



**JEL codes: F 220**

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# THE INTEGRATION OF IMMIGRANTS ON THE FINNISH LABOR MARKET, AN OUTLINE OF THE ISSUE

**Abstract.** Modern Finland belongs to a group of wealthy countries of northern Europe. Thus, it has become a target country for different, primarily commercial immigrant groups. In this article it is assumed that effective integration should be held through the labor market. Therefore the aim of the article was to evaluate the Finnish immigration policy in the context of access to the labor market.

**Keywords:** integration, labor market, unemployment, immigrants, Finland, MIPEX index.

## ИНТЕГРАЦІЯ МІГРАНТІВ НА ФІНСЬКОМУ РИНКУ ПРАЦІ — СТРУКТУРА ПИТАННЯ

**Анотація.** Сучасна Фінляндія належить до групи багатих країн Північної Європи. Таким чином, вона стала цільовою країною для різних, насамперед комерційних груп іммігрантів. У статті йдеться про те, що ефективна інтеграція повинна реалізовуватися через ринок праці. Тому мета цієї статті полягає в оцінюванні фінської імміграційної політики в контексті доступу до ринку праці.

**Ключові слова:** інтеграція, ринок праці, безробіття, іммігранти, Фінляндія, індекс MIPEX.

## ИНТЕГРАЦИЯ МИГРАНТОВ НА ФИНСКОМ РЫНКЕ ТРУДА — ОЧЕРТАНИЕ ПРОБЛЕМАТИКИ

**Аннотация.** Современная Финляндия принадлежит к группе зажиточных стран Северной Европы. Таким образом, она стала целевой страной для различных, в первую очередь коммерческих иммигрантских групп. В статье обосновано, что эффективная интеграция должна проходить через рынок труда. Поэтому цель статьи заключается в оценке финской иммиграционной политики в контексте доступа к рынку труда.

**Ключевые слова:** интеграция, рынок труда, безработица, иммигранты, Финляндия, показатель МИПЭКс.

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**Target setting.** The phenomenon of immigrants' flow into the European countries is one of key issues of contemporary politics both in local and regional dimensions. It is treated first of all as threat for the European order, seldom

as contribution to economic and cultural development of receiving countries. International migration always has economic dimension and convictions as for its effects, both positive and negative ones influence decisions of countries on

using legal solutions and created institutional models regulating migration streams. There are factors that require from authorities supporting labor migrations as follow:

1. Economic factors resulting from inability to export all posts based on low skills from developed countries into those of low remuneration (construction industry, hospitality, tourism, gastronomy, trade, health care, housekeeping, agriculture).

2. Demographic factors resulting from low birth rates in rich countries (according to the European Commission 57 % population in a productive age shall be obliged to maintain 30 % of those at the age of 65 and more in 2050).

3. Social factors resulting from educative ambition of young people in developed countries, unwilling to accept work offers of low social prestige. It is worth noticing that foreign employers, although satisfy demand on certain types of work, nevertheless they often experience economic or social exclusion. There is a tendency while employing immigrants to transform mercenary employees into independent mandatories who are not protected by any collective contracts, have no employment guarantee and take all the risk in case of disease of job loss by themselves [2]. Once employed, they are they are hired as temps and treated as flexible labor force. Undoubtedly, such perception of immigrants on the labor market does not facilitate integration processes whose necessary attitude is stability and sense of economic and social safety. Thus, a way of labor market regulation may facilitate or complicate immigrants' integration in a receiving country. That matter remains a top issue in

the contemporary public debate especially in the age of the migration crisis whose indirect result is popularization of populist parties building their social capital on the belief that immigrants are the cause of unemployment and weakening of national social programs.

In the light of integration programs implemented in the EU's countries, Finland is presented as a state which follows Scandinavian solutions and has worked out a favorable integration policy off immigrants placing itself on a significant position in the MIPEX rank according to the data from 2015 [11]. It is worth mentioning that the support of the Finnish society in the performed integration concept in the labor market, as the data from the recent European Social Poll show, the influence of immigration into the state economics was estimated positively, especially in the context of creating new workplace due to the phenomenon [3].

**Analysis of recent research and publications.** In recent years, the problem of immigration policy becomes more important. The latest analysis and publication posted on the websites of the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment are interesting source of knowledge about Finnish policy of integration in the labor market. The analysis about actual impact of this policy are published also at the statistical office of the Finnish and index MIPEX.

**The purpose of the article.** The main aim of this article is presentation of the Finnish integration policy of immigrants based on the MIPEX index. The authors have focused on the analysis of the immigrant integration process through labor market. They have indicated factors making authori-

ties support migration processes. They have characterized the post-war population of immigrants, presented statistics concerning the number and origin of the described group, the migration tendency in Finland throughout recent years, the level of employment among immigrants comparing to other European countries. The level of the labor market for immigrants, support provided in that matter by Finland and the rights granted to immigrants have been estimated, especially in comparison to the native Finnish. Moreover, the Governmental Integration Program for the years 2016–2019 has been presented characterized by innovativeness, inter-sector cooperation, using cultural potential of immigrants and popularizing tolerance. Cultural barriers impeding integration, resulting from various diversity of immigrants' population have been taken into consideration as well.

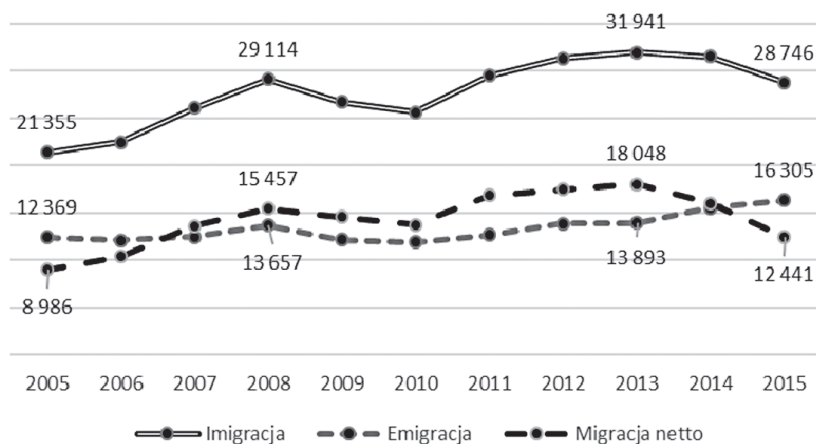
**The statement of basic materials.** Immigrants in Finland. Finland did not experience social changes connected with the immigration phenomenon until 1980's and 1990's. Basing on available sources, it may be accepted that until that time it had been an emigrating country and one of small groups that appeared on the territory of Finland were rehoused Karelians from Russia [5]. Hermetic Finnish society was a result of peripheral location of the country, historical background and slower development after WWII comparing to the other Nordic countries [7]. In 1960's nearly 300 thousand inhabitants left Finland to search for work [5]. The destination of such journey was usually Sweden. Large part of them soon returned to their country since they had

been unable to adapt to the cultural and social Swedish specifics.

Dynamic economic changes of 1980's significantly increasing the life standard of the Finnish have diverted the migration situation. The first groups of refugees we accepted by Finland in 1970's. Those were mainly Somalians and Kurds. In 1990's the Finnish government decide on enabling Russian citizens of Finnish origins returning within repatriation agreements. Those people were allowed to settle down for unfixed period. Similar procedure was used towards Estonian citizens of Finnish origin. After the collapse of the USSR, native Finnish still applied for the repatriation permit which formally lasted until 2010 [6]. In the same decade, Finland also accepted refugees form former Yugoslavia (Bosnians), Iraq and Iran [1]. Official Finnish statistics from 2015 indicate that the number of immigrants has been decreasing since 2013. However it is still much higher comparing to the number of emigrants leaving that country which proves this is mostly an immigrant country.

According to the recent data of Eurostat, in 2014 in Finland there were 31,5 thousand immigrants in total. Among them, 7,9 thousand, namely nearly 25 % were so called national emigrants, i.e. those having a citizenship of the country they come to. Another 23,1 thousand (73,4 %) were foreign immigrants, out of which 9,5 thousand came from the EU (0,1 %) and 13,6 thousand came from non-EU countries (43,1 %), 0,1 thousand were the non-country ones which makes 0,2 % out of all immigrants [8]. Comparing Finland to other countries it may be noticed that Finland received relatively little immigrants in

## Tendencje migracyjne w Finlandii



### Migration tendencies in Finland

Own work.

Source: Statistics Finland ([http://www.stat.fi/til/muutl/2015/muutl\\_2015\\_2016-05-17\\_tie\\_001\\_en.html](http://www.stat.fi/til/muutl/2015/muutl_2015_2016-05-17_tie_001_en.html), access: 22.01.2017)

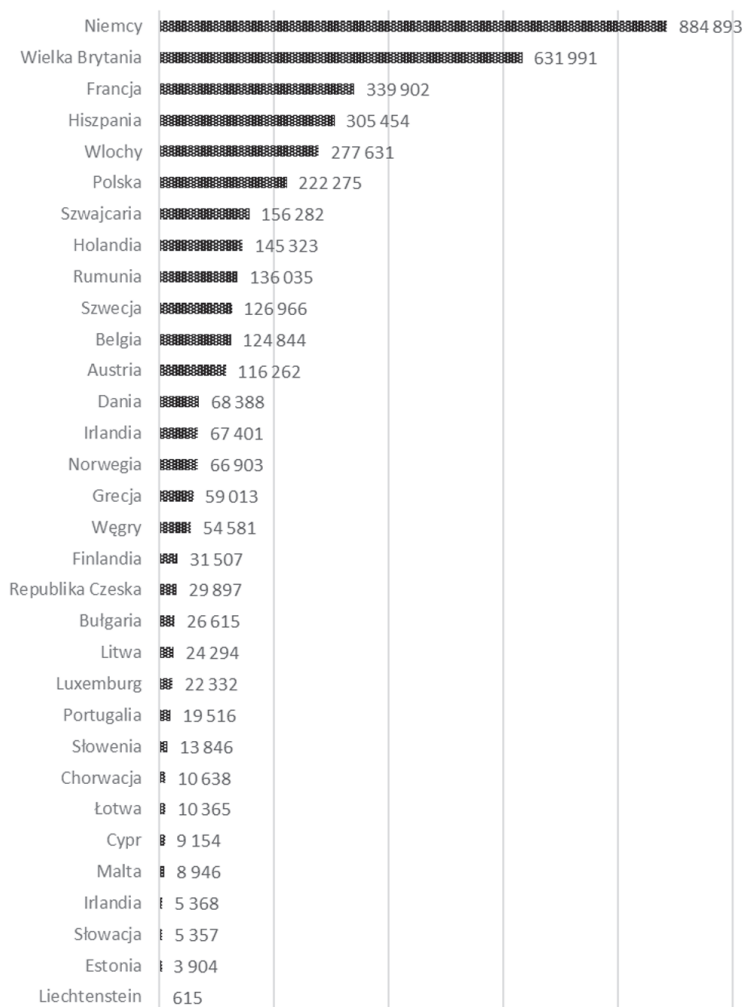
2014. As the diagram below shows, the largest number of immigrants was accepted in Germany and Great Britain. Finland was placed only on the 18th position among those analyzed countries according to the number of accepted immigrants. Such countries as Poland, Sweden or Norway received more immigrants than Finland.

However, in order to be able to compare relatively objective countries, a proper index must be used which can be a number of immigrants per 1000 inhabitants. Then, it can be noticed that the situation varies. Small countries such as Luxemburg, Malta, Switzerland or Lichtenstein accept relatively the most. However Finland, similarly to Poland accepts 6 immigrants per 1000 inhabitants.

Basing on the data of Eurostat [9] from January 2015 in relation to Finland, it may be observed that the largest

group of immigrants includes Estonians (22,1 % out of all immigrants) and Russians (14 %). The remaining groups of immigrants are: Swedish (3,8 % out of all immigrants), Chinese (3,5 %) and Somalians (3,4 %). It should be indicated that in Finland there is large scattering of immigrants as regards citizenship. It means that over half of immigrants (53,3 %) have citizenship of other countries than those mentioned before. In 2015 among 32,500 those searching for asylum over 60 % were Iraqis. Similar tendencies are observed while taking into consideration a country of an immigrant's birth. Also in that case the largest number includes immigrants of the category others (51,9 %). The data of Eurostat [10] from January 2015 indicate the largest number of immigrant were those born in the former USSR (54,7 %) which made 17,4 % out of all immigrants. The next numbers

## Liczba przyjętych imigrantów w roku 2014.



### The number of accepted immigrants in 2014

Own work. Source: Eurostat ([http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Migration\\_and\\_migrant\\_population\\_statistics/pl](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Migration_and_migrant_population_statistics/pl), access, 25.01.2017)

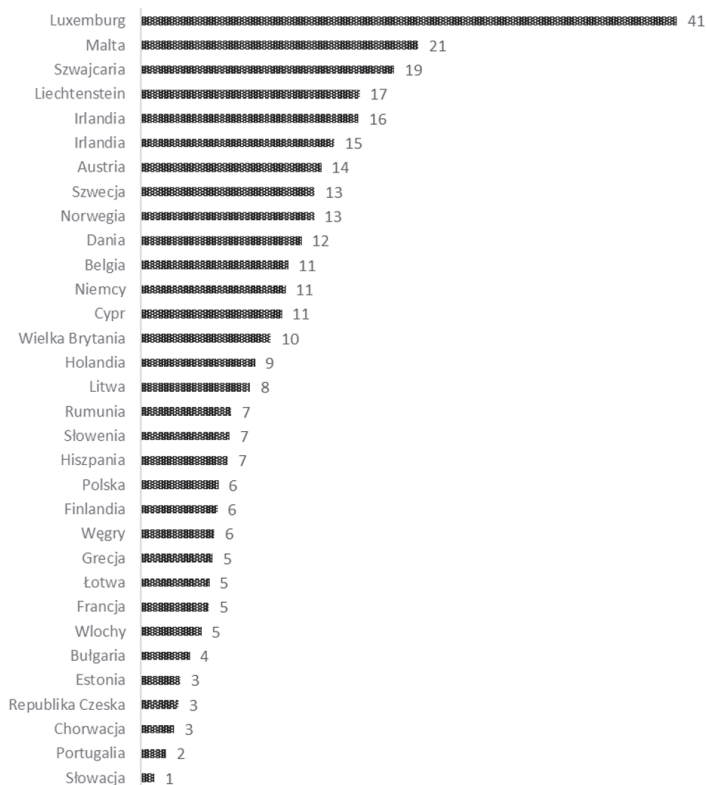
belong to immigrants born in Estonia (13,5%), Sweden (10,1), Russia (3,8%) and Somalia (3,2%).

The integration policy of Finland based on the MIPEX index. The immigration policy is a part of migration policy of a given country. In a general division it is performed in two areas. On

the one hand it focuses on the regulation of immigrants' inflow. On the other hand, it means using such law and practices that interact with immigrants on their territory due to the state's intentions [4].

In this article, another aspect of the immigration policy shall be discussed in

### Liczba imigrantów na 1000 mieszkańców w 2014 roku.



### The number of immigrants per 1000 inhabitants in 2014

Own work. Source: Eurostat ([http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Migration\\_and\\_migrant\\_population\\_statistics/pl](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Migration_and_migrant_population_statistics/pl), access, 25.01.2017)

the context of immigrants' integration through the labor market. There will be the policy within the access to the labor market presented as well as the support provided by Finland and the immigrants' rights granted on the labor market, especially in comparison to native Finnish people.

The analysis shall be conducted basing on the MIPEX index. It serves to evaluation and comparison of integration policies of 38 countries from various regions throughout the world. Due to the fact that it has been systematically used for many years, it enables

not only comparing those countries but also observing the change pace in particular states. The MIPEX index itself has been built of 167 particular indexes enabling to compare policies and law of particular states in many areas. Each index is evaluated in three possible options and on that basis each policy is granted points (total amount of points is 100). Basing on particular indexes there are complex indexes created concerning various matters of immigrants' policy and law, i.e. equal access to the labor market or a country' support on that market. Whereas the set of those

indexes creates general indexes concerning the areas of matters, e.g. mobility on the labor market, opportunity to link families or anti-discrimination policy, etc. [12].

The article shall be limited to the evaluation of one are of the Finland's integration policy concerning mobility on the labor market based on the MIPEX index. In order to exemplify that are of matter on the MIPEX pages, there is a description of two polarized cases of a good and bad integration policy towards the labor market. A good labor market, favorable to involving immigrant means such one where an immigrant has the same rights as others from the very first day on the labor market. In practice it means that from the first day the person and his/her family may apply for a job both in a private and public sectors. Simultaneously, a state recognizes qualifications and skills of an immigrant and creates opportunities to develop of different kinds from the beginning. A bad situation on the labor market from an immigrant's perspective is that one where an immigrant has no opportunity to be involved from the very beginning into the economic life of a destined country and his/her skills goes into waste. Acquiring rights to undertake work and set up own business requires certain grace period (e. g. 5 years) and even after that time an immigrant is forbidden to work in selected sectors or profession. Qualifications and skills are not recognized by the destined state that does not support developing competences and skills of an immigrant as either [13].

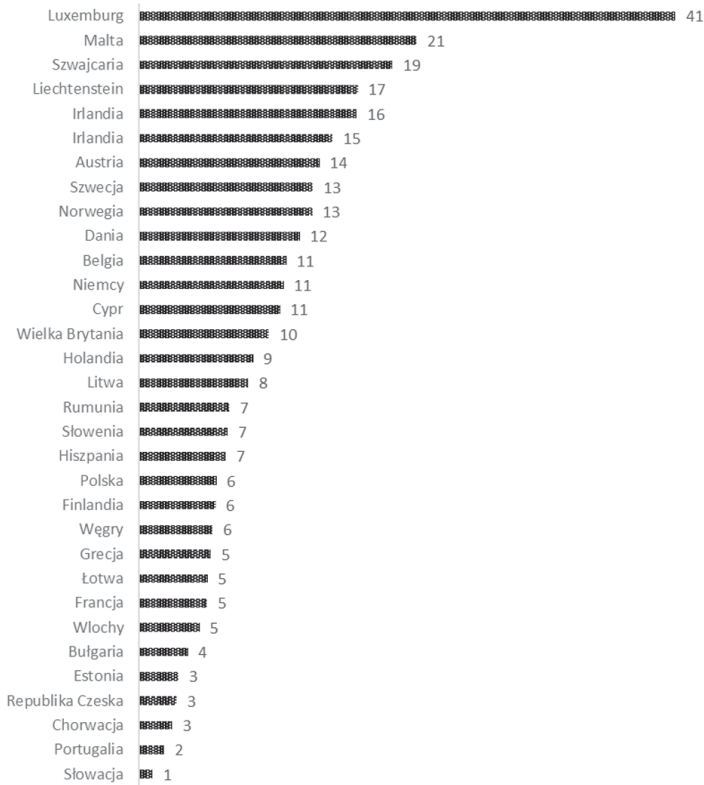
In that context, the Finland's integration policy may be treated as a case of a friendly policy to an immigrant and

supporting his/her mobility on the labor market. If only European countries shall be analyzed in that matter, Finland is included into 5 countries with the most favorable policy and law. Only two Scandinavian countries have reached better scores: Sweden and Norway, Portugal and Germany have the highest percentage of immigrants in Europe.

Analyzing such high evaluation results of the Finland's policy towards favoring involving immigrants into their labor market question about the specifics of the Finnish integration policy should be asked. The answer is in the detailed analysis of the MIPEX index. The evaluation of the Finland's integration policy in the context of the labor market has been based on so called indicator of mobility on the labor market. It aims and indicating how much legal immigrants living in a receiving country has comparable rights and conditions in the access to the labor market to the remaining citizens of that country. The evaluation has been conducted basing on four complex indicators. The first indicator was the one of the access to the labor market. It is supposed to answer the question how much an immigrant and his/her family have access to various sectors of the labor market (and opportunity to change job in different sectors) in a receiving country. Secondly, a general support received by an immigrant on the labor market has been evaluated. The support has been measured basing on the conditions describing how much an immigrant and his/her family have opportunity to develop own skills and qualifications in the same range as remaining citizens of a destined country. Thirdly, directed support has been evaluated considering specific



## Liczba imigrantów na 1000 mieszkańców w 2014 roku.



### The immigration policy of the European countries in the matter of mobility in the labor market based on the MIPEX index in 2014

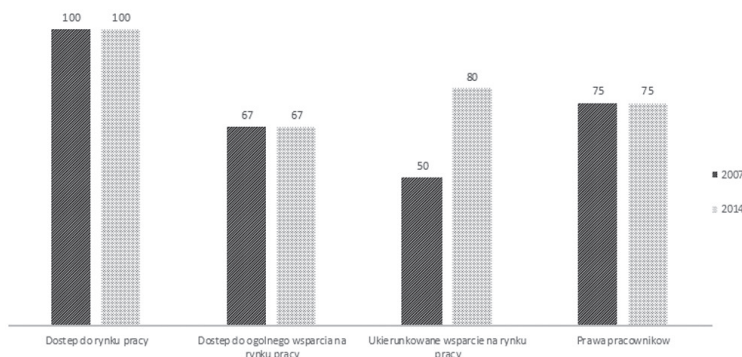
Own work. Based on MIPEX, (<http://www.mipex.eu/labour-market-mobility>, access: 12.12.2016)

needs of an immigrant that result from a birthplace and possessed qualifications acquired abroad. Fourthly, immigrants' rights on the labor market within protecting employees' rights and social protection have been evaluated [13].

As the data on the above diagram show, the Finland's policy receives the highest scores in the access to the labor market for immigrants (100 points in 2007 and 2014). In that area of matter the following issues were taken into consideration: if an immigrant has an opportunity to be immediately in-

involved in the destined labor market, if the access is the same for both private and public sectors (if immigrants are excluded from certain areas of employment such as army, police or higher post in administration) and if he/she may soon after arriving in the destined country set up own business and run it on the same conditions as remaining inhabitants of the country. The Finland's integration policy within protecting immigrants' rights on the labor market was relatively weaker evaluated (75 points in 2007 and 2014). Such in-

Mobilność na rynku pracy



### Mobility on the labor market

Own work. Based on MIPEX, (<http://www.mipex.eu/finland>, access: 12.12.2016)

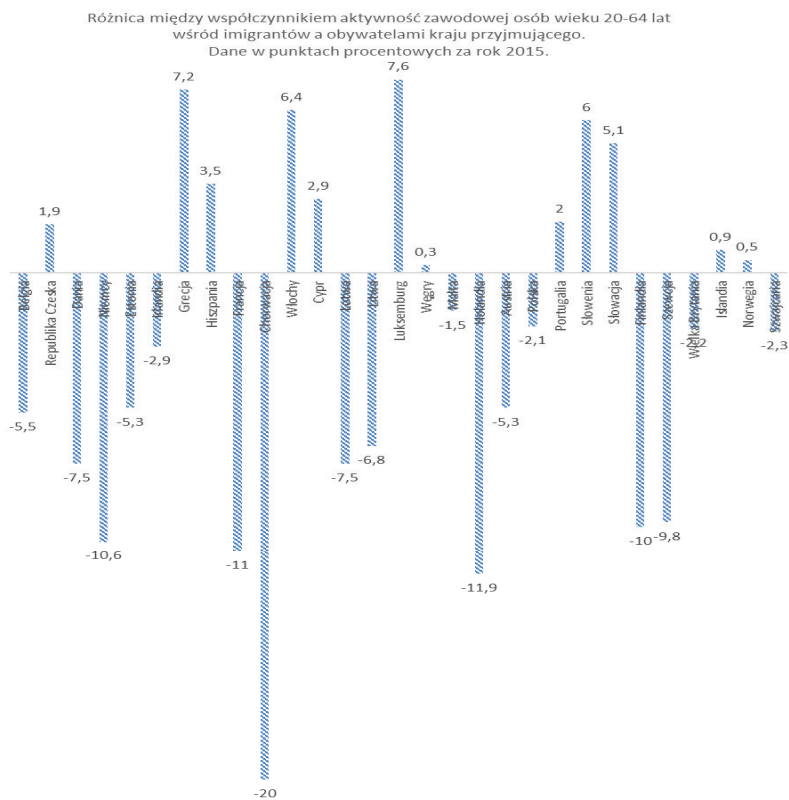
dexes as membership in labor unions, access to social protection, access to flats or working conditions were evaluated here. The support on the labor market was the lowest in evaluation (67 point in 2007 and 2014). The index examined if an immigrant has an access to work advisors, equal access to higher education and trainings, scholarships as well as if academic diplomas acquired abroad are recognized and if there are simple procedures of validating the skills. Throughout years, there is a visible improvement of support directed towards immigrants (50 points in 2007 and 80 in 2014). The dimensions of the integration policy such as simplifying of qualification recognition, measures serving to economic integration of citizens of third countries, measures serving to integration of youth and women and an active information policy were subject to evaluation here.

Professional activity of the immigrants in Finland. In order to reconstruct a fuller image of the immigration policy, it is worth referring to so called an indicator activity rates of popula-

tion aged 20–64. It enables evaluating the level of immigrants' integration on the labor market of the receiving country. According to Eurostat in 2015 the level of professional activity among the Finnish was 80,3 % and among immigrants in total it was 70,3 %. It makes 10 percentage points for the immigrants' disadvantage. It is one of the weakest scores among the polled countries.

The less favorable situation is if we compare the index of professional activity of the citizens of the receiving country to the index of professional activity of those immigrants from non-EU countries which makes in Finland 61,5 %. As a result the percentage difference makes 18,8 points for the disadvantage of non-EU immigrants in Finland.

On the basis of the data it may be considered that the “good” integration policy itself in the shape of liquidating barriers in the access to the labor market is not sufficient. As the statistical data on immigrants' activity on the labor market show, the lack of such barriers is not a guarantee of bigger immigrants' activity. The example of Sweden



**The difference between the factors of professional activity of those aged 20–64 among immigrants and citizens of the receiving country. Data on percentage points in 2015**

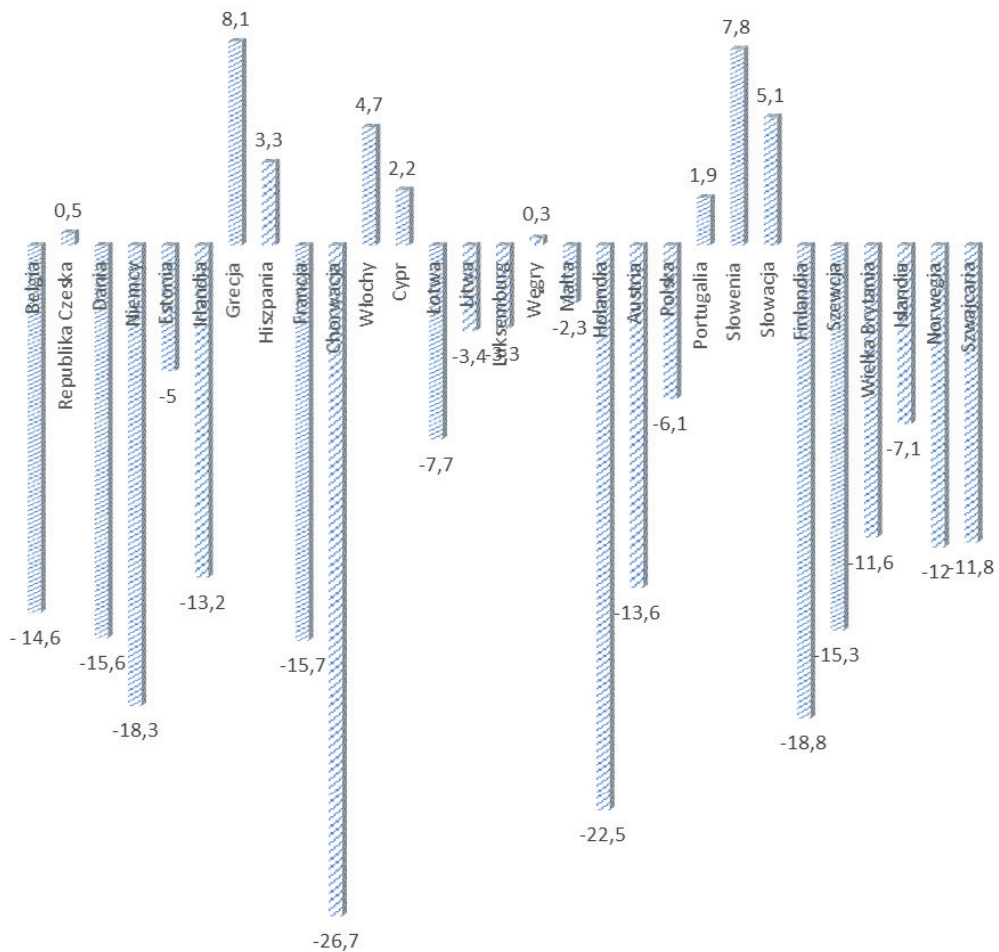
Own work. Source: Eurostat (<http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/2995521/7437901/3-06062016-AP-EN.pdf/225c8b96-2345-470d-8b87-c76a16525aa2>, access: 26.01.2017)

illustrated it well, which has the best integration policy among those polled countries in the area of mobility on the labor market according to the MIPEX index. And simultaneously it has low factors of immigrants' activity rates aged 20–64 including those from non-EU countries comparing to their own citizens. Whereas Slovakia has completely different situation, i.e. its immigration policy is poorly evaluated and simultaneously it has relatively high employees' activity rate of immigrants in total including those from non-EU countries. It shows that the evaluation of the integration policy is more compli-

cate and would demand more detailed tests in future.

The rights and opportunities of undertaking employment and increasing qualifications among emigrants. In order to provide self-efficiency and independence of immigrants, residents coming from non-EU countries use a favorable support in finding appropriate work and trainings. The Finnish authorities, similarly to the head Nordic countries of the Western Europe put great pressure on improvement of that usually weakest area of integration. Since in 2011 in Finland individual integration plans have been implemented,

Różnica między współczynnikiem aktywności zawodowej osób wieku 20-64 lat wśród imigrantów z poza UE a obywatelami kraju przyjmującego. Dane w punktach procentowych za rok 2015.



**The difference between the factors of professional activity of those aged 20–64 among non-EU immigrants and citizens of the receiving country. Data on percentage points in 2015**

Own work. Source: Eurostat (<http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/2995521/7437901/3-06062016-AP-EN.pdf/225c8b96-2345-470d-8b87-c76a16525aa2>, access: 26.01.2017)

new comers to that country have been subject to an individual evaluation, counselling and they are supported in performing all necessary language courses and professional trainings within those plans. Separate solutions have been arranged for specific receivers,

e. g. youth or women providing them special support in fighting barriers in undertaking employment or participating in improvement trainings.

As regards the access to the labor market, non-EU immigrants have generally the same rights in the context of

searching or change the job and sectors of employment as the Finnish citizens. Nevertheless, not all, as long as they may work in all economic sectors, the language requirements in the public sector may incomparably exclude foreigners.

What is important, Finland, similarly to other Nordic countries, does not extend the period of entering immigrants onto the labor market, and the integration also in that matter is a priority almost from the very first day after their arrival to that country. Certain potential weakness in the Finland's integration policy is not recognizing academic and professional qualifications of non-EU foreigners. It is undoubtedly an area demanding improvement [13]. Participating in the process of education and improvement trainings by adults, both by men and women is the same in Finland and other Nordic countries. It is about 1/3 of population. Moreover, most unemployed, fulfilling certain conditions of non-EU citizens may rely on the support in finding a new job.

The Finland's integration program. Finland is one of the best places to live and work throughout the world. It has become one of the most modern and competitive economies based on innovativeness and high quality of social capital although it used to be a peripheral country at the end of 19th and at the beginning of the 20th century, focused on exploitation of forest resources and agriculture [15]. Good Finnish economic condition means low unemployment rate which was 7,9 % in December 2016.

The priority in the integration policy is supporting social cohesion and providing immigrants to successfully

become members of local community with successful cooperation between the government and local authorities. The legal basis of the performed integration policy is the act on integration promoting [14] which came into force on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2011. Its aim is to equal rights and obligations of immigrants to the rest of population. The act includes provisions that regulate allocation of funds and services destined to the support in the immigrants' integration process. Pursuant to the act, immigrants' integration is an area included in the competence of Ministry of Economics and Labor (the minister is responsible for integration, legislation in that matter, promotion of immigrants' employment, monitoring). The indicated tasks require close cooperation between particular departments of public administration of all levels – national, regional and local ones.

On the regional level, the responsible bodies are the Centers of Development, Economic, Transport and Environment. They support municipalities. They also conclude agreements with municipalities to grant persons receiving international assistance. On the local level, municipalities coordinate the integration by preparing integration programs. Whereas Employment and Economic Development Offices focus on searching for work for those registered as the unemployed and prepare supplement trainings [14].

The governmental integration program prepared for the years 2016–2019 and accepted by the government in September 2016 aims at promoting equality and assuring immigrants' skills will be useful for the Finnish society. Through efficient integration on the

beginning phase, cooperation between institutions and those interested parties, the performed attempts in order to assure flexible entrance of immigrants both onto the area of education and labor market. The Integration program is based on the act on promoting migration integration according to which the government decides upon the national integration through working out an Integration Program every four years. The first program was completed in 2012.

The program for the years 2016–2019 concerns four key subject areas:

1. Using cultural power of immigrants to increase the Finnish innovative efficiency. The aim is to use the knowledge and skills of qualified immigrants and foreign students who graduate from the Finnish universities and support their carrier development of the Finnish labor market, development of entrepreneurship and internationalism.

2. Making integration more attractive thanks to inter-sector funds. The conditions of immigrants' integration are fixed in early stages. The aim is to equip those with required competences to further education and professional life in order to improve their position on the labor market in order to guarantee protection of the support of many professions to immigrants' families as well as supporting participation of immigrants in recreation activities.

3. Increasing cooperation between a state and municipalities receiving beneficiaries of the international law. The aim is to place groups of refugees in municipalities searching for asylum, those who received residence permit within two months and the integration process should begin immediately.

4. Promoting cultural humane discussion that would not tolerate racism. The aim is the discussion on integration was conducted openly in a way that respects human dignity. Official forums shall be also created for the dialogue between authorities and immigrants.

According to Ministry of Economics and Labor, within 3 next years there will be at least 2 thousand trained and employed immigrants. The Project will be performed by the Finnish Fund of Innovation SITRA that offers immigrants directed trainings which will support their future employment. Its aim is to prepare immigrants to enter the labor market within 4 months after beginning of the course. The trainings shall be still lasting on the work post and it shall include: language, culture, professional skills trainings. The project is supposed to satisfy the needs of both immigrants and employers. Work offers may be found in such sectors and constructor's engineering, services, care, gastronomy. The projects shall be financed by the private capital thus investors may influence the social issues. The power of the model is that there are particular formal objectives determined concerning economic results that are regularly monitored.

Prompt employment of immigrants shall allow Finland save public funds connected with providing social support for those remaining outside the labor market. If the objectives of the project are satisfied, the ministry shall partially refund the capital involved by the investors as well certain part of profits.

**Conclusions.** Despite promoting the integration policy for many years, it is difficult to say about its full success.

As mentioned in the introduction, the result of economic integration depends on numerous factors lying on both sides: the state and immigrants' community. Finland is presented as a country which is incredibly active in its involvement into the immigrants' integration policy. It is visible in the implementation of complex integration programs aiming at guaranteeing employment to the largest possible group of immigrant on the Finnish labor market. The attempts do not bring presumed results. Immigrants, especially those from non-EU countries are still in most often unemployed, they more frequently undertake activities as those considered by the society as unattractive or badly paid ones. One of the most disturbing barrier that effectively stop integration processes, also on the labor markets, are cultural and civilization diversities which determine immigrants social behaviors. One of the above is patriarchal family model which prevents women from entering the labor market. Another significant factor disintegrating immigrants' community is their various diversity resulting from a social structure of those polled, the level of education, time and reason of arriving in the destined country as well difficult to solve religious, ethnic and language diversities that arouse conflicts within a group. They disturb undertaking and perform unanimous integration programs that would satisfy the needs of all those immigrants searching for employment. Those remaining outside the labor market have more difficult integration and become social support beneficiaries. The situation concerns first of all the immigrants from the North Africa and Near East. In recent months the phenomenon

has been arousing reluctance of public opinion resulting in disapproval of the Finnish government for the extended inflow of immigrants which increased after closing the borders in the Norwegian-Russian border in December 2015. While responding the occurred situation, the authorities intend to deport about 20 thousand put of 32 thousand arrived immigrants. The entrance criteria have been restricted towards Iraqis, Afghans and Somalians. Those actions may prove the government's integration policy shall be limited to a certain group of immigrants which would adapt on the Finnish labor market the best and is able to accept the requirements put by the state and society.

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