



FACULTY OF ARTS
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Facing Europe in Crisis: Czech Language Courses as Means for Integration of Immigrants

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Erasmus+ IP (Charles University, Prague)

The language I have learn'd these forty years,
My native English, now I must forego:
And now my tongue's use is to me no more
Than an unstringed viol or a harp,
Or like a cunning instrument cased up,
Or, being open, put into his hands
That knows no touch to tune the harmony:
Within my mouth you have engao'l'd my tongue,
Doubly portcullis'd with my teeth and lips;
And dull unfeeling barren ignorance
Is made my gaoler to attend on me.
I am too old to fawn upon a nurse,
Too far in years to be a pupil now:
What is thy sentence then but speechless death,
Which robs my tongue from breathing native breath?

Richard II Act I Scene III

These are the words with which Thomas Mowbray, Duke of Norfolk, laments the sentence of lifelong exile passed on him by the king himself. Being forced to leave one's own country is difficult for many reasons; however, Shakespeare chooses to focus on the inability to use one's own language as the cruellest of punishments. All the displaced people, fleeing war or persecution in their home country must face this problem. Not being able to understand and express themselves in the language of the host country, they are highly disadvantaged in all their interactions with its people as well as vulnerable to dishonest behaviour. Moreover, the powerlessness of being forced into silence by incomprehension isolates and depresses – the unhappy courtier compares it to being imprisoned with “dull unfeeling barren ignorance as a gaoler.” Learning the language of a country is one of the key aspects of integration into its society. It allows the immigrant to function in everyday contexts, to find work and to establish relationships. Although some may feel, as Thomas Mowbray does, that they are “too far in years to be a pupil now,” it is a necessity that cannot be avoided. The Centre for Integration of Foreigners offers, among other things, open courses in Czech in order to “enable immigrants to the Czech Republic to lead independent and dignified lives in the CR,” thus helping them to overcome the language barrier and giving them skills that are necessary for settling into Czech society.

“We help immigrants to become our fellow citizens.”



“Becoming a Pupil Again”: Integration through Education

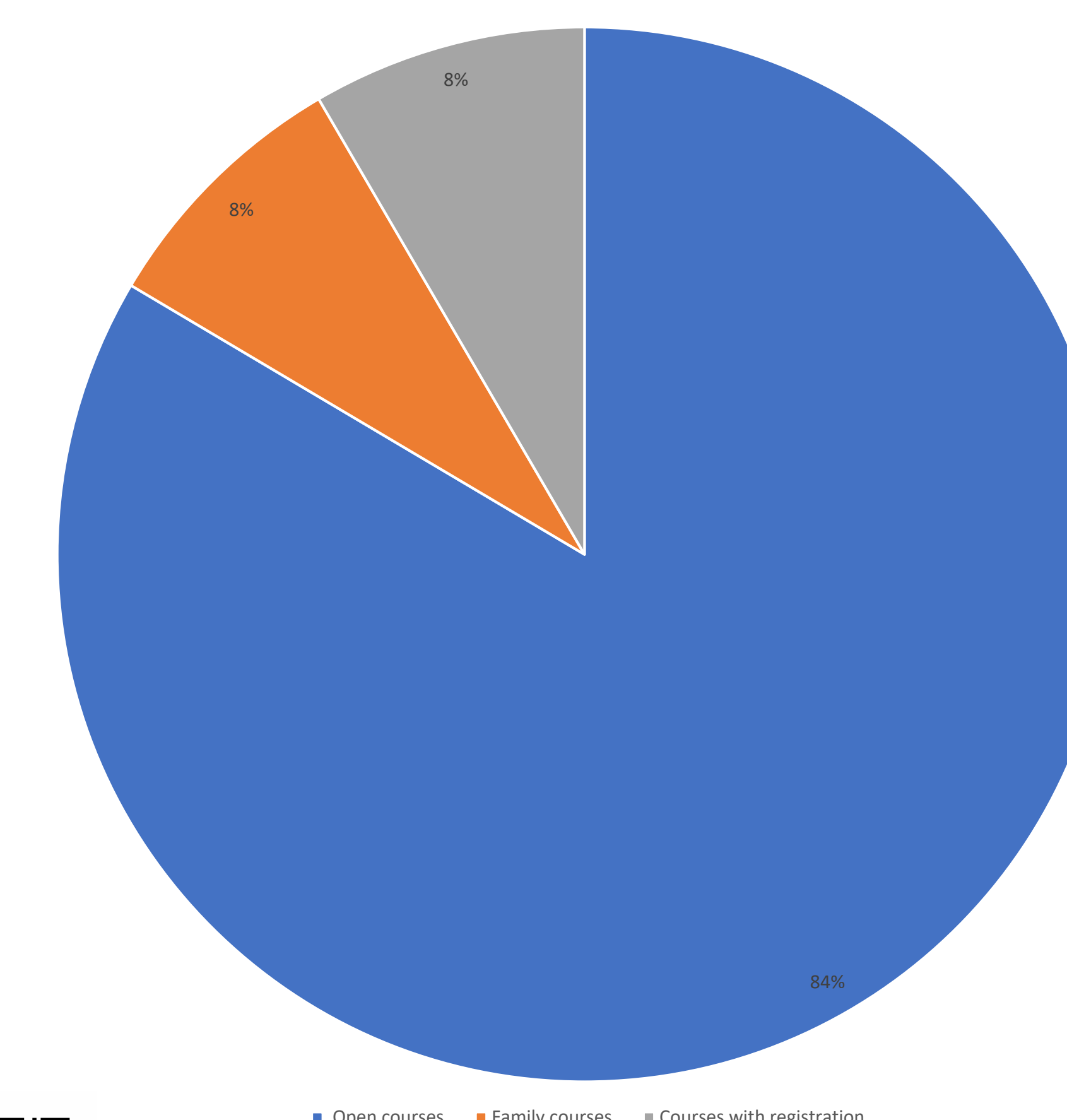
The Centre for Integration of Foreigners (CIC) was founded in 2003 as a NPO for the purpose of helping foreigners participate in Czech society and become a part of it. The CIC offers walk-in and field-based social services and educational programmes for foreigners who are long-term or permanent residents of the Czech Republic. The CIC is active in all regions of Bohemia, though its main activities are in Prague.

The organization's main activities include:

- social counselling for immigrants, assistance in dealing with the authorities
- employment consultancy, developing programmes and activities for immigrants
- drop-in, open courses in Czech language, as well as other specialized courses of Czech for foreigners
- other ongoing education activities

The goal of all the programmes is to enable immigrants to the Czech Republic lead independent and dignified lives in the CR while being aware and respectful of the local legal and basic inter-personal norms on one side, and to contribute to mutual understanding and respect afforded to each immigrant by society on the other side.

Attendance of Czech Courses in 2016



centrum
pro integraci
cizinců

Contact information:

Centre for Integration of Foreigners (CIC)

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