

The dynamics of Ukrainian migration to Greece: Routes, decisions, practices

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Introduction and methodology

- The research was conducted in the period January 2013-October 2014
- The sample covers 14 interviews with stake-holders in Greece and Ukraine, 28 interviews with migrants in Greece and 13 interviews with returnees or family members in Ukraine.
- The analysis of the interviews follows approach of life course perspective of the respondent (Bengtson/Allen, 1993, Wingers et al. 2011, Giele/Elder, 1998, Mortimer/Shanahan, 2003).

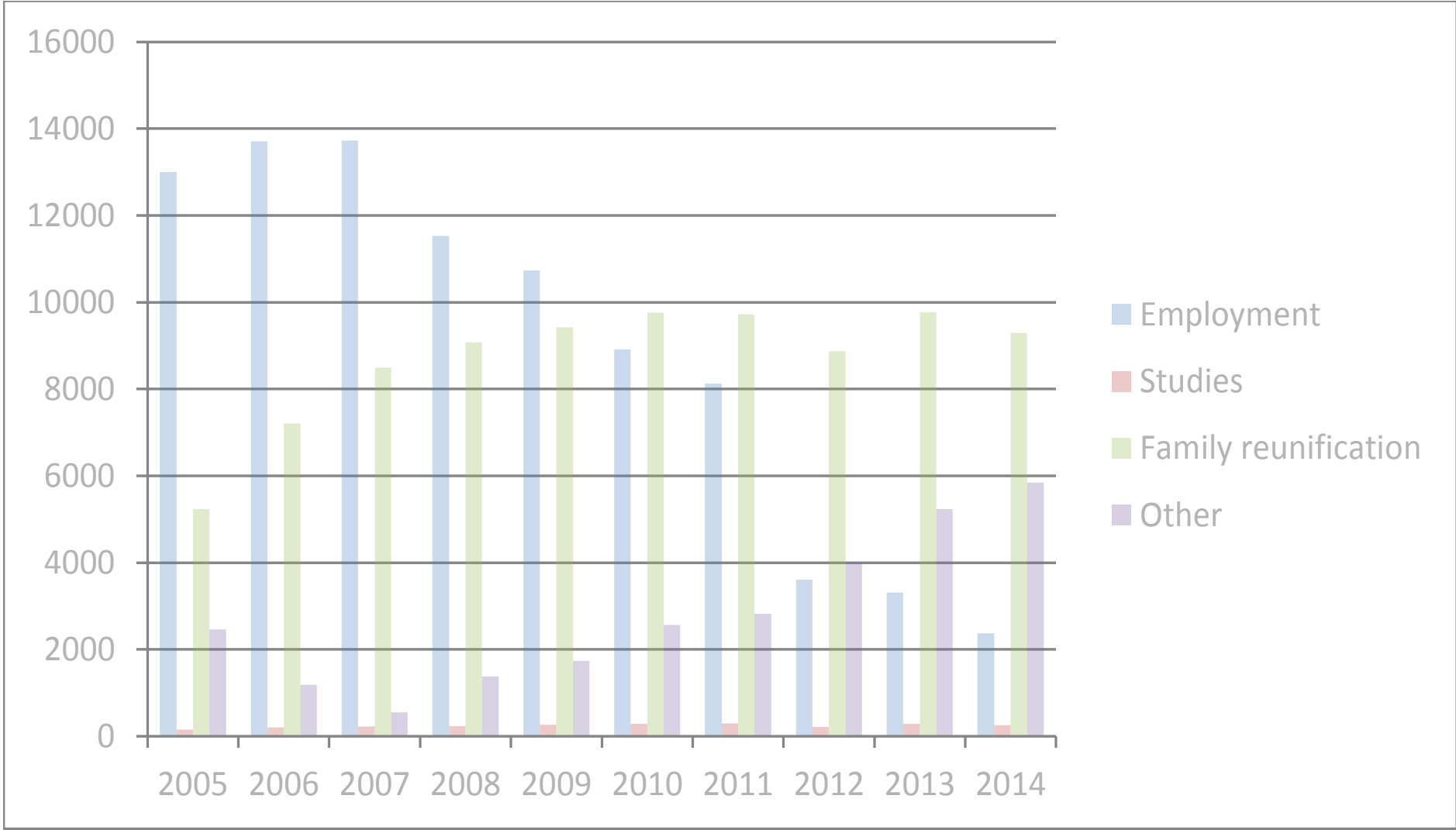
Migration of the Ukrainians to Greece

- Greece is among the first EU member states to receive immigrants for long term duration of migration since the mid-1990s, just after the release of the exit visa regime in Ukraine. In the case of Greece, women form up to 80% among the total number of Ukrainians
- Information regarding the country of destination – from social networks to internet and counselling centres.

"Why did I go there? The 1990s were difficult years in our country. First of all, we didn't receive a salary, I worked as a teacher and my husband was an engineer. We lived in the village at the time, my husband worked at the collective farm. The collective farm was ruined. After that there were only odd jobs. Salaries were often delayed; sometimes they didn't pay at all. Once they gave us roofing slate instead of money. What will we give our kids to eat? You have to find a truck, take those roofing slates, go to the market to sell it and only then you will get some money".

Woman, 46 years old, Lviv

Types of residence permits issued per year in 2005–2014





Greece as a destination and host country. Decision and preparation to migrate.

I imagined Greece differently. I was thinking about classical Greece with the Greek women in traditional costumes. I imagined it as more joyful. If someone had told me that I should take care of elderly woman, probably I wouldn't go at all, I was a teacher and it is very hard to accept the situation". Woman, 46 years old, Lviv

"We graduated from the University, we got married and we had never worked up until our departure to Greece. In Ukraine it was very difficult to find work; the employers were not paying salaries. Back then we had no internet; we were informed by my mother-in-law. We wanted to come for a couple of years to save some money. Our expectations were high, but in neither way were they justified. All our friends found jobs, built houses in Ukraine. While we live here in 28 sq.m. apartment with the children, they owe me money at work... We didn't find ourselves here... But over the years we managed to help my parents to buy an apartment in my city". Man, 38 years old, Athens.

"I was confident that someone I trust will help me and will mentor me, so I didn't give it further thought", Woman, 55 years old, Radekiv rayon.

Greece as a destination and host country. Decision and preparation to migrate.

- The role of the social networks and the pattern: “everyone did so and my mom was no exception”. In the 1990’s the immigrants were **probably not interested and had no knowledge regarding the policies** themselves, but they were **up-to-date on the practices of migration**.
- 2000’s – more reliable information. Established centres in Ukraine to inform the potential migrants on the countries of destination and the living and working conditions.
- Main pattern of migration (1993-2001): legal arrival with visa – overstaying visa duration – irregular stay in Greece – regularisation of status through regularisation programmes

Regularisation policies and their results

- Four regularisation programmes – in 1998, in 2001, in 2005 and in 2007

Residence permits per year in 2005–2012

Year	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Ukraine	20 854	22 295	22 995	22 210	22 178	21 523	20 959	16 698
Total	452 119	547 507	589 086	592 626	610 809	596 241	582 112	440 118

Source: Greek Ministry of the Interior.

Regularisations/De-regularisations

According to a monitoring report of the foreign consulates in Ukraine, including the Greek consulates in the country, seems that in 2013 Greece attracts mostly "tourists", "entrepreneurs" and "close relatives" (NGO Europe without barriers)

Ukrainians are currently well informed about Greece as a host country

From the interviews with irregular migrants in Greece, comes into sight that most of the informants **live in the country more than ten years**, and **more than 70% of them had documents in the past.**

The migrants can't sustain the social security costs and the high costs for the renewal of the stay permits. These are main reasons in their case to prefer to remain without stay permits.



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Please note

> Visas covering a short period, i. e. for transit through or intended stays in the territory of Schengen member - states not

Economic crisis and tendency for return

- Tendency to return to Ukraine (from 2007-2008), Greece is not any more a destination for new Ukrainian migrants. An exceptions to this latter concerns relatively small numbers of relatives of immigrants already in Greece who come to work for short periods of time, who should not however be considered as new arrivals. (Levchenko, 2010)
- Impact of economic crisis in the sector of construction - most of the men lost their jobs, or the working days per month and daily wages decreased dramatically. The families adopted strategies to return smoothly – they started sending their children to Sunday schools, the decision for return needs more time until they release it in practice, than the decision to migrate. They need more time to prepare for the return. It is easier to take the decision to return when they have long term stay permit, because the door to come back is open.
- Some families who went to Ukraine couldn't re-integrarte, they were feeling isolated and they came back in Greece.
- The legislation of the European Directive on family reunification has been important for the migrants, as it helped preserve the unity of the family and enabled them to take decisions while together in the same place.
- Document on asylum seekers from Ukraine was circulated by the UNHCR in the spring of 2014. It is not reported that there are applications from Greece.

Concluding remarks

- Ukrainians are well informed about the living conditions in and the practices of immigration to Greece. The reliable sources of information are changing according to the judgment of immigrants and depending on the issue for which they want to be informed for.

- Key features of Ukrainian migration to Greece include the fact that the majority of migrants are holders of stay permits – in many cases with long term duration. This also gives them more extensive timeframe to find solutions, to decide whether to return back to Ukraine or to try to find a job in Greece in cases of unemployment.

- In the last years, the Ukrainians do not violate the terms of their visas, most of them travel to Greece for tourism, to visit relatives and for business purposes

- It seems that the new generations have “lighter” migration plans – they could travel more often, for shorter period of time and are less demanding regarding the financial benefits from migration

- In many cases the elder women working as domestic helpers do not have insurance and loose the right to renew their stay permits (in the cases they have one). In that sense, it is necessary to be signed bilateral agreement between the states to transfer insurance and pension rights.

Thank you!

More on IRMA – Governing Irregular Migration: States, Actors and Intermediaries, visit its website” <http://irma.eliamep.gr/>

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