

Migration in Greece: Recent Developments

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Executive Summary

Economic Crisis and Refugee Crisis: An Apocalyptic Scenario

During 2015 Greece has been faced with an apocalyptic scenario. On one hand, it has experienced a deepening of its economic and political crisis: two national elections took place in this period (in January 2015 and in September 2015) as well as one referendum (in July 2015). The Left wing coalition government of SYRIZA (backed by the small nationalistic party ANEL) that came to power after the January 2015 election engaged into a difficult negotiation over the austerity policies imposed on Greece by its creditors (the EU, the IMF and the ECB). The negotiation was harsh and it failed to achieve most of the government's objectives, notably reducing payments to the country's creditors and using the relevant funds for subsidies towards the poorest strata of the population and revamping public investment. The government also had to back track to many of its negotiation positions which resisted the deregulation of the labour market, the privatisations of important national assets and the further reduction of pensions. Despite the negative outcome of the negotiation, the Left wing coalition government was reconfirmed in the election of 20 September 2015 with roughly the same votes (36% for Syriza and just under 4% for ANEL instead of 4.6% in January). Nonetheless, for the majority of citizens who supported the negotiation effort (over 60% as per the 5 July 2015 referendum results), its result was a political blow while the forthcoming additional taxes and welfare/pension cuts are hard to sustain. At the same time the protracted negotiation period and uncertain situation over the summer of 2015 sent the economy plummeting.

As if this economic and political crisis were not enough, Greece has been faced with dramatically rising asylum seeking and irregular migration flows already during 2014 and through the first 9 months of 2015. Still none had predicted the dramatic escalation of the asylum seeking flows (with 60% of the arrivals coming from Syria and 25% from Afghanistan). Indeed the refugee flows have surpassed all predictions. By 29 September 2015 388,000 people had arrived in Greece mostly crossing from Turkey to the Aegean islands, most of them fleeing war and violence in their home countries (Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq but also Pakistan and Somalia). Although not only state authorities but also local volunteers, NGOs and international organisations have mobilized to face the emergency, the situation remains critical and it is actually surprising that despite the harsh economic conditions, public opinion remains overall welcoming to the refugees.

This refugee influx – the largest refugee flow that Europe has experienced in its soil since the Yugoslav wars of the mid 1990s – has led to important changes at the European level including a de facto or de jure interruption of Dublin III and the first safe country principle – as well as intensive talks that Dublin III needs to be radically reformed. Indeed irregular migrants and asylum seekers arriving in Greece during 2015 have for their most part continued their journey via other southeastern European countries (FYROM, Serbia, Croatia, Bulgaria – in different combinations) to central Europe (Hungary, Austria and eventually Germany or even further north

Sweden) seeking refuge in countries where support and jobs are available for them, by comparison to the crisis-stricken Greece.

Asylum and Transit

While a new asylum system was put in place in 2013, challenges to Greece's asylum system continue. These have less to do with its legal foundations (that are solid, for more info see relevant section further below) and more to do with problems in the funding (that often experiences hiccups leaving the asylum services with no interpreters and with very few positions at shelters for even vulnerable groups like unaccompanied minors or families with children). In addition the backlog of the previous asylum system operated by the police authorities has not yet been fully processed. While the backlog which initially stood at 45,000 applications by summer 2013, has been partly processed and there was an effort for it to be cleared by end 2014, several applications particularly at second degree were still in process in early 2015. The new government issued a draft Presidential Decree in spring 2015 proposing to give a stay permit for humanitarian reasons to all persons who had applied for asylum in Greece before 21 November 2010 with a view of clearing the backlog and ensuring a situation of legality for people that had been effectively "trapped" in Greece both legally and physically. Unfortunately the decree was judged against the law and is now returning to the relevant Ministries which will apparently seek to amend the current migration law with a view to settling these cases of protracted asylum seeking applications.

Several measures have been adopted by the new government with a view of overhauling the blanket detention policy adopted by the previous governments (which adopted 18 months or longer detention for undocumented migrants and asylum seekers apprehended in the country or at the border. Asylum seekers, vulnerable groups (women, children, ill and invalid persons, victims of torture etc.) and anyone detained over 6 months have been gradually released in spring 2015, where possible directed to shelters and open reception centres and where that was not possible simply released to find accommodation on their own (decision of 17 February 2015 of vice Ministers of Justice and Migration).

Greece has not only overhauled its asylum system but also created a fast track procedure for Syrian refugees, providing them with subsidiary protection status suffice they could prove they are Syrians, as of November 2014. Nonetheless, Syrians and Afghans do not wish to apply for asylum in Greece as support measures like accommodation, food, language training are non-existent and jobs are certainly scarce. They thus move further north with the help of smugglers, voting with their feet so to speak, and defying the Dublin III regulations. Overall Greece has received 8,519 asylum seeking applications during 2015, 33% up compared to 2014 (9,432 in the entire 2014). But it is clear that currently less than 1% of all asylum seekers passing through Greece lodge an application in the country. The reason is less the ability of the system to receive and process applications and much more, as noted the lack of a social support programme for asylum seekers and the scarcity of employment opportunities.

Citizenship Reform

The left wing government led by the SYRIZA party has stood by its long standing promise to reform the citizenship law. Despite strong opposition by its junior government coalition partner ANEL (a small right wing nationalistic party with a strong anti-austerity stance), the government passed a citizenship reform bill facilitating citizenship acquisition. Law 4332/2015 makes naturalization possible with a simple declaration/application for children born in Greece and for youth that have completed most of their education in Greece (whether primary, secondary or University education). This is also made possible to people who fulfill the requirements (of what we could describe as being of second generation or of 1.5 generation – having arrived in Greece at a young age and having completed most if not all their education in Greek schools) but are in the meantime adults. There are no provisions however facilitating the naturalization of the “ordinary” first generation migrants (people who came to Greece to work and have lived in the country since).

Labour Market and Economic Migration Management

The double emergency of the long standing social and economic reform that Greece needs (and the austerity measures of dubious outcome imposed on the country) and the refugee crisis, at this point, leave little room to discuss any other migration related issue such as long term migrant integration, or issues of informal work or of discrimination in the labour market. Indeed conditions at the labour market are particularly harsh given the very high unemployment rates (over 25%) of the past three years (and the particularly high unemployment rates among third country nationals, approaching 40%). Thus the question becomes if one has any job at all, rather than under what conditions one works. And the challenge is valid for both natives and migrants.

The Migration Code (Law 4251/2014) voted in April 2014 regulates matters of entry, stay and social integration of third country nationals in Greece, integrating previous laws and bringing the Greek legislation up to date with EU law. EU citizens, refugees and asylum seekers are excluded from its field of effect. The Migration Code aims to **simplify and organize** the different types of stay permits into six categories: stay permits for work or professional reasons; temporary stay permits: stay permits for humanitarian or exceptional reasons; stay permits for study, training or voluntary work; stay permits for victims of trafficking or human smuggling; stay permits for family reunification, and stay permits of long duration. It also transposes and incorporates into a single text recent European directives concerning the migration of students, trainees, researchers, highly skilled workers (Blue Card) and so on. It streamlines to some extent the processing of long term resident permits although these probably remain more cumbersome to access by comparison to the national 10-year long permit which is given to third country nationals who have been living legally in Greece for the previous 10 years (permits before the 10 year one are given on a 2-year basis).

Law 4332/2015 (article 19) strengthens the Migration Code provisions concerning stay permits on exceptional and humanitarian grounds. The exceptional grounds include third country nationals who have lived in Greece for at least three years before the submission of their application and who had a valid entry visa to the country, or can prove to have lived in the

country for at least the past seven years, or to have held a stay permit in the past ten years, or to prove that s/he has long lasting ties with the country. Thus the law casts a wide net to cover all people who are currently undocumented and particularly those who have fallen to irregular status because of unemployment or other problems in renewing their permits.

Similarly special provisions protecting vulnerable people (permits issued on humanitarian grounds) are strengthened (article 19A) to cover not only victims of trafficking for instance but also victims of particularly exploitative conditions, and people who are testifying to penal proceedings. Both the humanitarian and exceptional grounds' permits are issued for an initial period of 2 years and then can be converted to regular stay permits (i.e. for work or study or other purposes). They thus offer a clear path toward re-establishing legal residence in Greece to the people concerned.

Concluding Remarks

Greece is yet presenting once more a paradox in terms of its migration policy which not only evolves in leaps and bounds but seems to evolve more radically when a full swing economic and political crisis is taking place. As in 2010 and 2011 the then newly elected government of the Socialist George Papandreou approved some of the most important immigration and citizenship bills, similarly now the government of the leftist Alexis Tsipras is pushing further for reform, simplification and an overall more migrant friendly policy, aligned with EU directives but also acknowledging the fact that Greece is a long term host country by now.

1. Introduction

Greece has been into a deep economic recession for over five years now. Unemployment levels have tripled and the purchase power of citizens has plummeted. During these same years (notably since 2009) the country has seen important changes in its political landscape. A far right wing party of Neo-Nazi orientation, Golden Dawn, has entered Parliament and received over 6% of the national vote in the 2012 and 2015 elections. At the same time in 2015 Greece has elected its first left wing government as the SYRIZA party attracted one third of the national vote (approx.. 36% in both elections of January and September 2015). Syriza has formed a government coalition with the nationalistic party ANEL, based on their common anti-austerity programme. However negotiations with the so-called “institutions” (notably the EU, IMF and ECB) have not led to significant changes in the austerity policies and structural reforms imposed on Greece. Rather the protracted negotiation during the first semester of 2015 has significantly worsened the country’s economic performance (because of the political instability that it caused) while the gains from the negotiation were rather modest in terms of alleviating the pressure on the country’s spending in social protection and economic growth measures.

In this difficult economic and political landscape, with over one quarter of the population unemployed and an even higher unemployment rate among third country nationals, the country has been faced with the massive arrival of asylum seekers from Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan as well as of continuing flows of people with mixed motivations (economic and political) from other Asian and African countries including Pakistan, Somalia, Bangladesh, for instance.

Despite the emergency, the Syriza-led left wing government has introduced important changes in the citizenship law, with a modest opening towards young people who were born and/or raised/educated in Greece, while it has also strengthened measures aiming at bringing back to legality undocumented migrants (who had previously been living in Greece legally) and rejected asylum seekers (who have been in process for a long time).

This report offers an overview of immigration in Greece, the size and main features of the migrant population, with a special emphasis on the current situation as regards the flows of asylum seekers and irregular migrants arriving on the Greek islands via Turkey. The report outlines main developments in migration and asylum policy and particularly the most recent citizenship reform (law 4332/2015) in July 2015. It concludes outlining the prospects of migration in Greek society in the second half of the 2010s.

2. The Migrant Population in Greece

While the 2011 national census¹ data, registered 713,000 third country nationals² and 199,000 EU citizens (non-Greek) living in Greece accounting respectively for 6.5% and 1.8% of the total resident population, most up to date data coming from the Labour Force Survey of 2015 (second trimester) suggest a significant decrease in the total migrant population to approximately 550,000 people and 100,000 EU citizens (non-Greeks) (see Table 1 below), accounting thus for 5% and 1% respectively of the total resident population. It is of course possible that the LFS data over-represent the reduction of the immigrant population as they are not as accurate as census data, nevertheless the decrease in the migrant residents is dramatic. This reduction is corroborated by data from the Ministry of Interior's data base on stay permits (see figure 1 below)

Table 1: Stock of Foreign Population in Greece, as of June 2015

	Size of immigrant stock	% of total resident population
Total TCN population	547,326	5%
Total EU population (non Greeks)	100,354	1%
Total immigrant stock	647,680	6%
Total population of Greece	10,837,556	100.00

Source: Hellenic Statistical Authority (ELSTAT.), Labour Force Survey 2015, 2nd Trimester.

Data on effective inflows and outflows of immigrants in Greece are based on the issuing and renewal (or not) of stay permits but may not be accurate as people may stay on in the country even if they lose their legal status or may enter the country undocumented. However, data on stay permits do give an indication of the actual trend in terms of inflows and outflows and also in terms of the possible de-legalisation of migrants who previously had a legal status.

The highest number of legal migrants present in Greece was registered in December 2010, with over 600,000 valid permits. Since then, there is a continuous decrease in the number of valid stay permits, which fell to just over 550,000 at the end of 2015 (see table 2 and figure 1 further below).

Table 2: Valid Stay Permits for Third Country Nationals, 2010-2015

Valid Stay permits TCNs	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Men	329,934	324,039	291,967	279,818	274,762	285,384
Women	271,738	274,577	256,961	249,242	249,480	258,250

¹While the national census of 2011 does not provide the most up to date data for 2014, it is worth consulting as regards the total migrant population residing in Greek as it does not distinguish between legal and undocumented residents. Even though one might consider that recent arrivals were not registered as at all probability they lacked a fixed domicile.

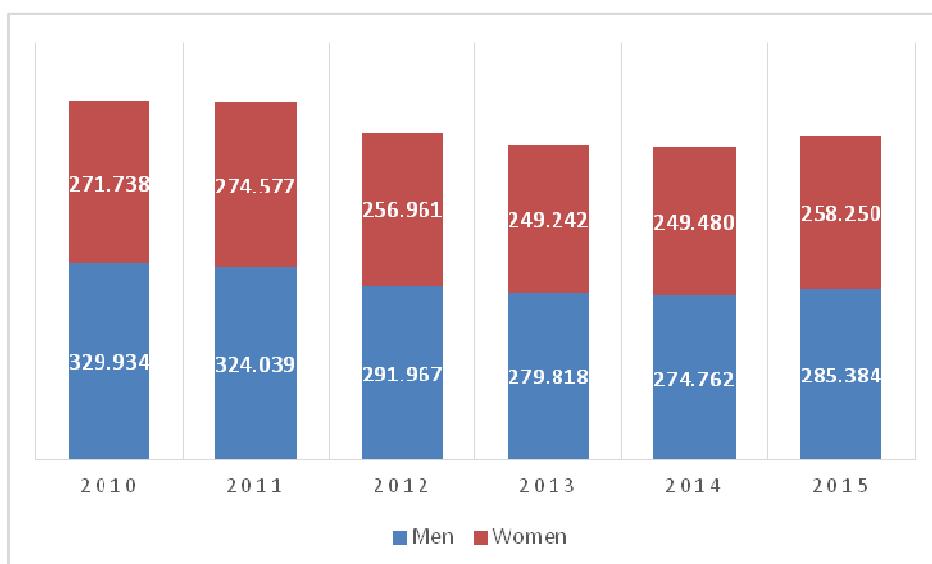
²The largest immigrant groups were Albanians (480,000), Bulgarians (75,000), Romanians (46,000), Pakistanis (34,000), Georgians (27,000), Ukrainians (17,000) and Poles (14,000).

Total	601,675	598,619	548,929	529,060	524,242	543,634
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Source: Data provided by the Ministry of Interior, database of permits for TCNs, upon our request for this report.
 Note: Data refer to 31 December of each year. Data for 2015 refer to 30 June 2015.

It should be noted however that in line with data issued by the Ministry of Interior upon request of the Ombudsman (Baltsiotis, 2014) there are at anyone time an approximate number of 99,000-150,000 of permits in process for being renewed. According to Baltsiotis data (2014: 5) such permits in the process of renewal stood at 112,500 in November 2014 thus bringing up the total number of stay permits for TCNs to 607,000 (495,000 valid in Nov 2014 as per Baltsiotis data, plus 112,500 in renewal). It may thus be safely argued that at anyone time we can estimate the legal migration stock as the number of valid permits plus an approximate 20% of permits in processing for renewal (approximately 100,000-150,000 on top of the roughly 600,000 valid).

Figure 1: Legal migrants (stock) Greece by Gender, 2010-2015



Source: Database of valid stay permits, Ministry of Interior. Data refer to valid permits on the 31st of December of each year except 2015 where data refer to valid permits on the 30th of June.

2. Irregular Migration Flows and Readmissions

Greece has been characterised by relatively high irregular migrant population stocks and flows during the past 25 years. The evolution of presumed inflows of irregular migrants (as registered through apprehensions at border areas) has gone through ups and downs at the different border

areas (see table 2). The most notable reduction is at the Greek Albanian border as of 2011 and particularly in 2014, though this is closely related to the exemption from a visa requirement of Albanian nationals who are entering the EU for periods shorter than 90 days as of December 2010.

The border that has been consistently under pressure during the past five years is however the Greek Turkish one. Overall, migration and asylum seeking pressures there appear to follow the hydraulic principle: when inflows at the land border rise, they fall at the sea borders, and conversely when the land border crossings are abandoned (towards the end of 2010 and as of 2011) the island entries rise. Surely these trends are strongly influenced by geopolitical developments in the region since the Arab spring in 2011 and particularly the implosion of the Libyan regime, the conflict in Syria as well as the overall instability and conflict in the Middle East which have reshuffled the irregular migration and asylum seeking routes in the whole southeastern Europe and the Mediterranean. Thus while in 2012-2013, Italy carried the brunt of these developments (since the lack of law and order in Libya was facilitating the operations of the smuggling networks ferrying migrants through Libya to Italy and Malta), in the period 2014-2015 Greece is faced with a steep rise already during 2014.

Indeed during 2014 and particularly in 2015 the situation has been rapidly evolving. Arrivals at the Greek islands increased twenty times from just over 2,500 in 2013 to over 42,000 in 2014. They have further increased six fold between 2014 and the first 8 months of 2015, while the most recent update by the UNHCR puts them at 340,991, i.e. nearly nine times higher than 2014 and the arrivals keep unabated particularly on the island of Lesvos where some 2,000-3,000 asylum seekers arrive on a daily basis.

Table 2: Apprehensions of irregular migrants, per border, 2010-2015

Border \ Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015*
Greek-Albanian Border	33.979	11.743	10.927	10.413	9.290	5,780
Greek-FYROM Border	1.589	1.003	1.168	1.041	1.216	1,170
Greek-Bulgarian Border	983	636	365	505	780	681
Greek-Turkish land Border	47.088	54.974	30.433	1.122	1.914	3,009
Greek-Turkish sea Border	6.204	814	3.610	2.525	42.651	242,707
Crete	2.444	1.640	2.834	2.557	3.093	2,704
Rest of the country	40.237	29.372	31.151	16.253	18.219	15,105
Total	132.524	99.368	76.878	34.416	77.163	271,156

Note: data refer to apprehensions, not to people. Hence the same person if apprehended twice counts twice. * data refer to the first 8 months of 2015.

Source: Greek police data, www.astynomia.gr

A closer look at the nationalities of the migrants apprehended in Greece because undocumented, we notice the emergence of Syrians as by far the largest group in 2015 (accounting for 60% of all registered undocumented arrivals). Afghans remained an important group in 2014 but their numbers have increased dramatically in 2015 to over 50,000, a number that had not been registered even in the crisis years of 2009-2011.

Interestingly Pakistanis who had declined in absolute numbers from nearly 20,000 in 2011 to 3,600 in 2014, have picked up again with over 11,000 apprehensions and the same is true for Iraqis which are the fifth largest group.

Table 3: Apprehensions of irregular migrants in Greece (at the borders and within the country, 5 main nationality groups), 2011-2015

2011		2012		2013		2014		2015*	
Afghanistan	28,528	Afghanistan	16,584	Albania	15,389	Syria	32,520	Syria	175,375
Pakistan	19,975	Pakistan	11,136	Syria	8,517	Albania	16,751	Afghanistan	50,177
Albania	11,733	Albania	10,602	Afghanistan	6,412	Afghanistan	12,901	Pakistan	11,289
Bangladesh	5,416	Syria	7,927	Pakistan	3,982	Pakistan	6,184	Albania	10,985
Algeria	5,398	Bangladesh	7,863	Bangladesh	1,524	Somalia	3,621	Iraq	9,059

Source: Ministry for the Protection of the Citizen, www.astynomia.gr for all years cited here.

* first 8 months of 2015.

3. Composition and Features of the Immigrant Population

About 60 % of Greece's foreign population comes from Albania while the second largest group are Bulgarian citizens, but their percentage in the total migrant population is considerably smaller. Georgians and Romanians are the third and fourth largest communities. While the data from the 2011 census may now be considered partly obsolete, it is useful to compare the LFS and TCN valid permit data with those of the census also in the light of our earlier observation that a considerable number of permits are in process at anyone time (estimated at 20% on top of the valid permits).

Comparing our LFS June 2015 data with those from the 2011 census we realise that the Bulgarian and Romanians community are double the size of the LFS estimate, with more than 75,000 Bulgarian citizens and 46,000 Romanians registered at the census (see also Greece SOPEMI report 2014). The same is true for the Georgian and Pakistani communities that is

roughly 50% according to the census (compared to both valid permits and LFS data). By contrast, Ukrainians are under-represented in LFS data but census 2011 data and valid stay permits roughly coincide. Part of this discrepancy concerning particularly Georgian and Ukrainian citizens can be explained by the fact that a number of female migrants from these countries work as live-in maids in households and may not be registered so that they could be “captured” by the labour force survey.

Table 4: National Composition of the Migrant Population (top 10 Nationalities)

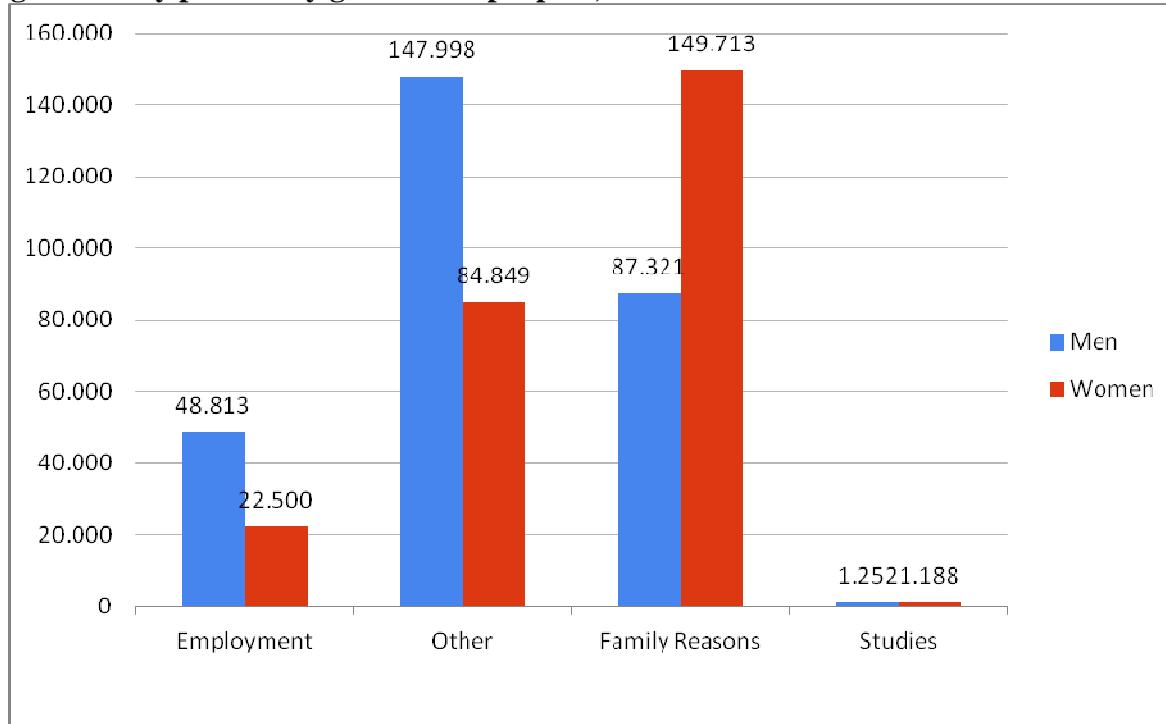
Country of Origin	Number	Country of Origin	Labour Force Survey		TCN valid permits	
			2nd Trimester 2015	on 30.06.2015	Number	Percentage
Census 2011			2nd Trimester 2015			
Albania	480,851	Albania	412,533	63.7	377,604	69.5
Bulgaria	75,917	Bulgaria	33,706	5.2		
Romania	46,524	Romania	22,621	3.5		
Pakistan	34,178	Georgia	17,719	3.0	18,170	3.3
Georgia	27,407	Pakistan	15,244	2.4	16,735	3.1
Ukraine	17,008	Poland	13,482	2.1		
UK	15,388	Russia	11,661	1.8	14,191	2.6
Cyprus	14,448	UK	9,513	1.5		
Poland	14,145	Turkey	9,161	1.4	1,451	0.3
Russia	13,809	Ukraine	8,840	1.4	18,897	
India	11,333					
Bangladesh	11,076					
Germany	10,782					
Egypt	10,455					
Moldova	10,391					
Philippines	9,807					
Armenia	8,113					
Syria	7,628					
Afghanistan	6,911					
USA	5,773					
OTHER	80,056	OTHER	93,461	14.4	96,586	17.8
TOTAL	912,000	TOTAL	647,941	100	543,634	

Sources: Hellenic Statistical Authority (ELSTAT.), National Census Data 2011, also Labour Force Survey, 2nd Trimester 2015; Ministry of Interior, Valid Stay Permits on 30 June 2015.

Concerning the purpose of third country nationals' stay in Greece (see figure 3 below), 45% of the men hold permits of 10-year or indefinite duration, which are included in the 'other category',

followed by permits for family reunification (31%) and stay permits for employment purposes (23%) while the vast majority of women hold family reunification permits (65%) followed by 10-year or indefinite duration permits (23%) and employment permits (11%). Student permits are considerably low in number.

Figure 2: Stay permits by gender and purpose, 30 June 2015



Source: Graph compiled by authors on the basis of data provided by the Ministry of Interior. The other purposed category includes mainly permits of long term duration (10 years or indefinite).

Regarding the settled population, it is worth noting that in June 2015, there were over 190,000 people holding a 10-year or indefinite duration stay permit. Long-term permits have increased significantly in the last six years, but still account for less than 25% of the total valid permits (just under 550,000 in June 2015).

Table 5: Long-Term Permits Issued, 2007-2015

Type of permit	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015*
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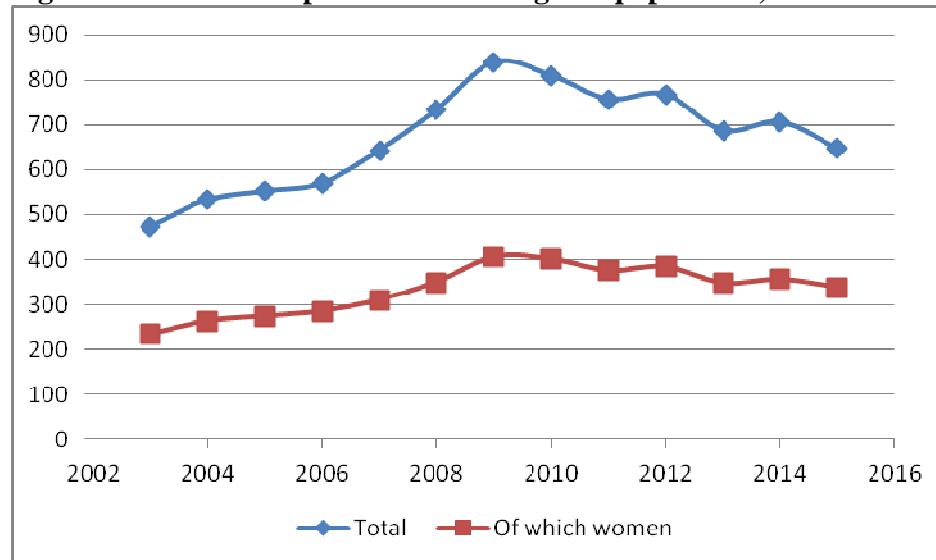
Total permits of 10-year or indefinite duration etc.	821	34,296	45,998	62,312	75,377	107,080		174,449	192,919
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Source: Ministry of Interior database on stay permits, author's own compilation. * Data for 2015 date back to June 2015.

Long term stay permits include the permits issued to second generation youth after the annulment of the citizenship law reform of 2010 and the related modification of the Migration Code giving the second generation youth 5 year stay permits renewable.

The 2011 census data confirm the imbalanced gender composition of the migrant population—men are more numerous than women. However this imbalance varies among groups. For instance nationalities like Ukrainians or Georgians include more women than men while Pakistanis and Bangladeshis are mainly men. In the absence of more recent data, we use the LFS survey to check the overall evolution of the gender composition of the migrant population. The LFS suggests that there is a stronger reduction of the migrant men population during the crisis years, while the percentage of women varies only a little (see figure 3)/

Figure 3: Gender composition of the migrant population, 2011-2014



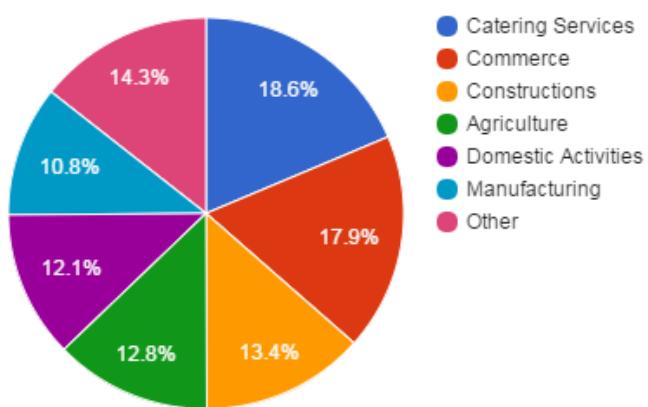
Source: Hellenic Statistical Authority (ELSTAT.), Labour Force Survey, 2nd Trimester of each year, 2011

4. Labour Market Participation of Immigrants at Times of Crisis

According to the Labour Force Survey, the main sectors of employment for third country nationals in Greece are catering and commerce (accounting for just under 20% each of the total) while construction, agriculture and domestic work account for approximately 13% each.

A closer look at the evolution of third country nationals' employment in the last ten years (2005-2015 thus covering the period before the financial crisis and today shows a clear change in the sectors with a dramatic reduction in the construction sector and in the domestic work sector and to a lesser extent in manufacturing. The other sector and commerce have increased while also agriculture which had increased in 2010 has decreased today. While these data unfortunately tell us little about the actual dynamics of integration of TCNs in the labour market they suggest that the crisis has been a factor that has pushed migrants out of their traditional, ethnicised areas of work (construction for men, cleaning/caring for women) and into self employment (commerce and other) or other type of salaried work.

Figure 4: Third Country Nationals by Sector of Employment, 2015 (%)



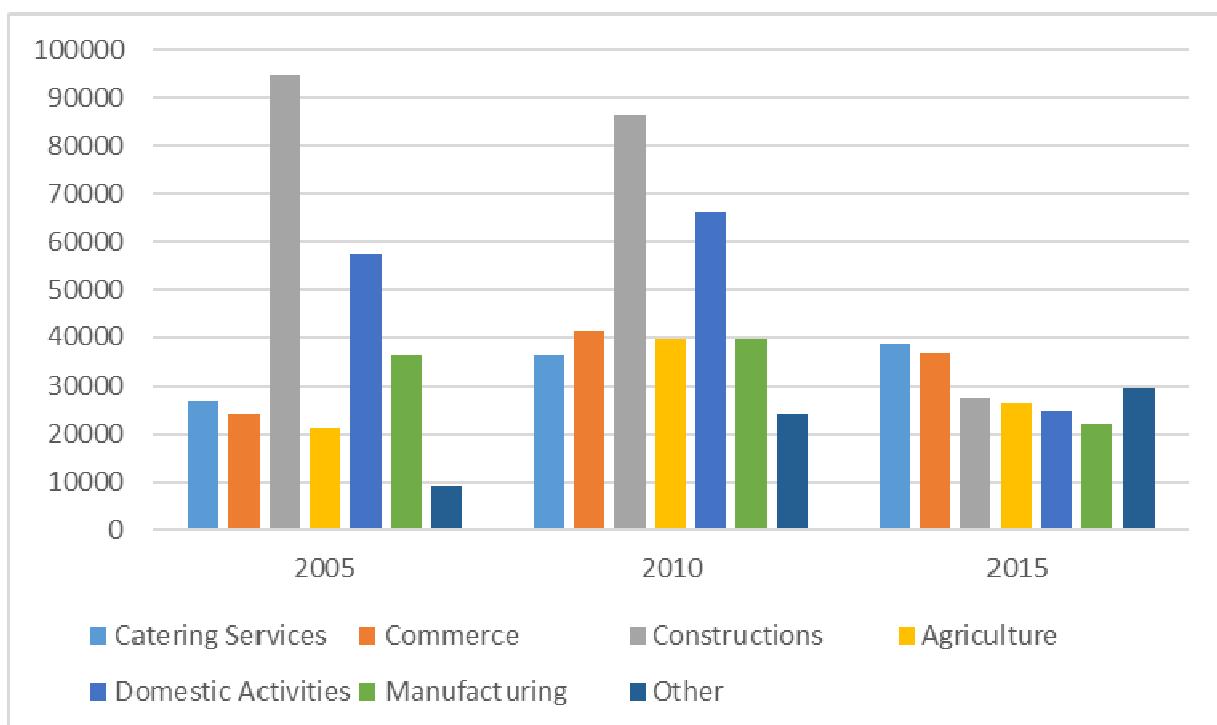
Source: Hellenic Statistical Authority (ELSTAT.), Labour Force Survey, 2nd Trimester, 2015

More in depth and qualitative analysis is needed to understand however whether this is a positive change that contributes to upwards economic mobility and occupational de-ghettoisation of the migrant population, whether it relates to the entry of the second generation in the labour market or finally whether it rather testifies to a survival strategy at times of very high unemployment.

While third country nationals in Greece used to have very low unemployment rates, the crisis has had a very harsh impact on them. Labour Force Survey data for the period 2005-2015 show a

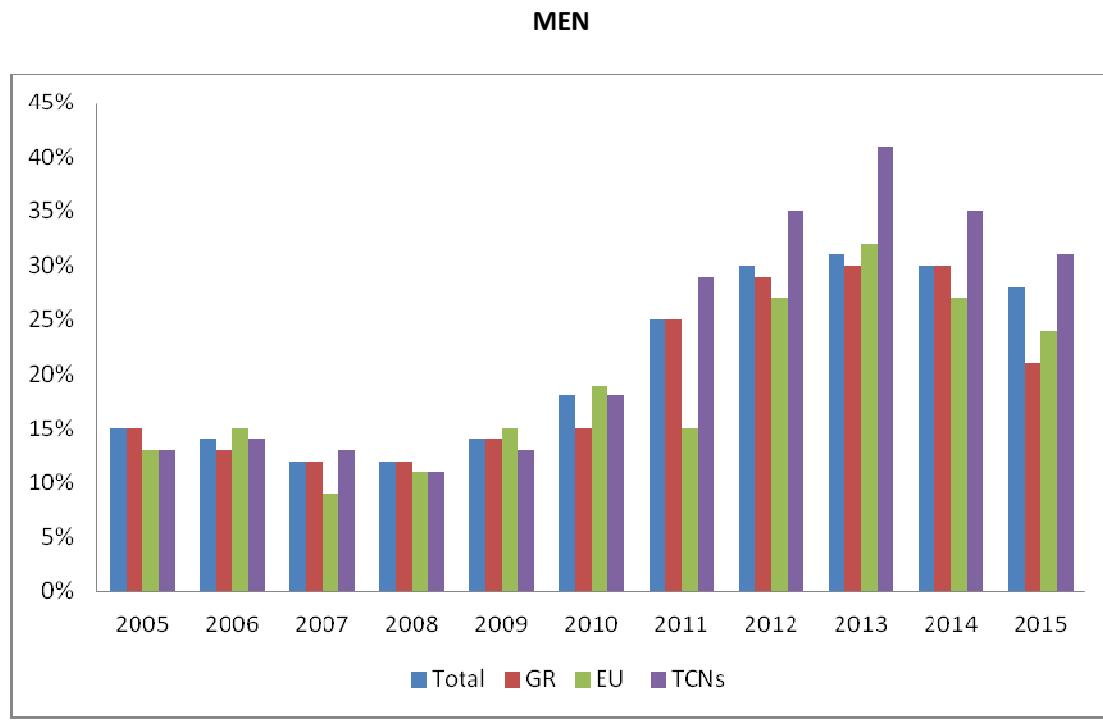
spectacular rise in unemployment for both immigrant men and women. Immigrant men jumped from nearly full employment before the crisis (4% TCNs and 3% EU citizens), to 8% (EU citizens) and 11% (TCNs) in 2009, reaching 30% (EU citizens) and an alarming 40% (TCNs) in the last trimester of 2012 and further nearly 40% for both categories at the end of 2013. During 2014 and 2015 unemployment appears to be reduced however the question arises whether the rate is reduced because many EU citizens and TCNs in search of employment have simply left Greece, rather whether the decrease is caused by an increase in employment. Interestingly though overall unemployment has also been slightly improving for natives in 2014 and more so in 2015.

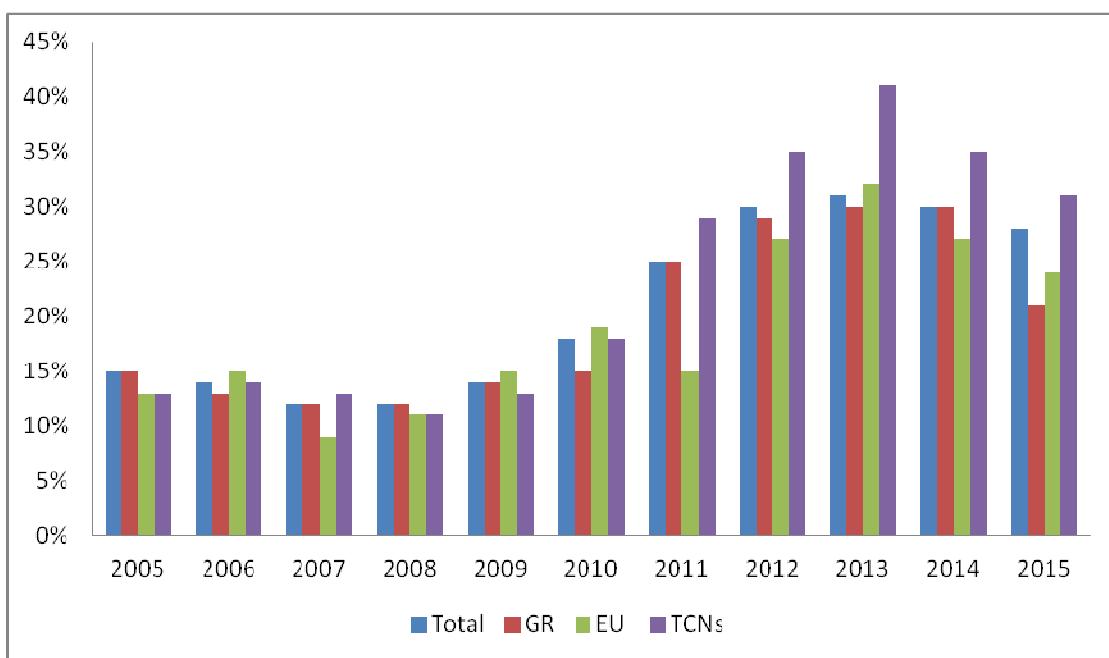
Figure 5: Third Country Nationals by Sector of Employment, 2005-2015 (%)



Source: Authors' compilation on the basis of LFS data, 2nd Trimester of each year

Figure 6: Unemployment rates by nationality in percentages 2005-2015





Source: Hellenic Statistical Authority (EL.STAT.), Labour Force Survey, 2nd trimester of each year

5. Recent Developments in Greek Migration and Asylum Policy

Greek migration policies in the 1990s and 2000s have largely been characterized by a reactive approach to irregular migration and informal employment in the country's black market economy. The main legislative measures for normalizing the migration situation have been regularization programmes (three such programmes have been adopted: in 1998, in 2001 and in 2005, a smaller informal amnesty programme has also been introduced in 2007 and since then a tacit case by case regularization on individual basis through the stay permits on exceptional grounds). Integration measures have been mostly on paper but in practice rather minimal. Integration has taken place in the labour market and in schools and neighbourhoods de facto rather than following a plan.

In the section that follows, we review the main migration policy developments during 2015, comparing what has changed in relation to the Migration Code voted in April 2014. For a more detailed discussion on the Migration Code please refer to the 2014 report.

5.1 Asylum Policies

Since 2009, Greece had been under the spotlight for its failing asylum system which was characterized by inappropriate processing of the applications (impossibility to access the relevant service and file an application, no information given at border areas or when apprehended, once an application was filed, decisions mainly taken on the basis of the (safe or unsafe) country of

origin, no substantial asylum interviews, overall process mishandled by police persons that had not received any asylum training, and no political will to improve things). In addition there was a major concern with the inhuman and degrading conditions of detention of pending asylum seekers and about the fact that when they were released wither with a pink card (temporary permit allowing them to stay in Greece while their application was processed, renewable every six months) they were left to their own devices.³

Law 3907/2011 passed by the Greek Parliament in January 2011 introduced the Asylum Service, an Appeals Committee and a First Reception Service. The new asylum agency (the first asylum office started operating with a 2.5 year delay, in June 2013) is autonomous and decentralised (with nine regional offices currently in function). Under the current system, the Asylum Service and the Appeals committee are autonomous. The First Reception Service is responsible for the ‘management’ of new arrivals, bringing together a team of ‘first respondents’ in the maritime and land borders. In fact recognition rates have greatly improved (see tables 6 and 7), from nearly null or 1% to approval rates of between 10% and 30% in total (refugee status and subsidiary protection, first and second instance).

Table 6 Asylum seeking recognition rates, First instance, 2013-2015

Status\Year	2013*	2014	2015
Refugees	11	20.5	N/A
Subsidiary Protection	4.4	8.2	N/A
Negative	84.6	71.3	N/A
Total	100	100	100

Note: * Second semester only. Data available at http://asylo.gov.gr/?page_id=615, consulted on 6 October 2015.

Table 7 Asylum seeking recognition rates, Second instance

Status\Year	2013*	2014	2015
Refugees	6.2	11.1	9.6
Subsidiary Protection	2.8	5	4.5
Negative	91	83.8	85.9
Total	100	100	100

Note: * Second semester only. Data available at http://asylo.gov.gr/?page_id=615, consulted on 6 October 2015.

³Greece had been under the spotlight because of its continuing inability to provide effective protection to asylum seekers arriving at its shores and having to be handled in Greek territory in line with the Dublin II regulation. Already on 31 January 2009, the European Commission had started infringement Proceedings with Greece because of its failure to implement the Dublin II regulation, bringing the country in front of the European Court of Justice. The infringement concerned mainly the fact that Greece lacked legal guarantees for a substantial examination of the application of asylum claimants. On 21 January 2011 the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) found that Greece's broken asylum system and appalling detention conditions meant that Belgium's transfer of an Afghan asylum seeker to Greece in 2009 under the Dublin II Regulation had breached the prohibition on ill-treatment and denied him an effective remedy (Triandafyllidou and Dimitriadi 2011).

The good performance of the new asylum system is unfortunately compromised often by lack of funding. In the past two years there have been a few times when asylum services were left with no interpreters. In addition places at shelters for families and unaccompanied minors are limited and certainly not sufficient in number.

In addition the backlog of the previous asylum system operated by the police authorities has not yet been fully processed. While the backlog which initially stood at 45,000 applications by summer 2013, has been partly processed and there was an effort for it to be cleared by end 2014, several applications particularly at second degree were still in process in early 2015. The new government issued a draft Presidential Decree in spring 2015 proposing to give a stay permit for humanitarian reasons to all persons who had applied for asylum in Greece before 21 November 2010 with a view of clearing the backlog and ensuring a situation of legality for people that had been effectively “trapped” in Greece both legally and physically. Unfortunately the decree was judged against the law and is now returning to the relevant Ministries which will apparently seek to amend the current migration law with a view to settling these cases of protracted asylum seeking applications.

Several measures have been adopted by the new government with a view of overhauling the blanket detention policy (Angeli et al 2014) implemented by previous governments (18 months or longer detention for undocumented migrants and asylum seekers apprehended in the country or at the border). Asylum seekers, vulnerable groups (women, children, ill and invalid persons, victims of torture etc.) and anyone detained over 6 months have been gradually released in spring 2015, where possible directed to shelters and open reception centres and where that was not possible simply released to find accommodation on their own (decision of 17 February 2015 of vice Ministers of Justice and Migration).

Greece has not only overhauled its asylum system but also created a fast track procedure for Syrian refugees, providing them with subsidiary protection status suffice they could prove they are Syrians, as of November 2014. Indeed asylum recognition rates for Syrians stand currently at 100%, for Iraqis at 72%, Afghans 63% and Iranians at 47%. Recognition rates were similar in 2014 standing at 100% for Syrians, 77% for Eritreans, 67% for Iraqis and Somalis and at 62% for Sudanese.⁴

Nonetheless, Syrians and Afghans do not wish to apply for asylum in Greece as support measures like accommodation, food, language training are non-existent and jobs are certainly scarce. They thus move further north with the help of smugglers, voting with their feet so to speak, and defying the Dublin III regulations. Overall Greece has received 8,519 asylum seeking applications during 2015, 33% up compared to 2014 (9,432 in the entire 2014). But it is clear that currently less than 1% of all asylum seekers passing through Greece lodge an application in the country. The reason is less the ability of the system to receive and process applications and much more, as noted the lack of a social support programme for asylum seekers and the scarcity of

⁴ Data available at http://asylo.gov.gr/?page_id=615

employment opportunities.

5.2 Border Management

Alongside improvements in its asylum and irregular migration management policy, Greece has improved its border controls. Indeed, the rising number of apprehensions generally indicates not only irregular migration or asylum seeking pressures at the borders of Greece (or the presence of irregular migrants within the country) but also the enforcement efforts of the authorities. Greece has beefed up its border controls since 2007 in particular and again even more in 2012 through the Operation Shield (Aspida) and the 12.5 fence build along the Greek Turkish land border. However Operation Aspida has been discontinued in 2015 for lack of funding and because of the significantly reduced migrant pressures there. Similarly the fence appears to have suffered important damages from flooding in the region during the winter 2014-15.

Until January 2015, apprehensions at the border and particularly so at the Greek Turkish land and sea borders included disembarkation, identification at the police station and detention as a routine measure, for all irregular migrants and asylum seekers. Returns, whether voluntary or compulsory had also significantly increased during the past two years with Pakistanis being the main returned nationality.⁵ The situation has however dramatically changed in 2015. The change is on one hand due to the different practice of the new government concerning detention of irregular migrants and asylum seekers (see section above). However it has also had to do with the rising and particularly overwhelming influx towards Greece of irregular migrants and asylum seekers from the Middle East (particularly Syria but also Iraq) as well as overall from Asian and African countries (particularly Afghanistan, but also Pakistan, Bangladesh, and to a lesser degree Somalia, Eritrea, Sudan).

5.3 Policies Addressing Irregular Status

Article 19 of the Migration Code voted in 2014 codified stay permits for humanitarian and exceptional reasons and further developed earlier provisions (law 3907/2011) as regards the regularization of people who have lived in Greece and have developed “special and strong ties with the country”. Law 4332/2015 (article 19) voted in July 2015 has further strengthened the Migration Code provisions concerning stay permits on exceptional and humanitarian grounds. The exceptional grounds include third country nationals who have lived in Greece for at least three years before the submission of their application and who had a valid entry visa to the country, or can prove to have lived in the country for at least the past seven years, or to have held a stay permit in the past ten years, or to prove that s/he has long lasting ties with the country. Thus the law casts a wide net to cover all people who are currently undocumented and particularly those who have fallen to irregular status because of unemployment or other problems in renewing their permits.

⁵ For a detailed discussion on detention and returns see the 2014 report.

Similarly special provisions protecting vulnerable people (permits issued on humanitarian grounds) are strengthened (article 19A) to cover not only victims of trafficking for instance but also victims of particularly exploitative conditions, and people who are testifying to penal proceedings. Both the humanitarian and exceptional grounds' permits are issued for an initial period of 2 years and then can be converted to regular stay permits (i.e. for work or study or other purposes). They thus offer a clear path toward re-establishing legal residence in Greece to the people concerned.

6. Migration Management. The Migration Code and Beyond

Law 4251/2014 labelled as Migration Code (Kodikas Metanastefsis) regulates matters of entry, stay and social integration of third country nationals in Greece. EU citizens, refugees and asylum seekers are excluded from its field of effect. The Migration Code aims to simplify and organize the different types of stay permits into six categories: stay permits for work or professional reasons; temporary stay permits: stay permits for humanitarian or exceptional reasons; stay permits for study, training or voluntary work; stay permits for victims of trafficking or human smuggling; stay permits for family reunification, and stay permits of long duration. This categorization follows the relevant European logic for stay permits and the Code transposes into national law the relevant EU directives for family reunification, migration for study or vocational training, migration of researchers, the Blue Card directive and so on. Indeed, there are no major innovative elements in the field of stay permits for work purposes (salaried or freelance). There is some encouragement of investment, as people who make important investments (albeit the minimum sum of this investment is not specified in the law) may bring with them and receive permits for up to ten highly skilled person that will work in relation to the investment. These people like also generally highly skilled migrants may bring their families with them and receive permits for their family members immediately and do not have to wait (like other migrants) for settling down and applying for family reunification.

There are a few novelties in the Migration Code as regards stay permits. A first novelty is the codification in the law of the document (*βεβαίωση*) that certifies that a third country national has submitted a complete application for the issuing or renewal of a stay permit. This "certification" is valid for 12 months and amounts to a temporary stay permit as it can be used for all purposes within the country (but does not allow travelling within the Schengen area for instance) (article 9).

Second, the migration code offered security of residence to the second generation (article 108). People who were born in Greece or who have finished 6 years of schooling in Greece by age 21, can obtain a stay permit of 5 year duration. Such a stay permit is renewed every 5 years with the mere presentation of the previous stay permit. Law 4332/2015 which has reformed citizenship acquisition provisions (see further below) has also kept this avenue open for those not wishing to naturalise. Parents of children who are Greek citizens can apply for a 5 year duration permit, renewable as long as their family relationship with the Greek citizen is maintained.

Third, the Migration Code regulated seasonal migration for work in agriculture and the fisheries industry. These provisions were amended by law 4332/2015 which aligned Greek legislation with the relevant European Directive on seasonal migration (Directive 2014/36). Particularly important is the access of third country nationals that are seasonal migrants (as well as to all third country nationals living in Greece and holding the single permit as this is introduced by the EU legislation) to social rights concerning the right to go on strike, to participate in trade unions as well as overall social insurance and other socio-economic rights which are aligned with those of other workers (incorporating the provisions thus of Directives 2014/36 and 2011/98).

The Migration Code continues to prohibit Greek public services (article 26), local authorities, and organizations of social security to offer services to foreigners who are ‘unable to prove that they have entered and are residing in the country legally.’ These provisions have not been amended so far despite the different approach of the Syriza government.

The only exception to this prohibition is hospitals in emergency cases and in cases of offering health care to minors (under 18 years of age). Children’s access to the public education system is regulated by law 2910/2001, regardless of their parents’ legal status.

Another problematic issue is the prohibition to state employees including doctors in hospitals for instance, to provide their services to irregular migrants as well as the criminalization of those who rent accommodation to irregular migrants (article 29) and the obligation of hotel and other tourist accommodation owners to inform the police about the arrival and departure of third country nationals (art.30) point to an increased emphasis to internal controls over undocumented stay.

The Migration Code introduces important improvements in the simplification and codification of the legal provisions and in fully aligning Greek legislation with relevant EU directives but it remains a management law rather than one that has a sense of perspective for Greek society and its changed demographic composition (as this is confirmed also by the 2011 census data). The situation with regard to a more long term vision of migration in Greece has partially improved through law 4332/2015 and its modest citizenship reform discussed in the section below as well as with the overall extended effort to bring back to legal status third country nationals who live in Greece and who have lost their papers because of unemployment and of administrative mishaps.

7. Citizenship Policy Reform

Greek nationality has been based predominantly on the *jus sanguinis* principle and, until March 2010, the naturalization procedure was long, costly, and with a very uncertain outcome even for applicants who satisfied the requirements. Greek law includes several modes of citizenship acquisition. Thus, besides naturalisation, the law provides acquisition of citizenship by declaration due to birth and/or residence as a minor and citizenship ascertainment (dapistosi or kathorismos ithageneias), a kind of acquisition by descent. Persons. A simplified and fast procedure of naturalisation is provided for persons of Greek ethnic origin . A detailed analysis of

the intricacies of the Greek citizenship policy goes beyond the scope of this report (see Christopoulos 2012). What is important to highlight is that citizenship was defined in ethnic-genealogical and cultural terms with little reference to civic elements and the possibility to “become” rather than “be born” Greek.

However, the *jus sanguinis* logic was applied differently for different groups of co ethnics. Thus while Pontic Greeks coming from the former Soviet Republics benefitted from citizenship ascertainment and at least about 110,000 people acquired Greek citizenship through that procedure. By contrast, co ethnics from Albania, the so called *Voreioi piros*, were faced with a tacit ban on citizenship acquisition till 2007 (see Baltsiotis 2014: 7, Christopoulos 2012: 235). The policy changed in November 2006 after a recommendation of Ministers of Interior, Public Administration and Decentralisation, and of Foreign Affairs to promote the procedures for granting the Greek citizenship to co ethnics **from Southern Albania** and started being implemented from January 2007 onwards. As the Greek Citizenship Law does not provide any long residence requirement for the naturalisation of co-ethnic Greeks, and the procedure is simplified as Baltsiotis notes (2014: 12, the number of naturalised persons was immediately increased..

Naturalisation of both ethnic Greeks and non co ethnics stood at between 1,000 and 2,000 cases each year in the period between 2000 and 2006. The situation changed rather radically after 2007 through the lift of the informal ban for the naturalisation of co ethnic Greeks of Albania residing in Greece, roughly 200 k that time (Baltsiotis 2009: 7-10, 19-21) . Naturalisations of Greek Albanian co ethnics rose exponentially to over 10,000 people per year and actually to approximately 50,000 people in the period 2007-2010.

As of 2011, the Ministry publishes relevant data distinguishing between the different modes of citizenship acquisition. (see table 8 below). While there has been a brief interlude between 2010 and 2012 where a much more generous law was adopted (law 3838/2010) including provostions for the children born or have their residence in Grece,⁶ this law was annulled by the Council of State in early 2013. As a result however of both the opening towards co ethnics from Albania and the temporary implementation of the new law, overall citizenship acquisitions have further increased in the last few years.

Table 8 Acquisition of Greek Citizenship (2011-2014)

	2011	2012	2013	2014
Naturalisations of Co-ethnics	12,616	13,495	22,574	15,791
Naturalisations of other	930	1,149	1,866	Add 2,019

⁶ Facilitating the citizenship acquisition for children born in Greece or who had completed six years of schooling in the country, reducing the residence requirement for the first generation to 7 years, upgrading the importance of the EU long term residence status as a stepping stone to citizenship, and last but not least introducing local political rights for third country nationals residing in Greece for 5 years or longer and holding a long duration stay permit.

ethnicities					
Birth or study in Greece	3,103	5,543	529	0,	
Other provisions	946	928	1,917	2,029	
Under-age children of naturalised adults (parents)	1,627	622	3,337	1,990	
Total	19,222	21,737	30,223	21,829	

Source: valte to neo syndesmo Ministry of Interior Data for 2011 to 2013 are available through the Ministry's website:
http://www.ypes.gr/UserFiles/f0ff9297-f516-40ff-a70e-eca84e2ec9b9/StatsCategory_2011_2013_04032014.pdf

Law 3838/2010 which radically reformed Greek citizenship and facilitated citizenship acquisition for the first and second generation of migrants who are not co ethnics, was annulled by the Council of State in February 2013, with certain of its provisions found to be anti-constitutional because reducing a “genuine bond” with the nation to a mere technical checking of requirements’ satisfaction.

Citizenship acquisition has been most recently reformed again by the new government that came into power in January 2015. Despite strong opposition by its junior government coalition partner ANEL (a small right wing nationalistic party with a strong anti-austerity stance), the government passed a citizenship reform bill facilitating citizenship acquisition. Law 4332/2015 makes acquisition of citizenship possible with a simple declaration/application for children born in Greece and enrolled at Greek elementary schools, for youth that have completed most of their education in Greece (whether primary – 9 years required, secondary – six years required or University - where also a secondary education certificate is required – education). This is also made possible to people who fulfill the requirements (of what we could describe as being of second generation or of 1.5 generation – having arrived in Greece at a young age and having completed most if not all their education in Greek schools) but are in the meantime adults. A period of three years is given to all those who had qualified (retroactive effect) to apply for citizenship acquisition. The fee is rather reasonable (300 Euro, compared to 100 euro for stay permit renewal/acquisition and to the previously 1,5000 euro required, before 2010). Unfortunately, there are no provisions in the 2015 law facilitating the naturalization of the “ordinary” first generation migrants (people who came to Greece to work and have lived in the country since).

8. Public opinion on migration and the Rise of Racist Violence

Although in a situation of emergency because of the dramatic rising of migration flows alongside with the harsh economic austerity measures, it is actually a surprise that the public opinion in Greece remains overall welcoming to the migrants and refugees. A social experiment on public acceptance/resistance to racist behaviour carried out by the NGO Action Aid in February 2015 in

Athens gave hopeful results: most unaware citizens witnessing an episode of racist comments and behaviour towards an Asian looking young man reacted against the perpetrator of the racist behaviour and sought to protect and soothe the victim.⁷

This trend is also reflected in a series of positive institutional and legislative developments which are referred to the respective reports (2014) of European and international organisations such as the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance⁸ (ECRI), United Nation High Commissioner for Refugees⁹ (UNHCR) and Human rights Watch¹⁰ (HRW). The most obvious developments concern the introduction of new special police units to tackle racist violence in late 2012, the appointment of public prosecutors, responsible for the prosecution of acts of racist violence in October 2013 and the enactment of the new anti-racism law adopted by the Greek parliament in September 2014.

Most importantly, in April 2015, began the historic trial of the leadership of the neo-nazi Golden Dawn party on charges of running a criminal organization operating under the mantle of a political party. Despite Golden Dawn's significant criminal track-record against migrants, the judicial investigation into the party's activities was launched only after the murder of a Greek leftist activist in September 18, 2013, committed by a Golden Dawn militant. In addition to this, the trial is expected to shed light, *inter alia*, to the party's role in the murder of a Pakistani worker, the violent attacks against Egyptian fishermen, as well as various other attacks against migrants across the country¹¹.

A remarkable development that could be considered as a milestone is the Mixed Jury Court of Athens decision (no. 398/2014) according to which the murder the Pakistani national Shehzad Luqman by two young militants of Golden Dawn, in January 2013, constitutes a criminal offence motivated by hatred. The court unanimously condemned them to life-time sentences without recognizing any mitigating circumstances. This is the first time in Greece's history that a racist motive has been identified in a trial and as such has set a legal precedent¹².

This was followed by a decision issued by the court of Piraeus against four Greek citizens accused for beating the Egyptian worker Walid Taleb and then leaving him chained to a lamppost in November 2012 in the island of Salamina. The four men were found guilty and were sentenced to 13 years and two months in prison.¹³ In February 2015, another Greek citizen was sentenced to six months in prison with a three-year suspension for a verbal racist attack against a Nigerian doctor at a public hospital in Kozani¹⁴. These positive developments have certainly contributed to a different socio-political climate that is more respectful of fundamental rights of migrants and that condemns racial violence and hate speech.

Despite these positive developments in terms of policy and judicial practice, public opinion

⁷ For more information see: <http://greece.greekreporter.com/2015/03/21/action-aid-experiment-how-racist-are-greeks/>

⁸ For more information see: <http://neurope.eu/article/racism-europe-greece-and-norway-cases/>

⁹ For more information see: <http://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rwmain?docid=54cb3af34>

¹⁰ For more information see: <http://www.hrw.org/europe/centrale-asia/greece>

¹¹ For more information see: <http://greece.greekreporter.com/2015/04/20/historic-golden-dawn-trial-is-expected-to-last-roughly-a-year/#sthash.D0qdCi4f.dpuf> / <http://www.refworld.org/docid/55a4fa5715.html>

¹² For more information see: <http://www.unhcr.gr/1againstracism/en/comment-the-recognition-of-racist-motive-in-the-case-of-shehzad-luqmans-murder/>

¹³ For more information see: <http://www.unhcr.gr/1againstracism/en/four-convicted-for-attack-on-egyptian-walid-taleb/>

¹⁴ For more information see: <http://greece.greekreporter.com/2015/02/26/nigerian-doctor-victim-of-racist-attack-in-northern-greece/>

surveys conducted in 2014-2015 register also a strong anti-immigrant attitude. A survey conducted in 2014 by the Pew Research Center found that anti-immigrant sentiment in Greece was the highest among seven EU countries (86%).¹⁵ In February 2015, the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) in its report on Greece noticed that the public and political discourse is widely permeated by hate speech against migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, who often become targets of racist violence. It was also highlighted that (despite the positive developments outlined above) Greece continues to fall short of measures to deal with and fight racism, which is on the rise in all expressions of social and political life.¹⁶ According to the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), Greece is ranked in the lowest category as regards existing state mechanisms for recording and publishing data on hate crimes.¹⁷

Indeed, the Greek Racist Violence Recording Network (RVRN) in its annual report for 2014, referred to over half of the incidents of hate crime recorded by the network in 2014 were committed against immigrants or refugees. The majority of attacks occurred in public places or on means of public transport (buses etc)¹⁸, often in the centre of Athens and/or in neighbourhoods with a high concentration of an immigrant population. Half of the attacks were reportedly carried out by extremist groups. A number of the incidents were allegedly perpetrated by police officers; some occurred in police stations and detention centres.¹⁹ On the other hand, the Human Rights Watch signalled a few pushback episodes at the Greek Turkish borders that are now under investigation by the responsible Ministry²⁰, which unlike in the past strongly condemned such episodes.²¹

9. Emigration of Greeks abroad

There has been a lot of discussion as to whether Greeks are emigrating abroad to seek employment. Unemployment rates have been dramatically high in the last 5 years reaching a peak in the summer of 2013 (with over 28% of general unemployment and over 55% of youth unemployment) but have since slightly eased to 25.6% overall (May 2015), and nearly double that rate, notably 51%, among youth (May 2015). It is difficult to know however whether Greeks are leaving, outside anecdotal evidence as they are not required to register when leaving nor is there any advantage in doing so.

¹⁵ For more information see: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/55a4fa5715.html>

¹⁶ For more information see: <http://www.unhcr.gr/1againstracism/en/ecri-racism-on-the-rise-in-greece/>

¹⁷ For more information see: http://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra-2012_hate-crime.pdf

¹⁸ For more information see: <http://www.hrw.org/europe/central-asia/greece>

¹⁹ For more information see: <http://www.unhcr.gr/1againstracism/en/the-murder-of-shehzad-luqman-was-a-hate-crime/>

²⁰ <http://left.gr/news/kataggelia-stin-efsyn-gia-viaii-epanaproothisi-prosygon-ston-evro> and

<http://www.efsyn.gr/arthro/antithetos-me-tis-epanaproothiseis-o-panoysis>

²¹ For more information see: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2015/10/22/greece-attacks-boats-risk-migrant-lives>

Table 10: People born in Greece, residing abroad (selected countries), 2010-2014

Country	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	change 2010-2014
Germany	276,685	283,684	298,254	316,331	328,564	19%
UK	29,000	32,000	34,000	41,000	n/a	41%
Sweden	4,824	5,290	6,222	7,126	7.784	61%
NL	7,781	8,584	10,100	11,760	13.164*	69%
Switzerland	6,808	7,521	8,678	9,788	11.401	67%
Australia*	97,153	97,072	96,916	96,433	n/a	0%

Sources:

Germany: <https://www.destatis.de/EN/FactsFigures/SocietyState/Population/MigrationIntegration/ForeignPopulation/Tables/CitizenshipTimeSerie.html>; UK: <http://www.ons.gov.uk/>; Sweden: http://www.statistikdatabasen.scb.se/pxweb/en/ssd/START_BE_BE0101_BE0101F/UtilmedbR/?rxid=15e8fb18-2828-4818-8a52-835ffe473705; Netherlands: <http://statline.cbs.nl/Statweb/dome/?LA=en>; Switzerland: <http://www.pxweb.bfs.admin.ch/>; Australia: <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/DetailsPage/3412.02011-12%20and%202012-13?OpenDocument#Data>.

* data referring to 1 January 2015.

An indication of not the total number of emigrants from Greece to important destination countries (as documented also in Triandafyllidou and Gropas, 2014) but of the trends can be given through an analysis of the residents born in Greece that appear in national statistics of these countries. Thus, we note a non negligible increase in the major European destinations, notably, Germany, Britain, Sweden, the Netherlands and Switzerland, but no increase (actually a small decrease) in the people born in Greece resident in Australia. Even though these data may give a partial view of the emigration trends they do note a significant percentage of increase of Greek residents abroad that stands at over 60% in Sweden, the Netherlands and Switzerland, approximately 40% in the UK (data calculated on the basis of 2013) and nearly 20% in Germany. Interestingly there is no increase or rather a small decrease in Greek residents in Australia. It should be emphasised that several media reports²² have stated that 200,000 young and highly educated Greeks have emigrated in the last few years because of the economic crisis. While this is not unlikely there are no data (to our knowledge) that can document either the size or the features and destinations of

²² <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jan/19/young-talented-greek-generation-g-worlds-biggest-brain-drain> Here Helena Smith, well known correspondent of The Guardian in Athens claims that 35,000 doctors have emigrated to Germany. She cites German statistics, cited in media reports – neither the statistics nor the media reports that cite them are referenced/given.

Another example: <http://www.youthemploymentdecade.org/repor/emigration-the-only-solution-for-young-greeks/> The cited study by Endeavour is a study financed apparently by a group of corporations to get a better sense of whether highly skilled Greeks are leaving and where they are heading to. Nonetheless the 200,000 number is sourced as: National statistics from different destination countries.

such an emigrant population and related numbers should be taken with a lot of caution (as numbers, once cited, tend to acquire a life of their own).

10. Concluding Remarks

While migration and asylum remain important challenges for a country at the geographical frontier (or fringes?) of Europe, there is certainly a change of political direction in Greek immigration and citizenship policy with the arrival in power of the new left wing government. Despite the very strong pressures that Greece is faced with in terms of asylum seeking and irregular migration flows and the gloomy economic and occupational landscape, the new government promotes a different political and policy agenda in migration, citizenship and asylum. The Syriza government (despite the opposition of its junior coalition partner) has passed the citizenship reform and has further facilitated the return to legality of migrant families that are settled in Greece and how had lost their legal status because of unemployment. The public debate as it emanates from the government has clearly changed. Emphasis is put on solidarity and humanitarianism as the main principles by which Greece stands. Systematic detention of irregular migrants and asylum seekers has been stopped even though challenges remain on how to handle the huge flows of the last few months and how to set up a viable first reception, registration and asylum processing and irregular migrant return system.

A lot remains to be done in terms of an overall change of mentality among Greek citizens (but certainly the discourse of the new government can push things in a direction of tolerance and inclusion) as well as in terms of fighting discrimination in the labour market or more generally in society (here too the intervention of the government is necessary and should be developed) but there is clearly a new wind blowing in terms of considering migration as a feature of modern Greek society and economy rather than as an accident of history or an evil to be mitigated by strict control and marginalisation of the newcomers.

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