

# Migration in Greece Developments in 2011

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## Executive Summary

The main source of data on legally staying immigrants in Greece is the stay permit database of the Ministry for the Protection of the Citizen (former Ministry of Interior). Table 2.1.1 and Graph 2.1.1 below present the legal migrant stock in Greece from January 2004 till December 2011 (estimate), excluding seasonal migrant workers.

The highest number of legal migrants present in Greece was registered in January 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 2010 (553,916 on 1 December 2010) while it is expected that on 1 December 2011 the number of valid stay permits will be more than 100,000 lower, i.e. 447,658.

**Table 1: Estimate of legal migrant stock, Greece, 2004-2011 (excl. seasonal permits)**

Year	Number of valid stay permits
01/12/2004	380,692
01/12/2005	432,030
01/12/2006	540,839
01/12/2007	585,585
01/12/2008	589,796
01/12/2009	602,797
01/12/2010	553,916
01/12/2011	447,658

Source: Database of valid stay permits. Ministry of Interior.

It is most likely that the decrease in the number of valid stay permits is related to the current economic crisis that Greece is facing. It should also be noted that this decrease does not necessarily always mean that these migrants and their families have left Greece. Some of them may still be in the country but having lost their legal status because of the impossibility to satisfy the employment and welfare payment requirements foreseen by law.

**Table 2: Estimate of total immigrant stock in Greece, on 1 December 2011**

	Size of immigrant stock	% of total resident population	Source of data
<b>Total immigrant stock</b>	447,658	3.96%	stay permits valid on 1 Dec 2011, Ministry of Interior database
<b>Co ethnics from Albania</b>	197,814	1.75%	Data from Ministry of Interior, for 31st Dec. 2009
<b>Coethnics from the Soviet Union</b>	154,000	1.36%	Secretariat of Greeks abroad, Special Census, 2000
<b>Irregular immigrants</b>	440,000	3.89%	Maroukis, Triandafyllidou and

(estimate)			Lyberaki, 2011
<b>Total immigrant and co ethnics stock</b>	1,239,472	10.96%	
<b>Total without co-ethnics</b>	887,658	7.85%	
<b>Total population of Greece</b>	11,305,000	100%	Eurostat estimate for 2011, <a href="http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_PUBLIC/3-08062011-BP/EN/3-08062011-BP-EN.PDF">http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_PUBLIC/3-08062011-BP/EN/3-08062011-BP-EN.PDF</a>

Source: Author's own compilation on the basis of various sources annotated in the table.

Throughout the last 2 years Greece has been experiencing the most acute economic crisis in the last 60 years. The crisis has led to a spectacular increase in unemployment rates. Greece registered 18.2 % average unemployment rate in July 2010, up 6 percentage points from 12.2% in August 2010. The crisis has hit hard all sectors of the economy by now but some of the labour market sectors that had been suffering already in 2008-2009 from recession are typical sectors of migrant employment such as construction.

The ways in which the crisis affects migrants and their families and the strategies that migrant workers adopt to face this difficult period are closely related to how migration has been integrated into the Greek social and economic system. Since Greece has not so far developed a credible policy for managing legal migration inflows, most immigrants in Greece have arrived undocumented, found employment in the informal labour market and later regularised through an amnesty programme. Still to this day the only category of migrant workers that arrive legally in Greece are seasonal agricultural workers. And even in this case these permits are sometimes abused as workers are employed in other regions and in other sectors (see for more Maroukis and Gemi 2011)

The legal stay status of migrants and their families in Greece is particularly precarious as for the first 10 years of their stay they have continuously (every 1 or 2 years – when they renew their stay permit) to prove that they are employed, and have been insured. This is a condition that is becoming increasingly difficult to fulfil because jobs available in sectors such as construction, transport, catering or tourism are more often than previously without a proper contract, highly unstable and without welfare payments. The dramatic decrease in the number of valid stay permits documented in the tables above testifies to this problem.

The arrival in power of the Socialist government in October 2009 has marked an important shift in migration management and migrant integration/citizenship policies. A new law was voted in March 2010 which has significantly facilitated the naturalisation of first and second generation immigrants and has introduced local and regional political rights for third country nationals who live in Greece for 5 years or more. This law has represented a breakthrough in the Greek migrant policy. Approximately 12,000 non EU citizens have participated in the local elections of November 2010, the first local/regional elections to be held after this law entered into force.

In addition law 3852/3010 (the so-called Kallikratis law) which concerns the re-organisation of local and regional government has introduced the Councils for Migrant Integration at the municipal level. These councils are composed by members of the municipal council and social stakeholders including migrants themselves. They have a

consultative character advising the mayor about issues of concern to the local migrant population.

Law 4018/2011 has facilitated the acquisition of the EU long term resident status as it provides that immigrants can prove their knowledge of Greek language and history by sitting a test without having to have attended a specific state-run course as law 3386/2005 foresaw. This facilitation is important not only for the enhanced status of protection that the long term resident status entails but also because having the EU long term resident status is a prerequisite for applying for naturalisation under the provisions of the 3838/2010 law on citizenship.

A new law (law 3907/2011 voted on 26 January 2011) has also brought much needed changes in the Greek migration policy as regards the management of irregular migration and the creation of a new asylum system. In particular it creates centres of first reception to deal with newly arrived irregular migrants. It also creates new decentralised asylum offices. The implementation of these two measures however has not yet started at the time of writing (November 2011). Relevant directors at the Ministry of Interior note that they cannot proceed with their work because it is impossible to hire or indeed transfer from other services the relevant staff (let alone have staff that is appropriately qualified) and the process of committing any of the available funds (in their large extent EU funds) is particularly cumbersome because of the current situation in Greece. They hope that the first offices will open their doors in early 2012, at best.

This law also foresees the issuing of a stay permit for exceptional reasons, i.e. when an irregular migrant can prove to have lived in Greece for the 12 years in the past and in any case for the 10 years preceding the relevant application and also can be shown to have special bonds with the country (having studied in a Greek school, being a family member of a Greek citizen, speaking the Greek language, having held a legal stay permit for a number of years). This is a very important measure that aims at protecting specific aliens who have lived in Greece for a long period of time and who may have fallen to illegal status because of unemployment or other bureaucratic problems (see SOPEMI report 2010 for a more detailed explanation of these problems) but who have strong links with the country.

## 1. Introduction

Throughout the last 2 years Greece has been experiencing the most acute economic crisis in the post World War II period. While Greece appeared not to have been hit particularly hard by the global economic recession that started in 2008, the effects of the recession and the internal acute crisis of public finances became visible in late 2009. The Greek crisis is related more to structural problems of the Greek economy (low productivity, low competitiveness), the segmentation of the Greek labour market and a public debt that has skyrocketed during the last years, than to the global economic recession. Obviously however a negative economic environment in Europe and the world does not help resolve the Greek crisis and reverse the downward trend of Greek growth rates registered in the last two years.

The drastic austerity measures adopted by the Greek government since spring 2010 and already in three consecutive phases were to a large extent imposed on Greece by the European Union and the International Monetary Fund with a view to correcting its budget deficits and making the economy more competitive. They have included horizontal cuts in the salaries of public employees (which have now reached 30%), increases in both direct and indirect taxes (including one-off emergency taxes imposed in October and November 2011), significant cuts in public expenses including for instance the abolition of certain semi-public bodies and agencies and the reduction of certain types of welfare allowances. In parallel the government has introduced important changes in the national welfare and pension system, increasing the age of retirement and abolishing a large number of exceptions to the general regime, including those aimed at mothers with children who previously could retire much earlier. Structural changes such as the liberalisation of all the closed professions (transport, lawyers, chemists, butchers, notaries, auditors) and of the energy market or the simplification of business permits and business rules have not taken place yet, largely because of the fierce opposition by relevant trade unions. By contrast labour market rules have been liberalised, both in the public and in the private sector (some of the latest measures being the abolition of collective sectoral agreements and the reduction of lowest salary level).

The crisis and the measures taken to reduce the public debt and re-organise the state finances have had both a material and a psychological effect on the Greek market. Consumption has decreased dramatically hitting hard the retail and overall trade sector as well as leisure services such as catering. Tourism by contrast has been doing fairly well (largely because of the Arab spring repercussions on the tourism sector in North Africa) with a 20% rise in tourist arrivals and overall turnover in the summer of 2011 compared with the summer of 2010. The fall in consumption is due both to the lower income of households on average and to the psychological effect of the crisis: any investment, purchase of durable goods or other expenditure that is not strictly necessary is postponed to the future, when the economic situation of the country will stabilise. The banking sector has also been suffering a crisis period not least because of its holding a relatively large number of 'toxic' Greek state bonds. Thus banks have become extremely careful in giving loans to customers by fear that they will fail to repay them. Indeed the latest measures agreed between the Greek government and the Eurozone partners on 26 October 2011 include specific measures for the recapitalisation of Greek (and foreign)

banks because of the losses they will suffer after the so-called 'haircut' of Greek state bonds.

The crisis has led to an increase in unemployment rates. Greece registered 18.2 % average unemployment rate<sup>1</sup> in July 2010, up 6 percentage points from 12.2% in August 2010. Youth unemployment rate in August 2011 (people under 25 years of age) was 43.5% (second highest in the entire EU, after Spain). Unemployment among people between 25 and 34 years old was also higher than average at 24.9%. Women suffered more from unemployment (22.3%) than men (15.5%). The crisis has hit hard all sectors of the economy by now but some of the labour market sectors that had been suffering already in 2008-2009 from recession are typical sectors of migrant employment such as construction. The estate market is in crisis and constructors are not developing new housing projects. At the same time public works have been stopped or reduced in size, some have been postponed for the future.

Since Greece has not so far developed a credible policy for managing legal migration inflows, most immigrants in Greece have arrived undocumented, found employment in the informal labour market and later regularised through an amnesty programme. Still to this day the only category of migrant workers that arrive legally in Greece are seasonal agricultural workers. And even in this case these permits are sometimes abused as workers are employed in other regions and in other sectors (see for more Maroukis and Gemi 2011)

The impact of the crisis on migrant workers is multi-faceted and largely intertwined with the systemic features of migration in Greece. The legal stay status of migrants and their families in Greece is particularly precarious as for the first 10 years of their stay they have continuously (every 1 or 2 years – when they renew their stay permit) to prove that they are employed, and have been insured. This is a condition that is becoming increasingly difficult to fulfil because jobs available in sectors such as construction, transport, catering or tourism are more often than previously without a proper contract, highly unstable and without welfare payments. This of course risks becoming a vicious circle because if a migration cannot renew her/his stay permit they fall back into illegality and are then unable to get a legal job.

A recent study (Maroukis and Gemi 2011) and journalistic reports<sup>2</sup> suggest that some Albanian men are returning to Albania in search of better employment prospects there or in the effort to let the financial storm pass and return when job prospects are better. Some of the families stay in Greece, with women employed in the informal care and cleaning sector, while in other cases the entire family returns to Albania while the husband/father periodically returns to Greece for temporary employment in agriculture, tourism or construction

Regarding irregular migration, apprehensions at the Greek Turkish borders have decreased in 2011 (approximately 80,000 apprehensions for the first 10 months of 2011 compared to 102,000 in the first ten months of 2010). The Evros river area on the

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<sup>1</sup> Greek Statistics, Press release published on 10 November 2011, see [http://www.statistics.gr/portal/page/portal/ESYE/BUCKET/A0101/PressReleases/A0101\\_SJO02\\_DT\\_MM\\_08\\_2011\\_01\\_F\\_GR.pdf](http://www.statistics.gr/portal/page/portal/ESYE/BUCKET/A0101/PressReleases/A0101_SJO02_DT_MM_08_2011_01_F_GR.pdf) . last accessed on 14 Nov 2011.

<sup>2</sup> Reuters press agency, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2010/06/01/us-albania-greece-migrants-idUSTRE6503WB20100601>, also Kathimerini 25 July 2010, available at: [http://news.kathimerini.gr/4dcgi/w\\_articles\\_ell\\_1\\_25/07/2010\\_409263](http://news.kathimerini.gr/4dcgi/w_articles_ell_1_25/07/2010_409263)

northeastern part of the Greek Turkish land border remains however heavily trafficked, while the crossing from the Izmir coasts to the Greek islands in the Aegean, has been to almost abandoned by migrant smuggling networks.

The arrival in power of the Socialist government in October 2009, however, has marked an important shift in migrant integration and citizenship policies. A new law was voted in March 2010 which has significantly facilitated the naturalisation of first and second generation immigrants and has introduced local and regional political rights for third country nationals who live in Greece for 5 years or more. This law has represented a breakthrough in the Greek migrant policy. Approximately 12,000 non EU citizens have participated in the local elections of November 2010, the first local/regional elections to be held after this law entered into force.

In addition law 3852/3010 (the so-called Kallikratis law) which concerns the re-organisation of local and regional government has introduced the creation of Councils for the Integration of Migrants at the municipal level. These councils are composed by members of the municipal council and social stakeholders including migrants themselves. They have a consultative character advising the mayor about issues of concern to the local migrant population.

Law 4018/2011 has facilitated the acquisition of the EU long term resident status as it provides that immigrants can prove their knowledge of Greek language and history by sitting a test without having to have attended a specific state-run course as law 3386/2005 foresaw. This facilitation is important not only for the enhanced status of protection that the long term resident status entails but also because having the EU long term resident status is a prerequisite for applying for naturalisation under the provisions of the 3838/2010 law on citizenship.

A new law (law 3907/2011 voted on 26 January 2011) has also brought much needed changes in the management of irregular migration and has created a new asylum system. In particular it creates centres of first reception to deal with newly arrived irregular migrants. It also creates new decentralised asylum offices. The implementation of these two measures however has not yet started at the time of writing (November 2011). Relevant directors at the Ministry of Interior note that they cannot proceed with their work because it is impossible to hire or indeed transfer from other services the relevant staff (let alone have staff that is appropriately qualified) and the process of committing any of the available funds (in their large extent EU funds) is particularly cumbersome because of the current situation in Greece. They hope that the first offices will open their doors in early 2012, at best.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Personal communications at the first formal meeting of the Working Group on Migration Policy, attached to the Prime Minister George Papandreou, 31 October 2011, the author is the vice-chairperson of this Working Group.



report 2010 for a more detailed explanation of these problems) but who have strong links with the country.

It is in this social and economic context that this paper seeks to present the size and main features of the immigrant population in Greece, discuss their insertion into the Greek labour market and also critically review previous and most recent developments in migration management and migrant integration policies. The report is divided into 3 main sections. Section 2 below presents an overview of the migrant stock in Greece and their socio-demographic features. Section 3 reviews their labour market insertion. Section 4 critically reviews recent developments in migration policy in Greece.

## 2. Immigration in Greece

### 2.1 The Size of the Immigrant Population

The main source of data on legally staying immigrants in Greece is the stay permit database of the Ministry for the Protection of the Citizen (former Ministry of Interior). Table 2.1.1 and Graph 2.1.1 below present the legal migrant stock in Greece from January 2004 till December 2011 (estimate), excluding seasonal migrant workers.

The highest number of legal migrants present in Greece was registered in January 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 2010 (553,916 on 1 December 2010) while it is expected that on 1 December 2011 the number of valid stay permits will be more than 100,000 less, i.e. 447,658.

**Table 2.1.1: Estimate of legal migrant stock, Greece, 2004-2011 (excluding seasonal permits)**

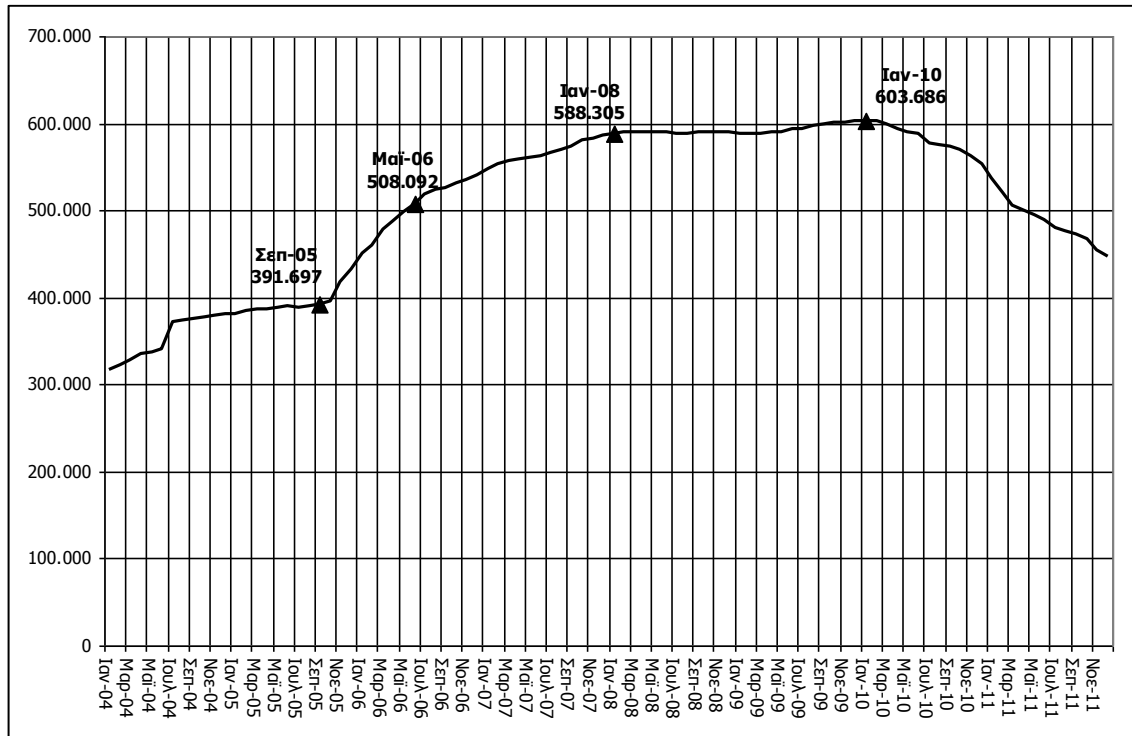
Year	Number of valid stay permits
01/12/2004	380,692
01/12/2005	432,030
01/12/2006	540,839
01/12/2007	585,585
01/12/2008	589,796
01/12/2009	602,797
01/12/2010	553,916
01/12/2011	447,658

Source: Database of valid stay permits. Ministry of Interior.

It is most likely that the decrease in the number of valid stay permits is related to the current economic crisis that Greece is facing. It should also be noted that this decrease does not necessarily always mean that these migrants and their families have left Greece. Some of them may still be in the country but having lost their legal status because of the

impossibility to satisfy the employment and welfare payment requirements foreseen by law.

**Graph 2.1.1: Legal migrant stock, Greece, 2004-2011**



Source: Ministry of Interior, Secretariat for Population and Social Cohesion. The data presented here exclude seasonal migrants and co-ethnic migrants/returnees.

In estimating the total number of immigrants in Greece, we may also take into consideration two groups of co-ethnics. The first group are Greek co-ethnics who are Albanian citizens (also known in Greece as *Voreioepiotes*). They hold Special Identity Cards for *Omogeneis* (co-ethnics) (EDTO) issued by the Greek police and have the same socio-economic rights as Greek citizens. EDTO holders are not included in the database of the Interior Ministry.

The second group of co-ethnics are ‘returnees’ from the former Soviet Republics, generally referred to as *Pontic Greeks* who arrived in Greece in the late 1980s and early 1990s as economic migrants. They are officially considered as ‘returnees’ to the ‘motherland’ even though they or their ancestors had never lived within the boundaries of the modern Greek state. According to the special census administered by the General Secretariat for Repatriated Co-Ethnics in the year 2000, 155,319 Pontic Greeks had settled in the country. More than half of them (about 80,000) came from Georgia, 31,000 came from Kazakhstan, 23,000 from Russia, and about 9,000 from Armenia (General Secretariat of Repatriated Co-Ethnics, 2000). While Pontic Greeks have naturalised upon arrival through a preferential channel (see Christopoulos 2006) they may be considered as

immigrants both in the technical sense (they moved to Greece during the 1980s and 1990s) and in the sociological sense (they face important problems of exclusion from the labour market and of social and political marginalisation).

**Table 2.1.2 Estimate of total immigrant Stock in Greece, on 1 December 2011**

	<b>Size of immigrant stock</b>	<b>% of total resident population</b>	<b>Source of data</b>
<b>Total immigrant stock</b>	447,658	3.96%	stay permits valid on 1 Dec 2011, Ministry of Interior database
<b>Co ethnics from Albania</b>	197,814	1.75%	Data from Ministry of Interior, for 31st Dec. 2009
<b>Coethnics from the Soviet Union</b>	154,000	1.36%	Secretariat of Greeks abroad, Special Census, 2000
<b>Irregular immigrants (estimate)</b>	440,000	3.89%	Maroukis, Triandafyllidou and Lyberaki, 2011
<b>Total immigrant and co ethnics stock</b>	1,239,472	10.96%	
<b>Total without co-ethnics</b>	887,658	7.85%	
<b>Total population of Greece</b>	11,305,000	100%	Eurostat estimate for 2011, <a href="http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_PUBLIC/3-08062011-BP/EN/3-08062011-BP-EN.PDF">http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_PUBLIC/3-08062011-BP/EN/3-08062011-BP-EN.PDF</a>

Source: Author's own compilation.

The total immigrant population in Greece is approximately 11%, however if we exclude from this population all co ethnic immigrants and returnees, it corresponds to approximately 8% of the total resident population of Greece at the end of 2011. About 3.9% of the total resident population or approximately half of the total non-ethnic Greek immigrant population is estimated to be undocumented. These are either people who have never had a stay permit or who had legal status but did not manage to renew their permits. This estimate is based on the

Regarding the irregular migrant population the evolution of presumed inflows of irregular migrants (as registered through apprehensions at border areas) has taken a new turn in 2011 (see table 2.1.3). Apprehensions at the Greek Albanian border have dramatically decreased by nearly 75%, apprehensions at the Greek Turkish sea border by more than 90%, apprehensions at the island of Crete (southern corner of Greece opposite

to Egypt) by 40% and apprehensions within the country by 50%. At the same time, apprehensions at the Greek Turkish land border appear to remain at similar levels as in 2010.

**Table 2.1.3 Apprehensions of irregular migrants, per border, 2007-2011**

<b>Apprehensions</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011*</b>
Greek Albanian border	42,897	39,267	38,164	33,979	8,855
Greek FYROM border	2,887	3,459	2,355	1,589	714
Greek Bulgarian border	966	1,795	1,258	983	570
Greek Turkish land border	16,789	14,461	8,787	47,088	45,170
Greek Turkish sea border	16,781	30,149	27,685	6,204	625
Crete	2,245	2,961	2,859	2,444	1,445
Rest of the country	29,799	54,245	45,037	40,237	23,461
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>112,364</b>	<b>146,337</b>	<b>126,145</b>	<b>132,524</b>	<b>80,840</b>

Note: data refer to apprehensions, not to people. Hence the same person if apprehended twice counts twice.

\* Data for 2011 refer to the first 10 months.

Source: Greek police data, [www.astynomia.gr](http://www.astynomia.gr)

While migrants apprehended at the Greek Albanian border are usually returned to Albania, thanks to the protocol of cooperation signed between Greece and Albania and the good cooperation of the two countries on this issue, people apprehended at the Greek Turkish borders are seldom sent back to their countries of origin or to Turkey. Since Turkey does not practically implement the Protocol. During the period 2002-2010 out of 5,039 requests made by Greek authorities concerning 78,711 cases, 9,320 cases were accepted by the Turkish authorities but only 2,695 people were effectively readmitted in Turkey, (see table 2.1.4 below).

**Table 2.1.4 Greek Requests for Readmission Towards Turkey (2002-2010)**

<b>YEAR</b>	<b>Requests for Readmission</b>	<b>Number of Irregular Migrants</b>	<b>Accepted for Readmission</b>	<b>Re-admitted</b>
2002	510	8,470	926	745
2003	528	5,380	1,002	374
2004	451	4,026	256	119
2005	174	2,087	330	152
2006	239	2,251	456	127
2007	491	7,728	1,452	423
2008	1,527	26,516	3,020	230
2009	879	16,123	974	283
2010	240	6,130	904	242
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>5,039</b>	<b>78,711</b>	<b>9,320</b>	<b>2,695</b>

Source: Ministry of Maritime Affairs (2010).

Regarding the main nationalities of apprehended irregular migrants, it is interesting to compare the data for the last three years (2009-2011) (see tables 2.1.5).

**Table 2.1.5 Apprehensions of irregular migrants in Greece (at the borders and within the country). Five main nationality groups  
2009**

<b>Nationality</b>	<b>Apprehensions</b>
Albania	63,563
Afghanistan	17,828
Palestine	10,763
Somalia	7,710
Iraq	7,662

**2010**

<b>Nationality</b>	<b>Apprehensions</b>
Albania	50,175
Afghanistan	28,299
Pakistan	8,830
Palestine	7,561
Algeria	7,336

**2011, January-June**

<b>Nationality</b>	<b>Apprehensions</b>
Afghanistan	8,154
Pakistan	5,583
Albania	4,978
Bangladesh	2,126

Algeria	2,006
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Source: Ministry for the Protection of the Citizen, [www.astynomia.gr](http://www.astynomia.gr) for all years cited here.

While Albanian citizens were by far the largest group of people apprehended for irregular entry or stay in the Greek territory throughout the years (see also SOPEMI report 2010), in 2011 for the first time we note an inversion of this trend. The dramatic decrease of apprehensions of Albanian immigrants may be explained by three concomitant factors. First, after waiving the requirement for tourism visas for Albanian citizens for visits in the Schengen area of up to 3 months in December 2010, there is much less scope in apprehending Albanian migrants staying without appropriate status in Greece. In other words, the police would have to prove that the migrant has stayed in Greece for longer than 3 months and is not in possession of appropriate travel documents. Second, the current economic crisis has probably prompted (See also Maroukis and Gemi 2011) many migrants who had lost already their legal status (or who had never had a legal stay permit, because they had entered the country after 31 December 2004, date of the last massive regularisation programme), to go back to Albania rather than endure the stress of being undocumented while their job prospects have also become rather bleak. Third, it is likely that less Albanian citizens seek work in Greece without appropriate stay permits again because of the economic crisis and especially the crisis in the construction sector.

The 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 during the last five years. In fall 2007, the Greek border guard employed 200 new officers in the Aegean sea. In addition FRONTEX has been operating in Greece since 2006 albeit with increasing intensity in the last couple of years. The joint operation POSEIDON has become now the largest FRONTEX operation in the Mediterranean and includes the first time ever deployment of FRONTEX's RABIT (Rapid Border Intervention Teams, 175 officers were sent to the Greek Turkish land border in late October and November 2010 and will stay there until March 2011), Project Attica which operates in the area of voluntary returns, and 6 long term stationed focal points.

It can be assumed that most of the migrants that are apprehended at the Greek Turkish border are released after a few days or weeks with an expulsion order at hand, asking them to leave the country within 30 days. Most migrants go then to Athens seeking to find their co-ethnic networks or their smugglers' contact people with a view either to finding a job and accommodation in Athens (including applying for asylum, especially people coming from war-torn countries like Afghanistan, Somalia, Iraq, Palestine) or with a view to leaving for Italy and then some other EU country (see also Triandafyllidou and Maroukis 2012).

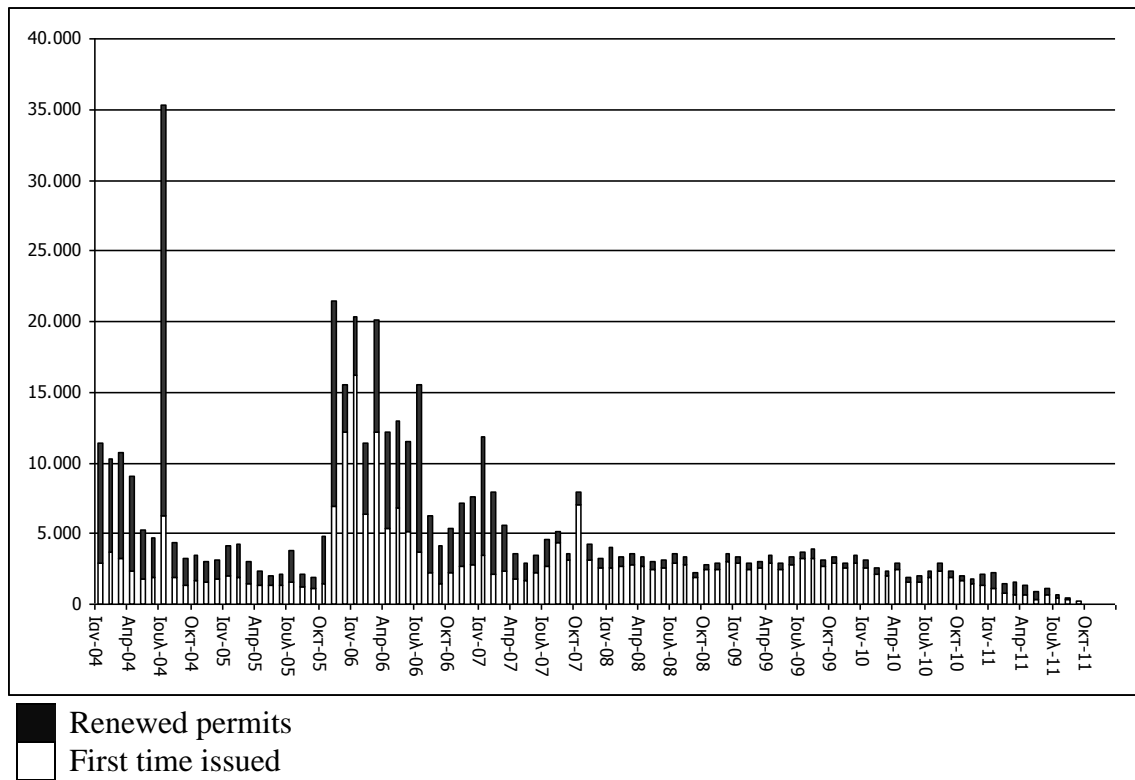
Regarding measures taken to reduce the irregular migrant population and to implement expulsion, Dimitriadi and Triandafyllidou (2009) show that apprehension and deportation is the regular practice for irregular migrants and efforts to establish voluntary return as a viable option for irregular migrants have been almost non-existent so far.

Police data concerning 2009<sup>4</sup> show that while 70% of the Albanian citizens apprehended by the Greek authorities are effectively expelled from the country, the relative rate of expulsions executed towards African and Asian countries range between 1.62 (average for African countries) and 2.74% (average of Asian countries). These data confirm the view that irregular migrants apprehended at the Greek Turkish borders in particular usually stay in the country undocumented despite having received an expulsion order.

## 2.2 Inflows and Outflows of legal migrants

While in Greece there are no data kept regarding effective inflows and outflows of immigrants, the Secretariat General for Population and Social Cohesion (Ministry of Interior) has for the first time elaborated the relevant data from its stay permit database, in preparation of the National Report on Migrant Integration for 2011. The analysis presented here is based on the findings of this last report.

**Graph 2.2.1: Stay permits renewed and first time issued, Greece, 2004-2011, per month**



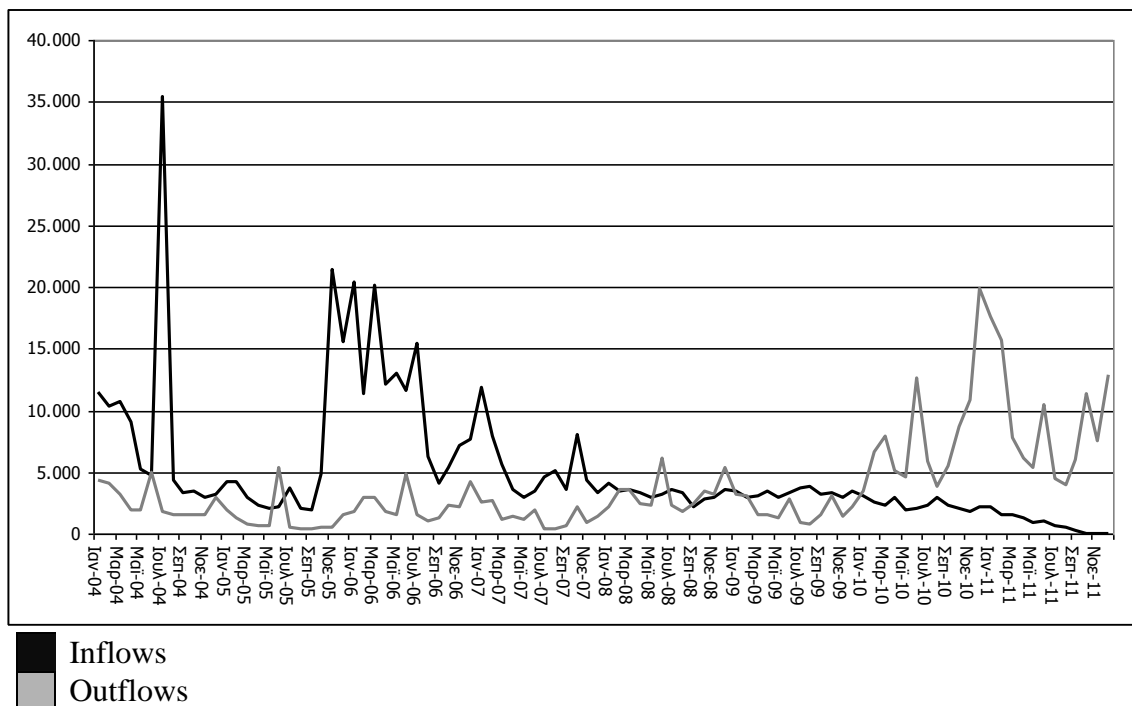
Source: National Report on Migrant Integration, Graph 2, page 31, prepared by the Ministry of Interior, Secretariat General for Population and Social Cohesion, draft version, October 2011.

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.astynomia.gr/images/stories/STATS/011009meta16.pdf>

Graph 2.2.1 above shows the number of stay permits renewed that the highest number of renewed permits was registered in July 2004 (35,554) while in October 2011 there were hardly any renewals. Concerning permits issued for the first time these are clearly linked to the regularisation programme that was introduced by law 3386/2005 and were highest (16,153) in January 2006 (when the new law entered into force). Naturally new permits can be issued for family reunification purposes (second most important reason after employment). However it is again noteworthy that new permits issued in October 2011 are almost zero.

Assuming that non renewed stay permits signal an outflow of immigrants from Greece, the national report on migrant integration (unpublished draft version, October 2011) presents the following graph:

**Graph 2.2.2 Inflows and Outflows of immigrants, Greece, 2004-2011**



Source: National Report on Migrant Integration, Graph 3, page 31, prepared by the Ministry of Interior, Secretariat General for Population and Social Cohesion, draft version, October 2011.

## 2.2 National Composition 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. It is worth noting though that it is likely that Bulgarians and Romanians are three or four times as many as they appear in the table below because they either do not know that they should register even if they are EU citizens or, due to mistrust towards Greek authorities, they do not wish to register (see also Nikolova 2011, Lazarescu 2011).



**Table 2.2.1 National Composition of the Migration Stock in 2010**

Country of Origin	Labour Force Survey 4th Tri. 2010		Third Country Nationals (TCN) Valid Permits December 2010	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Albania	485,004	59.87%	390,890	68.90%
Bulgaria	48,372	5.97%		
Georgia	32,755	4.04%	16,550	2.92%
Romania	33,347	4.12%		
Pakistan	21,211	2.62%	16,312	2.88%
Russia	14,067	1.74%	13,299	2.34%
Ukraine	12,246	1.51%	20,443	3.60%
Bangladesh	14,577	1.80%	5,719	1.01%
Syria	6,481	0.80%	7,378	1.30%
Armenia	6,721	0.83%	5,976	1.05%
Cyprus	9,933	1.23%		
Poland	10,166	1.25%		
Egypt	9,526	1.18%	13,735	2.42%
Iraq	6,657	0.82%	994	0.18%
India	7,964	0.98%	13,112	2.31%
UK	7,297	0.90%		
Germany	9,605	1.19%		
Moldova	5,429	0.67%	11,591	2.04%
Netherlands	3,227	0.40%		
Philippines	5,054	0.62%	9,389	1.65%
OTHER	60,414	7.46%	41,967	7.40%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>810,052</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>567,355</b>	<b>100%</b>

Sources: Author's own compilation on the basis of data from the National Statistical Service of Greece, Labour Force Survey 4<sup>th</sup> trimester 2010, and Ministry of Interior, Valid Stay Permits on 31 December 2010.

### 2.3 National composition of asylum-seekers

Regarding asylum applicants (asylum applicants are not included in the stay permits database of the Ministry for the Protection of the Citizen) the main nationalities are different from those of immigrants. In both 2009 and 2010 Pakistan is heading the list, followed by Georgia and Bangladesh. Asylum seekers from Afghanistan have decreased in 2010. Both Pakistan and Georgia are among the top 5 nationalities in terms of immigrant stock too. The overall number of asylum applications is low compared to the overall migrant population of Greece.

**Table 2.3.1: Asylum applications (first instance) per nationality, 2009-2010**

<b>Nationalities</b>	<b>Asylum Applications 2009</b>	<b>Asylum Applications 2010 (Jan-Oct)</b>
Pakistan	3716	1499
Georgia	2170	783
Bangladesh	1809	704
Afghanistan	1510	363
Syrian Arab Republic	965	121
Iraq	886	254
Nigeria	780	244
Albania	517	533
China	391	280
Senegal	336	282
Other	13885	1513
<b>Total</b>	<b>17937</b>	<b>6576</b>

Source: Author's own compilation based on data available from the UNHCR (<http://www.unhcr.org/statistics>) (for 2009) and from the Ministry for the Protection of the Citizen (2010).

## 2.4 Gender and Age

Based on data from the Labour Force Survey conducted by the National Statistical Service in the 4<sup>th</sup> trimester of 2010, while Greece's total population and that of Greek nationals appears to be gender balanced (49% men/51% women) and to some extent so does the population of third country nationals (53% men/47% women) the population of EU citizens shows great signs of gender imbalance (36% men/64% women). A possible explanation for this is the higher level of EU women marrying Greek men rather than the opposite.

It is worth noting, however, that there is a gender imbalance with regard to specific nationalities. For example, in the 2001 national census 96% of the Pakistani, 94% of the Bangladeshi, and 92% of the Indian immigrants were men. On the other hand 76% of the Filipino and 60% of the Bulgarian migrants were women. This imbalance still holds today (see table 2.4.1 below). Thus while the Albanian community is roughly gender balanced with slightly more men than women; the Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities are predominantly male (92% and 85% respectively) while for instance Filipinos are mainly women (nearly 80% of all Filipinos living in Greece). Similarly Bulgarians who reside in Greece are still predominantly women (62%) and so are Georgians (66%). These gender patterns represent also different migration projects of the people involved (see for a more detailed discussion Triandafyllidou and Maroukis, 2010).

**Table 2.4.1 Gender distribution of immigrant population for selected nationalities, 2010**

	Men #	Men %	Women #	Women %	Both
Albanian	257,653	53	227,350	47	485004
Bulgarian	14,960	31	33,411	69	48372
Romanian	10,540	32	22,215	68	32755
Georgian	13,566	41	19,781	59	33347
Pakistani	18,974	89	2,237	11	21211
Bangladeshi	14,042	96	535	4	14577
Filipino	2,125	42	2,929	58	5054
Total	409,133	50.50	400,919	49.50	810,052

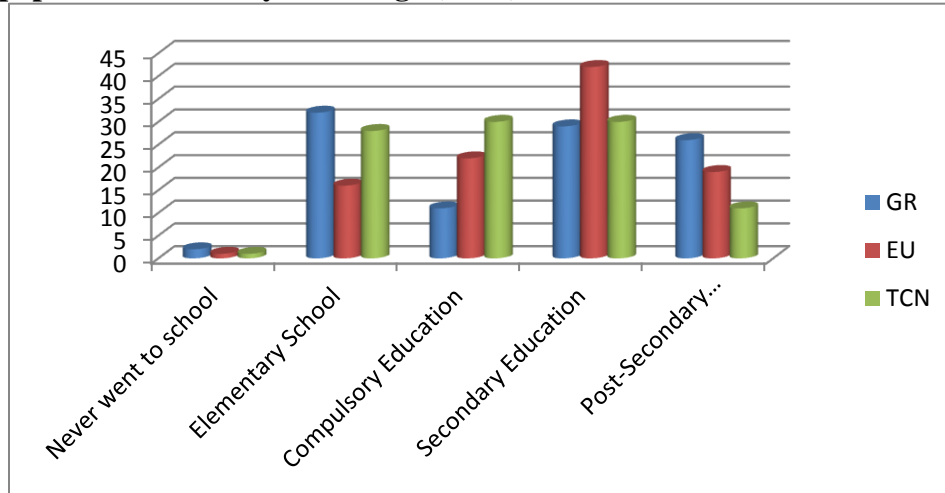
Source: Author's own compilation based on Labour Force Survey data, 4<sup>th</sup> trimester 2010.

It does not come as a surprise that, according to the Labour Force Survey Data for 2010, most migrants who live and work in Greece are part of the most productive age groups. About half of the foreigner population of Greece belongs to the 25-44 age bracket. Children under 15 years of age correspond to 22 % of third country nationals' population (almost 1 out of every 4 immigrants is a child and more than one in three is a young person – under 25 years of age). By contrast, people who are 55 years or older account for 6% of the third country nationals' population, while the corresponding percentage for EU citizens is 16%. The age distribution pattern of the immigrant population is clearly different from that of native Greeks where people between 25 and 44 years of age account for less than one third (28%) of the total and people who are 55 or over account for over 30%. The immigrant population thus contributes to mitigating the demographic problem of Greek society.

## 2.5 Educational Level

The educational level of immigrants varies mostly according to their nationality. Generally, the educational level of Asian immigrants is lower than the average of the total foreign population and they face great difficulties in learning Greek. As a result, the place reserved for them in the labour market is that of low payment and low specialization employment (Tonchev, 2007). Albanian immigrants, on the other hand, have a relatively high educational level and the majority speaks good or fluent Greek. However, there is a considerable mismatch between their educational level and the type of work they perform (Lyberaki and Maroukis, 2004). The cases of Bulgarian immigrants and repatriated Greeks from the former Soviet Union are also similar to that of the Albanians; there is a gap between their skills and their employment status. It is worth noting that Pontic Greeks have, on average, a higher level of education than Greek natives (Marouf, 2006) (See also figure 2.5.1 and table 2.5.1 below).

**Figure 2.1.5: Last completed education level of the native, TCN and EU citizen population over 15 years of age (in %)**



Source: Author's own compilation on the basis of data from the National Statistical Service of Greece, Labour Force Survey, 4<sup>th</sup> Trimester 2010, available from [www.statistics.gr](http://www.statistics.gr)

**Table 2.1.5: Last completed education level of the native, TCN and EU citizen population over 15 years of age, 2005-2010**

Last completed education level in percentages					
	Never went to school	Elementary School	Compulsory Education	Secondary Education	Post-Secondary and Higher
<b>2009</b>					
Greek	5,50	23,99	10,12	24,96	21,46
EU	1,57	10,22	16,91	42,21	19,20
TCN	1,62	20,24	23,31	21,74	10,08
<b>2008</b>					
Greek	5,34	24,09	9,99	25,44	21,21
EU	0,57	10,28	15,76	39,60	22,77
TCN	1,08	19,52	25,64	22,02	10,11
<b>2007</b>					
Greek	2,14	28,05	10,29	25,03	19,20
EU	0,40	9,06	16,86	45,18	10,08
TCN	0,54	18,50	23,49	24,80	21,21
<b>2006</b>					
Greek	2,20	28,73	10,30	25,03	22,77
EU	0,69	10,46	8,76	46,04	10,11
TCN	0,93	17,65	21,83	26,69	19,20
<b>2005</b>					
Greek	2,437	29,313	10,279	24,669	19,027
EU	0,508	8,288	8,788	49,746	26,187
TCN	0,735	18,102	22,167	27,293	11,180

Source: Author's own compilation, based on data from the National Statistical Service of Greece (ESYE), Labour Force Survey, 4th trimester of each year, available from [www.statistics.gr](http://www.statistics.gr)

### **3. Immigrant Insertion in the Greek Labour Market**

Greece's unemployment rate has fluctuated during the last decade. Starting from a relatively high rate in 2000 (of about 11%) it went down to 8.3% in 2007 but climbed to approx. 12% in August 2010 while in August 2011 it reached an alarming 18.2%, as a result of the acute economic crisis that the country is going through. There is a marked imbalance in the unemployment rates of the two genders however. The female rate of unemployment in the period 2005-2008 has been consistently higher than the unemployment rate of men by 7-9 percentage points. It was only in the period 2009-2010 that this difference was reduced to 5% approximately. Still in August 2011 the male unemployment rate was 15.5% while that of women approx. 22 % (i.e. again female unemployment was 7 percentage points higher than male unemployment).

Unemployment rates for people under 24 years of age are consistently over 20% in the period 2005-2010 and have reached 43% in August 2011, while the unemployment rate for the 25-34 age bracket is consistently above 10% and has reached a peak of 25% approximately in August 2011. Furthermore if we combine the gender and age data tables, we see that unemployment rates for young women skyrocket – the gap between male and female unemployment is actually valid in all age brackets.

Regarding the employment and unemployment rates of third country nationals, Greece until last year (2010) presented a typical southern European pattern: relatively high levels of unemployment (approx. 10%) co existed with large numbers of foreign workers. For instance according to the LFS data for the last quarter of 2009 there were about 430,000 foreigners formally employed in Greece (while there were also more than 600,000 registered unemployed, both Greek and foreigner).

The pattern had a relatively simple explanation, rather common among southern European countries: the Greek labour market was characterised by high segmentation with special employment niches occupied by migrant workers. The native population's living standards had increased in recent decades and there was widespread participation in tertiary and higher education. Thus, young Greeks preferred to wait for employment that conforms to their skills, while being financially supported by their families, rather than take up a low-prestige, low-skilled and low-paying job.

However the situation started changing since early 2009 and the change has become remarkable during 2011. Unemployment rates have gone 50% up compared to 2010 for natives but they have also climbed to dizzy heights for third country nationals. The table below shows that as of the first trimester of 2009 the unemployment rate of third country nationals has been higher than the average unemployment rate (and hence also the unemployment rate of Greek and EU citizens). In the first trimester of 2010 the unemployment rate for third country nationals reached nearly 20% while the average level for natives was approx. 16%. During the same period the percentage of the economically active population among TCNs has slightly increased (from 71.5% to 73.3% while that of Greeks has slightly declined (from 53.3% to 52%))

**Table 3.1 Unemployment rates, third country nationals, 2008-2011.**

	Unemployment rate TCNs	Unemployment rate (general)	Economically active TCNs (%)	Economically active Greeks (%)
2008	7,4%	8,3%	71,5%	53,3%
2009	10,7%	9,2%	72,1%	52,1%
2010	14,5%	11,4%	73,8%	52,4%
2011	19,8%	15,9%	73,3%	52,0%

Source: Author's own compilation, based on data from the Labour Force Survey, First trimester of each year, [www.statistics.gr](http://www.statistics.gr)

A closer look into the evolution of unemployment rates during the period between 2005 and 2010, distinguishing by gender and by category of legal status (citizens, EU citizens and third country nationals) shows that migrant men from other EU and from third countries had clearly lower unemployment rates than nationals until 2008. In 2008 they had about the same unemployment rate while in 2009-2010 the TCN unemployment grew by 50% each year while for natives and other EU citizens the increase was less dramatic.

**Table 3.2 Unemployment rates: Nationals, EU citizens and TCNs, 2005-2010**

<b>BOTH GENDERS</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>
Total	10	9	8	8	10	14
Nationals	10	9	8	8	10	14
EU Citizens	8	10	6	9	12	13
Third Country Nationals	8	8	7	7	12	18
<b>MEN</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>
Total	6	5	5	5	8	12
Nationals	6	6	5	5	7	11
EU Citizens	3	4	2	6	8	11
Third Country Nationals	4	4	4	5	11	17
<b>WOMEN</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>
Total	15	14	12	12	14	18

Nationals	15	13	12	12	14	18
EU Citizens	13	15	9	11	15	15
Third Country Nationals	13	14	13	11	13	19

Source: Author's own compilation on the basis of LFS survey data, 4<sup>th</sup> trimester of each year, 2005-2010.

In the case of non Greek women we observe that their unemployment rates are significantly higher than those of non Greek men (as it happens also with Greek women's unemployment that is much higher than that of Greek men). While in the case of women too the increase in 2010 is dramatic for third country nationals, the increase in the unemployment rate of EU women took place already in 2009 while there is no notable increase in 2010. In addition there was a decrease in the unemployment of non Greek women in 2007-2008 that is difficult to explain in relation to the economic crisis.

Based on data from the major national welfare fund insuring dependent employees (IKA, Social Insurance Institute) in June 2010 over 14% of those insured were foreign and the percentage was much higher in the construction sector where foreign workers accounted for almost 45% (See figure 3.2 below).

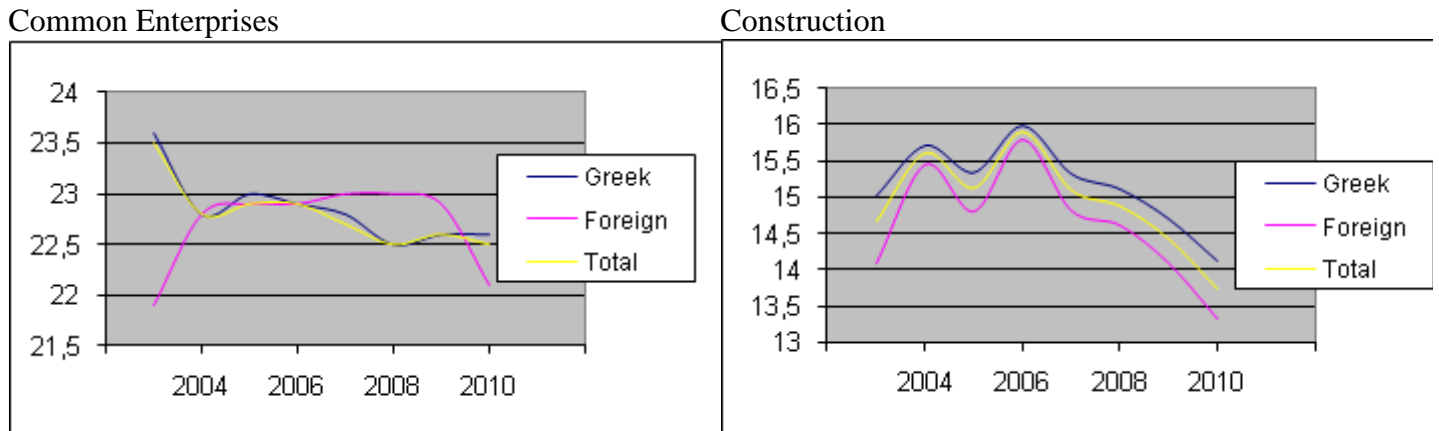
**Figure 3.2: Insured Workers by nationality in Percentages**



Source: Author's own compilation on the basis of data provided by the National Welfare Institute IKA, June 2003-2010, [www.ika.gr](http://www.ika.gr)

Apart from the increasing unemployment discussed above, the national welfare institute data show a decrease of working days per month for those employed which is more dramatic for foreign workers (see figure 3.3 below).

**Figure 3.3: Days of employment per month**

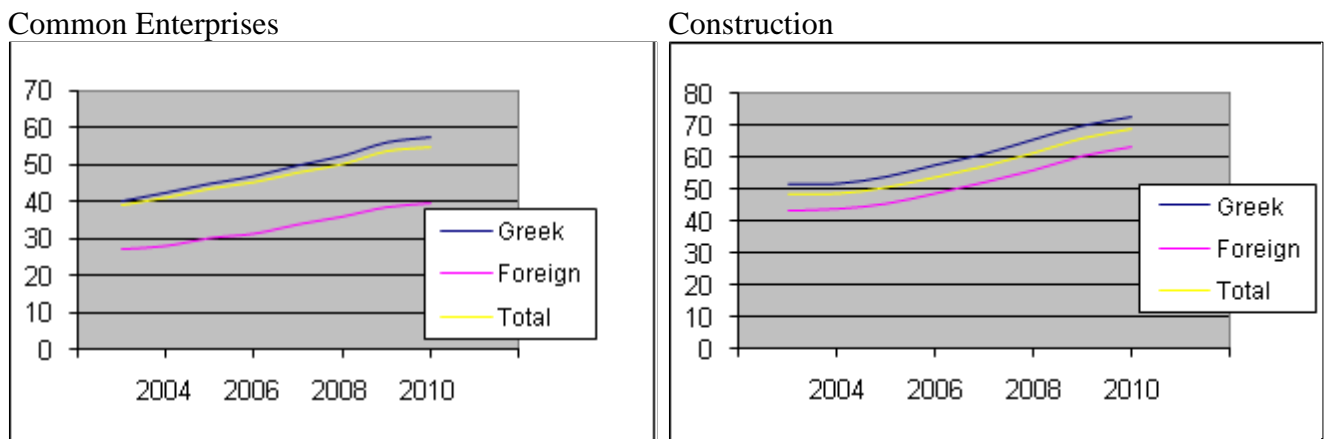


Source: Author’s own compilation on the basis of data provided by the National Welfare Institute IKA, June 2003-2010, [www.ika.gr](http://www.ika.gr)

Overall, the data obtained from IKA in 2010 on waged labourers show a significant inequality between the wages of different nationalities (See figure 3.4 below). Foreign workers receive wages that are between 30% and 50% lower than those of Greeks for general waged work and services. However, this inequality is significantly lower (between 6% and 15%) when it comes to the construction sector.

Wage inequality affects in similar ways citizens of larger immigrant groups who come from neighbouring countries, citizens of Eastern European countries and citizens of Asian countries with no previous cultural or historical ties to Greece (see graph 3.4 below). Thus, it appears that discrimination and inequality is structured along the axis of Greek/non-Greek rather than depending on the specific nationality of the worker. Naturally, this is a hypothesis that would need further testing to be corroborated.

**Figure 3.4: Daily Wages, TCNs and Greeks, 2003-2010**



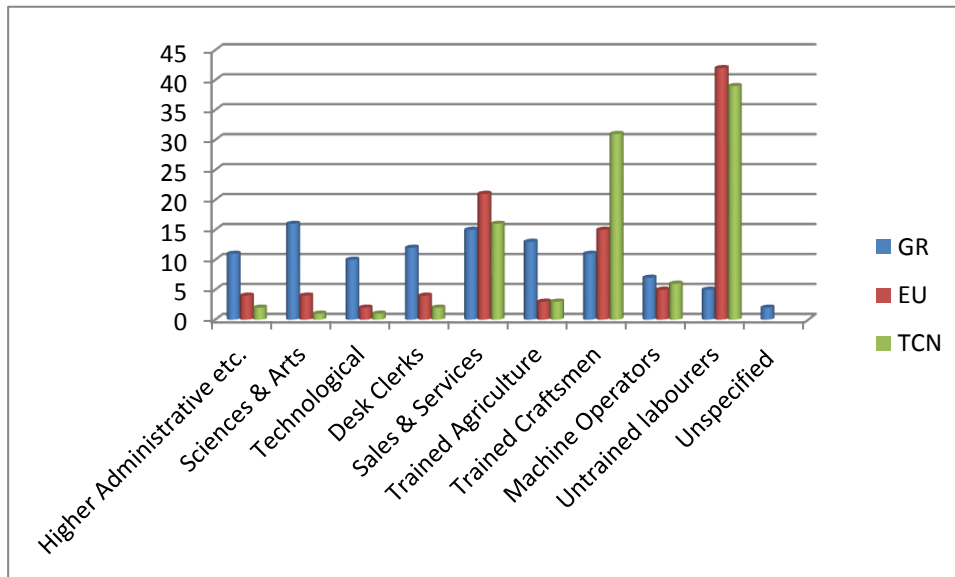
Source: Author’s own compilation on the basis of data provided by the National Welfare Institute IKA, June 2003-2010, [www.ika.gr](http://www.ika.gr)



The pattern of wage inequality suggests that in the ethnicised sectors of the labour market such as construction, discrimination and inequality in wages is lower, showing that there is probably a higher need for immigrant work and a better insertion of migrant labourers into these sectors. Overall while daily wages increase in parallel, the gap between the wages of Greek and foreign workers remains quite stable.

Recent data from the Labour Force Survey (LFS, 3<sup>rd</sup> trimester 2010) on immigrant insertion in the labour market show that nearly 40% of foreign workers (both EU and TCNs) are employed as unskilled labourers, mainly in manual jobs, and another 30% of the third country nationals and 15% of the EU citizens are employed as skilled workers (craftsmen). An important part of the immigrant population, though, (16% of the TCNs and 21% of the EU citizens) is now employed in the service sector and as salespeople in shops or open air markets (see figure 3.5 below).

**Figure 3.5: Distribution of migrant workers per employment sector**



Source: Author's own compilation based on data from the National Statistical Service, Labour Force Survey, 3<sup>rd</sup> Trimester 2010, available at [www.statistics.gr](http://www.statistics.gr)

With regard to specific employment sectors, data from the Labour Force Survey for the 3<sup>rd</sup> trimester of 2010 show that one quarter of TCNs and 13% of EU citizens (presumably Romanians and Bulgarians) are employed in the construction sector. About a quarter of EU citizens (again presumably Bulgarian and Romanian women) and 15% of TCNs are employed as domestic workers. Finally about one out of ten EU citizens and TCNs (12% of EU citizens and 10% of TCNs) are employed in catering services, just under 1 out of 10 (8% and 9% correspondingly) are employed in agriculture and another 10% of the TCNs are employed in the sales sector.

### 3.1 Ethnic business development

A small percentage of immigrants in Greece run their own businesses. The data on self-employment provided by the Labour Force Survey may be misleading as they categorize self-employed individuals into two categories based on whether they employ staff or not. The majority of self-employed immigrants are not employers, which means that their activities may vary from being, for example, a domestic worker with multiple employers to being an architect or an owner of a small shop. Based on LFS data for the 3<sup>rd</sup> trimester of 2010 there were about 5,500 self-employed EU citizens and 35,000 self employed TCNs (see table 3.1.1 below).

**Table 3.1.1 Data on self employed EU citizens and TCNs, 2005-2010**

<b>Self-employed EU citizens and Third Country Nationals</b>			
	Self-employed Employer	Self-employed	Total Self-employed
<b>2005</b>			
EU	2125	2873	4998
TCN	3365	18882	22247
<b>2006</b>			
EU	1560	3691	5251
TCN	5230	16908	22138
<b>2007</b>			
EU	1184	4377	5561
TCN	4490	20012	24502
<b>2008</b>			
EU	1562	5365	6927
TCN	3407	16043	19450
<b>2009</b>			
EU	2700	7573	10273
TCN	5972	25122	31094
<b>2010</b>			
EU	1847	3639	5486
TCN	6789	23991	30780

Source: Author's own compilation on the basis of data from the National Statistical Service of Greece (ESYE), Labour Force Survey, 4th trimester of each year, data available at [www.statistics.gr](http://www.statistics.gr)

With regards to business owners in particular it is difficult to get information for the whole country, and data from the Welfare fund for professionals (OAEE) are unreliable (Zografakis et al. 2007), but according to the Chamber of Commerce in Athens each ethnic group is specialized and strongly represented in a specific type of business. On the micro-level, data obtained from the Chamber of Commerce in Athens in 2006 indicated that Albanians are the most active in starting a business. Most of them run

corner shops or kiosks. Immigrants from Asia – Pakistan, Bangladesh and India – run food shops as well as video clubs (mainly Indians and Pakistanis).

The Chinese in Greece are usually merchants and have retail stores selling clothes and other goods. Tonchev estimates the Chinese community in Greece at approximately 20,000 people, that is, 15 times larger than the approximately 1,500 Chinese registered at the 2001 census (Tonchev 2007: 17). About one-half of the Chinese community is settled in Athens and works in self-owned stores while a few thousand Chinese move to the islands during the summer months to take advantage of the trade opportunities there (Tonchev, 2007: 17).

In absolute numbers, Albanians constitute the most active nationality with more than 2,000 businesses registered with the Chamber of Commerce. Egyptians and Cypriots come second with more than 200 businesses each. Close after them follow Pakistanis and Syrians. In relative numbers, though, Asians are much more business-oriented than Albanians or other Eastern European groups. Comparing the number of ethnic businesses run by Asians in the Athens area with the actual size of these groups (several tens of thousands), shows that they are the most entrepreneurial nationalities. Bulgarians, Romanians and Ukrainians are under-represented among business owners despite the relatively large size of these communities.

#### **4. Greek migration policy: recent developments**

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 measure 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 for those who had had a stay permit and has lost it because they did not have sufficient welfare contributions – that would prove 200 days of employment each year). Integration measures have also been practically non-existent until 2010.

Reviewing in detail the development of Greek migration policy during the past 20 years goes beyond the scope of this report and is done in sufficient detail elsewhere (Triandafyllidou and Maroukis, 2010 and SOPEMI report 2010). Here we shall present and critically discuss the most recent policy developments, which actually have been numerous and important both for migration management and migrant integration, in the period 2010-2011 despite the spectre of the economic crisis and the negative trends explained above regarding migrant employment.

##### **4.1 Recent Policy Developments: Citizenship Law Reform**

Integration through naturalisation has not been an easy option since Greek nationality has been based predominantly on the *jus sanguinis* principle and until March 2010 the naturalisation procedure was long, costly and with a very uncertain outcome even for

applicants who satisfied the requirements.<sup>5</sup> In practice, naturalization was an option only for people of Greek ethnic origin from the former Soviet Republics. Other immigrants including Albanian citizens of Greek ethnicity (the so called Voreioipirotas) could apply after 10 years of legal residence during the last 12 calendar years. Implementation was however particularly restrictive and citizenship acquisitions were counted in two-digit numbers (see table 2 below).

In November 2006, a joint decision by the Ministries of Interior and Foreign Affairs facilitated the naturalisation procedure for ethnic Greek Albanians waiving the fee and the discretionary character of the judgment. That decision was passed largely without much debate as it was congruous with the predominant conception of the Greek nation: Greeks are those of Greek descent, not those who live in Greece (if they are of non-Greek origins). During the period 2007-2009 approximately 45,000 people have acquired Greek citizenship, the vast majority of whom were ethnic Greek Albanian citizens (see table 2 below).

**Table 4.1 Acquisition of Greek citizenship (1998-2011)**

1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010*	2011*
56	69	66	58	52	36	23	66	68	10,806	16,922	17,019	7,500	7,000

Source: Ministry of Interior, 2011. \* Data for 2010 and 2011 are provided by the Ministry of Interior, Secretariat General for Population and Social Cohesion, draft report on Migrant Social Integration for 2011. Data for 2011 refer only to the first 8 months of the year.

When the Socialist party came to power in October 2009, they quickly proceeded in changing the citizenship law, in keeping with their electoral promises, to facilitate naturalization for non-Greek origin immigrants. Thus, in March 2010 the Greek Parliament voted a new law (law n. 3838/2010) on citizenship and naturalisation. The new law has lowered the requirement for naturalising from 10 to 7 years. Immigrants who wish to naturalise however have to first obtain the EU long term migrant status for which they can apply after 5 years of legal stay. The requirements for naturalising have been lowered although they still include knowledge of the Greek language and culture. By contrast to the previous law authorities are required to reply to applicants within a certain time frame and justify their decision.

The new law has made the EU long term resident status a stepping stone to naturalization. It has thus reduced the up to then ‘exorbitant’ fees of 900 euros for the EU long term resident status application down to the more ‘realistic’ but still pretty high 600 euro fee. In addition the integration test has been facilitated as people no longer have to follow the state-sponsored courses which had very few places available rendering practically the implementation of the long term resident status void. Applicants can now prove their knowledge of Greek by sitting a test (law 3789/2010). Nonetheless Greece remains one of the seven member states that require high incomes or integration courses

<sup>5</sup> A high fee was paid by the applicant (1,500 Euro) and the decision was discretionary; authorities were not required to reply within a specified period of time and needed not justify a negative decision to the applicant. If an applicant was rejected, s/he could apply again after one year.

and tests as well for a migrant to become an EU long term resident (see also MIPEX 2010).

Concerning the second generation, the new law provides that children born in Greece of foreign parents can become Greek citizens by a simple declaration of their parents provided that both parents have been living in Greece legally for at least 5 years. If one of the parents does not fulfill the requirement, the declaration can be made and the child may obtain the Greek citizenship as soon as the second parent satisfies the requirement.

Children who were born abroad of foreign parents but who have completed at least six years of schooling in Greece and live in Greece may also naturalise with a simple declaration by their parents provided again that both parents have been living in Greece legally for at least 5 years. Citizenship acquisition of migrant children may also make their parents' lives easier: as parents of Greek citizens they are entitled to a 5-year permit renewable, regardless of their employment situation, as this is in the best interest of the child who is a Greek citizen.

In addition to reforming the citizenship and naturalization rules, law 3838/2010 has introduced full local political rights for foreign residents who have lived in Greece for 5 years legally. However immigrants who wish to register to vote must also satisfy one of the following conditions: be in possession of an EU long term resident status, or of a national stay permit of ten year or indefinite duration, or be parents of a Greek citizen, or be married to a Greek or EU citizen, or hold a special identity card issued to ethnic Greeks from Albania.

In March 2011 the 4<sup>th</sup> Chamber of the State Council, responding to a claim made by a Greek citizen, has questioned the constitutionality of the local voting rights for foreigners. The issue has been referred to the Plenary Session but has not been decided yet at the time of writing (November 2011). This referral of the case to the Plenary Session came as a surprise to the Ministry of Interior and to most civil society actors and opposition parties. The constitutionality of the law had been assessed in the relevant parliamentary committee that had processed the bill in early 2010. It had then been made clear that the Greek Constitution foresees that local authorities are elected by universal suffrage (the Constitution makes no further specification as to whether those having the right to vote in local elections should be citizens or not). By contrast in the case of parliamentary elections the Constitution specifies that the national government is elected by the citizens who have the right to vote. The question of the constitutionality of the law as regards conceding local political rights to third country nationals had been questioned again during the parliamentary debate over the law on 9-10 March 2010 by the MPs of the extreme right wing party LAOS. However, all other political parties (including the main opposition Conservative party, New Democracy, and all the smaller left-wing parties) had rejected the claim.

While the extension of the local voting rights to non EU citizens has been greeted with great satisfaction by the centre-left wing parties and by a large part of the civil society organizations, its impact so far on migrant political participation has been rather small. The new law introducing these rights was voted in March 2010 and it foresaw that the election lists for the then upcoming local elections of November 2010 would be open for registration until the end of August 2010. The aim was to give sufficient time to migrants and co ethnic Greek Albanians to register to vote.

But the numbers of those registered have been rather small. The total number of immigrants who registered was 10,097 and of co-ethnics from Albania 2,665. Thus there were a total of 12,762 new voters for the November 2010 local election. While it was nonetheless important that more than 12,000 people were able to exercise their local political rights, it has to be noted that this number was a fraction<sup>6</sup> of the more than 60,000 people that were expected to satisfy the requirement and certainly a number too low to shape electoral outcomes in the different municipalities where they voted.

## **4.2 Other integration measures**

In addition to the above measures, the Socialist government (in power since November 2009) introduced law 3852/3010 (the so-called Kallikratis law) which concerns the re-organisation of local and regional government. This law foresees the creation of Councils for Migrant Integration at the municipal level. These councils are composed by members of the municipal council and social stakeholders including migrants themselves. They have a consultative character advising the mayor about issues of concern to the local migrant population. The Athens municipality and other municipalities across the country have created these councils but it is naturally too early to assess their role and impact on favouring migrant integration and civic participation.

Law 4018/2011 has introduced a new system for the management of TCN stay permit issuing and renewals creating one stop shops across the country which will replace the local (municipal) and regional centres that operated until now. In the previous system migrants had to submit their applications for issuing/renewing a stay permit at the municipal offices which received all the documentation and transferred it to the prefectural/regional offices that processed the applications and issued the permits. There was a lot of time lost and energy wasted in these transfers back and forth between municipalities and regional offices, many errors committed due to the fact that most of these services functioned with temporary contract workers. The new system introduced regional offices (with a higher number of offices in Athens and Salonica where a large part of the migrant population lives) that are one stop shops. This new system of management foresees also a more efficient use of databases and e-sources with a view to searching for missing documents through the internet and avoid that migrant applicants have to endure very large delays in the processing of their permit. These new one stop shop offices are expected to start working in 2012. They are believed to bring an important improvement in the management of stay permits.

Law 4018/2011 has also facilitated the acquisition of the EU long term resident status as it provides that immigrants can prove their knowledge of Greek language and history by sitting a test without having to have attended a specific state-run course as law 3386/2005 foresaw. This facilitation is important not only for the enhanced status of protection that the long term resident status entails but also because having the EU long term resident status is a prerequisite for applying for naturalisation under the provisions of the 3838/2010 law on citizenship.

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<sup>6</sup> 65,576 people were expected to satisfy the requirements for registering to vote in the 2010 local elections, according to I. Diamantidis, PASOK spokesperson in the discussion of the bill (Parliamentary Proceedings, 9 March 2010, page 4).

EU long term resident status holders in Greece were less than 1,000 in 2010 largely because of the stringent requirements concerning proof of knowledge of the Greek language foreseen by the law formerly in force. Migrants in Greece are issued stay permits of a maximum 2-year duration until the migrant completes a 10-year legal stay after which s/he may apply for a ten-year or indefinite duration permit. At the end of 2010 there were 62,000 people holding 10-year or indefinite duration stay permits (see table 4.2.1 below)

**Table 4.2.1 Long term permits, 2007-2010**

<b>Type of permit</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>
10-year duration permits (on the basis of law N.3731/08, art. 9, par.1)	3	467	8,780	24,994
Indefinite duration permits (on the basis of law 3386/05, art. 91, par. 2)	353	33,332	36,715	36,813
Other indefinite duration permits	465	497	503	505
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>821</b>	<b>34,296</b>	<b>45,998</b>	<b>62,312</b>

These people from the main pool of future citizens as regards first generation citizenship acquisition and of future local election voters. Naturally the effect of migrant children acquiring Greek citizenship through the relevant provisions of the new law and their parents acquiring 5-year stay permits as parents of Greek citizens is yet to be seen. We currently have no data nor estimates on the number of the children of foreign parents born in Greece or having completed six years in Greek schools.

### **4.3 Policy developments regarding asylum and the management of irregular migration**

To this day, asylum seekers arriving in Greece hardly have the opportunity to seek asylum. Irregular migrants / potential asylum seekers arriving at the Greek land or sea borders with Turkey are routinely detained in overcrowded reception centres and indeed in inhuman and degrading conditions. They do not receive information in a language that they understand regarding their right to claim asylum. They are usually informed through their co-ethnics or through the smuggling networks about the procedure for seeking asylum, notably the need to lodge their application at a special office located in Athens. Thus usually, with an expulsion decision in hand, written in Greek that invites them to leave the country within 30 days, they arrive in Athens where they receive assistance by the Greek Council for Refugees, the only specialized Greek NGO dealing with asylum.

Routinely first instance applications are rejected, mainly upon consideration of the country of origin of the applicant. Thus, Pakistan and Bangladesh are considered safe countries and hence all applications are routinely rejected. The interview to which first instance applicants are subjected is rudimentary and the questions formulated in such a way so as to conclude that the applicant has come to Greece as an economic migrant. The system was reformed in July 2009 abolishing the possibility to appeal to a first instance

decision. This amendment led to the UNHCR's withdrawal from assisting the Greek state in dealing with the applications. Eventually the whole system came to a standstill in fall 2009 leading to the additional piling up of thousands of applications creating an important backlog until January 2011 when law 3907/26.1.2011) has been voted. The new law puts in place an adequate asylum system for Greece but of course it will be several months still before it is effectively implemented.

Greece is one of the main geographical points of entrance to the EU for Asian and African irregular migrants and asylum claimants travelling through Africa or Asia to Turkey and then crossing to Greece. The table below shows the numbers of apprehensions of irregular migrants (including potential asylum applicants) at the Greek Turkish land and sea borders during the period 2007-2010. Apprehensions have nearly doubled in the period 2007-2010 and only show a small decline in 2011.

**Table 4.3.1 Apprehensions of irregular migrants at the Greek Turkish sea and land border, 2007-2011**

<b>Apprehensions</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011*</b>
Greek Turkish land border	16,789	14,461	8,787	47,088	45,170
Greek Turkish sea border	16,781	30,149	27,685	6,204	625
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>112,364</b>	<b>146,337</b>	<b>126,145</b>	<b>132,524</b>	<b>80,840</b>

Note: data refer to apprehensions, not to people. Hence the same person if apprehended twice counts twice.

\* Data for 2011 refer to the first 10 months.

Source: Greek police data, [www.astynomia.gr](http://www.astynomia.gr)

FRONTEX estimates that in 2010 three quarters of all irregular migrants that cross borders illegally (i.e. not visa overstayers) have entered the EU through Greece. It would be more accurate to say through the Greek Turkish borders. Indeed the asylum applications have increased over this period but are still comparatively few (see table 4.3.2 below) compared with the total of irregular migrant apprehensions (let alone irregular migrants / asylum seekers arriving undetected).

**Table 4.3.2: Asylum applications in Greece, 2000-2009**

Categories	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Number of asylum applications	3,083	5,499	5,664	8,178	4,469	9,050	12,267	25,113	19,884	24,822

Source: Author's own compilation on the basis of data from the Ministry for the Protection of the Citizen, [www.astynomia.gr](http://www.astynomia.gr)

Greece has until recently lacked the political will to implement an appropriate asylum system. Previous governments have not invested the appropriate human and economic resources to this purpose. However the country has also been subject to disproportionately high irregular migration pressures due to its geographical position as well as to Turkey's unwillingness to cooperate in taming these flows. While given the



geographical position of the country such pressures may not be avoided actually, it may be avoided that all asylum seekers that arrive at the Greek Turkish border have to have their applications lodged and examined by Greek authorities.

Recognising the failure of Greece to implement the Dublin II Regulation, the European Commission started infringement Proceedings against Greece on 31 January 2009, 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. Not only were asylum applicants routinely placed in detention and when released given no assistance for housing or subsistence, but also and most importantly their applications were routinely rejected without a proper examination or interview.

In April 2008 the European Council for Refugees and Exiles (ECRE) had already argued that by requiring that those fleeing persecution must claim asylum in the first EU country they reach, the Dublin system fails to take account of the fact that a person's chance of being recognised as a refugee varies hugely from one EU country to another. ECRE noted in particular that Greece was not a safe place for those in need of protection because of its faulty asylum system. It called for all member states to follow the example of Norway that in February 2008 suspended Dublin II and stopped returning asylum claimants to Greece.

ECRE noted that Dublin II was in need of reform. In a report with title: 'Sharing Responsibility for Refugee Protection in Europe: Dublin Reconsidered' ECRE showed the limitations and injustices of the current system. This report was accompanied by related decisions by specific member states that acknowledged the failure of the system in particular as regarded the role of Greece as a safe country: Finland stopped returning asylum seekers to Greece on 18 April 2008, soon after Norway, in March 2008 a Swedish court stopped the extradition of an Iraqi asylum seeker to Greece but it was only in November 2010 that Sweden revoked the application of the Dublin regulation as regards Greece. The UK stopped returning asylum seekers to Greece in September 2010 while in late January 2011 Germany did the same.

Most recently 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.

In response to the above asylum crisis situation, the Greek government presented in August 2010 to the European Commission a National Plan of Action for the management of migration flows. This plan presented a common framework regarding the first reception of irregular migrants and asylum seekers, a new asylum system, and a new framework regarding asylum seekers reception centres.

During the preparation of the new law (which was voted by the Greek parliament on 26 January 2011) and until the beginning of its implementation (foreseen for the first semester of 2012), asylum applications both first time applications and appeals (applications at a second level) are being examined under the condition introduced by Presidential Decree 114/2010. This decree introduced a first step in the reform of the asylum system as it re-introduced the committees that examine the appeals (according to the Greek police data the backlog of asylum applications from the previous system was at

the end of 2009, 45,079.<sup>7</sup> The UNHCR has started collaborating again with the Greek state authorities in the processing of these applications at “second level.”

The new law 3907/2011 creates two separate Agencies, the Asylum Agency and the Agency for First Reception thus transposing into Greek law the provisions of the European Directive 2008/115/EC concerning common standards for the return of illegally staying third country nationals. Thus this new law introduces new standards concerning the first reception of irregular migrants, the distinction between irregular migrants and asylum seekers, the processing of asylum applications, the waiting period for the judgement of these applications and most importantly takes the asylum committees out of the authority of the Greek police which had basically taken over the whole asylum system since 2008.

The new asylum agency is autonomous and refers directly to the Minister of Interior. It consists of a central and several regional offices, located at the main points of entry to and exit from the country (e.g. near the Greek Turkish land border, in Orestiada, but also at the port of Patras, in several islands of the Aegean sea). At the same time the new law creates First Reception Centres in selected places where there is a notable inflow of immigrants. These first reception centres receive irregular migrants upon their arrival, inform them about their rights and obligations and refer asylum seekers to the regional asylum office which may function within the local reception centre. They also take care of vulnerable groups such as minors, women with young children, people who have health problems, victims of trafficking. The regional asylum offices are responsible for receiving and processing the applications, conducting interviews and issuing decisions at first instance.

The new law still foresees that irregular migrants and asylum seekers arriving in Greece can be detained in the first reception centres but such detention has to be appropriately justified. Detention has to be justified in relation to the need of establishing the identity of the irregular migrant/asylum seekers and it is foreseen that asylum applicants will stay in the reception centres for as long as their application is being processed. The time necessary for processing the application is determined at 15 days with a possible extension of 10 more days. In other words, it is expected that decisions on first instance asylum applications will be issued within 30 days. If during this period there is no decision issued, the asylum office will issue a temporary asylum seeker permit and will send the asylum seeker to appropriate hostels, that are to be set up by the Ministry of Public Health.

Law 3907/2011 foresees also two kinds of new permits for irregular migrants and asylum seekers in the effort to satisfy the letter and the spirit of the European Directive on common standards for returning illegally staying third country nationals. Thus, irregular migrants who have been issued an expulsion decision and who cannot be expelled for a number of reasons, e.g. their ill health or the non cooperation of their country of origin, are issued with a written statement that postpones their return. This written decision has a 6-month validity and can be renewed (provided that the migrant cooperates with relevant authorities and is at their disposal for actually executing the expulsion when this becomes possible) for as long as the expulsion cannot take place. During this period the stay of the irregular migrant in Greece is thus registered and legal and s/he may access the labour market. These postponements of expulsion decisions are

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<sup>7</sup> see <http://www.astynomia.gr/images/stories/2010/300110meta14.pdf>

not meant to 'reward' illegality but rather to acknowledge a difficult situation and allow for a dignified existence for these people who are otherwise living with the constant fear of detection and arrest.

The same law introduces also a new type of permit for exceptional reasons that are given to irregular migrants who have been living in Greece for 12 years or more and in particular for 10 years before their application for such a permit. People who have thus been living in the country for a long time and can prove that they have strong ties with the country including for instance being a family member of a Greek citizen, speaking the Greek language, having attended Greek schools, having been holders of a legal stay permit in the past. Thus

Law 3907/2011 also opens up the possibility of viable voluntary return for irregular migrants who have been caught to enter or reside illegally in Greece. While the time period during which the irregular migrant can decide to return to her/his country voluntarily is normally between 7 and 30 days, when the migrant declares their will and a decision of voluntary return is issued, the new law foresees the possible expansion of this period up to one year so as to make the voluntary return feasible for the migrant. This expansion of the period for initiating a voluntary return aims at taking into account the special personal circumstances of the illegally staying alien for instance the fact that her/his children may be studying at a Greek school or that s/he may have special ties with Greece because of her/his stay and work in the country so that return requires some time to be organized.

The new law aims at creating a functional and flexible asylum system and appropriate conditions and infrastructure as well as a legal framework for dealing with irregular migrants in full respect of their fundamental rights. The creation of first reception centres near border areas, the location of asylum offices physically within these first reception centres albeit as administrative and legal units distinct from first reception, the specification of clear time periods for processing promptly the applications are all measures aiming at a speedy albeit appropriate examination of all asylum claims in conditions of respect of the person and in respect of her/his fundamental rights.

The design of the new law is certainly in line with European asylum law and practice and has promise for significantly improving Greece's record in both asylum and irregular migration management. However it remains to be seen how such an ambitious organisational and legal framework can be implemented under the current conditions of austerity. One of the first implementation problems that the two Directors responsible for the organisation of the first reception centres and of the asylum offices have faced is the recruitment of qualified personnel. Under the current ban of hiring new staff in the public sector, the staff needs of the two new services have to be satisfied through transfer of personnel from other offices of the wider public sector to the new ones. This is particularly problematic as such personnel would not have the experience or training required for their new tasks. In addition some of the staff needs will be subcontracted including the security of the first reception centers (to private security companies), or the translation services. In short the new system for dealing with irregular migration and asylum is ambitious and appropriate but its implementation and results are yet to be seen.

## 5. Concluding Remarks

The migrant and co ethnic migrant/returnee population of Greece is approximately 1.2 million corresponding to 11% of the total resident population. Of those about 200,000 are Greek co ethnics from Albania who hold special stay permits, 150,000 are co ethnics from the former Soviet Republics who have naturalized through a special procedure. Of the remaining 900,000 non Greek immigrants, 450,000 held valid stay permits on 1 Dec 2011 while another 440,000 are estimated to be undocumented. The number of valid stay permit holders has been dramatically decreasing during the last 2 years. This decrease is most likely due to people being unable to renew their stay permits because they have no stable employment and hence no sufficient welfare stamps to prove that they have employment and sufficient income. Indeed immigrant unemployment which was lower than that of natives until 2009 (especially among men) has skyrocketed to nearly 20% during the last year because of the overall economic crisis and in particular because of the decline of the construction sector, a sector in which immigrant men have been traditionally employed in Greece.

The largest immigrant group in Greece remains Albanian citizens accounting for about 60% of the total immigrant population (whether legal or undocumented). The top 5 immigrant groups after Albanians include Bulgarians and Romanians (as regards other EU MS) and Georgians, Ukrainians and Pakistanis.

Regardless of the acute financial crisis Greece has taken important steps forward in several areas of migration management, asylum and migrant integration policy. In the field of migrant integration new developments include the new citizenship and naturalization law adopted in 2010 that has radically changed the prospects of the second generation and to a large extent the prospects also of their parents. This law has facilitated naturalization for the first generation too (provided they live in the country for 7 years legally) and has extended local political rights to third country nationals who live in Greece for 5 years or more. In addition, in 2011, a new law has simplified the conditions for acquiring EU long term resident status. The reorganization of the local and regional government system in Greece in 2010 has also included the creation of Local Councils for Migrant Integration with a consultative role aiming at favouring migrant integration at the municipal level.

Regarding the management of irregular migration and asylum, there is a new law on asylum and a new asylum system that follows the European standards and practices as regards the processing of asylum applications. The provisions of the European Directive on common standards for returning illegally staying third country nationals have been also transposed into Greek legislation and a new system of first reception centres has been introduced to deal with irregular migration. This new system pays special attention to respecting the fundamental rights of irregular migrants, informing them about the possibility to apply for asylum and protecting vulnerable groups such as minors, children, victims of trafficking.

The new first reception and asylum centres will start functioning in early 2012 so it is too early to speak about their impact on the overall situation. However already a Presidential Decree voted in 2010 and a partial reorganization of the existing asylum system has helped process a part of the backlog of first and second instance applications. In addition new types of permits have been introduced to provide for temporary legal

status for pending asylum seekers and people who have received expulsion decisions but who cannot be expelled or returned to their countries of origin.

A special permit for humanitarian reasons has been introduced for people who have been living in the country for more than 12 years and who are at present undocumented, taking into account their personal and family ties with the country.

These developments, even if so far they are only partly implemented have marked very important and much needed changes in the migration policy framework of Greece. Of course the labour market integration of immigrants remains a thorny issue as the legal migration management system following the practice of ‘metaklisi’ (invitation of a foreign worker to come to Greece to take up a specific job) is not working well. However, given the current bleak circumstances for migrant (as well as natives’) employment this is certainly not a top policy priority.

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