

# Migration in Greece Developments in 2012

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Greece has been experiencing important changes in its migration landscape during the last two years. These concern both long-term settled migrants and irregular, newly arrived migrants and asylum seekers. We may summarise these changes as follows:

Long term settled migrants, unemployment and return migration

- Unemployment is rampant and affecting both natives and immigrants. Only EU citizens appear to do slightly better. The changes for third country nationals are spectacular as they went from a situation of nearly full employment (4% unemployment) in 2008-2009 to 27% registered unemployment in 2011
- There are signs that Albanian immigrants are returning to their home country (different estimates are provided by Albanian sources, ranging between 28,000 and 100,000 people)
- More than 150,000 long term settled migrants from non EU countries have been unable to renew their stay permits during the last two years (2010 and 2011) because of unemployment of the main breadwinner of the family (usually the man) upon whom the whole family's permits depended (women are often working in the cleaning and caring sector without insurance and hence without their own independent stay permit).

There have been in 2011 some policy measures aiming to address the above problems:

- The number of welfare stamps (equivalent to proof of days of work) required per year has been lowered to 120 per year or 240 per 2 years (was previously 200 and 400 respectively)
- Stay permit renewal has been transferred to one-stop-shops with a view to facilitating the procedure. Although the intentions of this re-organisation of the whole process for issuing/renewing stay permits are good, its results are so far dubious as the human resources available are insufficient (many immigration offices were staffed with temporary personnel whose contracts have not been renewed in the last 2 years).

Concerning irregular migrants and asylum seekers

- Irregular migration pressures at the Greek Turkish border continue unabated. Apprehended irregular migrants are usually released after a short period of detention as they cannot be returned to their countries of origin or to the last transit country (Turkey for most of them). They thus find themselves trapped in Greece as they can not move on to a third European country nor can they be returned to their countries of origin as these are often war torn zones like Afghanistan, Somalia, Sudan, Iraq or are simply non collaborating with Greek authorities (e.g. Bangladesh).
- The living and working conditions of irregular migrants and asylum seekers gathering mainly in the centre of Athens, Thessalonike and near the port of Patras has rapidly deteriorated as opportunities for employment in the informal labour market have dried up due to the crisis.

- In addition far right groups are operating especially in the centre of Athens spreading fear among immigrants and asylum seekers, beating up people looking Asian or sub-Saharan African, and 'selling protection' to native residents.
- The police is not managing properly either to combat effectively rising criminality (both organized crime and petty criminality) or to tame these far right extremist groups. Racist violence incidents have been rising and there have been recently allegations that the police forces are a stronghold of the Golden Dawn Party.
- The media portrayal of these issues contributes to rising fears and feelings of uncertainty among the general population. A clear indication of this is that the extreme far right neo-Nazi party Golden Dawn gathered nearly 7% of the national vote in the last two elections (on 7 May and 17 June 2012) up from 0.22% in the election of 2009.
- A new law for managing asylum and irregular migration has been voted by the Greek Parliament in January 2011. However this law is still to be properly implemented. A reception centre with appropriate conditions has been created near Athens in the period before the May 2012 national election. New reception centres are now nearly ready in the region of Thrace in northeastern Greece but there has been as yet no progress on the asylum front. Local actors in northern Greece are protesting against the setting up of such reception centres in their localities.

#### Integration issues

- The effects of the citizenship law reform of 2010 which aimed to open up Greek citizenship to the second generation (children born in Greece or who have done at least six years of schooling in the country) and easing naturalization to the first generation (reducing the required residence years to 7 and streamlining the procedure) have been marginal so far: there are about 7,000 new citizens per year during the last years however they are mostly of co-ethnic Greeks whose citizenship acquisition had been facilitated already in 2007. There have been so far (as of 16 July 2012) approximately 6,000 applications under the new provisions but only 1,100 naturalisations approved.
- Third country nationals' participation in the local elections of November 2010 has also been rather low: 12,000 people out of the 60,000 that the Ministry of Interior estimated would qualify.
- Probably the cause of these non-effects are the high naturalization fees (900 Euro per person), the obstructive attitude of front desk officers (according to NGO testimonies they tell prospective applicants that when the Conservative party will come to government they will annul the law so why bother?), the red tape involved (different papers required each time for immigrant children to prove 6 years of school attendance in order to apply for citizenship, or request of birth certificates from countries of origin that are very difficult to obtain). As regards the voting in local elections it seems to have to do with a lack of trust in politics as well as with the stringent requirements (as regards the specific types of long term permits that one had to have in order to be eligible for participation) of the law.
- The European Fund for Integration of Third Country Nationals which has started being implemented in 2009 has given some impetus in research on migrant

integration and in migrant and other NGO involvement in projects. However it is unclear if this is having any kind of real effect for the average migrant family.

- Overall public opinion on migration has worsened towards all migrants although media debates and to some extent political discourse too tend to draw a line distinguishing between 'good' settled migrants usually from Albania, and other eastern European countries, and 'bad' Asian and sub Saharan African irregular migrants. Generally estimates of irregular migration are blown out of proportion where both politicians and journalists estimate irregular migrants in Athens only to have reached one million people, or that migrants access to health care services is creating the health care budget deficit (both statements completely out of touch with reality).

#### Emigration of Greeks abroad due to the crisis

- There has been a lot of discussion as to whether Greeks are emigrating abroad to seek employment since the unemployment average for nationals was at 21% but stands at approximately 55% for young persons under 25 years of age. It is difficult to know however whether Greeks are leaving, outside anecdotal evidence. Data on Greek presence from main presumed destination countries show a moderate increase in inflows of Greek citizens although it is difficult to know the reasons of such increases. However, Greeks living in the Netherlands have increased by 10% in 2011 and by 20% in 2012 (however the overall number is in 2012 approx. 10,000 people). In the UK there has been an increase of 20% between 2011 and 2012 and in Sweden there has been an increase of 10% in the inflows of Greeks from 2009 to 2010 and an increase of 70% from 2010 to 2011. However, overall inflows were in 2011 approx. one thousand people. Taking into account that Greece has a nearly 11 million population of which approx. 10 million are Greek citizens this means that a tiny fraction has been emigrating. Nonetheless the data above and the percentages of increase may be signaling a new trend of emigration from Greece. Anecdotal evidence suggests that it is the high skilled (University education, at least one foreign language) that emigrate.

## 1. The Migrant Population in Greece

The main source of data on legally staying third country nationals in Greece is the stay permit database of the Ministry for the Protection of the Citizen (former Ministry of Interior). Table 1 and Graph 1 below present the legal migrant stock in Greece from January 2005 till December 2011 (estimate), excluding seasonal migrant workers.

The highest number of legal migrants present in Greece was registered in March 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) and further down to 447,658 on 1 December 2011.

**Table 1: Legal migrants (stock) Greece, 2005-2011 (excluding seasonal permits)**

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

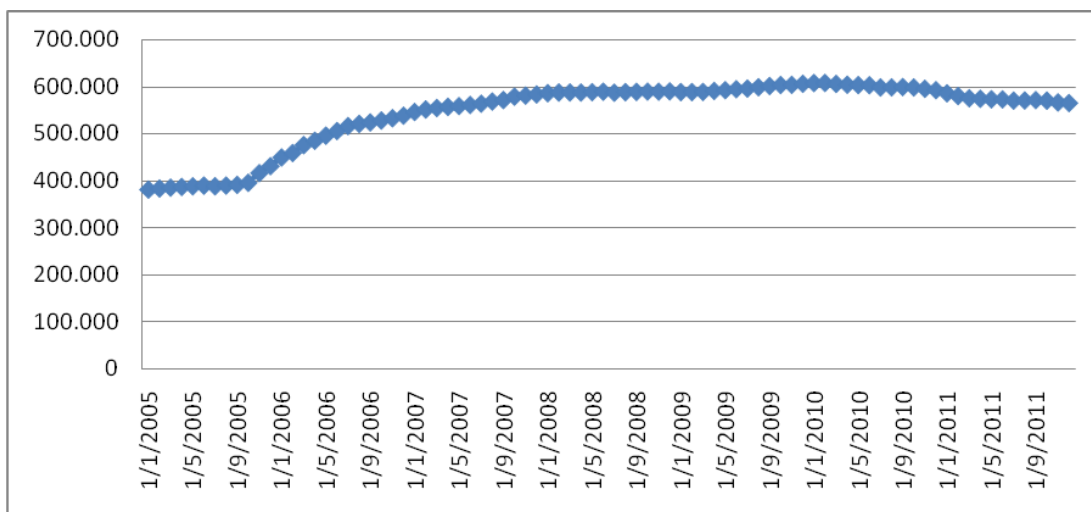
Source: Database of valid stay permits. Ministry of Interior, emphasis added.

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 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.

There appears to be an increasing trend of Albanian migrants to return to their homeland. Different estimates of the people returning have been quoted by Albanian authorities. At a conference in early 2012, the head of the Directorate for the Migrants and Returnees at the Ministry of Labor, Social Issues and Equal Opportunities in Albania estimated that approximately 28,000 had returned since 2010 when the crisis hit hard

Greek economy overall. In a recent report by Top Channel TV, a large quality TV channel in Albania, a journalist<sup>1</sup> claimed that out of half a million Albanians residing in Greece approximately 15-20% were estimated to have returned to Albania. The same figure, i.e. 15% or approximately 75,000 was quoted in a Reuters report in April 2012.<sup>2</sup> While precise data are hard to come by, there is clearly a returning trend among Albanian immigrants who have lived in Greece even for a long time. Albanian authorities express concerns however as the unemployment rate in Albania was 13.4% in 2011 and the economy is estimated to have kept growing by 2.5% in 2011, much slower than in previous years but still not in recession as neighbouring Greece.

**Graph 1: Legal migrant stock, Greece, 2005-2011**



Source: Data from Ministry of Interior database, graph elaborated by authors.

We estimate the total immigrant population in Greece at approximately 840,000 people. Our estimate is based on the total number of valid stay permits at the end of 2011 plus a scientific estimate of the irregular migrant population that currently lives in Greece:

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

<sup>1</sup> <http://top-channel.tv/artikull.php?id=237328>, second paragraph, last accessed on 27 June 2012.

<sup>2</sup> [http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2012-04-06/news/sns-rt-albania-greecemigrants-feature-tv-20120406\\_1\\_albanian-migrants-albanian-economy-greece](http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2012-04-06/news/sns-rt-albania-greecemigrants-feature-tv-20120406_1_albanian-migrants-albanian-economy-greece) published on 6 April 2012, last accessed on 27 June 2012.

	Size of immigrant stock	% of total resident population	Source of data
<b>Total legal immigrant stock</b>	447,658	4.00%	stay permits valid on 1 Dec 2011, Ministry of Interior database
<b>Irregular immigrants (estimate)</b>	391,000	3.5%	Maroukis, 2012, available at <a href="http://www.eliamep.gr/en">www.eliamep.gr/en</a> , published June 2012.
<b>Total immigrant excluding co-ethnics</b>	838,658	7.4%	
<b>Total population of Greece</b>	11,305,000		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 from various sources.

The total immigrant population in Greece is approximately 7.4 % of the total resident population of Greece at the end of 2011. Legal migrants correspond to about 4% of the total population (see Table 2 above). About 3.5 % 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.

There are two groups of Greek citizens who are foreign born and who have naturalized under preferential citizenship acquisition paths – which could be considered sociologically as immigrants (in the sense of facing discrimination in the labour market, ethnic prejudice and exclusion) but who are now Greek citizens and hence do not appear in Table 2 above.

The first group is that of Greek co ethnics from Albania (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. During the last three years, EDTO holders have been encourage by the Ministry of Interior to naturalise and many did (see also section below on naturalisations). In addition, the Ministry of Interior has started cross-checking of the previously issued Special Identity Cards and hence many were cancelled as people did not live in Greece any more. The result has been that EDTO identity card holders have been reduced from approx. 197,000 in December 2009 to only 6,509 in December 2011.



The second group 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).

General data from the 2011 national census published recently<sup>3</sup> show that the total resident population in Greece was 10,787,690 of whom 884,422 are foreign citizens – i.e. quite close to our estimate cited above. However, according to Eurostat data for 2011, there were 956,000 foreign citizens living in Greece, corresponding to 8.5% of the total resident population. It is worth noting though that Eurostat data<sup>4</sup> show that the total foreign born in Greece were 1,255,000 people or 11.1% of the total resident population (the relevant national census data are not yet available). This shows that about 300,000 people notably 150,000 Pontic Greeks, and nearly 150,000 Greek Albanians as well as small numbers of non-ethnically related foreigners have naturalised in the last decade, mostly (as we can see from the citizenship section below) through preferential channels.

**Table 3: Estimates of Foreigners and Foreign Born, Greece, 2011**

<b>Population of foreign citizens</b>	<b>In thousand</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Total foreign citizens</b>	956.0	8.5
<b>Citizens of another EU27 Member State</b>	153.0	1.4
<b>Citizens of countries outside the EU27</b>	803.0	7.1
<b>Total foreign-born</b>	1 255.2	11.1
<b>Born in another EU27 Member State</b>	317.1	2.8
<b>Born in a country outside the EU27</b>	938.1	8.3
<b>Total resident population</b>	10.788	100%

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.statistics.gr/portal/page/portal/ESYE/BUCKET/General/A1602\\_SAM01\\_DT\\_DC\\_00\\_2011\\_01\\_F\\_GR.pdf](http://www.statistics.gr/portal/page/portal/ESYE/BUCKET/General/A1602_SAM01_DT_DC_00_2011_01_F_GR.pdf)

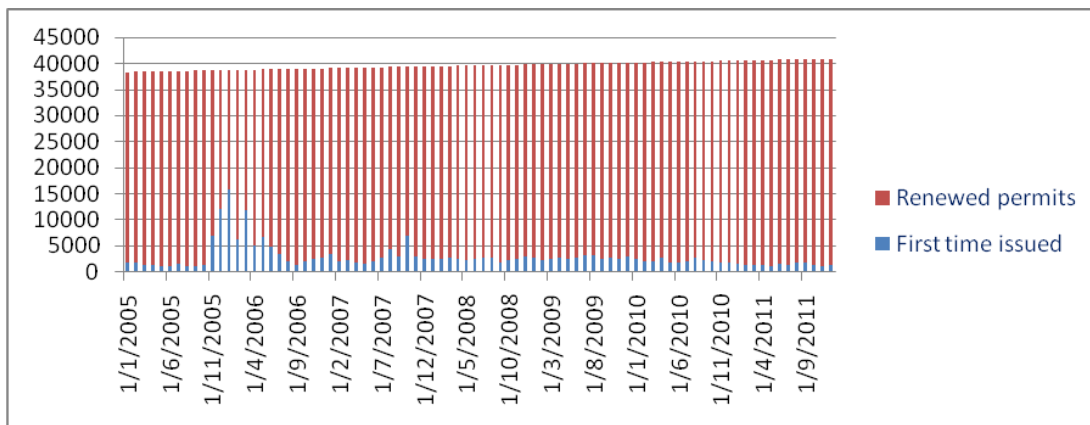
<sup>4</sup> [http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY\\_PUBLIC/3-11072012-AP/EN/3-11072012-AP-EN.PDF](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_PUBLIC/3-11072012-AP/EN/3-11072012-AP-EN.PDF)

## 2. Inflows and Outflows of legal migrants

While in Greece there are no data kept regarding effective inflows and outflows of immigrants, the Secretariat 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 shows 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 practically null.

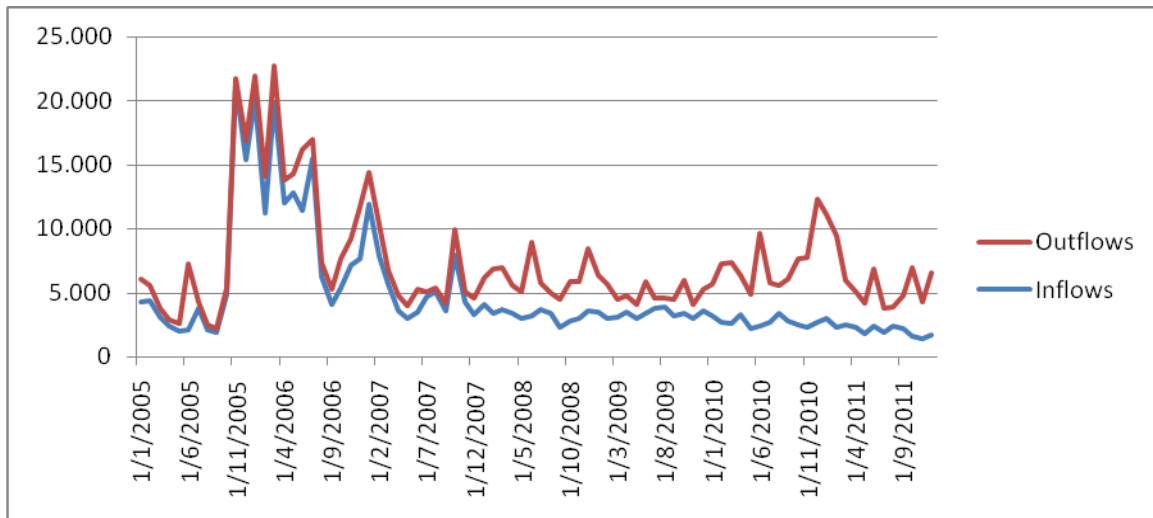
**Graph 2: Stay permits renewed and first time issued, 2005-2011, per month**



Source: Ministry of Interior

Assuming that non renewed stay permits signal an outflow of immigrants from Greece, the national report on migrant integration presents the following graph:

**Graph 3. Inflows and Outflows of immigrants, Greece, 2005-2011**



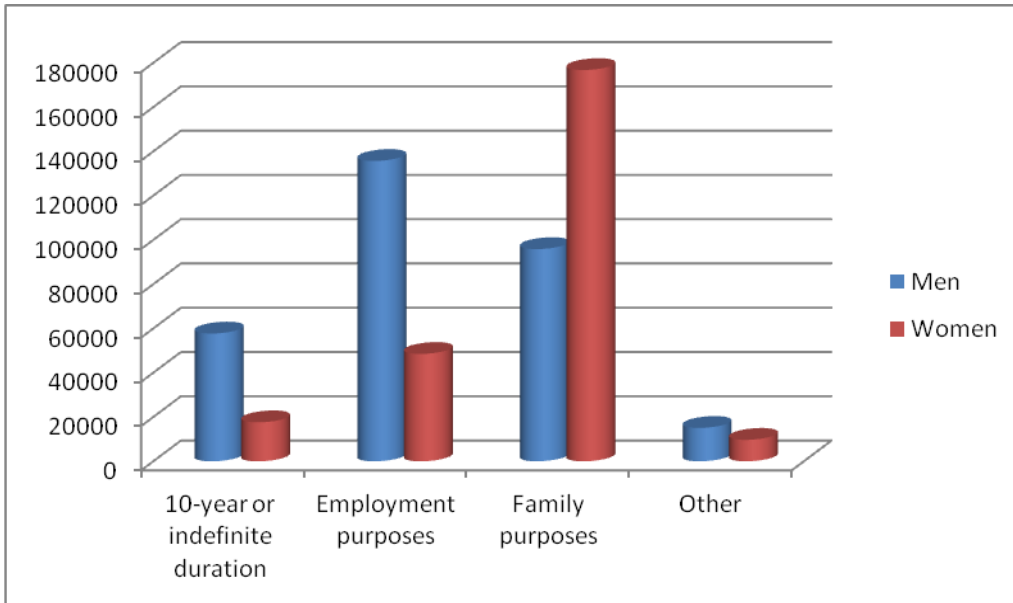
Source: Ministry of Interior, authors' own re-elaboration

There is a concern that the decrease in valid and in renewed stay permits does not indicate a real outflow (i.e. migrants leaving the country) but rather a strong trend towards de-legalisation in the last year. Qualitative research suggests that there are long term migrants who are losing their permits because they are unable to secure formal employment or any employment at all (Triandafyllidou 2011). In the following section we discuss the impact of the current acute economic crisis that Greece is going through on unemployment of migrants and compare such unemployment with that of natives and intra-EU migrants and seek to shed more light to this issue.

### **3. Composition and Features of the Migrant Population**

Concerning the purpose of third country nationals' staying in Greece (see figure 1.1 below), 45% of the men hold permits employment purposes followed by permits for family reason (31%) and 10-year or indefinite duration stay permits (19%) while the vast majority of women hold family reunification permits (70%) followed by employment permits (19%). Student permits are low in number and are included in the 'other' category (see Figure 2).

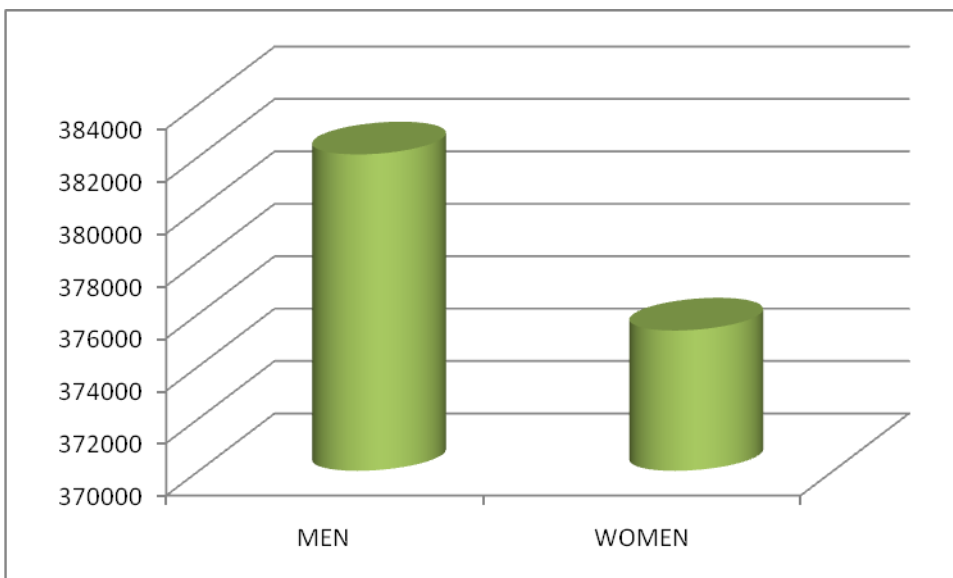
**Figure 2: Permits of stay by purpose, 31st of December 2011**



Source: Ministry of Interior

The gender composition of the migrant population is overall quite imbalanced – men are much more numerous than women (See figure 3 below). However this imbalance varies among groups. For instance nationalities like Bulgarians, Ukrainians or Georgians include more women than men while Pakistanis and Bangladeshis are mainly men.

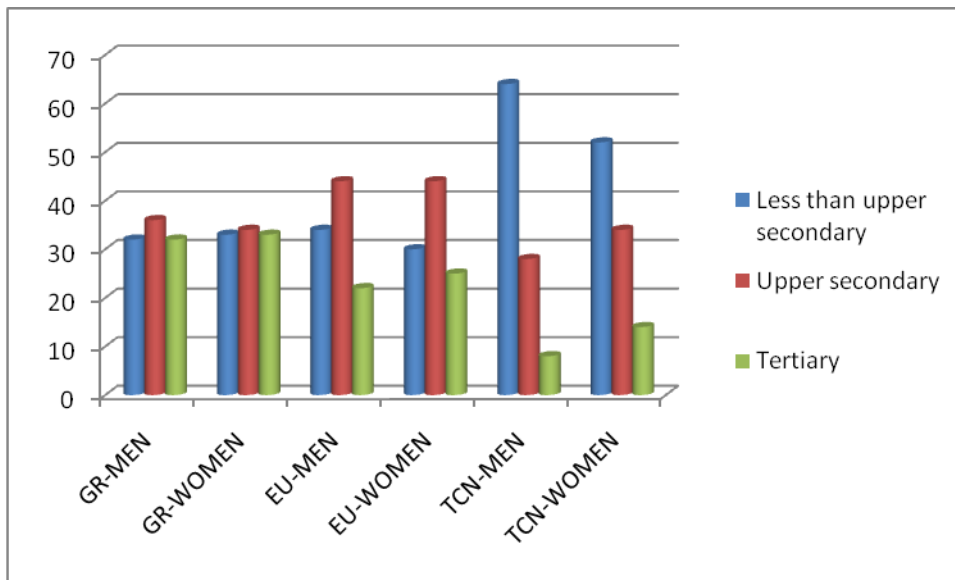
**Figure 3: Gender composition of the migrant population, 2011**



**Source:** National Statistical Service of Greece (ESYE), Labour Force Survey, 4<sup>th</sup> trimester of 2011

Regarding the educational level of the migrant population, the educational profile of EU citizens is largely similar to that of natives as regards primary education. But they include more people with secondary or technical education (indeed a type of education that was quite common in Communist countries) and less people who have attended University than natives. By contrast TCNs are overall less educated than natives or EU citizens with significantly higher levels who have finished only lower middle school (the obligatory schooling) only. The percentage of TCNs with a University diploma is also quite low. Despite these differences in educational qualifications between TCNs and EU citizens, we should note that the sectors of migrant employment in Greece are generally the same for both groups (construction, agriculture, other low skill jobs, transport services for men; cleaning, caring, catering, tourism for women).

**Figure 4: Educational Level by Nationality and Gender, 2011 (%)<sup>5</sup>**



**Source:** National Statistical Service of Greece (ESYE), Labour Force Survey, 4<sup>th</sup> trimester of 2011

Table 4 below presents the national composition of the migrant population in Greece in 2011 based on the Labour Force Survey data as well as data from the Ministry of Interior’s database on valid stay permits for third country nationals and for intra-EU migrants.

<sup>5</sup> Refers to persons between 16 and 64.

**Table 4: National Composition of the Migration Stock in 2011**

Country of Origin	LFS 4th Tri. 2011		TCN valid permits December 2011		EU Cit. Valid permits December 2011		All foreigners (EU and non-EU)	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Albania	449,706	56.89%	388,666	70%			388,666 <sup>6</sup>	52%
Bulgaria	47,348	5.99%			71,949	38%	71,949	10%
Georgia	28,041	3.54%	16,577	3%			16,577	2%
Romania	40,620	5.13%			54,883	29%	54,883	7%
Pakistan	24,094	3.04%	16,974	3%			16,974	2%
Russia	12,036	1.52%	13,454	2%			13,454	2%
Ukraine	10,816	1.36%	20,264	4%			20,264	3%
Bangladesh	10,482	1.32%	61,00	1%			6,100	1%
Syria	10,089	1.27%	7,394	1%			7,394	1%
Armenia	9,530	1.20%	5,910	1%			5,910	1%
Cyprus	12,071	1.52%			7,270	4%	7,270	1%
Poland	7,481	0.94%			14,668	8%	14,668	2%
Egypt	10,863	1.37%	13,629	2%			13,629	2%
Iraq	5,323	0.67%	937	0%			937	0%
India	2,808	0.35%	13,639	2%			13,639	2%
UK	7,642	0.96%			10,330	5%	10,330	1%
Germany	6,216	0.78%			7,854	4%	7,854	1%
Moldova	4,003	0.50%	11,480	2%			11,480	2%
Netherlands	1,394	0.17%			2,934	2%	2,934	0%
Philippines	2,099	0.26%	9,633	2%			9,633	1%
OTHER	132,903	16.81%	32,440	6%	20,598	11%	53,038	7%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>790,431</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>557,097</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>190,486</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>747,583</b>	<b>100%</b>

Sources: National Statistical Service of Greece, Labour Force Survey 4<sup>th</sup> trimester 2011; Ministry of Interior Affairs, Valid Stay Permits on December 31<sup>st</sup> 2011; Ministry of Citizen Protection. Registered EU citizens on December 31<sup>st</sup> 2011.

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

<sup>6</sup> This number referring to valid stay permits does not include ethnic Greek Albanians holding EDTO cards.

communities (see table 3 above). It is worth noting though that it is likely that the number of Bulgarians and Romanians is three or four times higher than what appears in the table above since many do not register with the authorities (a) because they are unaware that they should, (b) because they have bad experience from Greek public administration from the time when they were TCNs, (c) because having a stay permit does not help them get a job as they are often contracted to work without proper insurance and sometimes they even offer themselves to work informally in order to get the job and make a living. Thus the data on Bulgarians and Romanians are believed to grossly under-represent the real size of these groups in Greek society. In the case of Bulgarians the relatively large incidence of live-in female domestic workers within this group is another factor which makes the real size and features of the group invisible to the authorities (see also Nikolova 2010, Lazarescu 2010).

Regarding the settled population it is worth noting that at the end of 2011, there were 75,000 people holding 10-year or indefinite duration stay permits at the end of 2011 (20% more than in 2010 but still a meager 20% of the legal migrant population and less than 10% of the estimated total migrant population (see table 5, below)

**Table 5: Long term permits, 2007-2011**

<b>Type of permit</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>
Total permits of 10-year or indefinite duration	821	34,296	45,998	62,312	75,377

Source: Ministry of Interior database on stay permits.

## **4. Labour Market Participation of Immigrants at Times of Crisis**

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 approximately 14% in the last trimester of 2010. In December 2011 the unemployment rate for Greek citizens was at 21% i.e. 2.5 times higher than 4 years earlier and 1.5 times higher than the previous year while in June 2012 it was 25%.

There is, however, a marked imbalance in the unemployment rates of the two genders. 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 2009 that this difference was reduced to 4 percentage points while it climbed again to a 7 percentage point difference in 2010 and 2011 (see table 6 below).

The evolution of unemployment rates by nationality group (total, natives, EU and TCNs) can be better visualised in the graph below (figure 5). While all lines are going up steeply from 2009 in particular that of male third country nationals shows a particularly steep rise in unemployment over the last two years.

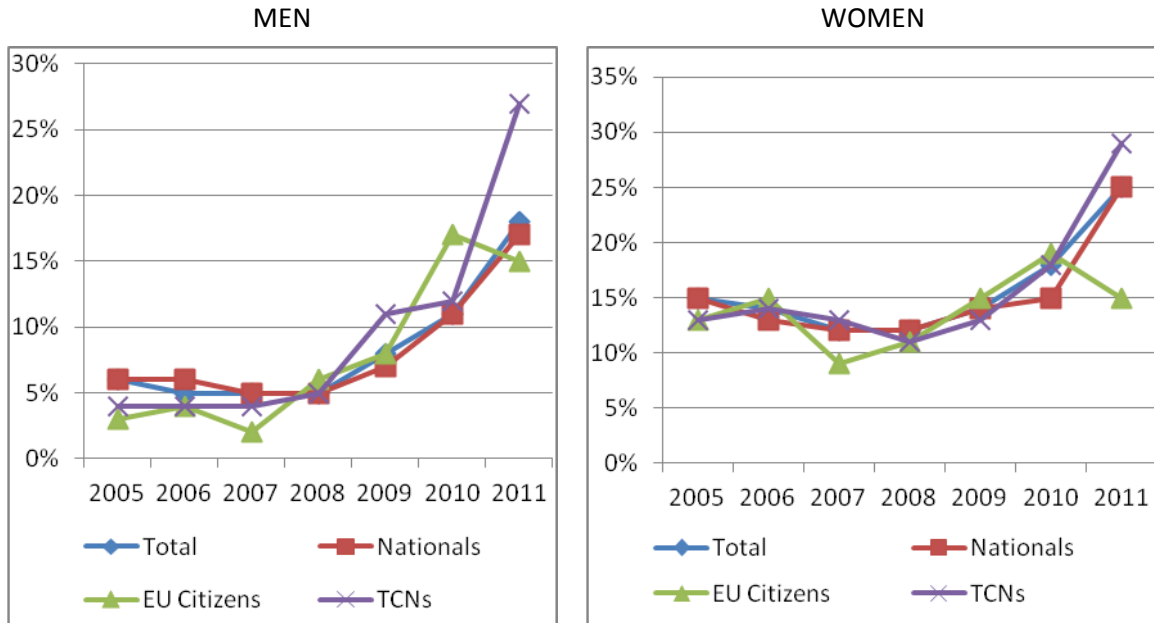
**Table 6: Unemployment rate by nationality and gender, 2005-2011**

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Total	10%	9%	8%	8%	10%	14%	21%
Nationals	10%	9%	8%	8%	10%	13%	21%
EU Citizens	8%	10%	6%	9%	12%	18%	15%
TCNs	8%	8%	7%	7%	12%	14%	28%
<b>MEN</b>							
Total	6%	5%	5%	5%	8%	11%	18%
Nationals	6%	6%	5%	5%	7%	11%	17%
EU Citizens	3%	4%	2%	6%	8%	17%	15%
TCNs	4%	4%	4%	5%	11%	12%	27%
<b>WOMEN</b>							
Total	15%	14%	12%	12%	14%	18%	25%
Nationals	15%	13%	12%	12%	14%	15%	25%
EU Citizens	13%	15%	9%	11%	15%	19%	15%
TCNs	13%	14%	13%	11%	13%	18%	29%

Source: National Statistical Service of Greece (ESYE), Labour Force Survey, 4<sup>th</sup> trimester of each year, available at [www.statistics.gr](http://www.statistics.gr).



**Figure 5: Unemployment rates by nationality and gender 2005-2011**



Source: National Statistical Service of Greece (ESYE), Labour Force Survey, 4<sup>th</sup> trimester of each year.<sup>7</sup>

Regarding the employment and unemployment rates of third country nationals and intra EU migrants, until 2009, Greece presented a typical southern European pattern: relatively high levels of unemployment (between 8% and 10%) among nationals coexisted with large numbers of foreign workers who had a very low level of unemployment (8% on average but only 5% for men from third countries as well as for male intra EU migrants (3%). 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 characterized 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 which conformed 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 in early 2009 and the change has become remarkable in 2011. The Labour Force Survey data for the period 2009-2011 show a spectacular rise in unemployment for both immigrant men and women (mainly TCNs). Immigrant women have been affected by rising unemployment in 2011 while immigrant men experienced the change already in 2009. Thus immigrant men jumped from nearly full employment to 8% (EU citizens) and 11% (TCNs) in 2009, reaching 15% (EU citizens) and an alarming 27% (TCNs) in the last trimester of 2011. Actually male TCNs seem to have resisted the crisis and registered only 12% unemployment in 2010 (up 1 percentage point from 2009) but the situation exploded at the end of 2011 when their unemployment more than doubled to 27%. By contrast male EU citizens experienced a rise in their unemployment to 17% in 2010 but the percentage was slightly lower (15%) at the end of 2011 showing that they are overall resisting better the crisis. It is hard to explain this difference as both EU and TCN migrant men are employed in the same sectors notably construction, transport, catering, low skill services. However these data of the LFS are in line with our findings from a

<sup>7</sup> Available from <http://www.statistics.gr/>

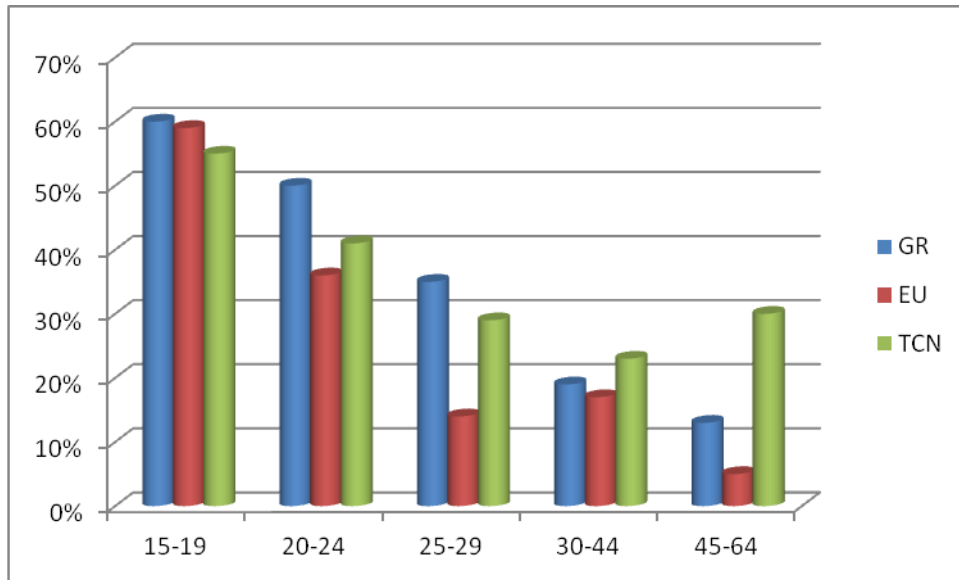
qualitative study which actually showed that Romanian and Bulgarian citizens suffered much less from unemployment and lower income than Albanians and other non EU nationalities (Triandafyllidou 2011).

Women with an on average high unemployment rate of between 11% and 13% also climbed to a worrying 29%. In the case of women the pattern is as follows: many migrant women from third countries were working in the informal labour market (e.g. as cleaners or carers without contracts and welfare stamps) and were insured under their husbands' work and welfare fund. This explains the relatively high levels of official unemployment during the period 2005-2008. What we probably notice in recent years is that migrant women who had jobs with contracts and insurance are now losing them and their unemployment rate climbs.

Interestingly unemployment of intra-EU migrants (15% for intra EU migrant men) is below the overall national level (21%) and more than 10 percentage points lower than that of male third country nationals (27% at the end of 2011). The same is true for intra EU migrant women who actually had reached 19% unemployment at the end of 2010 but who have gone down to 15% at the end of 2011, clearly much below native women (25%) and TCN women (29%). Even though the unemployment rates of intra EU migrant men and women are double or 2.5 times higher than what they used to be in 2005-2008, they do not appear to increase in 2010-2011. It is quite difficult to explain this positive trend for intra EU migrants (see also figure 3 above) and the fact that they are less affected by unemployment compared to any of the other two groups (nationals, and TCNs). Qualitative research (Triandafyllidou 2011) confirms the fact that EU citizens are less affected than TCNs in their employment and economic situation and does not show any increased trends for return to the countries of origin (Romania and Bulgarian in particular). The arguments put forward by the migrants interviewed (about 50 in total) was that the unemployment and low income situation was as bad and actually worse in the countries of origin. We should perhaps wait to see if in 2012 the different trend for EU nationals is confirmed.

Looking closer into the unemployment rates by age bracket we note that younger people are dramatically affected by unemployment with peaks of unemployment above 30% for all groups 29 or younger (with the exception of EU nationals in the 25-29 age bracket).

**Figure 6: Unemployment rates by nationality group (EU, non-EU and natives) and age bracket, 2011**



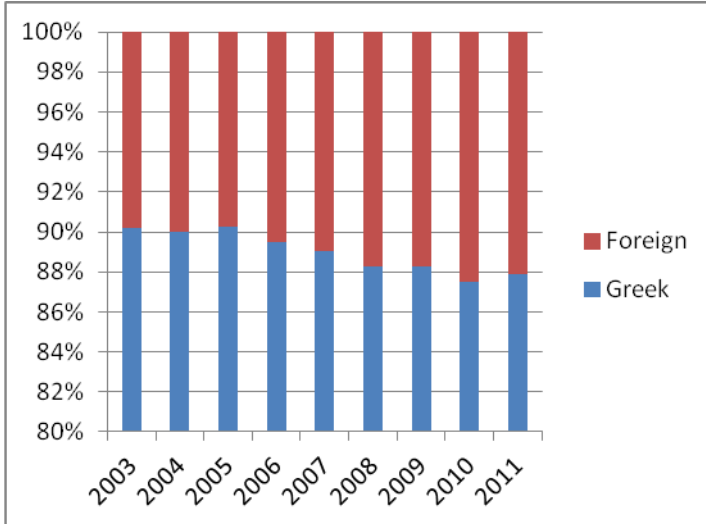
Source: National Statistical Service of Greece, LFS, 4<sup>th</sup> Trimester 2011

The youngest are particularly hit by unemployment. This is partly an endemic feature of the Greek labour market as unemployment rates for people under 24 years of age have been consistently high (over 20%) in the period 2005-2010. However in the last trimester of 2011 (see figure 6 above) they climb to over 50%.

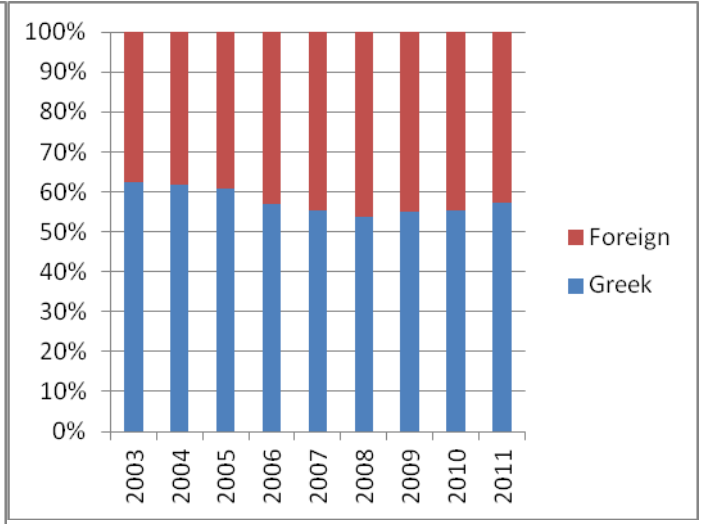
A more detailed look into the labour market situation of third country nationals who are dependent employees can be given from the data from the major national welfare fund insuring dependent employees (IKA, Social Insurance Institute). In June 2011 approximately 13% of those insured were foreign and the percentage was much higher in the construction sector where foreign workers accounted for almost 38%, yet, the percentages of insured immigrants have dropped in comparison to 2010 (See figure 7 below).

**Figure 7: Insured Workers by nationality in Percentages**

**Common Enterprises**



**Constructions**

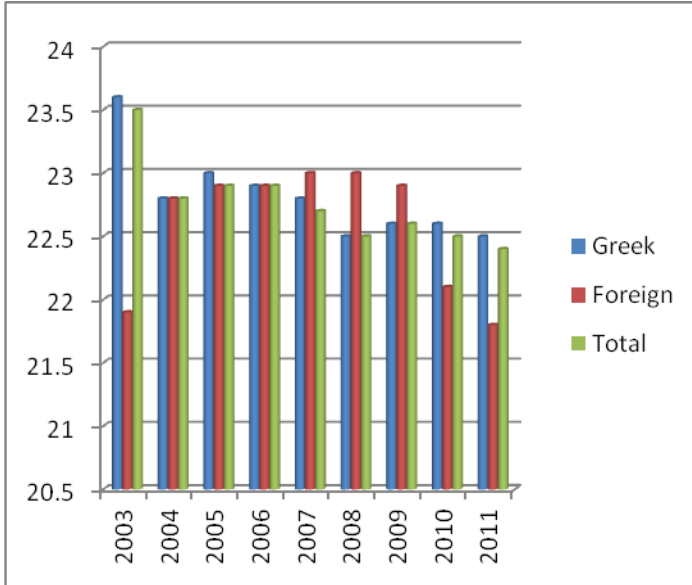


Source: IKA, June 2003-2011, available at [www.ika.gr](http://www.ika.gr)

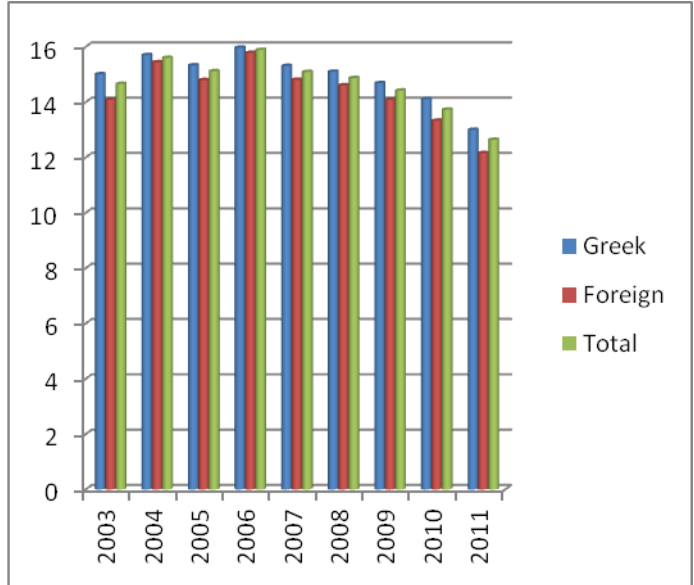
Increasing unemployment is complemented by a decrease of working days per month for those employed which is more dramatic for foreign workers (see figure 8 below).

**Figure 8: Days of employment per month**

Common Enterprises



Construction

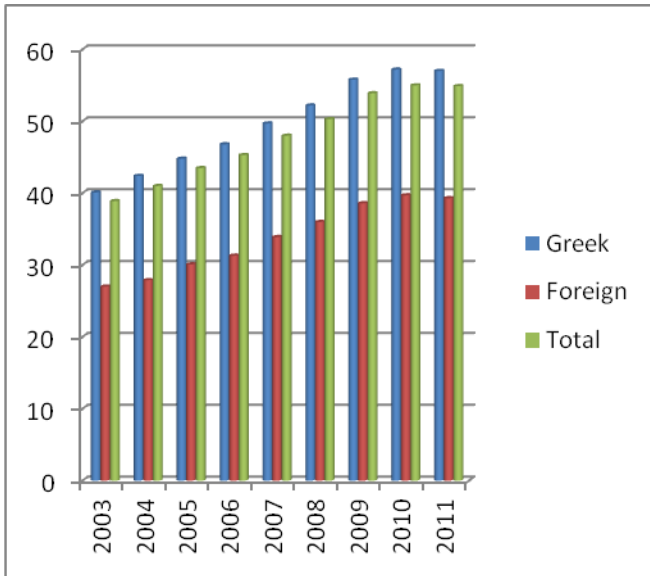


Source: IKA, June 2003-2011, available at [www.ika.gr](http://www.ika.gr)

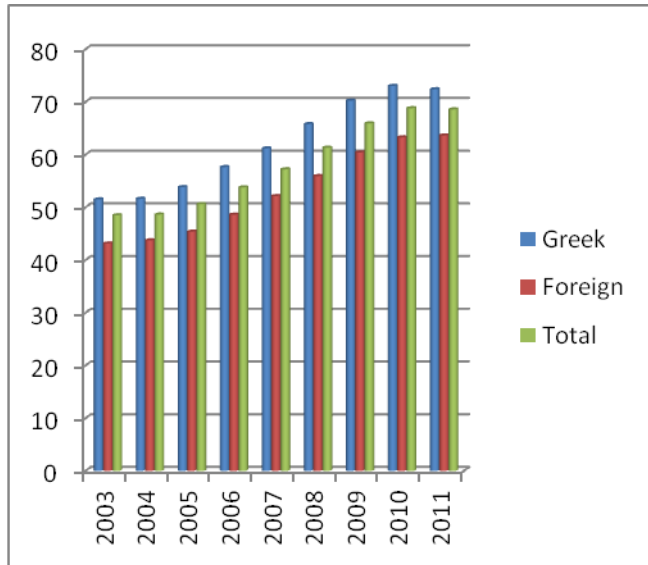
Overall, the data obtained from IKA in 2011 on waged labourers show a significant inequality between the wages of different nationalities (See figure 9 below). Foreign workers receive wages that are approximately 30% lower than those of natives for general waged work and services. However, this inequality is significantly lower (between 6% and 15%) when it comes to the construction sector. It is also noteworthy that inequality similarly affects 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 (Triandafyllidou and Maroufouf 2008). 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. Additionally, 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 until 2010 and then slightly decrease again in parallel in 2011, the gap between the wages of Greek and foreign workers remains quite stable.

**Figure 9: Daily Wages**

**Common Enterprises**



**Construction**



Source: IKA, June 2003-2011

In summary, it comes as no surprise that the Greek economy is shrinking and that unemployment has been quickly rising, both for natives and for third country nationals. The employment prospects for both men and women from non EU countries are rather bleak as they are doubly hit by the crisis. Men suffer because of the crisis in the construction sector, in public works and in transport which has left them out of work. Women start suffering too however as the crisis is hitting now also middle class Greek families who start from cutting off cleaning and caring services usually provided by foreign women. There is a slight albeit not dramatic decrease in registered wages according to the Labour Force Survey Data for the fourth trimester of each year up to 2011, however qualitative research (Triandafyllidou 2011: 14) suggests otherwise

“Both construction workers and cleaning persons or house maids note that daily wages have significantly decreased. As regards male workers, wages at the construction sector have been reduced from 50 Euro plus welfare stamps to 30-40 Euro for a day’s work without insurance (Int. 13, 24 and 26 men from Albania, Int. 16, man from Bulgaria; Int. 40 man from Romania). For sewing work in small manufacturing businesses in northern Greece, Bangladeshi migrants who arrived in Greece during the last year, without papers, receive approx. 400 Euro net, without a contract nor welfare contributions for 10-12 hours of work every day for 5 or 6 days a week. Street peddlers (Int. 31, Pakistani man) who are also recent arrivals and undocumented earn even less. They usually earn 2-3 Euros per day by selling flowers or cleaning windows at traffic lights in Athens or Thessalonike, adding up to about 100 Euro per month. Our interviews suggest that newly

arrived undocumented migrants from Asia (Pakistan or Bangladesh) go through the same path: they are initially unemployed and supported by fellow nationals that they actually meet in Greece. They then get some contacts and try with street peddling. With some luck and thanks to network contacts from the home countries they eventually manage to get a job in a small textile factory.

For cleaning work the daily wage used to be 40-45 Euro without welfare contributions and now it has gone down to 30 Euro or even less. Live in maids used to work for 800 Euro but now they accept 500 or 600 Euro and feel a lot of insecurity as to whether they can keep their job, or whether they can find a new job if they become unemployed (Int.37 and 38, two women from Bulgaria; Int. 41-44, Georgian women, Int. 45 Ukrainian woman) while for live-out maids working full time for one employer wages also are approximately 600 to 700 Euro (i.e. the equivalent of the minimum net salary).<sup>8</sup>

There are no studies demonstrating this yet but there is anecdotal evidence that Greeks are going back to tourism and catering jobs that they were previously outsourcing to migrant workers.

Thus, we are noticing an overall significant reduction of the demand for migrant labour in the typical niche sectors – such demand is simply disappearing (in the case of cleaning and caring, being replaced by unpaid domestic work by family members) or being met by native workers (in tourism and catering). However, we have no sufficient qualitative and quantitative evidence on these labour market mechanisms so far.

#### **4.1 Problems in stay permit renewal**

It is not easy for immigrant workers in Greece to find and keep a job in the formal labour market with proper contract and welfare insurance that would allow them to renew their stay permit when it expires. There are two kinds of problems here. First, the problem of securing a legal job and, second, the immense delays in the issuing/renewing of stay permits that has marked the Greek policy since the late 1990s, when the first attempts to manage migration started.

Until 2011, immigrants had to collect 200 daily welfare stamps in each calendar year to have their permit renewed. When regularising their status for the first time, they are allowed to buy these welfare stamps independently from the National Institute for Welfare Insurance (IKA) or from the Agricultural Insurance Organisation (OGA). However, when renewing their permits they are *normally* not allowed to buy missing stamps. The rationale behind the law here is to oblige the employers to pay welfare

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<sup>8</sup> The results presented here come from the paper: Triandafyllidou, A. (2011) Migrant Livelihoods during the Greek crisis, presented at the Conference on migration policies in Southern Europe and the Balkans co-organised by the Institute of Strategic and Development Studies – Andreas Papandreou (ISTAME) and the University of Leicester on 19 December 2011. The data presented in the paper refer to interviews conducted with migrants in the spring and summer of 2011. We are continuing this study as we believe that the situation has further evolved (in negative ways) both for migrants and natives and this information might even be out of date now.

contributions to their employees, but it is unfortunately common knowledge that as long as employer inspections and sanctions are scarce, it is usually the workers that pay for the welfare stamps.

Things have got worse during the last year because of the Greek economic crisis and the continuing crisis in the construction sector that has left many migrant men unemployed. In reaction to this situation, the Ministry of Labour has announced on 13 January 2011 that they were considering options for lowering the number of welfare stamps (and hence of working days per year) necessary for a migrant to renew her/his stay permit. On 23 May 2011 the Vice Minister for Migration, Anna Dalara, announced that they were considering for an ad hoc regularization of migrants who are employed. However, no regularization programme was passed and Vice Minister Anna Dalara was released of her duties in June 2011 after a government re-shufflement. However in the summer of 2011 the Ministry of Labour issued a Ministerial decision<sup>9</sup> which brought the number of necessary welfare stamps for stay permit renewal down to 120 welfare stamps per year or 240 stamps per 2 years.

## **4.2 Opportunities to regain legal status for long term migrants**

Law 3907/2011<sup>10</sup> voted by Greek Parliament in January 2011 opens the possibility of regularization for irregular migrants or rejected asylum seekers can prove that they have been living in Greece for the past 12 years (article 44). This provision modifies the already existing possibility of issuing stay permits for humanitarian reasons (article 44 of law 3386.2005). Permits issued under the new law in 2011 were 1,150, i.e. about 50% less than in 2010 and previous years<sup>11</sup> when such permits were approx. 2,000 per year.<sup>12</sup> People who receive this type of permit (of initial annual or 2 year duration, then renewed every 2 years) are allowed to work as dependent employees. They are also allowed to work as self employed if they held in the past a self-employment stay permit

In addition irregular migrants for whom there is an expulsion decision but the expulsion of whom is not possible either because of their health situation or because their identity cannot be established, and hence they cannot be removed, receive provisional stay permits of six month duration, renewable. During the waiting period as ‘non-removables’ the Greek state has an obligation to provide for decent accommodation and living conditions. If the state is not able to provide such conditions, the third country nationals in question are allowed to work as dependent employees. There have been approximately 1,700 such stay permits issued in total during the period 2011 until May

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<sup>9</sup> Ministerial Decision: K.Y.A. 15055/546/10.8.2011

<sup>10</sup> Entitled: Creation of an Asylum Office and an Office of First Reception, adaptation of Greek legislation to the Directive 2008/115/EC ‘concerning the common rules and procedures in the EU member states for the return of illegally residing third country nationals, and other provisions

<sup>11</sup> Data released by the Ministry of Interior in July 2012 in a special report on the impact of the new law on naturalisation on the migration situation in Greece.

<sup>12</sup> The documents required for applying for this status were specified by Ministerial Decision 21879 of 30 August 2011



2012 (data provided by the Greek police). However the ministerial decision allowing holders of these permits to work has not been issued yet.

### **4.3 The cheque system for domestic workers**

The introduction of the cheque system (*εργόσημα*) can be seen as a step towards the right direction although it is too early to evaluate its impact. This policy, aimed at tackling uninsured work and the shadow economy, was introduced in September 2011. Payments for domestic services, and a few other sectors, can be made through cheques which can be purchased by the employer at post offices and a number of banks. The amount of the cheque includes the employee's social security contributions which are deducted when the employee cashes the cheque.<sup>13</sup>

## **5. Emigration from Greece to other EU countries**

There has been a lot of discussion as to whether Greeks are emigrating abroad to seek employment since the unemployment average for nationals was at 21% but stands at approximately 55% for young persons under 25 years of age. 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. It is most likely that any emigration may be partly caught in the 2011 national census data when these become available.

For the purposes of this report, we have looked for data on Greek citizens residing in countries that have not been hit particularly by the crisis and who have been mentioned in the media as preferred destinations for Greeks, notably the Netherlands, Sweden and Germany and also in the UK a 'traditional' preferred destination for highly skilled Greeks.

These presumed main destination countries show a moderate increase in inflows of Greek citizens although it is difficult to know the reasons of such increases. Greeks living in the Netherlands have increased by 10% in 2011 and by 20% in 2012 (however the overall number is in 2012 approx. 10,000 people). While Greeks living in Germany have increased only by 3% between 2010 and 2011 (while they had actually slightly decreased between 2009 and 2010). In the UK there has been an increase of 20% between 2011 and 2012 and in Sweden there has been an increase of 10% in the inflows of Greeks from 2009 to 2010 and an increase of 70% from 2010 to 2011. However, overall inflows were in 2011 approx. one thousand people. Taking into account that Greece has a nearly 11 million population of which approx. 10 million are Greek citizens this means that a tiny fraction has been emigrating. In addition data on stocks may disguise a certain level of inflows and outflows that even out each other to some extent. This may be particularly

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13 IKA, Circular nr: 68 with reference to Law 3863/2010 & Law 3996/2011

the case of Germany where some pensioners may have come back to Greece while some young people may have emigrated for work to Germany – however the overall number of Greek citizens living in Germany may not have changed dramatically.

Nonetheless the data above and the percentages of increase may be signaling a new trend of emigration from Greece. Anecdotal evidence suggests that it is the high skilled (University education, at least one foreign language) that emigrate.

**Table 7: Greeks abroad, selected data on stocks and flows, 2009-2012**

<b>Stock of Greek citizens</b>					
<b>Netherlands</b>	2009	2010	2011	2012	
	7,383	7,781	8,584	10,100	
<b>Flows from Greece to Sweden</b>					
<b>Sweden</b>	2009	2010	2011		
	306	376	622		
	211	226	396		
<b>Greeks in Germany, stocks</b>	2009	2010	2011		
	278,063	276,685	283,684		
<b>Stocks in the United Kingdom</b>					
		2010	2011		
		30,000	26,000		
<b>estimated inflow + or -</b>		+ 8,000	+ 7,000		

## 6. Migrant Integration: Recent Policy Developments and their Impact

### 6.1 Reform of Greek Citizenship Law and Local Voting Rights for TCNs

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. 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 *Voreioipirotes*), could apply after ten years of legal residence distributed in the last 12 calendar years. Implementation was, however, particularly restrictive, and citizenship acquisitions were counted in two-digit numbers (see table 6 below).

In November 2006, a joint decision by the Ministries of Interior and Foreign Affairs facilitated the naturalization procedure for ethnic Greek Albanians, which waived the fee and the discretionary character of the naturalization judgment. That decision was passed largely without debates 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 57,000 people acquired Greek citizenship, the vast majority of whom were ethnic Greek Albanian citizens.

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

**Table 6: 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. We have not yet received the updated figures for either year nor for 2012.

Concerning the second generation of immigrants, the new law provides for children born in Greece of foreign parents to become Greek citizens through a simple declaration of their parents, provided that both parents have been living in Greece legally for at least five 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 be naturalized with a simple declaration by their parents provided again that both parents have been living in Greece legally for at least five years. Citizenship acquisition of migrant children may also make their parents' lives easier: as parents of Greek citizens they are entitled to a five-year renewable permit, 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 legally in Greece for five years. However, immigrants who wish to register to vote must also satisfy one of the following conditions: be in possession of a long term EU resident status or a national stay permit of ten years or indefinite duration, be parents of a Greek citizen, married to a Greek or EU citizen, or hold a special identity card issued to ethnic Greeks from Albania.

While the extension of local voting rights to non-EU citizens has been greeted with great satisfaction by the center-left wing parties and by a large part of civil society organizations, its impact so far on migrant political participation has been rather small. The new law introducing these rights was passed in March 2010 and it prescribed that the election lists for the then upcoming local elections of November 2010 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 number of registered have been rather small. The total number of immigrants who registered was 10,097, alongside 2,665 co-ethnics from Albania. Thus there was a total of 12,762 new voters for the November 2010 local election<sup>14</sup>. While it was 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 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.

During the last months there have been talks about reforming the citizenship law making the requirements more stringent. Actually the new Minister of Interior Evrypidis Stylianides, soon after he was appointed, has prepared a bill amending the current citizenship law prolonging the required legal stay of parents of a child born in Greece from 5 to 10 years for the child to obtain Greek citizenship. It also prolongs the required

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<sup>14</sup> Data provided by the Secretariat for Population and Social Cohesion, on 15 November 2011 upon our request

length of schooling from 6 to 9 years. It is proposed that children obtain Greek citizenship at age 18 and not upon birth even if these requirements are satisfied. The required length of stay for first generation migrants to apply for citizenship is proposed to go back from 7 to 10 years as it was before. By contrast it is proposed that foreigners who have studied in Greek schools and enter Greek Universities (upon a competitive national exam) should have a preferential path to Greek citizenship. For the time being this bill has not been voted in the Greek Parliament.

## **6.2 Facilitating acquisition of the EU long term resident status**

Law 3838/2010 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 down to the more ‘realistic’ but still excessively high 600 euro fee for the application. 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. Law 4018/2011 has also facilitated the acquisition of long term EU resident status as it provides for immigrants that can prove their knowledge of Greek language and history through a written test to skip the specific state-run course, as law 3386/2005 prescribed. This facilitation is important not only for the enhanced status of protection that the long term resident status entails but also because having long term EU resident status is a prerequisite for applying for naturalization under the provisions of the 3838/2010 law on citizenship.

## **6.3 Local Integration Councils**

In addition to the above measures, the Socialist government (in power between November 2009 and November 2011) introduced law 3852/3010 (the so-called Kallikratis law) which concerns the reorganization of local and regional governments. This law instructs the creation of Councils for Migrant Integration at the municipal level. These councils are composed of 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 naturally it is too early to assess their role and impact on favouring migrant integration and civic participation.

## **6.4 Reform of stay permit management**

Law 4018/2011 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 centers operating until now. In the previous system, migrants had to submit their applications for issuing/renewing a stay permit at the municipal offices that 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 and many errors committed due to the fact that most of these services functioned with temporary contract workers. It is unclear if this new system has brought improvements in the handling of stay permit renewals. While the initiative is positive it is most likely that the system suffers from staff shortages as most employees working in the prefectural immigration offices were under short term contracts that have not been renewed in 2010-2011.

## 7. Public opinion on migration and the rise of the far right in Greece

Surveys conducted in the period 2006 and then annually between 2008 and 2010 (January of each year) by the company Public Issue, sponsored by the large Greek daily Kathimerini (Public Issue 2010) present an ambivalent assessment of migration by lay people (see Table 2.5.1 below)

**Table 7: Public Opinion on Immigration in Greece (2006-2010)**

	2006	2008	2009	2010
Migration makes a positive contribution to the Greek economy	54	40	32	30
Migration harms the Greek economy	34	47	52	59
Migrants do jobs that Greeks do not want to do – agree	88		48	46
Migrants increase unemployment	56		39	45
Migrants do jobs that Greeks do not want to do but also increase unemployment			9	8
Local voting rights for immigrants - agree			38	46
Disagree			55	49

Sources: Table compiled by the authors on the basis of data given in Xenios Dias (2006) and Public Issue (2010). The two surveys were conducted by different companies and with different questionnaires. This table presents those questions that were common in the two surveys.

Nearly 60% of the population considers that immigration harms Greece (and only 19% consider that immigrants is good for the country). The same percentage considers that immigration is bad for the Greek economy and only 30% (down from 40% in 2008) think it is good for the Greek economy. A similar percentage (57%) believe that immigration is transforming Greek national identity (understood in a negative sense, αλλοιώνει) while 3/4s of the respondents believe that immigration increases crime rates. In contrast to the 2006 survey results, in 2010 less than half (46%) of the Greek respondents believe that immigrants do the jobs that Greeks are not willing to do while nearly 45% believe that immigrants take the jobs of Greek causing unemployment. On a more positive note the 2010 survey showed a slight increase in the percentage of respondents supporting local political rights for non citizens compared to 2009 and a

decrease in those against such rights.

In the period after 2009, which has been characterised by the economic crisis, both the political agenda and the public opinion have often shown acute signs of intolerance towards migrants. For instance a survey conducted by Public Issue (2011) in January 2011, shortly after the Minister of Citizen Protection, Christos Papoutsis, announced the construction of a wall along the border zone of Evros showed that, while the whole concept of a wall is negatively charged for the majority of those questioned (it brings to mind the Berlin wall (53%) the East block (20%) or the partition of Cyprus (18%)) and one in six felt they were not at all informed of this plan. Interestingly 46% of the respondents supported that this project is absolutely necessary regardless of its cost and at the same time a similar percentage of respondents (40%) considered the cost unbearable under the circumstances.

While there have not been public opinion surveys in 2011-2012 on migration similar to those reported in table 2.5.1 above, it is worth noting that the far right has experienced a spectacular increase in its electoral force. Two far right parties have emerged in these last 5 years: LAOS (*The People's Orthodox Rally*) is an extreme right wing formation that won 5.6% of the vote in 2009 national elections and 7.1% in the elections for the European Parliament. LAOS has participated in the provisional coalition government formed in November 2011 to deal with the crisis; this further legitimised its position in the Greek political system. In the last two elections (May and June 2012) the party has lost most of its voters declining to nearly 1%. LAOS has actually been replaced in voters' preferences by a more extremist group: *Golden Dawn*, is a nationalist far right party whose members have been repeatedly accused of carrying out hate crimes against immigrants, political opponents and ethnic minorities. Golden Dawn, with a clear racist and Nazi political position, operates in 'troubled' urban areas in terms of 'field work' proclaiming to offer security to residents, while violently attacking and terrifying immigrants and refugees. Golden Dawn gained one seat in the Athens municipal council (winning 5.3 % of the local vote) in November 2010 for the first time in its history and gathered nearly 7% of the national vote (in two consecutive national elections on 6 May and 17 June 2012) electing thus 21 members in Parliament (again it is the first time that the party enters Parliament). For both parties migration has been a priority issue and their electoral agenda and influence was highly related to their anti-immigrant and overtly racist discourse.

Since 2009, there has been a rise of hate speech that goes unaccountable voiced by more or less extremist right wing social and political actors. A recent unofficial report initiated by the UNHCR branch in Greece has registered some 63 self-reported incidents of racist violent attacks. In 18 of those there were police officers involved as perpetrators. Interestingly also in 18 cases the perpetrators were simple citizens not members of extremist right wing groups. Actually there have been recent reports by journalists which suggest that many police people are active Golden Dawn supporters.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2012/oct/12/greece-fascists-beating-people-police> and <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/video/2012/oct/26/golden-dawn-greece-police-greek-video> for relevant reports in English.

## 8. Concluding Remarks

Irregularity and instability (due to the short duration of stay permits and the difficulty to renew them by proving that one has been formally employed with welfare payments for at least 200 working days per year) remain two of the main ingredients of the Greek migration management model. After 20 years of experience as a host Greece is still to design and implement legal migration channels for third country nationals and a viable system of management for immigrants who are already in the country. Such insecurity and instability has hit particularly hard long term settled migrants during the current economic crisis. Unable to find work many see their stay permits and their 10 or more years stay in Greece evaporate into thin air, falling to the status of irregular migrants.

The brand new citizenship law that was expected to radically change the prospects of the second generation and to a large extent the prospects also of their parents is yet to take off the ground. Part of the reason is that migrant families cannot afford the 900 Euro per person fee at this difficult time even if they generally fulfill the requirements. The same is probably true for the long term resident status whose fee has been lowered to 600 Euro per person, still a substantial amount for a migrant family that is striving to make the ends meet in the current crisis context. In addition the law is currently under review by the new government with the aim of making it more difficult for people to naturalise.

Unemployment has hit hard migrants from third countries in particular, both men and women. Many Albanian migrants are heading back to Albania looking for a better future there. Migrant integration in the Greek labour market and overall public attitudes towards migration are currently heavily influenced by the acute economic and political crisis that Greece is going through. The spectacular rise of the far right is particularly worrying and even though their racist discourse and violent attacks mainly target Asian and African migrants, they certainly do not make long term migrants from Southeastern and Eastern Europe feel comfortable or welcome either. Migrants are seen now more than ever as competitors for scarce resources (like a recent row in Parliament over how many migrant children attend municipal kindergartens prove) and even scarcer jobs. Actually the rise of racist violence and the increasing ethnic prejudice and overt racism expressed in public and political discourse is particularly worrying and needs to be addressed with concrete policy measures. Such measures should include:

- Ensuring that migrant families do not (continue to) fall into irregularity because of unemployment of the main breadwinner of the family (usually the man). It is suggested that stay permits for those who live in Greece for 5 years or more are decoupled from proof of employment and welfare stamps. A stay permit of 1-year duration should be introduced for those who have been in Greece for less than 5 years.
- While labour market checks would normally be necessary in order to reduce informal employment, welfare payment evasion and exploitation of migrant (as well as non migrant) workers, it may be counter-productive to embark into an intensive labour control campaign during a period of acute recession and steeply rising unemployment.



- It is also advisable that the Greek citizenship law remains as is and is not reformed in a more restrictive direction. The data available show that there has been no abuse of the law nor any massive naturalisation that could be any source of concern.

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