

Proposal for:

Migration and Integration in Europe and Russia: New Challenges and Opportunities.

International Conference, St. Petersburg, November 16-18, 2012

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Title: 'God help us stay': Integration strategies of religious Ukrainian immigrants in the Czech Republic.

The paper deals with strategies of the use of religion in migratory process, especially in the post-migratory phase of integration into hosting society. It focuses on one of the main migration streams to the Czech Republic, those coming from Ukraine. With long established history of migration between both countries, Ukrainians are the second biggest immigrant group in the Czech Republic. Relative closeness of both countries and linguistic proximity makes Czech Republic favorite migration destination for migrants from Ukraine. Even though, integration of immigrants is not smooth process.

One of the features of Ukrainian immigrants is the higher level of religiosity (Leontiyeva 2006) in comparison with Czechs. Even though after the immigration it is often hard to find the time to visit the church, those immigrants who have the opportunity to do that (usually in bigger cities) often benefit from it. Immigrants join churches to seek spiritual help in turbulent times of post-migration but it is not only spiritual help they can get on church meetings. Churches might be places where immigrants can gain quick access to social capital, language and other competences. However, different Churches have distinct notion of their role in integration process of immigrants and therefore provide different 'services' for them. The paper will thus address the integration potential of four Christian Churches in the Czech Republic (Greek Catholic Church, Orthodox Church, Jehovah's Witnesses and Apostle Church) and also integration strategies of religious Ukrainian immigrants. Based on in-depth interviews with Ukrainian immigrants and Churches representatives, the paper reveals several different approaches of immigrants and churches to the question of integration. These strategies result from position of religion in the lives of immigrants and also from different conceptions of Churches they attend. **The paper does not aim at finding general patterns but particular experiences of social actors. I want to show how different actors use religion for integration, how their religiosity and church affiliation influence their migratory experience.**

- LEONTIYEVA, Y. 2005. Ukrajinci v ČR. In Socioweb. Online in <http://www.socioweb.cz/index.php?disp=temata&shw=200&lst=111>.