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# Improving the life of migrant worker's communities by activities and services of NGOs



# INTRODUCTION



## Czech Council on Foreign Relations in Prague:

- Is an independent NGO dealing for 15 years with foreign policy and its educational, international and cultural aspects
- In the last years we became more aware of the importance of the social dimension of these activities

### The project

## Center for development of a multicultural environment influenced by workers' migration in the region of Maladá Boleslav

is one of the several activities implemented by the CCFR



# NEW CCFR PROJECT



**Many unprivileged and vulnerable groups in the Czech Republic are influenced by continuous erosion of social system**

- **Foreign workers are among them.**
- **They deserve a fairer treatment and some help, because:**
  - **They contribute markedly to the country's financial and cultural wealth,**
  - **The social protection of all is complementing, not contrary, to the economic growth.**
  - **economic growth to the detriment of a social security is shortsighted**

**That was the ideas at the beginning of the project.**

# MULTICULTURAL CENTER



## Why Multicultural Center ?

### **Mladá Boleslav**

- Industrial town, seat of the largest Czech car manufacturer Skoda,
- Highly dependent on foreign workers labor.
- High density of migrant workers creates a multicultural environment with its shortcomings and benefits.

### **Foreign workers**

- Deserve a decent working and living conditions, social protection and social security,
- Society inviting them should have some responsibility for their life,
- Foreigners working officially in the Czech Republic should have basically same rights and duties as the Czech workers.



# MULTICULTURAL CENTER



## Purpose of the project:

- Improve relations among immigrant's communities and the Czech population
- Contribute to mutual understanding, and solving foreign workers' problems that is

**Facilitate the integration of foreign workers into the society**

## Target Groups:

- a) Foreign workers at Škoda Auto factory (Ukrainians, Slovaks, Poles, Vietnamese);
- b) Czech side - local government representatives, Škoda Auto management, trade-unions, police, local NGOs, media and public.



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# MULTICULTURAL CENTER



## Three outputs of the project:

1. The Multicultural Centre in Mladá Boleslav - **operating**
2. Complex Sociological Research about the conditions of life of immigrant's minorities – **will be presented in May 2009**
3. Activities, services and assistance of the Center – going on at present - **will be adjusted** to the research results

**Understand better the living and working conditions of migrants in Mladá Boleslav – and recommend the necessary changes**



# MULTICULTURAL CENTER



## Impact of the global crisis

- Specific features of the crisis in the Czech Republic,
- No financial crisis,
- For some time government denied the impact,
- Majority of population don't feel it yet – why?
- The real economic crisis is still ahead
- Situation in the country is stable – why?

**Problems in the economy are temporarily solved on account of immigrant workers – they are the first to be redundant**

The work of the Multicultural center has become even more important,



# FOREIGN WORKERS IN THE CR



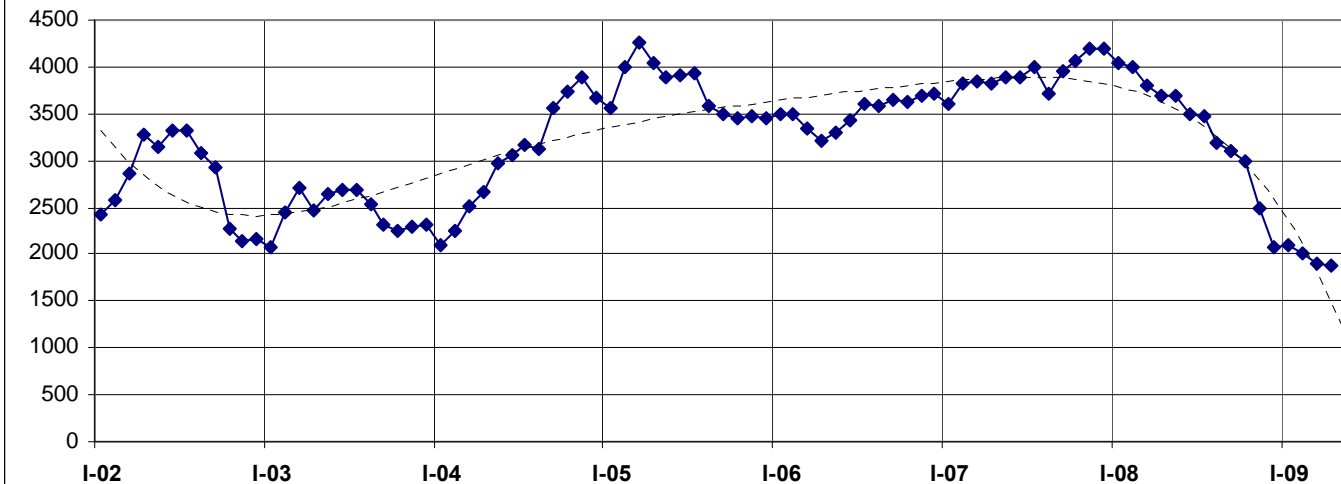
- Population of the Czech Republic: 10 millions of people;
- From this about 4,5 millions are in the workforce;
- At the end of 2008 worked in the Czech Republic officially about 300 thousand of foreigners;
- With estimated 150 thousands undocumented workers, all together this gives **about 10% of all workers**;
- Foreign workers - **important part of the Czech work force**. They contribute significantly to the Czech economy, national income and gross domestic product;
- Estimated about 15 thousand foreign workers lost their jobs at the end of 2008 and beginning of 2009 – that is about 2-3 % of foreigners;
- Only several hundreds foreign workers returned home;
- That means that about 14 thousand are still in the country waiting for a new job or for the end of the crisis.



# Foreigners in Škoda Auto MB



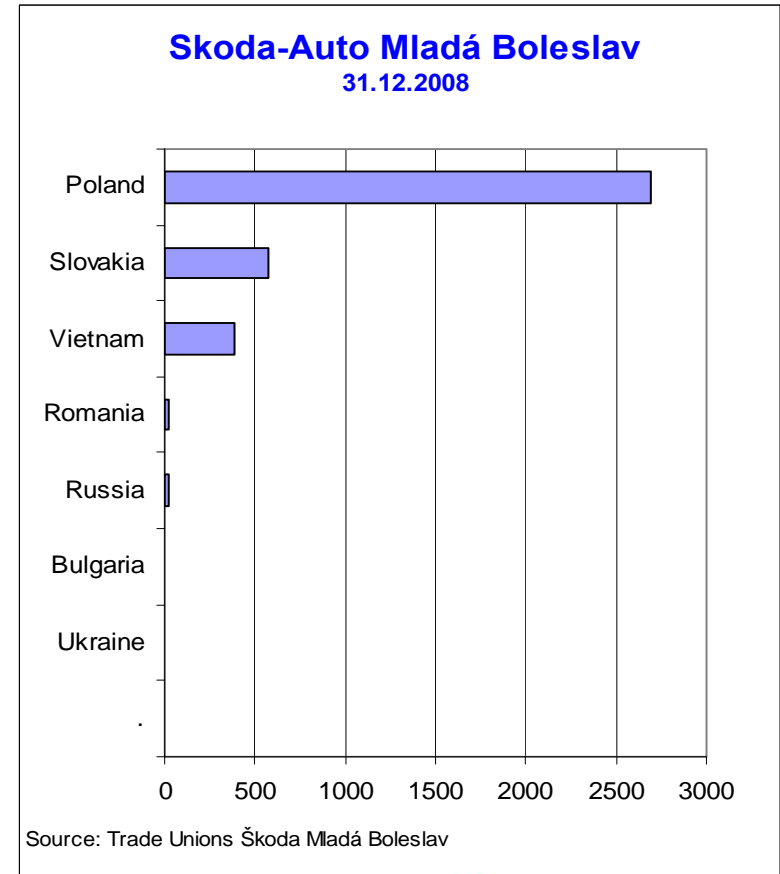
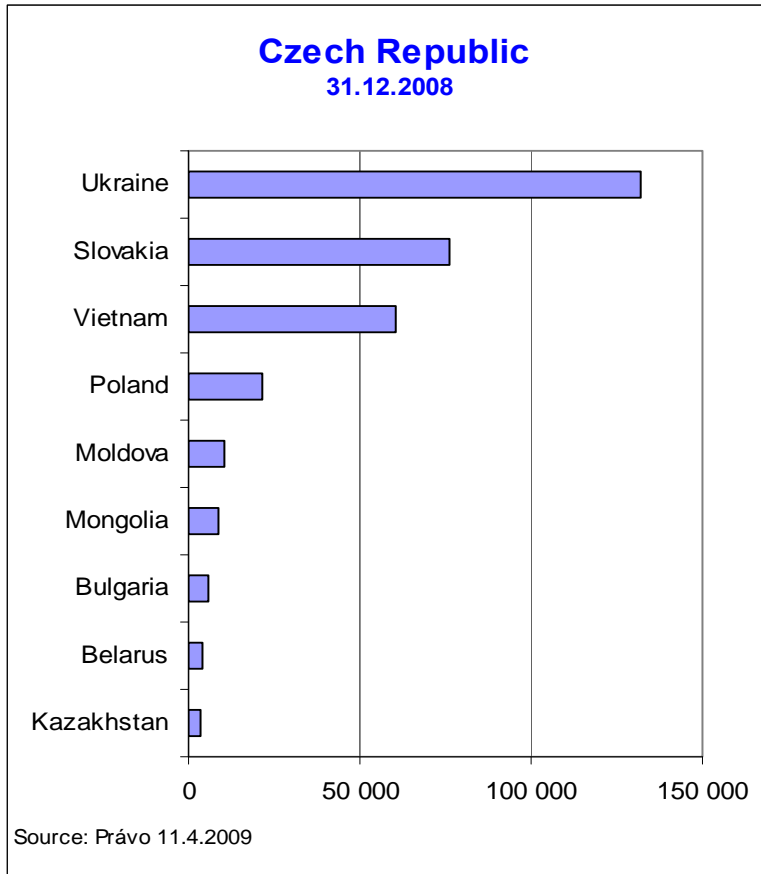
Overview of temporary agency workers in Škoda MB  
2002 - 2007



Source: Škoda Mladá Boleslav



# Composition of foreign workers



# MAIN FINDINGS



## Two categories of workers:

- **Core workers**

Similar social protection and security as Czech workers

- **Temporary agency workers**

No social protection at all

Fully depend on the agency

Many foreign workers prefer the temporary agency status

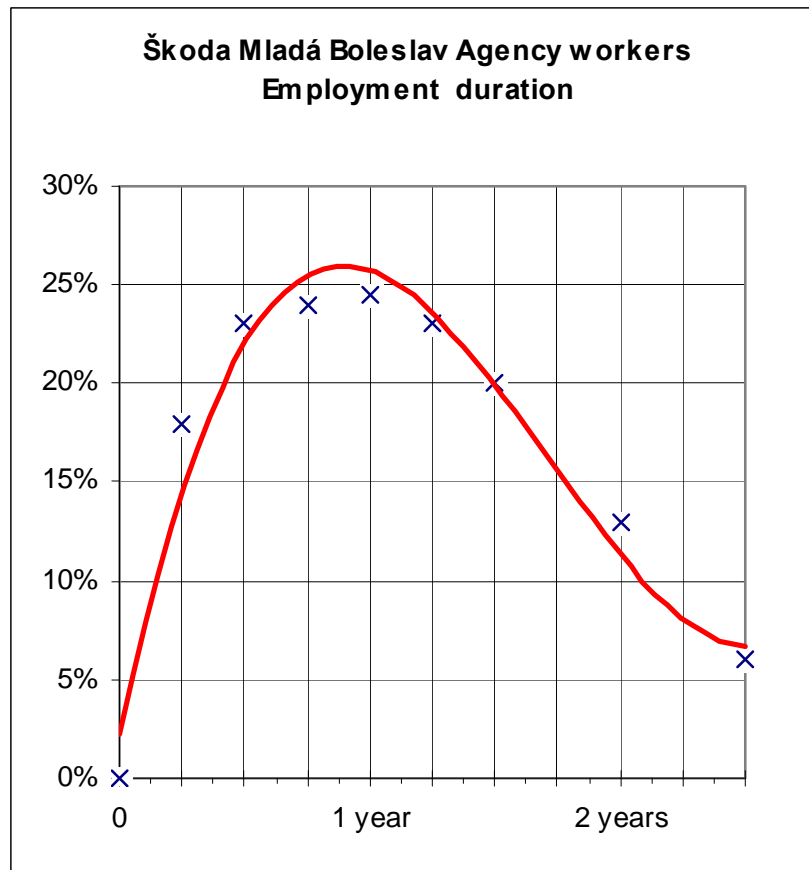
They have come to earn money

They are ready to work hard, overtime, on holidays

They don't care about social security



# Distribution of foreign workers



- During the last 4 years about 1400 Škoda MB employees changed from temporary agency to core workers status



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# MAIN FINDINGS



- **All migrant communities are very closed; in reality they don't communicate at all with the Czech population and with other communities**
- **In need they seek help and information mostly within their communities (Church, richer colleagues)**
- **Majority of foreign workers are recruited at home countries by labour agencies – there is about 2000 labour agencies in the Czech Republic**
- **Different status of EU and non - EU immigrants**



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# MAIN FINDINGS



- **Workers from the EU countries** (Poles, Slovaks) move freely about the EU, understand the language, find their own ways to get the job, can take care of themselves; if necessary they can return home. They do not depend on employment agencies.
- **Workers from non-EU countries** (Ukrainians) and especially far-away countries (Vietnam) are in much more difficult position. They have paid important sums to agencies for visa, work permits, travel and have debts at home. They cannot return home. They depend highly on employment agencies.
- They feel it as a personal failure and shame if they are becoming unemployed and are trying hard to survive.



# MAIN FINDINGS



## Responsibility of the majority population

Czech majority population is also responsible for lack of communication

- Still lot of unjustified xenophobic feelings
- Feeling of superiority towards immigrants, even contempt, as they are ready to accept inferior, second-rate work
- Many don't understand that immigrant's work has positive impact on the society
- Education of the Czech population is an important part of the project activities



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# CONCLUSIONS



- **In good times** - the living and working conditions of migrant workers are good, they don't complain. They want just more language teaching and professional training. Lower salaries compensate by working over time. Need to integrate them deeper into society.
- **In bad times** - problems. Danger of ending on the street as beggars, entering the shadow economy or criminal activities. Need to treat them as any Czech worker, exercise similar human rights, respect, social security



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# FUTURE OF THE PROJECT



## Service provisions and advocacy of the Centre:

- more informal meetings with migrant workers and local authorities
- engage children of migrants into the activities,
- cultural events – exhibitions, concerts, theatre,
- individual assistance – documents, translations, CVs, administrative tasks,
- involvement of media (best practice) – newspapers, radio, TV,
- educational courses – Czech language, computer skills, etc.



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# RECOMMENDATIONS



- Better regulation of migration to the Czech Republic – may be some coordination on the **EU level**; make illegal migration more difficult
- Limit the number and power of labor agencies - **government**
- Higher responsibility of **society**
- Same rights and duties for legal immigrants - **employers**
- Equal working conditions – contracts, working agreements, collective bargaining – **labor unions**
- Deeper integration of migrant workers for their benefit and benefit of the society - **NGOs**
- Maintaining the social standards - **government**



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# Contacts

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