

# **Migration in Greece: Recent Developments**

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## Executive Summary

### *Economic Crisis and Refugee Crisis: Towards Normalisation*

The period between 2016 and summer 2017 has been, perhaps unexpectedly, one of overall stabilisation in Greece. As internationally the economic climate has been improving and growth accelerating in the Eurozone area, so has Greece to some extent followed suit with timid growth (0.5% for 2017), a certain decrease in unemployment (falling from 24.2% in Jan 2016 to 21.2% in July 2017) and an improvement in the country's overall economic climate.

In a similar vein, the refugee emergency of 2015 and early 2016 has receded even if important challenges have remained with regard to the processing, return, relocation or integration of the asylum seekers and irregular migrants present in the country. While after the EU Turkey statement has been implemented flows have been reduced to very small numbers and the main challenge has been to (a) process those arriving on the islands after March 2016 and potentially return them to Turkey or to their countries of origin, or indeed give them asylum, and (b) process the asylum seekers stuck in the mainland to either relocate to another EU country under the EU's emergency relocation scheme or to eventually integrate in Greece.

### *Institutional Developments*

Both the normalisation of the migration situation in Greece and the need for long term structural efforts and coordination at national level seem to have brought to the creation of the Ministry of Migration Policy. Indeed, as of November 2016, the Ministry of Migration Policy is established, organized into three main branches:

- a. the General Secretariat for Migration Policy of the former Ministry of Interior and Administration Reconstruction, except for the Directorate of Citizenship that remains at the Ministry of the Interior;
- b. the General Secretariat of Reception of the former Ministry of Interior and Administrative Reconstruction;
- c. the independent Asylum Service and the independent "Appeals Authority".

### *Asylum, Transit and Returns*

#### *Data*

The total number of arrivals in Greece from Turkey was 847,084 during the entire 2015. Flows continued at a high rate during the first two months of 2016, with 147,000 people arriving but total flows for 2016 stood only at 173,561 showing the dramatic decrease of the flows after the implementation of the EU Turkey statement.

While flows were dramatically reduced to a trickle after March 2016, people continued to arrive from Turkey to the Greek islands. As of August 1, 2017, according to government figures, there were 35,114 asylum-seekers and migrants on the Greek mainland, and 14,354 on the islands, living in official sites and other state-run facilities.

As of the 20<sup>th</sup> of August 2017, the Asylum Service had requested the relocation of 24,705 persons (of the 27,369 who had applied) while the total number of relocation applications that have been accepted stands at 22,285. According to European Commission data, 20,362 people

had actually been relocated from Greece as of 28 September 2017.

*With regard to apprehensions and returns:*

In 2017, Albanians come back to being the largest nationality group in terms of apprehensions, as in the period prior to 2015. Syrians, Iraqis and Afghans remain the most important nationality groups for the sea borders. This is in stark difference compared to 2015 and 2016 and reflect of course the closure of the borders.

Data on returns and readmissions are a useful complement to this overview of irregular migrant and asylum seeker inflows and outflows: returns to Albania declined during 2017, yet still remain by far the largest group. While Pakistanis and Georgians were among the most common returned nationalities in 2014-2015, in 2016-2017, Moroccans, Algerians as well as Iraqis and Afghans emerged among the largest nationality groups for returns and readmissions.

According to IOM statistics, nearly 20,000 people have been returned through the Assisted Voluntary Return procedure (which however may also include people who are returned after apprehension) in the period between January 2014 and August 2017.

With regard to returns under the EU-Turkey Statement, based on the press releases of the Greek Ministry of Citizen Protection 1,217 persons have been returned between April 2016 and the 19<sup>th</sup> of June 2017. It should be noted that none of the Syrians have been returned on the basis that their asylum claim was found inadmissible. Of the total number of returnees, 39 per cent expressed no will to apply for asylum, 29 per cent were rejected asylum seekers and 15 per cent withdrew their will to apply for asylum or their actual asylum application.

*With regard to asylum seeker nationalities and recognition rates:*

With regard to asylum applicants' nationalities, their majority are Syrians (36.2 per cent), followed by Pakistanis (12.4 per cent), Afghans (11.7 per cent), Iraqis (8.6 per cent) and Albanians (4.2 per cent). The nationalities with the highest recognition rates are Syrians (99.5 per cent) and Palestinians (93.2 per cent) while the countries of origin of those with the lowest recognition rates are Georgia (0.0 per cent), Albania (0.2 per cent), Ghana (0.6 per cent) and Armenia (0.7 per cent). Finally, as of the 31<sup>st</sup> of July 2017, the number of first instance asylum decisions pending was 27,545.

*The Special Border Regime*

A notable development in Greece has been the establishment of a special border regime for asylum processing as per Article 60(4) of Law 4375/2016, which is in contradiction with other provisions on the asylum procedure. More specifically, the ministries of Interior and Defence may activate exceptional measures in the event of large numbers of arrivals lodging asylum applications at the border. As a result, the majority of those arriving to Greece by sea after the EU-Turkey Agreement are obliged to remain in the islands while their asylum applications are being processed, leading to a situation of overcrowded facilities and complaints by local societies.

In addition, the "safe third country" (Article 56(1) L 4375/2016) concept is considered as ground for inadmissibility – the admissibility test is a sort of pre-asylum test which is applied solely in the context of the Fast-Track Border Procedure (Article 60(4) L 4375/2016) on the islands for those arrived after 20 March 2016 and subject to the EU-Turkey statement. As a result, the asylum applications of the majority of Syrians arriving in Greece after the release of the EU-Turkey statement are found inadmissible on the first instance. The newly established

Appeals Committees generally upheld the inadmissibility decisions, yet, two Syrians challenged these second instance decisions before the Council of State, leading to a de facto suspension of second instance decision pending the outcome. In a very recent turn (on 28 September 2017), the Council of State rejected the final appeals of the two Syrian asylum seekers mentioned above (who were supported legally by the NGO Greek Council for Refugees) declaring their asylum claims inadmissible.

### *Labour Market and Economic Migration Management*

Unemployment rates for Greece's general population show a steady decrease over the past two years. The same trend is followed by male Third Country Nationals yet for their female counterparts the highest unemployment rates were observed in 2016, while interestingly enough for Non-Greek EU citizens, regardless of gender, unemployment rates were lower in 2015 than in 2016 and 2017.

One wonders whether this is a statistical shortcoming of the LFS data related to the area of employment of EU nationals or to the fact that EU nationals can work also without a contract as they do not need to prove employment to renew their permits. In other words, one wonders whether EU citizens fall into the same economic crisis trap like Greek natives – being offered informal, uninsured, temporary work and hence officially appearing as unemployed, while at the same time being still foreigners they are discriminated against compared to Greeks and hence do not benefit from the overall improvement of the labour market.

### *Emigration from Greece*

Greece is going through what has been described as its third phase of mass emigration. This phase differs from the previous two in terms of the age, education level, and professional experience of the emigrants. A Bank of Greece report (Lazaretou 2016) published in 2016 finds that 427,000 Greeks have left the country since 2008. In 2013, the total number of emigrants leaving Greece has been estimated at 117,094 persons. For 2014 and 2015, estimates are lower, but still over 100,000 people and it is likely that emigration will continue in the years to come.

### *Concluding Remarks*

Greece is undergoing a period of stabilisation and normalisation both as regards its financial and employment situation and as regards the appeasing of the refugee emergency and its convergence into a more medium-term integration issue. Important and largely successful integration measures have been taken with regards to asylum seekers in mainland Greece including accommodation and education, closure of the camps and mainstreaming access to the public health system. The role of civil society organisations has been crucial as intermediaries for referral and as providers of first instance assistance and first reception services. Naturally a lot remains to be done and this is really an important challenge for Greek society and the Greek state but one might say, that 18 months on from the border closure the situation on mainland Greece has evolved positively out of important efforts of the state, civil society and volunteers.

Another positive development has been the increased naturalisation of settled migrants particularly the second and 1.5 generation through the provisions of the 2015 reformed citizenship law which has led to 19,000 new citizens through the birth and education pathway.

In addition, the permits for exceptional reasons continue to try and get back to legality those settled migrant families that had lost their permits because of protracted unemployment (usually of the main male breadwinner in the household on whom the other family members' permits depended). In addition, there is a steady conversion of short term (1-2 years) to long term (5 or 10 years) permits allowing thus both to resolve the conundrum of befallen irregularity and helping migrants to feel secure and settled in Greece.

What remains a catch 22 situation is that of the asylum seekers stranded on the Greek islands. While there have been positive developments in terms of relocation and just over 20,000 people who arrived to Greece until 19 March 2016, have been relocated to other EU countries, those stranded on the islands because they arrived on the 20<sup>th</sup> of March or later are literally trapped there. Nearly 15,000 people stay currently on the Greek islands with little hope of moving on whether to mainland Greece or to other European countries, but also not yet returned to either Turkey or their country of origin. Very poor living conditions and the lack of hope have often led to tension and violence in the camps as well as rising discontents among local inhabitants.

## 1. Introduction

The period between 2016 and summer 2017 has been, perhaps unexpectedly, one of overall stabilisation in Greece. As internationally the economic climate has been improving and growth accelerating in the Eurozone area, so has Greece to some extent followed suit with timid growth (0.5% for 2017), a certain decrease in unemployment (falling from 24.2% in Jan 2016 to 21.2% in July 2017) and an improvement in the country's overall economic climate.

In a similar vein, the refugee emergency of 2015 and early 2016 has receded even if important challenges have remained with regard to the processing, return, relocation or integration of the asylum seekers and irregular migrants present in the country. While after the EU Turkey statement has been implemented<sup>1</sup> flows have been reduced to very small numbers and the main challenge has been to (a) process those arriving on the islands after March 2016 and potentially return them to Turkey or to their countries of origin, or indeed give them asylum, and (b) process the asylum seekers stuck in the mainland to either relocated to another EU country under the EU's emergency relocation scheme or to eventually integrate in Greece.

Indeed, as of the summer of 2016 and after the completion of the registration of all asylum seekers in the mainland, the challenge of managing huge transit flows has been transformed to the challenge of receiving and processing those tens of thousands of asylum seekers and migrants already transferred to mainland Greece as well as the few thousands that have been "trapped" on the Aegean islands in view of their return to Turkey under the EU Turkey statement.

After first reception and registration (completed on 1 August 2016 with approximately 29,000 people registered) efforts were geared towards normalisation, notably closing the camps and moving people to suitable accommodation, possibly also in different parts of Greece, and of course the processing of asylum claims and the submission of relocation claims to other EU countries.

In parallel to this, Greece has been seeking to both normalise the situation of the long term settled migrants – indeed the conversion of temporary stay permits to long term permits is notable, and to bring back to legality those migrants who had lost their papers because of protracted unemployment (hence grant them permits for exceptional reasons). An interesting development is the rise of stay permits for investors (people investing 250,000 euro or more whether in real estate or in starting up a business) which counts some 500 people per year and is mainly chosen by Chinese and Russian nationals as well as people from the MENA region.

Taking into account both the international and the national context, this report offers an overview of the immigrant population in Greece, its size and main socio-demographic features, as well as its labour market insertion. Special attention is paid to the current situation as regards

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<sup>1</sup> The EU-Turkey Statement provides that all migrants who arrived on Greek islands via Turkey or who are intercepted in the Aegean Sea after that date (18 March 2016) will be returned to Turkey. In exchange, the EU agreed, among other things, to relocate directly from Turkey a number of Syrians equal to the number of those intercepted and returned to Turkey from Greece. The Agreement applies to all irregular migrants and asylum seekers who arrived in Greece after 18 March 2016 as Turkey is declared a safe third country and hence Article 38 of the Asylum Procedures Directive concerning the Safe Third Country principle applies.

the flows of asylum seekers and irregular migrants who arrived in the country mainly during 2015 and 2016. The report outlines the main developments in migration and asylum policy more generally and the challenges that the country is facing with regard to emigration.

## 2. The Migrant Population in Greece

The 2011 national census<sup>2</sup> data registered 713,000 third-country nationals<sup>3</sup> and 199,000 EU citizens (non-Greek) living in Greece accounting, respectively, for 6.5 per cent and 1.8 per cent of the total resident population – hence a total of 8.3% of the resident population in the country.

More recent data from the 2017 Labour Force Survey (2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter) suggests a significant decline in the total migrant population with 430,873 third country nationals (TCNs) and 85,354 EU citizens (non-Greeks) (see tables 1 and 2 below), corresponding to 4 per cent and 0.8 per cent, respectively, of the total resident population (i.e. a nearly 60% reduction from 8.3% to 4.8%).

**Table 1: Stock of foreign population in Greece, 2nd quarter 2017**

|                                  | Size of immigrant stock | % of total resident population |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Total TCN population             | 430,873                 | 4 %                            |
| Total EU population (non-Greeks) | 99,422                  | 0.8 %                          |
| Total immigrant stock            | 516,227                 | 4.8 %                          |
| Total population of Greece       | 10,221,074              | 100.00                         |

Source: Hellenic Statistical Authority (EL.STAT.), Labour Force Survey 2017, 2nd Quarter.

However a closer look at the valid stay permits<sup>4</sup> for TCNs as provided by the Ministry of Migration Policy (see table 2) point to a higher number of third country nationals, notably 556,000 persons, without including EU nationals. In addition as can be seen further below (see Tables 4 and 5) there are 85,000 applications for permits that are in process which means that the people are present in the country and are applying for renewal. If the nearly 100,000 EU nationals estimated by LFS is close to reality then **we can assume that the immigrant**

<sup>2</sup> While the national census of 2011 does not provide the most up to date data for 2016, it is worth consulting as regards the total migrant population residing in Greek as it does not distinguish between legal and undocumented residents. Even though one might consider that recent arrivals were not registered as at all probability they lacked a fixed domicile.

<sup>3</sup> The largest immigrant groups were Albanians (364,132), Bulgarians (31,569), Romanians (23,208), Pakistanis (15,347), Georgians (13,915), Ukrainians (11,059), followed by Russians (11,010), and finally Poles (8,384). It should be noted again here that data provided by LFS are purely indicative, as they are accompanied by extremely large sampling errors.

<sup>4</sup> LFS estimates certainly point to a decrease of the country's migrant population. The gap between the LFS estimated number and the number of valid stay permits according to the Migration Ministry data is significant and difficult to explain.

population in Greece stands at 735,000 approximately corresponding to 7.4% of the total population in the country.

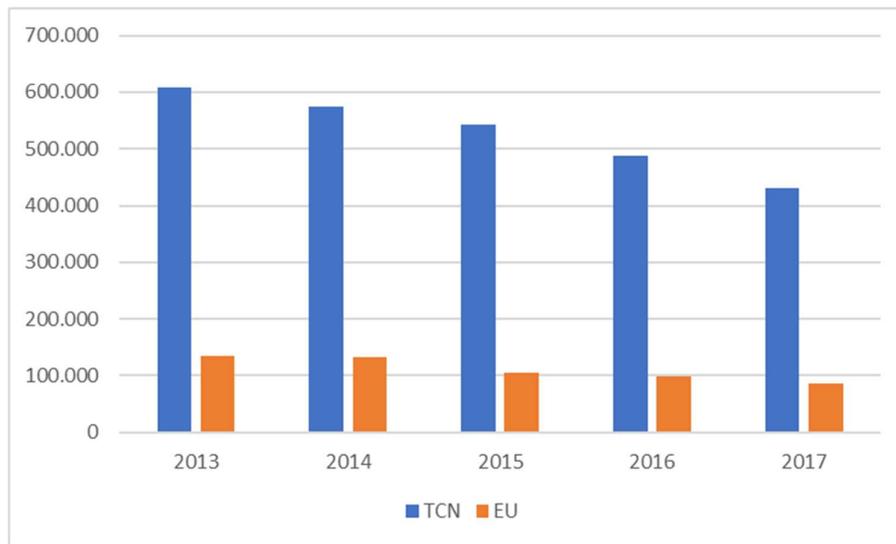
**Table 2: Valid stay permits for third-country nationals, per gender 2010-2017**

| Valid Stay permits TCNs | 2012           | 2013           | 2014           | 2015           | 2016           | 2017*          |
|-------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Men                     | 297,924        | 292,460        | 288,837        | 298,800        | 303,289        | 291,785        |
| Women                   | 262,437        | 262,292        | 261,824        | 273,569        | 276,447        | 264,801        |
| <b>Total</b>            | <b>560,361</b> | <b>554,752</b> | <b>550,661</b> | <b>572,369</b> | <b>579,736</b> | <b>556,586</b> |

Source: Data for 2012-2016 provided by the Ministry of Migration Policy, database of permits for TCNs, upon request. Data for 2017 are available at <http://www.immigration.gov.gr/>

Note: Data refer to 31 December of each year. Data for 2017 refer to 30 June.

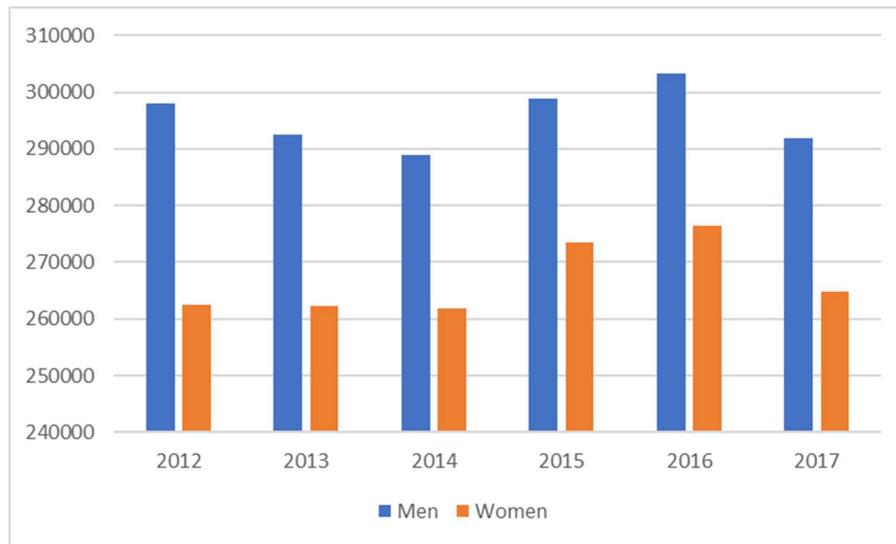
**Figure 1: Stock of foreign population in Greece, 2013-2017**



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

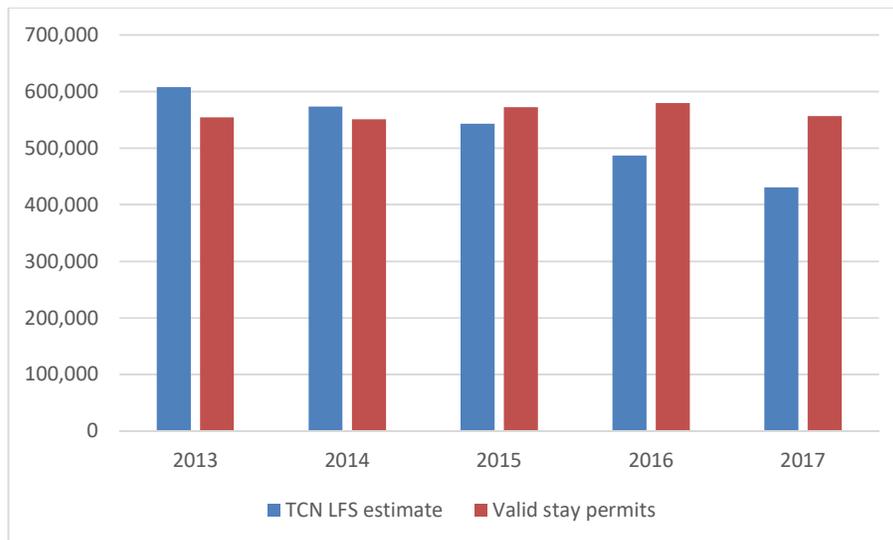
While we know that the LFS may underestimate smaller nationality groups (due to sampling issues) or people working in atypical jobs or with atypical housing situations (e.g. domestic workers), this is no sufficient explanation. One explanation could be though that there are several Albanian families with long term stay permits who have relocated to Albania or who are circulating between the two countries in the effort to maximise income and employment. Several configurations are possible, notably the family staying in Greece and the father circulating, or the family staying in Albania and the father working for shorter or longer periods in Greece (see also Figure 3 comparing LFS and stay permit data evolution in the period 2013-2017).

**Figure 2: Legal migrants (stock) Greece by gender, 2012-2017\***



Source: Data for 2012-2016 provided by the Ministry of Migration Policy, database of permits for TCNs, upon request. Data for 2017 are available at <http://www.immigration.gov.gr/>  
 Note: Data refer to 31 December of each year. Data for 2017 refer to 30 June.

**Figure 3: Migrant population stocks in Greece, 2013-2017, comparing LFS and Stay Permit Data**



Looking actually at the evolution of stay permits data, we would presume that the migrant population in Greece is undergoing a period of stabilisation and long-term integration. The numbers do not change much and as we shall see below the number of long term stay permits has considerably increased, along with naturalisations too (particularly for the second and the

1.5 generation – i.e. children born in Greece or who arrived in Greece in their early school years) (see Table 2, Table 3 and Table 12).

### 3. Composition and Features of the Immigrant Population

An estimated 60 per cent of Greece’s foreign population is Albanian, while the second largest group are Bulgarian nationals, although their percentage of the total migrant population is considerably smaller. Romanians and Georgians are the third and fourth largest communities according to LFS data. While data on valid permits at the end of June 2017 provide for the most accurate picture concerning the third-country nationals’ population, the 2011 census data are a useful source of comparison.

**Table 3: National Composition of the Migrant Population (top 15 nationalities)**

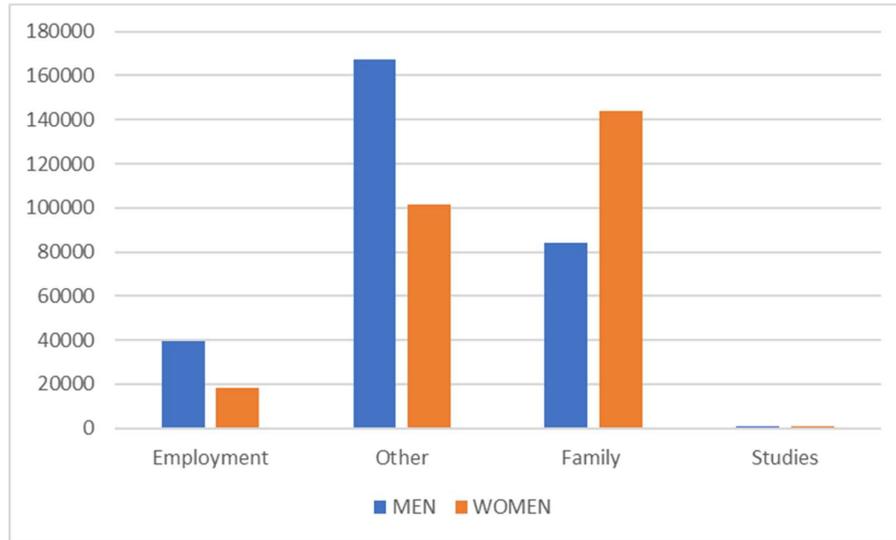
|                   | Population     | Labour Force       |              | TCN valid permits |              |
|-------------------|----------------|--------------------|--------------|-------------------|--------------|
|                   | Census 2011    | 2nd Trimester 2017 |              | on 30.06.2017     |              |
| Country of Origin | Number         | Number             | Percentage   | Number            | Percentage   |
| <b>Albania</b>    | 480,851        | 325,491            | 60.89        | <b>383,821</b>    | 68.96        |
| <b>Bulgaria</b>   | 75,917         | 29,819             | 5.58         |                   |              |
| <b>Romania</b>    | 46,524         | 16,914             | 3.16         |                   |              |
| <b>Pakistan</b>   | 34,178         | 15,729             | 2.94         | <b>16,495</b>     | 2.96         |
| <b>Georgia</b>    | 27,407         | 16,171             | 3.03         | <b>19,054</b>     | 3.42         |
| <b>Ukraine</b>    | 17,008         | 12,238             | 2.29         | <b>19,442</b>     | 3.49         |
| <b>UK</b>         | 15,388         | 5,473              | 1.02         |                   |              |
| <b>Cyprus</b>     | 14,448         | 8,001              | 1.50         |                   |              |
| <b>Poland</b>     | 14,145         | 6,166              | 1.15         |                   |              |
| <b>Russia</b>     | 13,809         | 6,033              | 1.13         | <b>14,934</b>     | 2.68         |
| <b>India</b>      | 11,333         | 3,876              | 0.73         | <b>14,067</b>     | 2.53         |
| <b>Bangladesh</b> | 11,076         | 2,595              | 0.49         | <b>6,699</b>      | <b>1.20</b>  |
| <b>Germany</b>    | 10,782         | 4,146              | 0.78         |                   |              |
| <b>Egypt</b>      | 10,455         | 3,863              | 0.72         | <b>11,970</b>     | <b>2.15</b>  |
| <b>Moldova</b>    | 10,391         | 5,556              | 1.04         | <b>8,618</b>      | 1.55         |
| <b>OTHER</b>      | 80,056         | <b>72,445</b>      | <b>13.55</b> | <b>61,486</b>     | <b>11.05</b> |
| <b>TOTAL</b>      | <b>912,000</b> | <b>534,516</b>     | <b>100</b>   | <b>556,586</b>    | <b>100</b>   |

Sources: Hellenic Statistical Authority (EL.STAT.), National Census Data 2011 and Labour Force Survey, 2nd Quarter 2017; Ministry for Migration Policy, Valid Residence Permits on 30 June 2017.

Concerning the purpose of third-country nationals’ stay in Greece (see figure 3 below), 57 per cent of men hold permits of the ‘other category’, which includes permits of 10-year or indefinite duration as well as permits for humanitarian or exceptional reasons, followed by permits for family reunification (29 per cent) and residence permits for employment purposes (14 per cent).

The majority of women hold family reunification permits (54 per cent) followed by “other” category permits (38 per cent) and employment permits (7 per cent). Student permits are considerably lower in number. There is a clear shift here of the permits from those of employment (for men) and of family reunification (for women) into those of 10-year or indefinite duration which suggests that the migrant population in Greece is stabilised and largely long-term settled in the country. This shift also attests to the fact that migrants have faced similar unemployment and underemployment challenges as native workers in the last few years.

**Figure 3: Stay permits by gender and purpose, 30 June 2017**



Source: Graph compiled by the authors on the basis of data provided by the Ministry for Migration Policy. Available from: [http://www.immigration.gov.gr/en\\_US/web/guest/miniaia-statistika-stoixeia](http://www.immigration.gov.gr/en_US/web/guest/miniaia-statistika-stoixeia)

A legal clarification is in order here concerning the different types of long-term permits available, in accordance with the Migration Code (Law 4251/2014) that regulates matters of entry, residence and social integration of third-country nationals in Greece, integrating previous laws, and bringing the Greek legislation up to date with EU law.

The long-term migration permits, as defined by the Migration Code (L4251/2014, Article 7), include the following types of permits: the 10-year long permit, the second generation permit, the permit of indefinite duration, and the long-term resident permit. The long-term resident permits refers to EU long-term resident status (as defined in 109/2003 EC). The permits of 10-years and indefinite duration reflect national long-term permits and do not constitute subcategories of the EU long-term permit. In other words, all four types constitute long-term residency arrangements.<sup>5</sup> Currently the goal is to bring all long-term residence permits under the EU long-term resident status (L4251/14, no 138) thus 10-year permits are no longer

<sup>5</sup>According to the Ministry of the Migration Policy, the long-term permits do not just suggest a long-term status (five years or longer) to their holders, they also provide them with certain rights. Therefore, duration and rights are the two characteristics that define the long-term permits. In this sense other types of residence permits could also be included to this category, such as residence card (*deltio diamonis*) issued to a member of Greek or EU citizen’s family, or permanent residence (*deltio monimis diamonis*) issued to a member of Greek or EU citizen’s family.

renewed automatically as in the past but are converted to the EU long-term resident status when the conditions are met.

**Table 4: Long-term permits, by type and gender 2012-2017**

| Type of stay permit                   | 2012           |                | 2013           |                | 2014           |                | 2015           |                | 2016           |                | 2017*          |                |
|---------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
|                                       | M              | F              | M              | F              | M              | F              | M              | F              | M              | F              | M              | F              |
| 10 year                               | 58,473         | 30,530         | 66,740         | 36,092         | 77,051         | 43,132         | 82,771         | 46,159         | 84,863         | 47,550         | 84,975         | 47,772         |
| 2nd gen.*                             | 667            | 520            | 2270           | 1,890          | 11,217         | 10,130         | 18,356         | 16,478         | 19,299         | 16,414         | 18,325         | 15,229         |
| Indefinite duration                   | 30,423         | 6,172          | 30,172         | 6113           | 25,007         | 5,455          | 20,842         | 4,829          | 18,812         | 4,362          | 18,008         | 4,061          |
| Long-term residence                   | 739            | 403            | 1181           | 545            | 8,082          | 2,066          | 12,849         | 3,015          | <b>15,439</b>  | 3,391          | 16,111         | 3,468          |
| <b>Total permits of long duration</b> | <b>90,302</b>  | <b>37,625</b>  | <b>100,363</b> | <b>44,640</b>  | <b>121,357</b> | <b>60,783</b>  | <b>134,818</b> | <b>70,481</b>  | <b>138413</b>  | <b>71,717</b>  | <b>137,419</b> | <b>70,530</b>  |
| <b>Total stay permits for TCN</b>     | <b>297,924</b> | <b>262,437</b> | <b>292,460</b> | <b>262,292</b> | <b>288,837</b> | <b>261,824</b> | <b>298,800</b> | <b>273,569</b> | <b>303,289</b> | <b>276,447</b> | <b>291,785</b> | <b>264,801</b> |

Note: M (male) and F (female). \* Second-generation permits. Source: Ministry of Migration Policy database. For 2017, data current to 30 June by the Ministry for Migration Policy [http://www.immigration.gov.gr/en\\_US/web/guest/miniaia-statistika-stoixeia](http://www.immigration.gov.gr/en_US/web/guest/miniaia-statistika-stoixeia)

Converting the national long term permits to EU long term resident permits has aimed to further promote the integration of the people concerned as this type of permits provides for increased rights and equal treatment with nationals in important areas of social and economic life (Article 97 No.4251 / 2014) offering advantages not granted to national long-term regimes of 10 years or indefinite duration. Professedly, the only advantage of national long-term permits is the validity period. However, the EU long-term resident status is a permanent status. If, for example, it is not revoked or lost for specific reasons, the person concerned does not have to prove every five years that he or she is entitled to it. The residence permit is renewed every 5 years, but the status granted does not cease to apply as a result of expiry of the residence permit.

In June 2017, the total number of residence permits reached 556,586, of which 207,949 were of long duration. The ratio of long-term permits to total residence permits has increased significantly, with long-term permits accounting for 37 per cent of all valid permits compared to 23 per cent in 2012, 26 per cent in 2013, 33 per cent in 2013, 36 per cent in 2015 and 37 per cent in 2016. Ten-year and indefinite duration permits account for the largest share of long-term permits, with a greater number of long-term permits being issued to men than to women.

Data provided by the Ministry of Migration Policy upon request show that there were a further 84,587 permits in process on 30 June 2017 (see Table 3). As for the main nationalities, 57 per cent of the applicants are Albanians, followed by Pakistanis (9 per cent) and Georgians (6 per cent).

Over 60 per cent of these applications (51,351) are under the ‘other’ category and the majority of those concern applications on permits on exceptional or humanitarian grounds. Stay permits

on exceptional grounds are awarded to TCNs who reside in Greece and can prove that they have developed strong ties to the country, the duration of these permits (on exceptional grounds) is of one year and after that period, the permit may only be renewed for one of the remaining purposes foreseen in the Greek Migration Code (work, study, family, etc). The submission of an application for a stay permit on exceptional grounds does not imply a legal stay of the applicant while the application is in process<sup>6</sup>.

Stay permits on humanitarian grounds may be awarded to TCNs who reside in Greece falling into specific categories such as victims of human trafficking, failed asylum seekers or persons suffering from serious health problems. On June 30<sup>th</sup> 2017, there were 1,370 valid stay permits on humanitarian grounds and 6,205 in process (see table 5).

**Table 5: Stay permits in process on 30 June 2017**

| <b>Category</b>      | <b>Men</b>    | <b>Women</b>  | <b>Total</b>  |
|----------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| Employment           | 5,661         | 2,120         | <b>7,781</b>  |
| Family reunification | 9,416         | 15,559        | <b>24,975</b> |
| Studies              | 293           | 187           | <b>480</b>    |
| Other                | 33,673        | 17,678        | <b>51,351</b> |
| <b>Total</b>         | <b>49,043</b> | <b>35,544</b> | <b>84,587</b> |

Source: Data provided by the Ministry for Migration Policy upon request.

The Immigration and Social Integration Code contains provisions that facilitate the stay of third-country nationals whose investments are characterized as strategic investments, via the provision of extended stay time limits for the representatives of investment bodies and their partners. Moreover it provides the possibility of granting residence permits to third country nationals and their family members, who proceed to the purchase of real estate property in Greece, the value of which exceeds 250,000 Euro<sup>7</sup>. The permits are renewable every five years provided the TCN still owns the relevant property or other investment.

Since it was launched in 2013 the investor permit scheme has attracted approximately 500 investors per year and by the 30<sup>th</sup> of June 2017 1,725 beneficiaries and 2,468 family members held this type of permits. As for their nationalities, their majority came from China, with 722 beneficiaries and 1021 family members, followed by Russia, with 359 beneficiaries and 446. With regards to gender, men hold 60 per cent of the beneficiary permits and women hold 57 per cent of the family members' permits.<sup>8</sup>

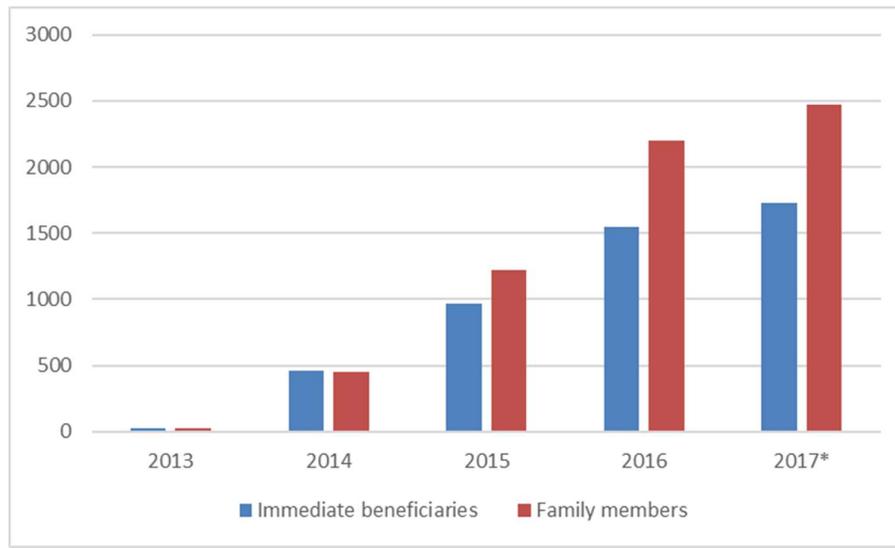
<sup>6</sup> See Law 4251/2014, Article 19.

<sup>7</sup> For more details see:

[http://www.mfa.gr/missionsabroad/images/stories/missions/uae/docs/permit\\_ependytes\\_en.pdf](http://www.mfa.gr/missionsabroad/images/stories/missions/uae/docs/permit_ependytes_en.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> Data by the Ministry for Migration Policy

**Figure 4: Investor residence permits 2013-2017**



Source: Graph compiled by authors on the basis of data by the Ministry for Migration Policy. Data refer to permits on the 31<sup>st</sup> of December of each year. \*Data for 2017 refer to permits on the 30<sup>th</sup> of June.

As noted by real estate agents, the increased demand for luxury holiday homes, that far exceeds the minimum limit of EUR 250,000 and are generally sold for amounts in the range of EUR 1-2 million has offered a great boost to this type of permits. According to real estate agencies and lawyers operating in this market, obtaining the five year stay permit has been an additional benefit from making such investments rather than the primary objective of the investors<sup>9</sup>.

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

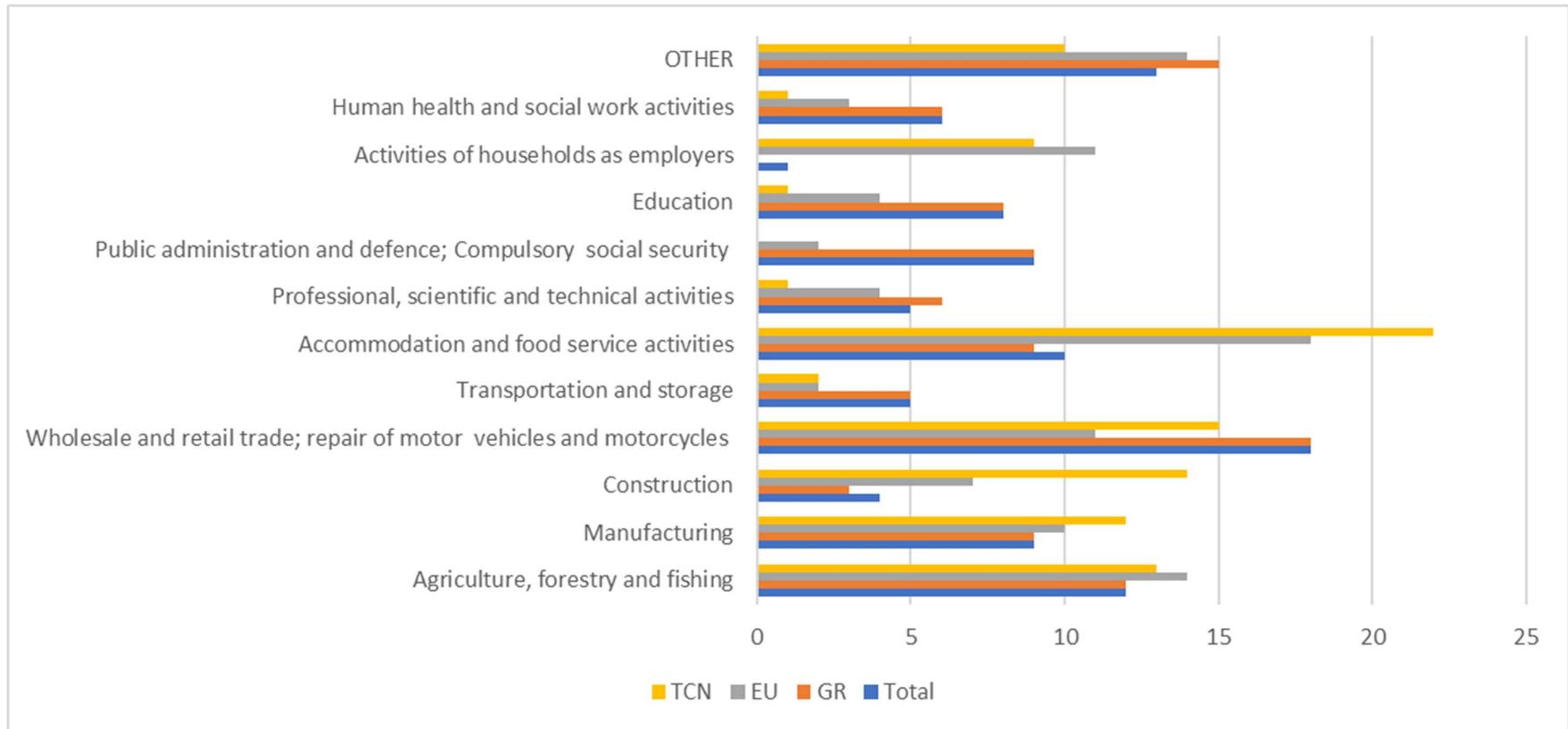
##### *Migrant Employment per Sector*

Before, analysing current data and figures on employment sectors, some comments on the evolution of migrant employment in the period 2008-2017 are in order.

The year 2013 marks an important change in the distribution of migrant workers among the three sectors (primary, secondary and tertiary). The percentage of migrants working in the primary sector doubled in 2013 from 5.4 per cent in 2008 to 13.5 per cent in 2013. Migrant employment in the secondary sector fell sharply, from 49.6 per cent in 2008 to 29.1 per cent in 2013, reflecting the overall decline of activity in that sector. Finally, in the tertiary sector, migrant employment rose from 45 per cent in 2008 to 57.3 per cent in 2013. It is highly likely that these changes reflect the crisis of the construction sector and the necessity for many migrants to declare themselves as employed in the agricultural sector or indeed to turn for employment to that sector, in order to renew their permits. In addition several migrants have of course sought employment or registered their previously informal employment in the service sector when their secondary sector activity has stopped.

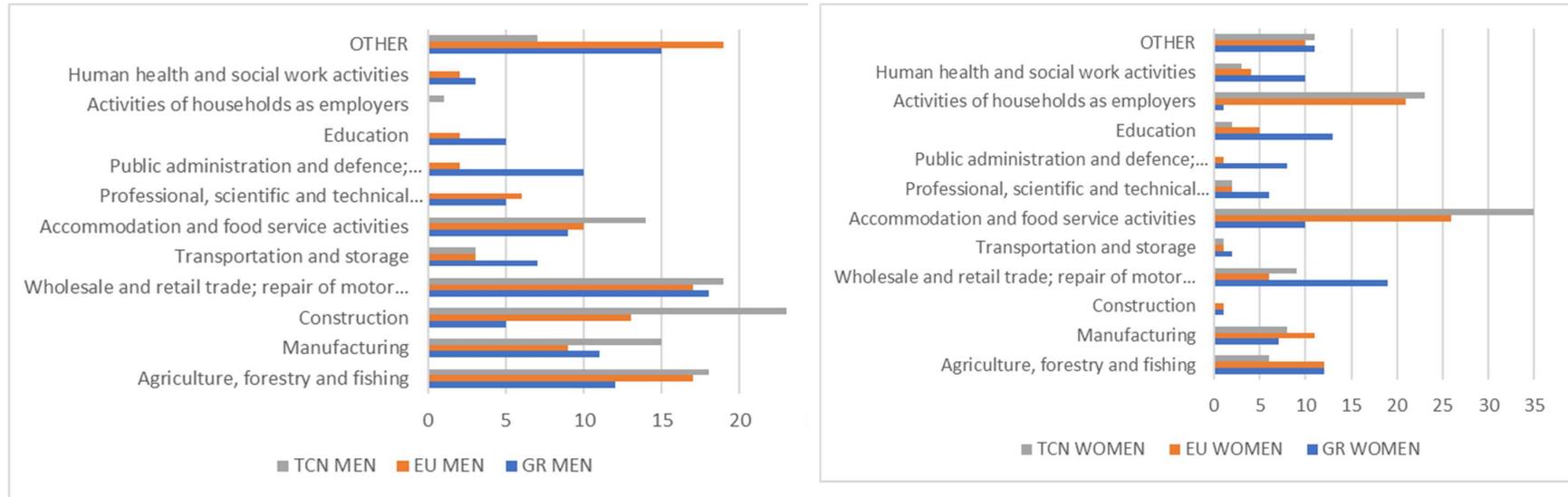
<sup>9</sup> See: <http://www.kathimerini.gr/930105/article/oikonomia/ellhnikh-oikonomia/3epernoyn-to-1-dis-ta-kefalaia-apo-to-programma-xrysh-viza>

**Figure 5: Nationality per sector of employment (%), 2017**



Graph compiled by authors based on Hellenic Statistical Authority (EL.STAT.), Labour Force Survey, 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter 2017.

**Figure 6: Nationality and gender per sector of employment (%), 2017**



Graph compiled by authors based on Hellenic Statistical Authority (EL.STAT.), Labour Force Survey, 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter 2017.

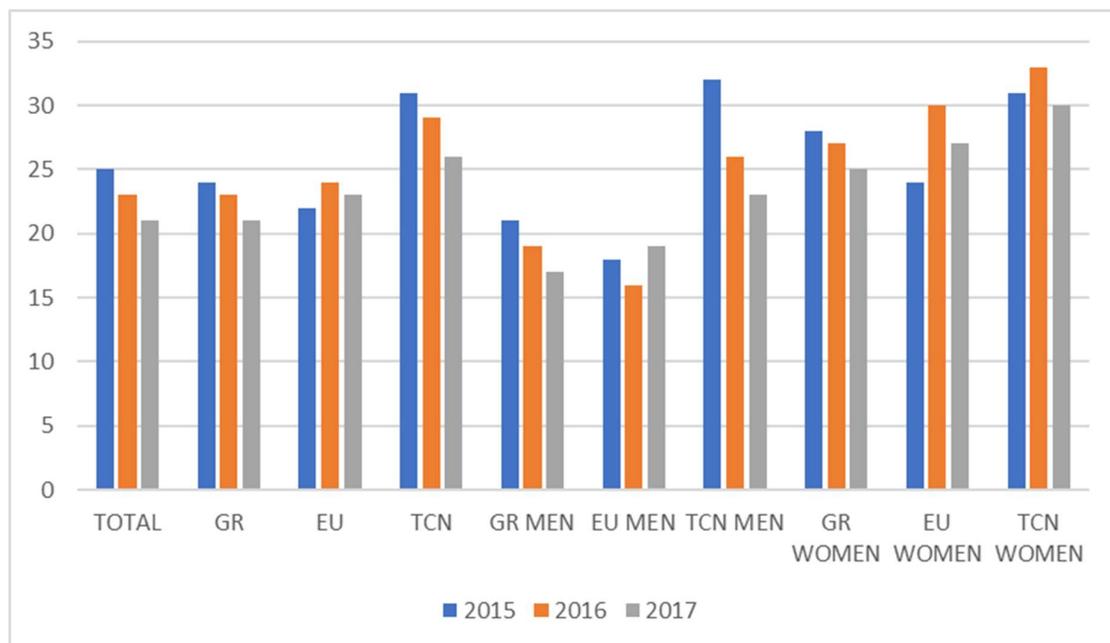
In absolute numbers, the primary sector created 15,500 new jobs for migrants in the first quarter of 2013, while during the same quarter 90,600 and 6,400 jobs were lost in the secondary and tertiary sectors. In 2013, the number of migrants employed in construction was just 43,000 when the equivalent number for 2008 had been 114,700 (Zografakis, 2014).

This trend is confirmed in the period 2015-2017 when migrants are mainly occupied in the tertiary sector, with a large representation of Albanians, in all three sectors for both years.

Unemployment rates for Greece’s general population show a steady decrease over the past two years. The same trend is followed by male Third Country Nationals yet for their female counterparts the highest unemployment rates were observed in 2016, while interestingly enough for Non-Greek EU citizens, regardless of gender, unemployment rates were lower in 2015 than in 2016 and 2017 (see Figure 7).

One wonders whether this is a statistical shortcoming of the LFS data related to the area of employment of EU nationals or to the fact that EU nationals can work also without a contract as they do not need to prove employment to renew their stay permits. In other words, one wonders whether EU citizens fall into the same economic crisis trap like Greek natives – being offered informal, uninsured, temporary work and hence officially appearing as unemployed, while at the same time being still foreigners they are discriminated against compared to Greeks and hence do not benefit from the overall improvement of the labour market.

**Figure 7: Unemployment rates by nationality and gender, 2015-2017**



Source: Hellenic Statistical Authority (EL.STAT.), Labour Force Survey 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter of each year.

## 5. Irregular Migration Flows and Readmissions

Greece has been characterised by relatively high irregular migrant population stocks and flows during the past 27 years. Throughout these years, there have been shifts vis à vis the border areas that constitute the principal entry points for the inflows of irregular migrants (see table 6 below). Different geopolitical evolutions led more than one million people to cross the Mediterranean and Aegean seas since January 2015. The total number of arrivals in Greece from Turkey was 847,084 during the entire 2015. Flows continued at a high rate during the first two months of 2016, with 147,000 people arriving but total flows for 2016 stood only at 173,561 showing the dramatic decrease of the flows after the implementation of the EU Turkey statement.

While flows were dramatically reduced after March 2016, arrivals from Turkey to the Aegean islands continued through mid-late 2016 and 2017. As of August 1, 2017, according to government figures, there were 35,114 asylum-seekers and migrants on the Greek mainland, and 14,354 on the islands, living in official sites and other state-run facilities.<sup>10</sup>

Data provided by the Greek police per border area and per nationality (see tables 5 and 6 below) provide a detailed and comprehensive view of the total arrivals of irregular migrants or asylum seekers in the country between 2015 and 2017 (first five months).

In 2017, Albanians come back to being the largest nationality group in terms of apprehensions, as in the period prior to 2015. Syrians, Iraqis and Afghans remain the most important nationality groups for the sea borders. This is in stark difference compared to 2015 and 2016 and reflect of course the closure of the borders.

**Table 6: Apprehensions of irregular migrants, per border, 2015-2017**

| <b>Border \ Year</b>             | <b>2015</b> | <b>2016</b> | <b>2017*</b> |
|----------------------------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|
| <b>Greek-Albanian Border</b>     | 8,867       | 5,915       | 3,037        |
| <b>Greek-FYROM Border</b>        | 1,395       | 783         | 342          |
| <b>Greek-Bulgarian Border</b>    | 1,245       | 1,421       | 563          |
| <b>Greek-Turkish land Border</b> | 4,907       | 3,784       | 841          |
| <b>D,A, Lesbos</b>               | 512,327     | 98,960      | 1,862        |
| <b>D,A, Samos</b>                | 104,453     | 15,211      | 1,410        |
| <b>D,A, Chios</b>                | 120,583     | 41,103      | 2,859        |
| <b>A'D,A, Dod/Nhsos</b>          | 21,953      | 4,853       | 766          |
| <b>B'D,A, Dod/Nhsos</b>          | 109,515     | 15,201      | 406          |
| <b>D,A, Cyclades</b>             | 900         | 533         | 189          |
| <b>Crete</b>                     | 3,148       | 1,700       | 629          |
| <b>Rest of the country</b>       | 22,178      | 15,356      | 6,506        |
| <b>Total</b>                     | 911,471     | 204,820     | 19,410       |

Source: Hellenic Police, [www.astynomia.gr](http://www.astynomia.gr)

Note: data refer to apprehensions, not people. Hence the same person if apprehended twice counts twice. \* Data for 2017 refer to the first 5 months.

<sup>10</sup> See <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/58630>.

According to UNHCR data, the most common nationalities arriving by sea between January 1<sup>st</sup> and July 31<sup>st</sup> 2017 were:

Syrians, with 4,559 arrivals (39.5 per cent), Iraqis with 1,601 arrivals (13.9 per cent) and Afghans with 789 arrivals (6.8 per cent) followed by Congolese (5.8 per cent), Algerians (4.8 per cent) and Pakistanis (4.2 per cent).<sup>11</sup>

**Table 7: Apprehensions of irregular migrants in Greece (at the borders and within the country, 5 main nationality groups), 2011-2017**

| 2011        | 2012   |             | 2013   |             | 2014   |             | 2015   |             | 2016    |             | 2017*  |             |       |
|-------------|--------|-------------|--------|-------------|--------|-------------|--------|-------------|---------|-------------|--------|-------------|-------|
| Afghanistan | 28,528 | Afghanistan | 16,584 | Albania     | 15,389 | Syria       | 32,520 | Syria       | 499,495 | Syria       | 86,058 | Albania     | 5,172 |
| Pakistan    | 19,975 | Pakistan    | 11,136 | Syria       | 8,517  | Albania     | 16,751 | Afghanistan | 213,267 | Afghanistan | 44,260 | Syria       | 3,462 |
| Albania     | 11,733 | Albania     | 10,602 | Afghanistan | 6,412  | Afghanistan | 12,901 | Pakistan    | 27,261  | Iraq        | 28,476 | Pakistan    | 3,414 |
| Bangladesh  | 5,416  | Syria       | 7,927  | Pakistan    | 3,982  | Pakistan    | 6,184  | Albania     | 16,910  | Pakistan    | 13,460 | Iraq        | 1,283 |
| Algeria     | 5,398  | Bangladesh  | 7,863  | Bangladesh  | 1,524  | Somalia     | 3,621  | Iraq        | 91,769  | Albania     | 11,333 | Afghanistan | 883   |

Source: Hellenic Police, [www.astynomia.gr](http://www.astynomia.gr)

Note: data refer to apprehensions, not people. Hence the same person if apprehended twice counts twice. \* Data for 2017 refer to the first 5 months.

Data on returns and readmissions are a useful complement to this overview of irregular migrant and asylum seeker inflow and outflows: returns to Albania declined during 2017, yet still remain by far the largest group. While Pakistanis and Georgians were among the most common returned nationalities in 2014-2015, in 2016 and 2017 Moroccans, Algerians as well as Iraqis and Afghans emerged among the largest nationality groups for returns and readmissions.

According to IOM statistics,<sup>12</sup> nearly 20,000 people have been returned through the Assisted Voluntary Return procedure (which however may also include people who are returned after apprehension) in the period between January 2014 and August 2017 ( 7,350 Assisted Voluntary Returns (AVRs) have taken place in 2014, 3794 in 2015, 6,153 in 2016 and 3,852 in 2017<sup>13</sup>).

With regard to returns Under the EU-Turkey Statement, based on the press releases of the Greek Ministry of Citizen Protection, 1,217 persons have been returned between April 2016 and the 19<sup>th</sup> of June 2017.

Of those, 90 per cent are men, 6 per cent are women and 4 per cent are children. Concerning the returnees' nationalities their vast majority (45 per cent) are Pakistani, followed by Syrians (16 per cent) and Algerians (11 per cent).

<sup>11</sup> Data available from <http://data2.unhcr.org/>

<sup>12</sup> Available from: <https://greece.iom.int/sites/default/files/AVRR%20up%20to%2029082017.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> Data for 2017 refer to the period between 01/01 and 25/08.

It should be noted that none of the Syrians have been returned on the basis that their asylum claim was found inadmissible. Of the total number of returnees, 39 per cent expressed no will to apply for asylum, 29 per cent were rejected asylum seekers and 15 per cent withdrew their will to apply for asylum or their actual asylum application<sup>14</sup>.

**Table 8: Returns of irregular migrants from Greece (5 main nationality groups), 2014-2017**

| 2014        |       | 2015     |       | 2016        |       | 2017*    |       |
|-------------|-------|----------|-------|-------------|-------|----------|-------|
| Albania     | 9,677 | Albania  | 9,628 | Albania     | 6,763 | Albania  | 2,558 |
| Pakistan    | 3,563 | Pakistan | 1,543 | Pakistan    | 1,624 | Pakistan | 1,248 |
| Georgia     | 1,202 | Georgia  | 810   | Morocco     | 1,491 | Algeria  | 433   |
| Bangladesh  | 1,012 | Bulgaria | 317   | Iraq        | 1,075 | Iraq     | 410   |
| Afghanistan | 612   | Syria**  | 310   | Afghanistan | 1,058 | Georgia  | 249   |

Source: Hellenic Police, [www.astynomia.gr](http://www.astynomia.gr)

Note: \* Data for 2017 refer to the first 5 months \*\* Data on Syria refer to voluntary returns to Turkey or other third countries.

Finally, UNHCR and Amnesty International (AI) have reported illegal returns of Syrian refugees to Turkey from Greece in October 2016. AI notes that the EU leaders' meeting in Brussels pressed for an acceleration of the return process and sees these returns as an indirect result of that pressure.

According to both organisations, ten Syrian refugees have been returned whose asylum claims were not considered.<sup>15</sup> Greece's Ministry for Citizen Protection denied that the Syrian refugees intended to claim asylum. Frontex, which was present during the operation, denied jurisdiction over returns and stated that the national authorities are responsible for such decisions.<sup>16</sup> The ministry's statement was revealed to be untrue by the Greek daily *Efimerida ton Syntakton* (Εφημερίδα των Συντακτών).<sup>17</sup> In addition, there have been reports of informal refoulement of Turkish citizens seeking international protection from Greece back to Turkey<sup>18</sup>. These reports by NGOs raise serious concerns about whether pressure on the Greek authorities to enforce the EU Turkey statement lead occasionally to practices that are not in line with Greek laws and the country's international obligations as regards asylum and subsidiary protection.

<sup>14</sup> Available from: <https://reliefweb.int/report/greece/returns-greece-turkey-21-june-2017>

<sup>15</sup> See <http://www.unhcr.org/news/briefing/2016/10/5809e78d4/unhcr-concern-illegal-return-10-syrian-nationals-greece.html> and also <http://www.amnesty.eu/en/news/press-releases/all/greece-reported-illegal-returns-of-syrian-refugees-to-turkey-dangerous-1001/#.WCLgNi0rLIW>

<sup>16</sup> See <https://www.efsyn.gr/arthro/i-frontex-adeiazeti-y-poyrgeio-prostasias-toy-politi> reference in Greek.

<sup>17</sup> See <http://www.efsyn.gr/arthro/eleytheroi-oi-epta-apo-toys-deka-paranoma-apelathentes-syroys> reference in Greek.

<sup>18</sup> See: <http://www.hlhr.gr/en/refoulements-turkish-asylum-seekers-evros/>

## 6. Recent Developments in Greek Migration and Asylum Policy

In 2016, evolutions occurring at Greece's different borders challenged the country's migration and asylum policy more than ever before, to the point of endangering also Greece's inclusion in the Schengen passport-free movement zone. Although Greece accounted for the majority of arrivals in 2015, only 1.5 per cent of those transiting claimed asylum in the country<sup>19</sup> as other European countries were their target destinations. However, this has changed as moving on is no longer an option; thus in 2016 and 2017 there has been a stark increase in asylum applications lodged in Greece (see relevant section above). The main challenge thus for both government and society in 2017 has been to relocate or integrate those in the mainland while also processing those in the islands with the aim of returning them under the fast track asylum procedure.

### 6.1 Institutional Developments

Both the normalisation of the migration situation in Greece and the need for long term structural efforts and coordination at national level seem to have brought to the creation of the Ministry of Migration Policy. Indeed, as of November 2016<sup>20</sup>, the Ministry of Migration Policy is established, organized into three main branches:

- a. The General Secretariat for Migration Policy of the former Ministry of Interior and Administration Reconstruction, except for the Directorate of Citizenship that remains at the Ministry of the Interior;
- b. the General Secretariat of Reception of the former Ministry of Interior and Administrative Reconstruction;
- c. the independent Asylum Service and the independent "Appeals Authority".

### 6.2 Developments in Asylum Policy

The shutting down of the Balkan route combined with the EU-Turkey Agreement forced the Greek government to hastily adopt a new law (L 4375/2016) on 3 April 2016 to amend the procedures for processing asylum claims.<sup>21</sup> The law mainly establishes what was agreed in the EU-Turkey Statement, introducing an exceptional regime applicable at the country's borders. It also introduces several reforms in the asylum process and international protection, the border regime, first reception, and, finally, labour rights of beneficiaries of international protection. The introduction of an exceptional border regime is a nodal point in the law's amendment and will be discussed further below.

Law 4375/2016 also provides for the transposition of the revised Asylum Procedures Directive in place of older provisions and introduces a regulation process for cases under the "old procedure."<sup>22</sup> In effect, this means that asylum seekers who have had asylum claims pending for over five years at the time the law was published, automatically received a two-year residence permit on humanitarian grounds.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Asylum service, Asylum statistics 2015, applications lodged in 2015.

<sup>20</sup> Presidential decree 123/2016

<sup>21</sup> Law 4375/2016, Official Gazette 51/A/3-4-2016, available at: <http://goo.gl/xkdhWo>

<sup>22</sup> PD 112/2010

<sup>23</sup> Unless they wish to continue the asylum procedure

This aimed at easing the backlog of 18,500 cases pending under this “old procedure”. According to the division of Citizen Protection of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, 5,058 such permits were awarded in 2016 and 639 in 2017. As to the nationalities of the permit holders, their majority were Bangladeshis, followed by Georgians and Pakistanis.

Modifications to the appeals procedure were made in amendments to the law introduced and passed shortly after the new law has come into force. The Greek Parliament initially rejected these modifications deriving from the European Commission on the grounds that they had been submitted too late in the procedure. The amendments were subsequently introduced under a different bill and thus passed as an amendment to a different law.<sup>24</sup>

This legislative procedure<sup>25</sup> has been highly criticized by experts, including members of the government, as it provides for the restructuring of the Appeals Committees with a view to reducing the possibility for appellants to request a hearing.<sup>26</sup> Concerns were also raised with regard to the constitutionality of the Appeals Committees’ composition, as it included two judges, yet, the Council of State dismissed the objection of unconstitutionality submitted by the Greek Council for Refugees and the Group of Lawyers for the Rights of Refugees and Immigrants.<sup>27</sup> At the same time, the Law has established an exceptional border procedure<sup>28</sup>, and enabled EASO officials to participate actively during the interviews of the applicants<sup>29</sup>.

A notable development in Greece has been the establishment of a special border regime for asylum processing as per Article 60(4) of Law 4375/2016, which is in contradiction with other provisions on the asylum procedure. More specifically, the ministries of Interior and Defence may activate exceptional measures in the event of large numbers of arrivals lodging asylum applications at the border.

These exceptional measures include:

- The possibility for police authorities and unarmed soldiers to conduct the registration of asylum applications.
- The possibility for European Asylum Support Office (EASO) officials and interpreters to assist the Greek authorities in registration and the conduct of interviews.
- An expedient version of the border procedure which lasts no more than 14 days at first and second instance. This entails a one-day deadline for asylum seekers to prepare for the interview and a maximum three-day deadline for lodging an appeal.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>24</sup>Draft Law “Legal framework for the establishment of regimes for Strengthening Private Investments for the regional and economic development of the country – Establishment of Development Council and other provisions,” 2 June 2016. For a more detailed discussion on that see AIRE ECRE Report 2016.

<sup>25</sup>Which does not constitute a novelty

<sup>26</sup> It introduces a restructuring of the Appeals Committees to comprise of two judges of administrative courts and a member designated by UNHCR instead of three members selected by a Selection Committee, AIRE, ECRE, *ibid*.

<sup>27</sup> See <http://www.efsyn.gr/arthro/ste-aperripse-tin-enstasi-gia-ti-synthesi-ton-anexartiton-epitropon-prosfygon>

<sup>28</sup> We will refer to the exceptional border procedure in the chapter on border management.

<sup>29</sup> That way the law provides for the clarification of EASO’s role, as under the previous framework the EASO was in principle limited to assisting the Asylum Service. The role of EASO has been criticised as non-transparent. For more on that see AIRE, ECRE *ibid*.

<sup>30</sup>The exceptional border procedure cannot be applied to vulnerable asylum seekers and to persons falling within the family provisions of the Dublin III Regulation. (AIRE ECRE report)

As a result, the majority of those arriving to Greece by sea after the EU-Turkey Agreement are obliged to remain in the islands while their asylum applications are being processed, leading to a situation of overcrowded facilities<sup>31</sup> and complaints by local societies<sup>32</sup>.

In addition, the “safe third country” (Article 56(1) L 4375/2016) concept is considered as ground for inadmissibility – the admissibility test is a sort of pre-asylum test which is applied solely in the context of the Fast-Track Border Procedure (Article 60(4) L 4375/2016) on the islands for those arrived after 20 March 2016 and subject to the EU-Turkey statement.<sup>33</sup> As a result, the asylum applications of the majority of Syrians arriving in Greece after the release of the EU-Turkey statement are found inadmissible on the first instance. The newly established Appeals Committees generally upheld the inadmissibility decisions, yet, two Syrians challenged these second instance decisions before the Council of State, leading to a de facto suspension of second instance decision pending the outcome. In a very recent turn (on 28 September 2017), the Council of State rejected the final appeals of the two Syrian asylum seekers mentioned above (who were supported legally by the NGO Greek Council for Refugees) declaring their asylum claims inadmissible<sup>34</sup>.

### *Conditions of Asylum Seekers on the Islands*

The Greek islands have been the place of stay and waiting for many months, and in some cases over one year - for all asylum seekers arriving through Turkey after the EU-Turkey Joint Declaration in March 2016. A notable preliminary finding of a recent study (Jauhiainen, 2017) conducted in asylum seeker reception sites on the island of Lesbos, Greece, is the different conditions between the island’s reception sites, Moria, Kara Tepe, and PIKPA, functioning under different management, state authorities, local authorities and volunteers respectively.

Based on a survey conducted with over 500 asylum seekers in December 2016, respondents felt safest in PIKPA and least safe in Moria, more of them felt they were treated well in Kara Tepe, and PIKPA than in Moria and the same pattern remained with regards to access to facilities such as toilets and showers. The authors pointed out that facilities of the sites should be improved immediately to make the everyday lives of asylum seekers more decent. Yet, conditions continue to deteriorate, given the continuous arrivals adding to the thousands who are “trapped” in the hotspots coupled with the non-implementation of returns to Turkey by the Greek authorities. The situation has also been exacerbated by the fact that NGOs and international organisations that have provided auxiliary services such as health services, primary assistance and legal advice have left and the Greek state has taken over all functions.

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<sup>31</sup> See for instance: <https://www.msf.gr/magazine/samos-kindynoi-gia-tin-epideinosi-tis-ygeias-ton-aitoynton-asylo> and <http://www.unhcr.org/news/briefing/2017/9/59b24a377/unhcr-urges-action-ease-conditions-greek-islands.html>

<sup>32</sup> For instance see: <http://www.kathimerini.gr/927285/article/epikairothta/ellada/sos-apo-ton-dhmarxo-lesvoy-gia-prosfygiko-oriakh-h-katastash> and <http://www.kathimerini.gr/903412/article/epikairothta/ellada/ay3anontai-oi-egklwvismenoi-prosfyges-kai-metanastes-sta-nhsia>

<sup>33</sup> See <http://www.asylumineurope.org/reports/country/greece/asylum-procedure/safe-country-concepts/safe-third-country>

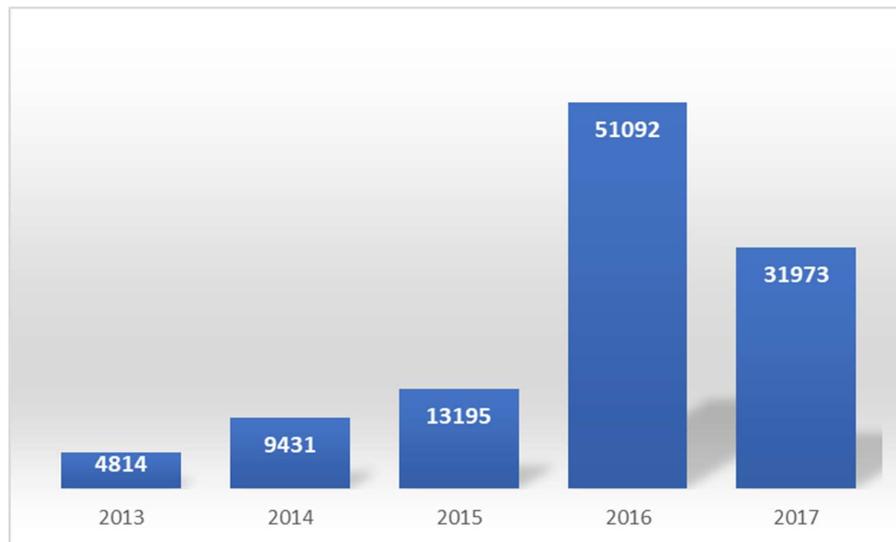
<sup>34</sup> See <https://www.efsyn.gr/arthro/ste-asfalisi-triti-hora-i-toyrkia> and <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2017/09/greece-court-decisions-pave-way-for-first-forcible-returns-of-asylum-seekers-under-eu-turkey-deal/>

The gradual withdrawal of UNHCR and NGOs from the islands was the result of the non-renewal of their funding programs at the request of the Greek authorities<sup>35</sup>. In fact, a number of NGOs, with a joint statement<sup>36</sup>, pointed out the possible shortcomings that could derive from the NGOs withdrawal from operations in the Greek islands while a recent joint letter of 19 organizations to the Prime Minister on the situation of asylum seekers in the Aegean islands<sup>37</sup> urges the Greek authorities to end to the continuing "restraining policy".

### 6.3 Asylum Seeking Recognition Rates

The developments briefly discussed above have had visible effects on Greece's asylum system as a sharp increase in asylum applications in 2016 and 2017.

**Figure 8: Lodged Asylum Applications 2013-2017**



Source: Asylum Service of Greece<sup>38</sup>

Data for 2013 refer to the period between 7/6/2013 and the end of the year.

Data for 2017 refer to the period between the beginning of the year and 31/7/2017.

With regard to the applicants' nationalities, their majority are Syrians (36.2 per cent), followed by Pakistanis (12.4 per cent), Afghans (11.7 per cent), Iraqis (8.6 per cent) and Albanians (4.2 per cent)<sup>39</sup>. The nationalities with the highest recognition rates are Syrians (99.5 per cent) and

<sup>35</sup> See: <http://www.kathimerini.gr/932238/article/epikairothta/ellada/ekleisan-oi-dromoi-pros-thn-eyrwph-gia-tis-metanasteytik-es-roes>

<sup>36</sup> See: [http://www.solidaritynow.org/joint\\_statement\\_ref/](http://www.solidaritynow.org/joint_statement_ref/)

<sup>37</sup> See: <http://www.hlhr.gr/%CE%BA%CE%BF%CE%B9%CE%BD%CE%AE-%CE%B5%CF%80%CE%B9%CF%83%CF%84%CE%BF%CE%BB%CE%AE-19-%CE%BF%CF%81%CE%B3%CE%B1%CE%BD%CF%8E%CF%83%CE%B5%CF%89%CE%BD-%CF%80%CF%81%CE%BF%CF%82-%CF%84%CE%BF%CE%BD-%CF%80%CF%81/>

<sup>38</sup> Available from: [http://asylo.gov.gr/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Greek\\_Asylum\\_Service\\_Statistical\\_Data\\_GR.pdf](http://asylo.gov.gr/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Greek_Asylum_Service_Statistical_Data_GR.pdf)

<sup>39</sup> See : [http://asylo.gov.gr/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Greek\\_Asylum\\_Service\\_Statistical\\_Data\\_GR.pdf](http://asylo.gov.gr/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Greek_Asylum_Service_Statistical_Data_GR.pdf)

Palestinians (93.2 per cent) while the countries of origin of those with the lowest recognition rates are Georgia (0.0 per cent), Albania (0.2 per cent), Ghana (0.6 per cent) and Armenia (0.7 per cent). Finally, as of the 31<sup>st</sup> of July 2017, the number of first instance asylum decisions pending was 27,545.

**Table 9: Asylum seeking recognition rates, first instance, 2013-2017**

| Status \ Year           | 2013  | 2014  | 2015  | 2016  | 2017  | TOTAL |
|-------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Refugee status          | 229   | 1224  | 3647  | 2467  | 4696  | 12263 |
| Subsidiary protection   | 93    | 487   | 348   | 245   | 392   | 1565  |
| Rejected                | 1756  | 4255  | 4436  | 6599  | 6473  | 23519 |
| Inadmissible            | 261   | 1451  | 2012  | 15035 | 18317 | 37076 |
| Discontinuance - Resign | 242   | 1047  | 2359  | 2465  | 3819  | 9932  |
| Total                   | 2581  | 8464  | 12802 | 26811 | 33697 | 84355 |
| Recognition Rate        | 15.5% | 28.7% | 47.4% | 29.1% | 44.0% | 37.0% |

Source: Asylum Service of Greece<sup>40</sup>

Data for 2013 refer to the period between 7/6/2013 and the end of the year.

Data for 2017 refer to the period between the beginning of the year and 31/7/2017.

**Table 10: Asylum seeking recognition rates by country of origin, first instance 2013-2017**

| 10 countries with the highest recognition rates (%) |        | 10 countries with the lowest recognition rates (%) |       |
|---|--------|--|-------|
| Syria   | 99.5 % | Egypt  | 6.4 % |
| Palestinian Authority                               | 93.2 % | Bangladesh   | 3.6 % |
| Stateless   | 85.1 % | India  | 3.3 % |
| Eritrea   | 84.1 % | Pakistan   | 2.2 % |
| Somalia   | 76.1 % | Algeria  | 2.2 % |
| Irak  | 72.8 % | Senegal  | 1.1 % |
| Afghanistan   | 63.6 % | Armenia  | 0.7 % |
| Sudan   | 59.0 % | Ghana  | 0.6 % |
| Ethiopia  | 55.9 % | Albania  | 0.2%  |
| Iran  | 54.1 % | Georgia  | 0.0 % |

Source: Asylum Service of Greece<sup>41</sup>

Data refer to the period between 7/6/2013 and 31/7/2017.

The data include countries of origin with over 100 decisions.

<sup>40</sup> Available from: [http://asylo.gov.gr/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Greek\\_Asylum\\_Service\\_Statistical\\_Data\\_GR.pdf](http://asylo.gov.gr/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Greek_Asylum_Service_Statistical_Data_GR.pdf)

<sup>41</sup> Available from: [http://asylo.gov.gr/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Greek\\_Asylum\\_Service\\_Statistical\\_Data\\_GR.pdf](http://asylo.gov.gr/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Greek_Asylum_Service_Statistical_Data_GR.pdf)

**Table 11: Asylum applications by country of origin pending on the 31<sup>st</sup> of July 2017**

|                                 |       |
|---------------------------------|-------|
| Afghanistan                     | 6008  |
| Syria                           | 5267  |
| Pakistan                        | 3950  |
| Iraq                            | 3555  |
| Iran                            | 1024  |
| Albania                         | 960   |
| Bangladesh                      | 876   |
| Republic of Congo (former Zair) | 840   |
| Georgia                         | 506   |
| Palestinian Authority           | 501   |
| Other                           | 4058  |
| Total                           | 27545 |

Source: Asylum Service of Greece<sup>42</sup>

Data refer to the period between 7/6/2013 and 31/7/2017.

#### 6.4 Moving Onwards: Relocation and Family Reunification

The increased inflow of third-country nationals in Greece (and Italy), the vast majority of whom is in need of international protection<sup>43</sup> underlines the need for more support for these countries. The EU's provisional response has been the Emergency Relocation Mechanism, decided on 22 September 2015.<sup>44</sup> Following the European Commission's proposals, in an effort to lighten the asylum systems of frontline member-states and provide protection, 160,000 asylum seekers are to be relocated from these Greece and Italy: 66,4000 persons from Greece and 39,000 from Italy by September 2017. The nationalities eligible for relocation under this mechanism are those with a recognition rate of at least 75 per cent<sup>45</sup> across the EU.<sup>46</sup>

This scheme, while ambitious in its conception and expressing a strong political will on the part of the President of the European Commission to enforce burden sharing, has had rather disappointing results thus far. It has been fraught with implementation problems stemming from the actual pre-registration and processing of people upon first reception in Greece (and Italy), a certain reluctance on the part of the destination member-states, as well as what has been dubbed 'shopping lists' of the people for relocation (for example, vulnerable groups such as unaccompanied minors, single mothers, victims of trafficking, or highly-educated persons). The European Commission has also described as problematic the lacking or unjustified grounds

<sup>42</sup> Available from: [http://asylo.gov.gr/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Greek\\_Asylum\\_Service\\_Statistical\\_Data\\_GR.pdf](http://asylo.gov.gr/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Greek_Asylum_Service_Statistical_Data_GR.pdf)

<sup>43</sup> According to UNHCR, 88 per cent of arrivals are from the world's top 10 refugee-producing countries. UNHCR, available at: <http://data.unhcr.org/mediterranean/country.php?id=83>

<sup>44</sup> Council Decision (EU) 2015/1601 of 22 September 2015 establishing provisional measures in the area of international protection for the benefit of Italy and Greece, available at: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dec/2015/1601/oj>

<sup>45</sup> It is important to note here that this rate is according to average quarterly statistics and each time some nationalities risk being excluded from relocation. This is, for example, the case of Iraqi nationals, whose average recognition rate fell to 73.2 per cent in the first quarter of 2016. Eurostat, First Instance decisions, (AIRE, ECRE Report 2016)

<sup>46</sup> UNHCR EU Emergency Relocation Mechanism, as of 21 September 2016

for rejecting relocation requests.<sup>47</sup> However, the Greek Asylum Service explained that following up on rejections of relocation is difficult because of the relocation scheme's overall design given that member-states' sovereign right to refuse to relocate asylum seekers cannot be challenged (AIRE, ECRE report). Naturally the whole issue has been further complicated by fears of terrorist infiltration of asylum seekers, particularly from Syria.

**Table 12a: State of Play of Emergency Relocation Mechanism, 28 Sep. 2017**

**Member States' Support to Emergency Relocation Mechanism**  
(As of 28 September 2017)

| Member States  | Relocation                 |                      |                       |                                |                                  |
|----------------|----------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|
|                | Places Formally Pledged[1] | Relocated from Italy | Relocated from Greece | Commitment legally foreseen[2] | Remaining places from commitment |
| Austria        | 50                         | 15                   | x                     | 1,953                          | 1,938                            |
| Belgium        | 1,530                      | 299                  | 698                   | 3,812                          | 2,815                            |
| Bulgaria       | 1,070                      | x                    | 50                    | 1,302                          | 1,252                            |
| Croatia        | 316                        | 18                   | 60                    | 968                            | 890                              |
| Cyprus         | 205                        | 47                   | 96                    | 320                            | 177                              |
| Czech Republic | 50                         | x                    | 12                    | 2,691                          | 2,679                            |
| Denmark        | x                          | x                    | x                     | N/A                            | N/A                              |
| Estonia        | 396                        | x                    | 141                   | 329                            | 188                              |
| Finland        | 2,128                      | 779                  | 1,196                 | 2,078                          | 103                              |
| France         | 6,940                      | 377                  | 4,091                 | 19,714                         | 15,246                           |
| Germany        | 13,250                     | 3,641                | 4,838                 | 27,536                         | 19,057                           |
| Greece         | x                          | x                    | x                     | N/A                            | N/A                              |
| Hungary        | x                          | x                    | x                     | 1,294                          | 1,294                            |
| Ireland        | 1,152                      | x                    | 552                   | 600                            | 48                               |
| Italy          | x                          | x                    | x                     | N/A                            | N/A                              |
| Latvia         | 627                        | 27                   | 294                   | 481                            | 160                              |
| Lithuania      | 1,160                      | 27                   | 355                   | 671                            | 289                              |
| Luxembourg     | 545                        | 159                  | 271                   | 557                            | 127                              |
| Malta          | 205                        | 47                   | 101                   | 131                            | 0                                |
| Netherlands    | 2,825                      | 807                  | 1,680                 | 5,947                          | 3,460                            |
| Poland         | 100                        | x                    | x                     | 6,182                          | 6,182                            |
| Portugal       | 3,218                      | 299                  | 1,197                 | 2,951                          | 1,455                            |

Responding to legal action taken by Slovakia and Hungary the Court of Justice of the European Union has upheld that the emergency relocation quotas are in line with EU law. While this decision is important at the political level, it probably did not change much in the implementation level where problems and delays have persisted.<sup>48</sup>

As of the 20<sup>th</sup> of August 2017, the Asylum Service had requested the relocation of 24,705 persons (of the 27,369 who had applied<sup>49</sup>) while the total number of relocation applications

<sup>47</sup> European Commission 18, May 2016 available at: [http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_IP-16-1763\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-16-1763_en.htm)

<sup>48</sup> For a full commentary see <http://eulawanalysis.blogspot.ch/2017/09/a-pyrrhic-victory-ecj-upholds-eu-law-on.html>

<sup>49</sup> The Asylum Service notes that relocation requests are not being forwarded when there are doubts with regard to security issues or the applicant's citizenship.

that have been accepted stands at 22,285 (for further details see Table 12a and 12b). 20,362 people had actually been relocated from Greece as of 28 September 2017.

**Table 12b: State of Play of Emergency Relocation Mechanism, 28 Sep. 2017**

| Member States  | Relocation                  |  |   |                                |   |
|----------------|-----------------------------|--|---|--------------------------------|---|
|                | Places Formally Pledged [1] | Relocated from Italy                       | Relocated from Greece                       | Commitment legally foreseen[2] | Remaining places from commitment                |
| Romania        | 2,182                       | 45   | 683   | 4,180                          | 3,452   |
| Slovakia       | 60                          | x  | 16  | 902                            | 886   |
| Slovenia       | 579                         | 45   | 172   | 567                            | 350   |
| Spain          | 2,500                       | 190  | 1,089                                       | 9,323                          | 8,044   |
| Sweden         | 3,777                       | 802  | 1,619                                       | 3,766                          | 1,345   |
| United Kingdom | N/A                         | x  | x   | N/A                            | N/A   |
| Norway         | 1,500                       | 816  | 693   | N/A                            | 0 [3]   |
| Switzerland    | 1,530                       | 828  | 448   | N/A                            | 254 [3]   |
| Liechtenstein  | 10                          | x  | 10  | N/A                            | 0 [3]   |
| Iceland        | x                           | x  | x   | N/A                            | tbc   |
| <b>TOTAL</b>   | <b>47,905</b>               | <b>9,268</b><br><b>(out of 34,953) [4]</b> | <b>20,362</b><br><b>(out of 63,302) [5]</b> | <b>98,255</b>                  | <b>68,642</b><br><b>(of initial 98,255) [6]</b> |

[1] This reflects the firm commitments made by each country according to the procedure foreseen in Art 5(2) of the Council Decisions.

[2] Commitment legally foreseen in the Council Decisions, which does not include the 7,745 persons still to be allocated under the First Council Decision and the 54,000 places which were made available for the purpose of legally admitting Syrians from Turkey to the EU.

[3] Norway, Liechtenstein and Switzerland have established bilateral arrangements according to Article 11 of the Council Decisions and joined the relocation scheme. As part of these commitments Norway has formally pledged 1500 places, Switzerland 1460 & Liechtenstein 10

[4] Out of 39,600 originally foreseen to be relocated from Italy, 34,953 commitments have been legally foreseen in the Council Decisions.

[5] Out of 66,400 originally foreseen to be relocated from Greece, 63,302 commitments have been legally foreseen in the Council Decisions.

[6] Of the 160,000, 7,745 have yet to be allocated from the 40,000 Decision and 54,000 unallocated places from the 120,000 Decision were made available for the purpose of legally admitting Syrians from Turkey to the EU.

Source: [https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/press-material/docs/state\\_of\\_play\\_-\\_relocation\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/press-material/docs/state_of_play_-_relocation_en.pdf), accessed on 29 Sep 2017.

It is important to clarify that relocation is available only to people who entered Greece between 16 September 2015 and 19 March 2016, and while unpopular among people on the move at first, it has since been reconsidered as the alternative is to remain in Greece with few prospects for employment.<sup>50</sup> In addition, asylum seekers' transfers from Greece to Germany for family reunification appears to be rather problematic, leading to an open letter by 27 NGOs.<sup>51</sup>

In a recent appearance in ARD, the Minister of Migration Policy mentioned that a small number of returns of refugees from Germany and other European countries to Greece has been approved. According to the German Ministry of foreign affairs, by the 31<sup>st</sup> of July 2017 392 such applications were submitted to the Greek authorities.<sup>52</sup>

<sup>50</sup> For detail, see ACAPS, Refugees/Migrants Crisis in Europe, Situation update, Greece March 2016.

<sup>51</sup> See <http://www.hlhr.gr/en/open-letter-asylum-seekers-transfers-greece-germany-family-reunification/>, <http://www.kathimerini.gr/920187/article/epikairothta/ellada/orio-apo-germania-sth-metafora-aitoyntwn-asylo>.

<sup>52</sup> See <http://www.cnn.gr/news/politiki/story/92275/nai-moyzala-se-epanaproothiseis-prosfygon-apo-ti-germania?v9>

## 6.5 Policies Addressing Recent Arrivals' Accommodation and Integration Needs

In September 2016, the ministries of Education and Migration presented a plan for the education of refugee children and their integration into the Greek education system. This plan aims at facilitating access to education for all minors living in accommodation structures in Greece. More specifically, it provides for pre-schoolers to be educated through schemes organised in the refugee camps (as parents might feel uncomfortable sending them away to pre-schools ) while children of primary and secondary school age will be integrated into local schools.

Other integration measures focusing on children include the UNHCR's program for learning English and their native language aimed at helping children adapt to life in the host countries. UNHCR also supports Greek institutions fostering collaboration between prosecutors and social workers aimed at placing unaccompanied children in foster care within the scope of family reunification.<sup>53</sup>

With regard to subsidised and other assisted accommodation schemes for asylum seekers, to date, the total number of places is 19,397, while the total number of beneficiaries reaches 68,2% per cent. The housing scheme offers accommodation in apartments, with host families, in hotels and other buildings as well as various relocation sites, as listed in table 13 below. The challenge though remains that once people are given some form of international protection status they have to leave these protected structures and search for their own accommodation.

**Table 13: Accommodation: total number of places from UNHCR and Operational Partners, August 29 2017\***

| Type   | Total number of places |
|--|------------------------|
| Total number of places <b>in apartments</b>          | 15,605                 |
| Total number of places <b>in host families</b>       | 34                     |
| Total number of places <b>in buildings</b>           | 2,523                  |
| Total number of places <b>in hotels</b>              | 727                    |
| Total number of places <b>in Agia Eleni Facility</b> | 508                    |
| <b>TOTAL</b>   | <b>19,397</b>          |

In addition, during the period 01.01.2017 – 31.07.2017 UNHCR supported 704 places for UASC and assisted 1,066 children in total

Source : UNHCR<sup>54</sup>

With regard to the accommodation of Unaccompanied Children (UAC), an estimated number of 2,450 UAC are currently in Greece based on analysis from referrals to EKKA, as of 31 August 2017 while there are 1,183 places available in UAC shelters. The total number of UAC on waiting list for shelter on 31 August were 1,473 of which 223 in Reception and Identification Centres and 113 in protective custody. Between 1 January 2016 and 31 August 2017, EKKA has proceeded to 8,419 UAC referrals out of which 93 per cent were boys and 7 per cent girls while 6 per cent were under 14 years old. With regard to their nationalities, 40 per cent came

<sup>53</sup> See UNHCR Factsheet Greece, 1-30 June 2016.

<sup>54</sup> Available from <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/58902>

from Pakistan, 20 per cent from Afghanistan, 13 per cent from Syria, 7 per cent from Algeria, 4 per cent from Bangladesh, 4 per cent from Iraq and 12 per cent from other countries.<sup>55</sup>

With regard to access to education, between October 2016 and March 2017, 107 Reception Structures for Refugee Education were founded and functioned in respective schools, in seven of the 13 educational districts. 2,643 school-age pupils (Primary and High School) studied in these units.<sup>56</sup>

The framework for the operation of Reception Structures for Refugee Education (RSRE) for the academic year 2017-18 is defined by a recently published joint ministerial decision<sup>57</sup>. The joint ministerial decision defines the place of operation for the RSREs, their schedule, their curriculum, the rules of their operation as well as issues pertaining to their staff and their duties. According to a recent press conference by the General Secretary of the Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs titled “2017-2018: All refugee children in school”, the inclusion of refugee children in public education is a duty and an international commitment of the Greek state, but also the decisive point for the integration of children into Greek society. Refugee children are studying or will soon start studying in about 1,000 schools throughout Greece. The recorded school-aged children (6-16 years of age) population is estimated at 2,493 children in urban areas and 2,360 in Refugee Hosting Structures.<sup>58</sup>

As for refugees’ and asylum seekers employment and access to the labour market, while law 4375/2016 allows asylum seekers access to the Greek labour market, asylum seekers are often unable to acquire a Social Security Number (AMKA) without which they are unable to access regular employment as it has been recently reported through a formal letter-report by 25 organisations<sup>59</sup>. Furthermore, the Minister of Immigration Policy, Yiannis Mouzalas has announced on 9 September 2017<sup>60</sup> three new integration programs that are being prepared with the first one concerns registration, attributes, VAT and AMKA to those entitled, the second concerns the enrolment of all children in schools and an English learning program, while the third focuses on employment integration<sup>61</sup>. Thus this testifies to the political will of the government even if the actual implementation of these programmes remains yet to be proven.

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<sup>55</sup> Data available from: <http://www.ekka.org.gr/files/EKKA%20dashboard%2031-8-2017.pdf>

<sup>56</sup> These numbers are slightly different in April 2017 when the Ministry of Education’s report was written, when there were 111 Reception Structures for Refugee Education with 145 classes covering 37 Refugee Reception Centres in all areas of the country except the islands  
[http://www.minedu.gov.gr/publications/docs2017/16\\_06\\_17\\_Epistimoniki\\_Epitropi\\_Prosfygon\\_YPPETH\\_Apotimisi\\_Protaseis\\_2016\\_2017\\_Final.pdf](http://www.minedu.gov.gr/publications/docs2017/16_06_17_Epistimoniki_Epitropi_Prosfygon_YPPETH_Apotimisi_Protaseis_2016_2017_Final.pdf)

<sup>57</sup> See [http://www.et.gr/idosc-nph/search/pdfViewerForm.html?args=5C7QrtC22wEsriP0JA1xBXdtvSoClrL8z3KynwC3ixEliYHTRwL0-OJInJ48\\_97uHrMts-zFzeyCiBSQOpYnTy36MacmUFCx2ppFvBej56Mmc8Qdb8ZfRjQZnsIAdk8Lv\\_e6czmhEembNmZCMxLMtd8zEe5sJeKEyg7PhNYPBvPR8wbEd6fZyxvpkG1eOy2G](http://www.et.gr/idosc-nph/search/pdfViewerForm.html?args=5C7QrtC22wEsriP0JA1xBXdtvSoClrL8z3KynwC3ixEliYHTRwL0-OJInJ48_97uHrMts-zFzeyCiBSQOpYnTy36MacmUFCx2ppFvBej56Mmc8Qdb8ZfRjQZnsIAdk8Lv_e6czmhEembNmZCMxLMtd8zEe5sJeKEyg7PhNYPBvPR8wbEd6fZyxvpkG1eOy2G)

<sup>58</sup> See: <http://www.minedu.gov.gr/news/30918-18-10-17-2017-2018-ola-ta-prosfygon-poula-sto-sxoleio-synentefksi-typou-tou-an-g-g-tou-ypourgeiou-paideias-erevna-kai-thriskevmaton-g-aggelopoulou>

<sup>59</sup> See: <http://arsis.gr/kini-epistoli-anafora-25-organoseon-me-thema-epanalamvanomena-peristatika-paraviasis-dikeomaton-ton-etounon-asylo-ke-prosfygon-apo-ti-diikisi-afm-amka-karta-anergias-dikeoma-stin-ergasia/>

<sup>60</sup> <http://www.ert.gr/frontpage/g-mouzalas-nea-programmata-entaxis-gia-tous-prosfyges-pou-tha-minoun-stin-ellada/>

<sup>61</sup> See <http://www.skai.gr/news/greece/article/354938/mouzalas-25000-30000-prosfuges-tha-meinoun-oristika-stin-ellada/>

## 7 Citizenship Acquisitions

In 2014-2015 a significant decrease was observed in the naturalisations of co-ethnics as well as the naturalisations of other ethnicities, or of other provisions. In 2016, we observe a sharp increase in the number of citizenship acquisitions, mainly due to the sharp increase of acquisition of citizenship through birth or study as well the increase in acquisitions of citizenship by non-co-ethnics, while the acquisition of citizenship in the “other provisions” category appears decreased (as per the reformed Greek citizenship law l. 4332/19.07.2015).

With regard to their previous nationality, the vast majority were Albanians, with 28,251 persons in 2016 and 11,615 in 2015. As for gender, the percentages of men are slightly higher than those of women, namely 52 versus 48 per cent in 2016 and 54 versus 46 per cent in 2015.

Interestingly enough, based on a poll that took place in December 2016, the majority of Greeks, 66.5 per cent, believe that children of legal migrants born in Greece should receive the Greek citizenship at birth, yet, the percentage that responded positive to the same question in 2015 was even higher (75.2).<sup>62</sup>

**Table 14: Acquisition of Greek Citizenship (2011-2016)**

|  | 2011          | 2012          | 2013          | 2014          | 2015          | 2016          |
|--|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| Naturalisations of co-ethnics                      | 12,616        | 13,495        | 22,574        | 15,791        | 8,563         | 7,460         |
| Naturalisations of other ethnicities               | 930           | 1,149         | 1,866         | 2,019         | 1,487         | 3,624         |
| Birth or study in Greece                           | 3,103         | 5,543         | 529           | 0             | 305           | 19,032        |
| Other provisions                                   | 946           | 928           | 1,917         | 2,029         | 1,529         | 1,183         |
| Under-age children of naturalised adults (parents) | 1,627         | 622           | 3,337         | 1,990         | 2,294         | 1,515         |
| <b>Total</b>                                       | <b>19,222</b> | <b>21,737</b> | <b>30,223</b> | <b>21,829</b> | <b>14,178</b> | <b>32,814</b> |

Source: Ministry of the Interior<sup>63</sup>

According to recently published data<sup>64</sup>, over 18,000 positive decision of Greek citizenship acquisition were published during the first nine months of 2017.

## 8 Incidents of Racism and Racist Violence

During the last few years, Greek society has been characterized by a paradoxical coexistence of violence that targets refugees and migrants while at the same time, there have been large

<sup>62</sup> See: [http://www.dianeosis.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/ti\\_pistevoun\\_oi\\_ellines\\_final\\_version.pdf](http://www.dianeosis.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/ti_pistevoun_oi_ellines_final_version.pdf)

<sup>63</sup> Available from: <http://www.ypes.gr/UserFiles/f0ff9297-f516-40ff-a70e-eca84e2ec9b9/StatsCategory2011-2016-070217.pdf>

<sup>64</sup> See: <http://g2red.org/el/latest-statistics-regarding-citizenship-3rd-trimester-2017/>

solidarity movements directed towards them. This trend, together with institutional and legislative developments mostly for the year 2014, was discussed in the 2015 and 2016 reports.

Although policy initiatives aimed at combatting racist violence were recorded in 2015, there are several issues that need be mentioned for the entire period 2015-2016. First and foremost, the Hellenic Police issued a circular on “Combating racism, xenophobia and discrimination in policing” on 8/11/2014 which established the obligation for law enforcement agents to investigate racist motivations in all cases prescribed by the law. The Greek Violence Recording Network (RVRN) in its annual report for 2015 notes that in Athens, the Department of Combating Racist Violence in the General Hellenic Police Headquarters, deals with these incidents regardless of the specific area of the crime. Nonetheless, reasonable doubts are still raised as to whether all law enforcement officials are aware of their responsibility to investigate racist motive without prejudice.

Between January and December 2016, the RVRN documented, through interviews, 95 incidents of racist violence involving more than 130 victims, the corresponding numbers for the previous year were 273 and 300. In 31 incidents, migrants or refugees were targeted due to their national or ethnic origin, religion or colour and in one incident the staff of humanitarian organizations and the building intended to host refugees were targeted. One incident was recorded of a journalist who covers the refugee crisis being targeted. In 31 incidents, more than one victim was targeted, while in 54 cases the attack was committed by two or more people.<sup>65</sup> Moreover, on the 19<sup>th</sup> of June 2017 a prosecution report has been submitted to the prosecutor of the Supreme Court regarding the racist attacks that have taken place in Goritsa Aspropyrgos during the eight months before the submission which were coordinated and recurring, targeting mainly Pakistani land workers and their Greek employers<sup>66</sup>.

Furthermore, in March 2017, the European court of human rights has issued a landmark judgment vindicating a group of migrant strawberry pickers who were shot at by employers for asking for their wages after months of unpaid labour, back in 2013, ordering the Greek state to pay damages of up to €16,000 each for having “*failed in its obligations to prevent the situation of human trafficking*”.<sup>67</sup>

## 9 Emigration of Greeks abroad

It is difficult to have accurate information on Greek emigration abroad as who leave are not required to register, making it difficult to find the necessary data. However, recent research<sup>68</sup> has shed some light on this issue.

Greece is going through what has been described as its third phase of mass emigration.<sup>69</sup> This phase differs from the previous two in terms of the age, education level, and professional

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<sup>65</sup> See: <http://rvrn.org/2017/04/annual-report-2016/>

<sup>66</sup> See <http://www.hlhr.gr/en/report-racist-violence-aspropyrgos/>

<sup>67</sup> See <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/mar/30/bangladeshi-strawberry-pickers-shot-at-by-greek-farmers-win-european-rights-case>

<sup>68</sup> In recent years, there has been substantial research in the qualitative and quantitative characteristics of the phenomenon. To mention some, Lazaretou 2016, Labrianidis and Pratsinakis 2016, ICAP group 2015,2016, Endeavor Greece 2014 and EUI 2013).

<sup>69</sup> The migration phases refer to these time periods that present a sharp and large increase of outgoing flows. The first phase occurred between 1903 and 1917, the second between 1960 and 1972, and the third is ongoing and started in 2010 (Lazaretou 2016).

experience of the emigrants. A Bank of Greece report (Lazaretou 2016) published in 2016 finds that 427,000 Greeks have left the country since 2008.

Between 2008 and 2013, an estimated 223,000 young people – Greek residents, aged between 25-39 years – left Greece to seek work or better employment conditions in other EU countries (Lazaretou, 2016). According to data, 75 per cent of emigrants are college graduates and one-third of them are post-graduates or medical and engineering graduates (Labrianidis and Pratsinakis, 2016). Research suggests that the new emigrants are young, single, and highly educated. The year 2010 is a marker date, as before then the mobility of highly-educated Greek residents could not be considered high in numbers. After 2010, this changed significantly. Out of an estimated 190,000 Greek graduates living abroad, 140,000 of left Greece after 2010. The post-2010 period is presented as comparable in size with the post-war decades. There are, however, significant differences in quality characteristics as it is taking place in tandem with ongoing immigration to or through the country and is also much more diverse than in the past (Labrianidis, Pratsinakis, 2016).

An assessment of the overall emigration shows (see table below) that an annual outgoing flow of about 40,000 persons between 2006 and 2009, sharply increasing between 2010 and 2013 and remaining quite high in 2014-2015 (see table 14 below).

**Table 15: Outgoing Migrants, Greece, 2006-2015**

| Total number of long-term emigrants leaving from the reporting country during the reference year |        |        |        |        |        |        |         |         |         |         |
|--|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Year   | 2006   | 2007   | 2008   | 2009   | 2010   | 2011   | 2012    | 2013    | 2014    | 2015    |
| Persons  | 38,368 | 40,400 | 43,044 | 43,686 | 62,041 | 92,404 | 124,694 | 117,094 | 106,804 | 109,351 |

Source : Data extracted from Eurostat Database<sup>70</sup>

In 2013, the total number of emigrants leaving Greece has been estimated at 117,094 persons. For 2014 and 2015, estimates are lower, but still over 100,000 people and it is likely that emigration will continue in the years to come (Labrianidis and Pratsinakis, 2016).

The outputs of the Labrianidis and Pratsinakis (2016) research have also revealed new elements as far as the sociodemographic features of recent Greek emigration. For the first time in the history of Greek emigration, people are leaving the country at ages older than 40 years (12 per cent of emigrants). This is indicative of the fact that a large number of the people emigrating are being pushed out by need and not as a result of choice. Unemployment is one of the reasons for emigration, but at the same time it is not the only one.

Although high income and education levels are the backgrounds from which more emigrants are being drawn,<sup>71</sup> there is a significant increase in the number of people with lower education and lower income background emigrating. Greek emigrants in their majority are from urban areas (79 per cent), followed by those from rural areas (14 per cent) and finally from suburban

<sup>70</sup> Available from: <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/en/web/products-datasets/-/TPS00177>

<sup>71</sup> It is important, though, to note here that the reasons of migration differ for the pre-crisis highly-skilled emigrants and those who emigrated after 2010 (Labrianidis and Pratsinakis 2016).

areas (7 per cent). Research (op. cit.) showed that people with middle and low educational backgrounds emigrate to Britain and the Netherlands, making use of social networks established in these countries by earlier ‘guest-worker’ type of migrations. The more highly-skilled mostly chose the UK or newer destinations such as Switzerland, making use of their personal networks. Eighty per cent of the total flows are directed towards EU countries, and of those about half to Britain and Germany (roughly 25 per cent each). Other main destination countries include, in order of preference, the U.S., Australia, France, the Netherlands, and Sweden.

Several new studies have been published focusing on emigration views on specific segments of the Greek population. A recent study by Lois Labrianidis and Theodosia Sykas (2017) examining the aspirations of Greek high school students found that those aspiring to migrate belong to the middle and upper middle classes and excel at school while having high professional and educational expectations. According to the authors, the emigration of the middle-class instigated by the recession can be intensified by emigration, leading to the “loss of developmental human resources” which may result in a “vicious circle between crisis and emigration”. Other scholars focus on brain drain in specific fields such as academia (Marinakou et al., 2017) and in the medical sector (Sidiropoulos et al. 2016 and Moris et al. 2017).

## 10 Concluding Remarks

Greece is undergoing a period of stabilisation and normalisation both as regards its financial and employment situation and as regards the appeasing of the refugee emergency and its convergence into a more medium term integration issue. Important and largely successful integration measures have been taken with regard to asylum seekers in mainland Greece including accommodation and education, closure of the camps and mainstreaming access to the public health system. The role of civil society organisations has been crucial as intermediaries for referral and as providers of first instance assistance and first reception services. Naturally a lot remains to be done and this is really an important challenge for Greek society and the Greek state but one might say, that 18 months on from the border closure the situation on mainland Greece has evolved positively out of important efforts of the state, civil society and volunteers.

Another positive development has been the increased naturalisation of settled migrants particularly the second and 1.5 generation through the provisions of the 2015 reformed citizenship law which has led to 19,000 new citizens through the birth and education pathway. In addition the permits for exceptional reasons continue to try and get back to legality those settled migrant families that had lost their permits because of protracted unemployment (usually of the main male breadwinner in the household on whom the other family members’ permits depended). In addition there is a steady conversion of short term (1-2 years) to long term (5 or 10 years) permits allowing thus both to resolve the conundrum of befallen irregularity and helping migrants to feel secure and settled in Greece.

What remains a catch 22 situation is that of the asylum seekers stranded on the Greek islands. While there have been positive developments in terms of relocation and just over 20,000 people who arrived to Greece until 19 March 2016, have been relocated to other EU countries, those stranded on the islands because they arrived on the 20<sup>th</sup> of March or later are literally trapped there.

Nearly 15,000 people stay currently on the Greek islands with little hope of moving on whether to mainland Greece or to other European countries, but also not yet returned to either Turkey or their country of origin. Very poor living conditions and the lack of hope have often led to tension and violence in the camps as well as rising discontents among local inhabitants. While most EU countries agree that the EU Turkey statement needs to be upheld to send the message that the Turkey Greece corridor and the Balkan route are truly sealed, the question of what to do with these people remains a thorny issue. The extent to which these people can be returned to Turkey or elsewhere remains debatable particularly as regards their security situation and of course their ability of building a life for themselves.

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