funding for research needs to be obtained via competitive bids to external funders. Fixed-term jobs are then created for the duration of the funded project, and this results in ‘academic experts’ being hired on short-term research contracts and thus contributes to academic mobility (Kim 2010). While this is the case especially in countries like the United Kingdom and the United States, because of the way in which higher education is funded there, the reliance on external funding for research is becoming more prevalent in other countries. Career decisions are being shaped by the need for ongoing mobility, by the need to move from one fixed-term contract to the next, and by the lack of opportunities and pathways to gaining a permanent position. Our qualitative data show that this lack of stability and lack of ‘embeddedness’ within institutions has a negative impact on individual careers and, potentially, on the wider academic environment, as we discuss below.

When looking at the reasons for and barriers to potential return, it is important to consider these wider factors that create the environment in which such decisions are made. While there is an emphasis on mobility, openness, and internationalisation in policy, structural issues like limited funding and

the lack of opportunities for career advancement make it difficult to implement the necessary processes in practice. At the same time, mobility itself can be a barrier to career advancement and stability.

### **9.3 THE CZECH EMIGRATION CONTEXT AND METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

While there is some evidence of the increased international mobility of Czech academics and scientists, there are no reliable or accurate data on the number of Czech academics leaving the Czech Republic to study or work abroad, either temporarily or permanently. Similarly, there are no data on the number of academics who return to the Czech Republic after obtaining international experience. As noted above, the mobility of Czech PhD students and academics is part of wider mobility trends, both within academia and as part of a broader, more general pattern of outward-bound mobility from the former state-socialist countries. Czech citizens who live abroad do not need to register with the Czech authorities after moving abroad. Consequently, the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs does not have exact data on the number of Czech citizens living abroad. The official estimates of the Czech authorities, based on requests for consulate services (like passport or birth certificate applications) and voting registers, are that around 200,000–250,000 Czech citizens and around 2–2.5 million people of Czech origin are living abroad (MZV 2023). We do not have data on how many of the Czechs living abroad work in academia and/or in science, broadly defined, as these data are not collected.

The research used a mixed methodology approach and data collection was conducted in two phases. The first part of data collection was completed in summer 2021 when we conducted an online survey. The Czexpats survey was attached to a larger survey aimed at the wider Czech diaspora, as discussed in Chapter 5. The Czexpats survey, along with the larger survey, was shared on social media and distributed via personal and relevant professional networks to maximise the range of potential participants, their geographic spread, and the representation of people in different career stages and disciplinary affiliations. Participants were screened at the start of the survey and the criteria for inclusion were having Czech citizenship or Czech ancestors, having a PhD and working in a relevant field, or studying towards a PhD, and a minimum stay abroad of six months. The minimum period of time spent abroad was added to exclude from the sample participants who held temporary visiting positions abroad. The second phase included qualitative data collection via a focus group with eight participants held in April 2022, which was followed by a set of qualitative interviews. The focus group participants included four

women and four men and they were in different career stages – PhD students, postdocs, senior researchers, and one full professor. With the exception of the PhD students, the focus group participants had experienced multiple international mobility.

This chapter draws on data from both phases of the research, the quantitative online survey and the focus group. The quantitative survey used a self-selected random sample. The self-selected sampling is perhaps one limitation of the research, as such a sample is likely to include respondents who are more interested in staying in touch with the Czech Republic, who are considering return, or who have other strong ties (professional or personal) to the country and were thus more motivated to respond to the survey than Czech academics who are not considering return or collaboration with a Czech institution. However, the responses (see below) show that some respondents had had negative experiences with Czech academia or industry, despite their ongoing efforts to maintain links or collaborative relationships with their Czech counterparts. These participants were motivated to take part in our research in order to raise awareness of the issues that they encountered. Despite the potential limitations, the mixed method approach and sampling method allowed us to gain insight into the wide range of views and experiences that shape the mobility patterns of Czech academics and the factors that frame and influence their decisions around mobility. Given the size of the sample and the wide disciplinary and career stage spread, it is reasonable to assume that our sample reflects the general situation, experiences, and views of the majority of Czech scientists and academics working abroad.

#### **9.4 CZECH ACADEMICS ABROAD – WHO ARE THEY?**

During the first phase of the research, the online survey, we received 198 responses. Of these 55.1% (109) of the responses were from women, while 44.4% (88) were from men and 0.5% (1) from a non-binary participant. The majority of respondents (72%) were from STEM fields and 28% were from the social sciences and humanities. Most of them had left Czechia in the doctoral stage of their career. The higher percentage of participants from STEM fields perhaps reflects more the makeup of the Czexpats in Science network and how the online survey was circulated and who it reached, as it was a self-selected sample. The respondents were from different age groups, ranging from 25 to 80 years of age, while the majority of participants were in the 25–40 age group (54.2%), and the next largest group was formed by those between the ages of 40 and 50 (31.2%). More than half of the respondents work at a university abroad (61.1%), while 27.3% of respondents work at a research

centre (either affiliated with a university or without a university affiliation). Only a small percentage of respondents work in the private sector (5.6%) or at other institutions (6.1%), which includes both government and non-governmental or non-profit organisations. The length of time respondents had been abroad also varied widely, from 6 months (which was the minimum time for inclusion in the sample) to 53 years. The majority of respondents had spent between 6 months and 10 years abroad (79.4%). A number of factors could have contributed to this. There has been a shift towards increased mobility in the past decade, as discussed above, with growing numbers of junior academics experiencing greater job insecurity and becoming more mobile and therefore potentially less settled in their destination country. Consequently, junior Czech academics are likely more interested in potentially moving back to Czechia in the hope of gaining more job security, and they may have stronger ties to Czechia than those who have lived abroad for longer, which we will discuss below. The way the research participants were recruited for this study, via social media and existing networks, meant that people with a stronger social media presence and with existing ties to Czexpats in Science were more likely to find out about the survey. This is also reflected in the career stage characteristics of our sample, which contains more people in the earlier stages of their career. While over one-third of our sample were in senior positions, those who were PhD students or were working as postdocs constituted more than one-half of the sample, as Table 1 shows.

**Table 1.** The career stages of survey respondents

|                 | <b>Freq.</b> | <b>Percentage</b> |
|-----------------|--------------|-------------------|
| SENIOR POSITION | 70           | 35.4              |
| POSTDOC         | 66           | 33.3              |
| PHD             | 48           | 24.2              |
| OTHER           | 14           | 7.1               |
| TOTAL           | 198          | 100.00            |

Our sample shows that most movement is to the USA (21.2%), the UK (16.7%), Germany (15.7%), and Switzerland (8.1%). The other 40% of respondents live in 26 other countries, many of which are part of the EU. Because of the Bologna process and the emphasis placed at the EU level on mobility as an important and positive aspect of higher education, it is not surprising that many of our respondents lived in other EU countries. Overall, the general trend observed in our sample is movement to or between countries in the Global North. This reflects wider trends in academic mobility. According to UNESCO (Schneegans et al. 2021), 89% of all internationally mobile

doctoral students in STEM fields are found in just ten countries, with the United States hosting the most with nearly one-half (49.1% in 2012), followed by the United Kingdom (9.2%), and with Germany ranking sixth (3.5%) and Switzerland seventh (3.1%).<sup>49</sup> These four countries are the ones that attract the most Czech doctoral students. They are countries that have a reputation as centres of excellence or centres of knowledge (Fahey and Kenway 2010). They also have more economic and political power than Czechia and can offer students better economic opportunities. Language is also likely to be a factor influencing a student's choice of destination country. English is the lingua franca of academia and many international journals publish in English, and the trend of academic migration to English-speaking countries reflects this. The presence of two German-speaking countries as the third and fourth most frequent destination for our respondents is likely the result of their geographic proximity, which is appealing to Czech academics for personal and family reasons, as our qualitative data show. Additionally, there are historical ties to Germany and German is one of the main languages taught in Czech schools.

Despite the higher number of women respondents in our sample, fewer of the women in the sample than the men were in senior positions,<sup>50</sup> which is a sign of ongoing gender inequality and likely also of the effects of the 'motherhood penalty' (Budig and England 2001). While gender is not a specific focus of this article, our data provided clear evidence of gender inequality (and the experience of sexism and/or sexual harassment), which some participants mentioned as a factor that was part of their decision to leave and/or stay abroad.

As Table 2 shows, there was only a small difference in the number of research participants who said they wanted to return to Czechia (74 respondents) and those who said they were not planning to return (76), with respondents who have children being more likely to say that they were not planning to return. Having children seems to reduce the willingness and/or ability to be mobile because of increased 'embeddedness' in the host society and deeper social connections.

The top five answers regarding what would motivate participants to return were personal and family reasons (75.3%), an opportunity to do science at the same level as abroad (67.2%), a job offer (59.6%), being able to contribute to the development of their academic field (48%), and the opportunity to

49 The top ten countries in the UNESCO report: United States (49.1%), United Kingdom (9.2%), France (7.4%), Australia (4.6%), Canada (3.9%), Germany (3.5%), Switzerland (3.1%), Japan (2.9%), Malaysia (2.9%), and Sweden (2.0%).

50 When compared to the number of women in senior positions at Charles University, our sample had significantly more women in senior positions, indicating there are better career opportunities for women academics abroad (see Loblova et al. 2021).

**Table 2.** Plans to return in relation to having children

| Do you plan to return to Czechia? | Do you have children? |     |       |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|-----|-------|
|                                   | Yes                   | No  | Total |
| I don't know                      | 21                    | 27  | 48    |
| Yes                               | 30                    | 44  | 74    |
| No                                | 35                    | 41  | 76    |
| Total                             | 86                    | 112 | 198   |

contribute to improving the quality of Czech higher education and science (44.9%). When we look at the main barriers to returning to Czechia, the top five answers were low pay (69.2%), lack of transparency in the hiring process and 'academic inbreeding' (52%), lack of resources for science, research, and higher education (44.4%), lack of internationalisation and lack of openness to foreigners (42.2%), and low quality of the academic environment (42.2%). To return to our argument, that academic conditions and the academic labour market are key aspects of the 'frame of reference' in which our respondents make decisions around mobility, the survey responses show that the conditions and structures in academia along with personal and family reasons are the key factors considered when making such decisions.

## 9.5 MOTIVATIONS TO RETURN AND REASONS TO STAY

In this section, we discuss the main motivations to potentially return to Czechia and reasons to stay abroad that we identified in our research, focusing on the three main areas noted above: (1) professional relationships, (2) personal/family relationships, and (3) the wider societal and political context. There is, of course, a certain overlap between the three areas; they cannot be neatly separated. This section draws both on open-ended survey questions and on data from the focus group.

### 9.5.1 THE PROFESSIONAL CONTEXT

In addition to issues such as low pay, lack of clarity around pay structures, and (a perceived) lack of transparency around recruitment procedures, both the survey and the focus group data show that the respondents had difficulty maintaining and/or establishing professional relationships and networks in Czechia from abroad and they experienced this as a barrier to both potential collaborative relationships and to the country. Previous studies have shown that some academics or students with international experience find them-

selves at a disadvantage when returning to their home country (Ackers 2008; Guth and Gill 2008). Spending time abroad meant that they were not able to maintain or create networks in their country of origin, and this puts them at a disadvantage vis-à-vis their colleagues who stayed in the home country and were not internationally mobile. Employers may prefer individuals who are familiar with the way things are done in the home country over people who have worked abroad and are used to different practices (Bilecen and Van Mol 2017). Our research participants had a similar experience and found that there was a lack of interest from colleagues in Czechia in collaborating with or attracting Czech colleagues based in other countries. Evidence of this was found in both the responses to the open-ended survey questions and in our qualitative data, as the following quote illustrates:

‘I started my PhD at [an institution] in Prague, I was part of a group there, and within the group there was a lot of sexual harassment. This made me leave. I moved abroad and completely cut off contact with my former colleagues and never tried to re-establish it. Over the next 20 years I was in contact with many other people, but any attempt to collaborate or to spend a semester in Prague, either as a visiting lecturer or as part of a research group – I always felt that people were giving me the hint that “we have completely different problems here, and you, you are in the US or Germany, and these problems do not concern you”. I feel that there is a lack of interest in integrating people who have international experience back into Czech academia.’

(FG participant 1, woman, senior researcher, experienced multiple international mobility)

Whereas the motivations to move abroad include obtaining better career and employment prospects by accumulating social, cultural, and professional capital (what we could call ‘reputational’ capital gained by working in centres of excellence/prestige), our data indicate that some academics are not able to transfer this professional and cultural capital back to their home country, as the quote above shows. Social, cultural, and professional capital needs to be developed over time by establishing and maintaining social and professional networks, and this needs to be done within a specific context. Social and professional capital built up abroad, in an international context, does not translate into the same level of social and professional capital back at home, in this case in Czech academia, where having social and professional networks within Czechia is what is valued.

While there is talk about internationalisation and the importance of international collaboration, and there are some scholars within Czech academia who are active internationally, there perhaps is not enough capacity to facilitate increased openness owing to external factors (like the lack of funding) and internal factors (academic structures, systems of evaluation and of

teaching), which limit the opportunities and motivations for international collaboration. The quote below points to some of the factors likely to limit internationalisation opportunities:

‘all communication has been with people who I know personally, close colleagues or those more active Czech scientists who attend international conferences and who I met that way, after I left Czechia. These active people then seek out or initiate collaboration, even though I haven’t collaborated with any of them, but that was due to a lack of opportunity. There are a small number of more active people who returned from abroad and know how to collaborate internationally. Older groups are not very active, even when it comes to inviting people to seminars. They tend to invite their friends or people they know from Czechia. They do not have international contacts, do not attend international events, and do not seek out new international contacts. That’s my experience.’

(FG participant 2, man, senior scientist)

While this lack of a pro-active approach to international collaboration may to some extent be a legacy of past educational policies, respondents also mentioned language barriers and a lack of financial resources for international travel as likely factors hindering the more widespread pursuit of and participation in international collaboration in Czech academia. However, as the quotes above indicate, some individual scholars do pro-actively pursue international collaboration, but this seems to be more of an individual effort made by some people than a systemic feature.

When talking about mobility, we must also consider the structures and conditions that shape mobility, and that individual mobility is embedded in (Fahey and Kenway 2010b). The way mobility is experienced by many in academia today it is a source of opportunities, such as being able to pursue a PhD abroad or to take up a visiting scholarship. However, when repeated mobility becomes an integral function of the labour market, it contributes to precarity and can hinder career progression and personal development and decrease excellence (Ackers 2008). Our data confirm this. Participants mentioned both the fact that increased international openness can attract more candidates and thus increase the potential of finding excellent candidates. Additionally, the participants also pointed out that the limited funds in Czech academia for international travel (e.g. to international conferences and/or workshops) constrain opportunities to create and develop international collaboration via short-term mobility. At the same time, participants expressed frustration with having to engage in continuous mobility and said that the possibility of having greater career stability in Czechia would be a significant motive to return. We will now discuss the personal context as a factor influencing mobility decisions.



## 9.5.2 THE PERSONAL CONTEXT

In relation to the personal context and its role in informing decisions around mobility and returning to Czechia, there was a tension between personal reasons, which acted both as motivating factors and as barriers to return at the same time. In the survey, personal reasons were the top factors in considering a return to Czechia. Often the reason was to be closer to parents and other family members, a motive not limited to any one specific life or career stage, even though the reasons for returning to Czechia change in response to life events. This is illustrated in the next two quotes:

‘For me, it’s a mixture of emotions, very personal, intimate factors, professional, a mix of factors and emotions. My answer is that I am considering returning to Czechia, it’s a real possibility and I would like to return. And it’s true that this is also for personal reasons – I am getting older, my parents are getting older, and this is starting to play a big role.’

(FG participant 1, woman, senior scientist)

The quote above shows that the reasons for mobility and factors influencing individual decisions can be complex. It is difficult to unpack them, and people may experience a tension around both wanting to return but having ties to the country they are living in. Personal reasons shape decisions around mobility even for academics who are not planning to return to Czechia, but who do not want to be geographically far away from Czechia. The quote below shows that geographic proximity and the ability to easily visit Czechia are also factors that can influence mobility decisions and do so in two senses – they can influence the decision to move to a location that is geographically close to Czechia to make visiting easier, but also the decision to go abroad for a more comfortable lifestyle without having to move too far away – as the respondent noted in another response.

‘I am currently in Germany ... I’ve been here for three years, and right now my husband and I are not thinking about returning. We are content here. Maybe in five or ten years, we will see. For me, this is quite normal, I’ve lived in different countries and on different continents for the last twenty years, so I don’t feel a strong pull to return to Czechia. But one of the reasons why we are here in [German town] is so that we are not too far from the grandparents, so that we can stay in touch with them.’

(FG participant 3, woman, postdoc, experienced multiple international mobility)

For other respondents, both in the focus group and in the survey, the opportunity for their children to learn Czech and to learn about Czech culture acted as motivating factors when considering a return.

Whereas having ties to other family members, and wider social ties in Czechia, led some respondents to consider returning, for others personal relationships were perceived as a barrier to returning, especially in the case of those with foreign partners, as the quote below illustrates:

‘Looking outwards from Czechia, people do not grasp a lot of stuff that people who live abroad face – for example, if they have a foreign partner. For foreign partners, moving to Czechia is a huge challenge, and, interestingly, in Czechia, you can’t explain that that’s the case to anyone. They are only thinking about you, not about your family or the fact that your partner might not settle in. They think it’s [your partner’s] problem. People who have not lived abroad, they don’t understand how many issues you face.’

(FG participant 4, man, senior researcher, experienced multiple international mobility)

The quote above points to the issue of the lack of openness and internationalisation that we discussed above. Our data show that the respondents viewed the Czech academic environment (and Czech administrative processes in general) as unwelcoming to foreigners. This was important for the respondents who had foreign partners and were concerned about the partner being able to adjust to life in Czechia, and it represented an obstacle to returning. Furthermore, it also points to the fact that mobility is not equally an option for everyone, and personal ties and considerations for a partner’s employment opportunities or children’s educational opportunities may have a constraining effect on mobility options more generally and not just in relation to returning to Czechia.

### 9.5.3 THE SOCIETAL CONTEXT

In relation to the wider societal and political context, respondents spoke both about the political and economic situation and the structural barriers in Czechia and about interactions in the public space that are shaped by wider social and societal values. We have already discussed the structural factors such as low pay, high housing costs, and other structural factors above. The structural factors (low pay, lack of transparency, lack of openness, and low quality of the academic environment) were the top four barriers to returning identified in our survey data and they were also mentioned in the open-ended survey questions and in the focus group. Low pay (when compared with salaries in Western universities) and lower funds available for travel to conferences are built into the academic structures that exist in every country and are in part produced by the ongoing economic inequalities between post-socialist countries and Western countries. Apart from the structural barriers, participants’ responses both to the open-ended survey

questions and in the focus group showed that for some academics the wider social and political environment is a deterrent (and in a sense a barrier) to returning. We touched on this topic in the previous section dealing with the personal context around barriers and motivations, where we discussed the lack of awareness of and consideration for the challenges that foreign spouses may face when trying to settle in Czechia. We noted that some of the respondents were critical of Czech society in remarks referring to the lack of openness not just in academia but in the public space/sphere and in Czech society in general, as the survey response quoted below illustrates:

‘I would welcome it if Czech society was less sexist and less conservative. I want my children to grow up in an environment where equality and inclusivity are important.’  
(open-ended survey answer)

The respondents’ answers also indicated that the long-term experience of living abroad and being embedded in a different social and professional environment leads to a change in values and expectations – for example, when it comes to civility and interactions in public and in the case of social values like inclusivity and gender equality:

‘Working conditions are important to me. I’ve gotten used to, you could say, Western standards when it comes to money, but also in terms of civility, politeness, gender equality, which here in Germany is excellent. So if I didn’t have that, if I had to return to the environment that was there in the late nineties, in that case, to be honest, I can’t imagine that.’

(FG participant 1, woman, senior scientist, experienced multiple international mobility)

However, our focus group data show that the respondents could find themselves torn when considering the factors that might motivate them to return and the barriers and deterrents to doing so, and some of them experienced life abroad as tiring and difficult because of the need to adapt to different cultural and social values:

‘I would like to be somewhere for a while, where it feels familiar, where I understand the social and cultural signals, or most of them. They are changing even back home.’

(FG participant 5, woman, senior researcher, experienced multiple international mobility)

The quotes above indicate the tension that exists between being in a familiar environment and a desire to avoid the negative aspects of the Czech social environment and societal values. The three contexts discussed in this

section – academic/professional, personal, and societal – form the frame of reference in which Czech academics make decisions around mobility.

## 9.6 CONCLUSION

Academic mobility is shaped by the personal and professional choices of individual academics. These choices may be constrained depending not just on where a person is positioned within the geopolitical system but also on their gender, ethnicity, health, and other factors (Fahey and Kenway 2010a). One of the consequences of academic mobility not being equally available to all academics is that international academic mobility (re)produces inequalities (Bilecen and Van Mol 2017) because academics and students who have experience working or studying abroad may have more opportunities as a result of their international experience. However, the ability to be mobile and to translate the experience of mobility into a social or ‘reputational’ capital is not equally distributed (Bilecen and Van Mol 2017). There is a hierarchy of value and privilege between countries and individual institutions. Degrees and experience obtained from certain institutions or countries are valued differently, and it is not the experience of international mobility per se, it also matters where a person gains that experience. At the same time, some academics or students with international experience find themselves at a disadvantage when returning to their home country (see Guth and Gill 2008) because spending time abroad meant that they were not able to maintain or create networks at home. We found this in our data, too, where long-term international experience led to a lack of relevant professional networks in Czechia and was experienced as a barrier to returning.

Decisions around mobility are complex, and even though our research participants had some negative perceptions of and negative experiences with the Czech academic environment, our data show that the participants believed that they would be able to do research of the same high quality if they returned to the Czech Republic as they did abroad. Mobility decisions were often significantly influenced by personal factors, such as what opportunities there are for one’s partner and children and how well they will be able to adapt to Czech society, as well as gender inequality and wider societal attitudes. In this chapter, we discussed some of the tensions that are present in Czech academics’ decisions around mobility. We argue that because of the specific nature of academic work, conditions in academia form the frame in which such decisions are made. Together with personal factors, these academia-related factors are embedded within the wider economic and societal contexts. Additionally, the frame of reference that informs decisions around mobility can shift over time and in response to life events, changing values,

and exposure to a new professional and social environment. For those who have long-term international experience of multiple mobility and have developed international networks, the frame of reference seems to shift to a more international/transnational context, where the choice is not between staying put and moving back to Czechia. Instead, career progression and employment stability, a pleasant social environment, and proximity to Czechia and ease of travel inform their decisions within this international/transnational frame of reference.

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# CHAPTER 10

## **FORGING BONDS BEYOND BORDERS: CONCLUDING INSIGHTS ON DIASPORA POLICIES IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE, WITH A SPOTLIGHT ON CZECHIA**

KRISTÝNA JANUROVÁ & EVA JANSKÁ

### **10.1 INTRODUCTION**

In this book, we took a complex look at the diaspora policy of four Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries, namely Czechia, Slovakia, Hungary, and Poland. Special attention was paid to Czechia. We analysed its diaspora policy in breadth, taking both an outward perspective, looking at it in a regional and international comparison, and an inward perspective, examining the policy's specific outcomes, successes, and failures in detail through the eyes of the policy's makers and targets. We hope to have enabled the reader not only to understand the individual mechanisms that make up diaspora policy in the four Visegrád countries, but also to see these mechanisms in a global context as components of states' attitudes and relations to their populations abroad (this especially concerns the chapters in Part I). Similarly, we believe we have managed to present an empirical analysis of the views, needs, and assets of diasporas that offers a good picture of how concrete policy provisions are reflected in the actual lived experiences of the Czech diaspora worldwide (especially in Part II). As a whole, this book constitutes a new and consolidated attempt at a coherent analysis of CEE diaspora policy and its specific outcomes for the individual.

### **10.2 THE PARALLELS AND DIFFERENCES OF THE DIASPORA POLICY OF FOUR CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPEAN (CEE) COUNTRIES**

The first part of the book summed up the most up-to-date information on the policies of the four CEE countries towards their diasporas, including both citizens and people claiming national or ethnic roots in these countries. Over recent years, this topic has become increasingly timely in connection with the growing political engagement of citizens living abroad and CEE governments' gradually awakened interest in transferring the diasporas' acquired

knowledge and skills back to the countries of origin, but also in connection with the efforts of the diasporas themselves to preserve their traditions, culture, and education in the destination countries. The diaspora policies of all four Visegrád countries were analysed probably for the first time alongside one another, highlighting the parallels and differences.

The four countries represent a varied yet close grouping, including states both large (Poland) and small (Slovakia, Czechia, Hungary), countries that have in different historical periods been both superpowers (Poland, Hungary) and dependants (all four), and countries with different trajectories of state-diaspora engagement. Yet, they all share the specific characteristics of the Central and Eastern European region, most notably the experience of repeated border changes, multiple historical waves of out-migration, communist regimes, post-communist political and economic transformations, with all their ups and downs, and, more recently, accession to the European Union and the Schengen Area. These led not only to intensified mobility among the countries' own citizens, but also to the immigration of third-country nationals, which has culturally and politically transformed their populations. The 'hot topics' highlighted in each of the country chapters point to the most current dilemmas, enabling a shorthand comparison, which we present in the following paragraphs.

The overview of the state institutions involved in the four states' diaspora policy-making and implementation has shown that the Visegrád countries have developed similar diaspora infrastructures by engaging existing ministries in diaspora affairs according to their spheres of responsibility. The Czech and Polish chapters comment on the role and involvement of their respective ministries in diaspora issues in illuminating detail. However, while Hungary and Slovakia have established institutions wholly dedicated to diaspora issues, Poland and Czechia have managed to make do, at least so far, by involving just general state departments. This difference might be reflective of the prevailing stance adopted by states towards their diasporas. Successive Hungarian governments have invested a great deal of effort in learning about their diaspora, with a special interest in kin-minorities in neighbouring states, which are a strong source of political remittances and thus have been granted important privileges that newer emigrants do not enjoy. Similarly, Slovakia's provisions targeting its growing diaspora have been described as overly celebratory and preferential, to the detriment of some parts of the population based in Slovakia. Interestingly, in Czechia, where state diaspora engagement is still barely visible to the broader public and generally receives little attention compared to other political topics, the idea of creating a government body to deal solely with diaspora issues has been raised repeatedly in discussions among policy stakeholders. In contrast, Poland, which has a longer history of diaspora engagement, has



invested incomparably more resources in this work, and is much more confident in its diaspora-honouring rhetoric both at home and outwards, seems to be satisfied with the current division of roles among state departments. This raises the question of what the real impact of a dedicated diaspora body would be.

A comparison of the laws in place reveals the varying degrees of importance assigned to the status of the diaspora (and the different groups within it) in the legislation of each state. While Czechia has never codified its relationship to its diaspora and is only gradually taking steps to enable specific formerly excluded diaspora groups to obtain Czech citizenship, the other three states address their diasporas in their constitutions and consciously seek to develop the notion of a unified nation at home and abroad through their policy provisions and rhetoric. The symbolic weight granted to diaspora issues within a state's political discourse depends, of course, on a combination of factors, such as the given institutional and legislative background and – perhaps most importantly – day-to-day political talk.

The chapters reveal that all four countries have provisions for citizens abroad to participate in elections, but they also cast light on the differences in access to participation in domestic elections among different groups within a diaspora. Czechia has been reluctant to introduce postal voting and has been unable to open more polling stations abroad, and many members of the diaspora have either had to travel long distances to be able to vote or have given up on electoral participation altogether. Hungary only allows citizens whose official residence is not in Hungary (i.e. most naturalised kin-minority Hungarians) to vote in national elections by mail, while newer members of the diaspora registered as residents of Hungary can only participate in the elections by voting in person at a consulate abroad or at a designated polling station in Hungary. Like in the case of Czechia, the Hungarian diaspora's (presumed) support for specific political parties is a key factor in the discussion here. In line with laudatory rhetoric about their diasporas, Slovakia and Poland have been more diaspora-friendly in that Slovakia has introduced postal voting for citizens based abroad and Poland has increased the number of polling stations abroad. While the Czech and Hungarian approaches raise questions about whether the states genuinely wish to maintain contact with their (new) diasporas, in the Slovak and Polish case the motive is clearly to support the new diaspora's ties to the country of origin and thereby increase their return and remittance potential.

Despite these differences, the four states' conceptions of diaspora membership, epitomised by their respective sets of diaspora policies and citizenship laws (all four countries now allow dual citizenship), reflect both the primordial/ethnic principle, which is especially criticised in the Slovak chapter, and – increasingly – a more civil understanding of diaspora mem-

bership, which extends voting rights and access to public service to (any) citizens based abroad.

A shared and largely undisputable trait of the four states' diaspora policies is that they all contain provisions for education in the country of origin's language and culture, which is one of the mechanisms they use to promote identification with the country of origin among the diaspora, even among later generations. All four countries have funding programmes to support the educational and cultural activities of self-help diaspora organisations and, to varying degrees, the work of state-backed educational institutions abroad.

There is no common denominator to the similarities and disparities of these policies across countries, but likely key factors include the size of a diaspora in relation to the homeland population, the diaspora's historical and contemporary involvement in homeland issues, and the diaspora's (assumed) political remittance potential. Interestingly, in all four cases, the volume of (potential) financial remittances seems to carry much less weight in these policy considerations than the symbolic value of national belonging and consciousness does. Regardless, in all four states we have seen a proliferation of policies targeting the diaspora and increasing proactivity on the side of the state.

### **10.3 THE CZECH 'NEW DIASPORA', TRANSNATIONAL RELATIONS AND INSTITUTIONAL ENGAGEMENT**

The second part of the book drew on original empirical research to present a composite picture of the Czech diaspora and its experiences with specific policy provisions. An analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data and a more detailed examination of the diaspora's transnational relations and its involvement in various organisations and institutions established or supported by the Czech state indicate that there is a continuing interest on the part of both the diaspora and the state in intensifying their mutual ties. The book focused primarily on the 'new diaspora', which means those Czechs who moved abroad after 1990, but the respondent sample also included Czechs who left earlier under different conditions – fleeing the totalitarian Czechoslovak state. The chapters thus studied the phenomenon of present-day migration, which still feels quite new in recent Czech history, where the free decision to leave can be reversed at any time by returning or by onward migration. An awareness of this was observed among the majority of the respondents in our research. Paralleling Europe-wide trends, a certain liquidity of migration behaviours in the face of the multiplicity of available options characterises contemporary Czech migration and how it responds to state policies targeting people abroad (Bygnes and Erdal 2017; Engbersen and Snel 2013).

The multi-method study that formed the basis for the chapters in Part II employed a unique approach that combined several types of data, collected from June 2021 to October 2022: data from a (non-representative) quantitative survey of 940 Czechs living abroad; data from qualitative in-depth interviews with 110 diaspora members from seven countries (Australia, Germany, France, Ireland, New Zealand, United Kingdom, and United States); data from 14 semi-structured interviews with key Czech diaspora policy-makers, implementers of policy, and civil society organisations; and data from a focus group with 8 Czech scientists working abroad.

Part II introduced the (new) Czech diaspora as understudied to date, but of growing interest to researchers both at home and internationally. The chapters revealed that the Czech diaspora is very transnationally active, largely wants to stay informed about affairs in Czechia, and is interested in contributing their knowledge, skills, and finances if suitable channels are available and if they feel acknowledged and welcome. Based on the outcomes of the questionnaire survey, we highlighted the diaspora's key demands from and experiences with diaspora policy and the barriers they face to potential return. Respondents' most strongly voiced demand was for greater efficiency in the work of the Czech authorities, both in the places where diaspora members live (the embassies) and in Czechia. Criticism was directed at the extensive bureaucracy, the insufficient digitisation of services, and the system's limited flexibility. Hence, accessibility of the state authorities (in terms of the geographic location of embassies, office hours, responsiveness to phone calls or e-mails, and willingness to accommodate unusual requests) was a frequently noted issue. Their next most frequent request was the possibility of remote voting. The possibility to vote was of great importance to respondents, though very few took advantage of it. On the question of returning to Czechia, respondents frequently noted problems of a macrostructural nature – their own dissatisfaction with the economic situation in Czechia, concerns about finding a job in the Czech labour market, and criticism of the political and social situation in Czechia. A key factor they mentioned for not yet having returned was the unacceptable level of remuneration for their work and of the financial valuation of their human capital. Returning would result in a significant reduction of income and, consequently, of their own and their family's standard of living.

Further, we confirmed that Czech migrants who live close to Czechia (e.g. Germany and Austria) adopt different transnational and institutional practices to those who live in countries further away (e.g. United States and Canada). In our qualitative data analyses, we zoomed-in on migrant motivations, observed the influence of motivational factors on integration strategies, and explored the barriers to return (especially in the case of mobile Czech academics). We argue that the migration cases intercepted by our qualitative

research can be described as continual individual mobilities, which in the era of globalised postmodern society are occurring on a mass scale and becoming much more visible. This migration is typically prompted by personal motives, where cognition, personal development, and ecological factors play an important role, but where the process of making the decision to migrate is significantly influenced by formal institutions. Educational institutions and corporations influence migration decisions, and they are becoming key environments of the migrants' integration at their destination, and, in effect, are contributing to the rise of professional or corporate diasporas. We find that the importance of continual individual mobilities among Czech migrants seems to be growing, and these individual mobilities are comparable in nature to what has been observed in Western European, US, and Commonwealth countries since the 1980s. As regards mobile academics, we argue that their social and professional capital cannot be easily transmitted to Czechia owing to a mix of structural factors (financial conditions, gender inequality, academic inbreeding, limited mobility opportunities, lack of transparency, lack of internalisation). However, family relocation logistics and integration prospects often turn out to be just as important as these structural barriers, effectively ruling out return as a realistic possibility.

The findings presented in Part II of this book and the policy analysis in Chapter 1 formed the basis for the recommendations for Czech policy-makers that were presented at the research project's closing seminar in the Chamber of Deputies of the Czech Republic in November 2022.

The main conclusions of the project were summarised in the Executive Summary and included the following recommendations: make the Czech diaspora more visible and promote a good image of the diaspora in Czech society (through the media, political speeches, etc.); create a single website for administrative and informational purposes, such as a 'Compatriot Portal', or link the 'Compatriot Portal' to the existing 'Citizen Portal' so that a single body of public administration will be responsible for its content and updating. It is also necessary to speed up the pace of digitisation of state administration so that documents handled by consular services can be electronically processed as much as possible directly by the relevant authorities; ensure equal political participation of all Czechs by introducing remote voting (preferably electronic); create a closer connection between the state and the diaspora by establishing a voluntary register through which the state would be able to contact the diaspora easily and inform them of relevant policy developments, news, and events; increase the level of support for cooperation, visiting opportunities, and the return of Czech scientists abroad, and expeditiously create full consular services in New Zealand.

## 10.4 CONCLUDING REMARKS

Diaspora policy has only recently started to take a relatively standardised shape in the academic and political discourse as a collection of legal provisions, policy mechanisms, administrative procedures, and political decisions that directly or indirectly target nationals and people who claim national or ethnic roots in another country (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004; Gamlen 2006; 2008; Ragazzi 2014; Pedroza and Palop-García 2017). Researchers in this area have in fact sometimes been a step ahead of governments, which only realised in retrospect, through concrete debates with their diasporas, that their decisions also affect people who no longer live on the territory of a country but are still affiliated with the country by citizenship, kinship, nostalgic ties, and activities of all sorts. This was also the case of the four Visegrád countries, which only gradually, after the post-communist turn, started to realise the need to acknowledge the demands of their historical and new diaspora communities for dual citizenship, extra-territorial voting rights, and the financial and symbolic support of their educational and cultural activities, in order to reach out to the scattered members of the diaspora and to be able to benefit from this relationship. While some Central and Eastern European countries have been included in international comparative studies, no research has yet analysed the four Visegrád countries' diaspora policies comprehensively side by side, especially since the example of Czechia has been missing from all such projects. We hope that this book fills that gap and contributes to the body of knowledge on the CEE diasporas and diaspora policies, a subject recently covered in Ruxandra Trandafoiu's (2022) extensive *The Politics of Migration and Diaspora in Eastern Europe: Media, Public Discourse and Policy*, where she draws on comparative case studies of Bulgaria, Croatia, Estonia, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, and Ukraine, and earlier in Ulrike Ziemer and Sean P. Roberts's edited volume (2013) *East European Diasporas, Migration, and Cosmopolitanism*.

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# SUMMARY

The book introduces and reflects on the diaspora policies of four Central European nations that since their accession to the EU have been undergoing transformations. New diasporas are emerging out of the migration patterns facilitated by EU policy. By examining the cases of four Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries – Czechia, Slovakia, Poland, and Hungary – we gain unique insights not only into their respective diasporas and kin-minority groups, including their historical-geographic evolution, but also into the legislative, institutional, and political dimensions of their specific diaspora policies.

The Czech case study in particular contributes significantly to the literature on post-socialist diaspora policies and provides insights in areas that have not yet been extensively addressed. This case study examines diaspora issues such as transnational engagement, institutional involvement, geographic dispersion, knowledge exchange, and integration. The Czech case study also delves into the behaviour of the ‘new Czech diaspora’.

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