

IMMIGRATION TO GREECE: THE CASE OF POLES

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1. Setting the stage: understanding migration towards Greece

Until recently, Greece was a migration sender rather than host. Emigration, however, came to a halt in the mid to late 1970s after the tightening up of migration regimes in northern Europe. The 1989 geopolitical changes converted the country into a host of mainly undocumented immigrants from eastern and central Europe, and increasingly from the Third World. Major population inflows since the late 1980s include co-ethnic 'returnees' and/ or their descendants from the former Soviet Republics (Georgia, Kazakhshtan, Russia and Armenia, commonly known as *Pontic Greeks*); Greek Albanian immigrants (ethnic Greek Albanian citizens known as *Vorioepiotes*); immigrants from non EU countries (other than the categories mentioned previously); and a smaller number of returning Greek emigrants from northern Europe, the US, Canada and Australia.

The investigation of the factors that attract migrants to Greece reveals interesting combinations of economic motivations with historical ties. Contrary to the argument that post-1980 migratory movements have been largely independent of geographical and historical ties between origin and destination (King *et al*, 1997), in the case of Greece, ethnic ties and labour market conditions have had an equal share in determining incoming flows (Veikou, 2001: 58). A large part of the migration patterns towards Greece correspond to pre-existing ethnic ties. A number of immigrants coming from ex-Communist states claim Greek ethnicity and choose Greece as their resettlement destination on the assumption that a presumed common cultural past should allow for an easier integration. Another important reason that attracts 'co-ethnics' to Greece is that according to the Greek Constitution, people from the Greek diaspora are entitled to a favourable legal status in Greece.

The dramatic and sudden increase of immigrant influx since the early 1990s was a new and unexpected phenomenon for both the government and the population. The new situation has been characterised by administrative and political confusion with regard to migration policy, and also by a shift in popular attitudes towards foreigners. An increase in xenophobic behaviour and racism has been registered since the mid-1990s while combating illegal migration remains a priority for the Greek government. Nevertheless, in the last few years, hesitant steps have been taken to address the integration of legal migrants. NGOs and to a lesser extent governmental agencies have recognised that Greece has become a multicultural society and have gradually advocated immigrant social and economic rights. Political participation of immigrants remains a taboo, however, and 'progressive' state policies are sometimes met with the citizenry reluctance to accept foreigners on a par within Greek society.

Against this background, this report provides for a comprehensive, though brief, overview of immigration to Greece during the past fifteen years. The following section offers an overview of the size and composition of the immigrant population and the third section discusses critically the main developments in Greek immigration policy since 1990. The fourth section focuses on the insertion of immigrants in the Greek labour market and social welfare system. The fifth section introduces the specific case of Polish immigrants in Greece and presents some ideas as to which are the relevant migration or other policies that have affected, and continue to affect (until the abolition of the restriction to the free movement of Poles in the EU), daily life and their plans to come and stay in the country.

2. The size of the immigrant population

At the 1991 census, there were 10,260,000 residents in Greece of whom 167,000 were foreigners. Following the most recent census of March 2001 (www.statistics.gr), there are 10,964,020 inhabitants in Greece of whom 797,091 are foreigners (both legal and undocumented as the census services tried explicitly to include the latter too in the census). Among the nearly 800,000 foreigners there are only 47,000 citizens from the fifteen EU member states (prior to the 2004 Enlargement to Central and Eastern Europe). Comparing the data of the two censuses it becomes obvious that the demographic growth of Greece in the last decade is almost entirely due to the arrival of non-EU workers and their families (Mpagavos 2003: 70-71).

With regard to the 762,000 immigrants, for whom we have detailed demographic data, the percentage of men is slightly higher than that of women (54.5% and 45.5% respectively). Most immigrant men and women declare work as their main reason for coming to Greece (54% in total). The second most important reason for settling in the country is family reunion (about 100,000 people in total, i.e. 13%), followed by return to their country of origin (about 52,000 foreigners of which 15,000 come from industrialised countries such as the US, Australia, Canada and Germany, another 12,000 are Albanian citizens, 5,000 are from Georgia, 5,000 from Russia, 2,500 from Turkey, 2,300 from FYROM and finally 1,000 from Kazakhstan). The census included an 'other reasons' category (apart from work, family, return, studies and seeking asylum), which was ticked by 164,180 individuals (roughly equally divided between men and women). We have no information as to what these 'other reasons' are despite the large number of people registering under it (over 20% of all foreigners).

The largest group of immigrants in Greece come from the Balkans. More than half of all foreigners registered in the census (57% or 438,000) are Albanian citizens. A majority of them (240,000, i.e. 54%) stated they came to Greece to find employment. Some 70,000 (15%) came for family reunion and about 10,000 (or 2.3%) as co-ethnic returnees. About one third of Albanians work in the construction sector and another 20% in agriculture.

The second largest national group (with a very large difference from the first, see Table 1 below) are Bulgarian citizens with 35,000 individuals registered at the census. Two thirds among them (more than 27,000 people) came to work in Greece. Roughly one third of Bulgarians work in agriculture and another third in private care and house cleaning services.

The third largest nationality group in Greece today are Georgians followed by Romanians (about 20,000 respectively). They are followed by Russians (17,500), Ukrainians and Pakistani (about 10,000 for each group). Among the then (in 2001) non-EU countries but currently European Union member states, 17,000 Cypriots and 13,000 Poles were registered at the census.

Among the developed countries that are members of the European Union, the largest cohorts come from Germany and the United Kingdom. Among non-EU developed countries of origin, the USA has the largest representation with nearly 20,000 citizens. It is likely though that some of the German and US citizens registered are of Greek ethnic origin. They are either first generation migrants who returned to Greece after retirement or people born in Germany or USA of Greek parents who returned to Greece, either alone or with their whole family (parents, siblings).

Table 1: Stock of foreign population in Greece, by country of origin
(data rounded to the nearest thousand)

Breakdown by Country of Origin*	Legal immigrants
Total	762,000
Non-EU European countries	563,000
Albania	438,000
Bulgaria	35,000
Georgia	23,000
Romania	22,000
Russia	17,000
Ukraine	14,000
Turkey	8,000
Moldova	6,000
Asian countries	26,000
Pakistan	11,000
Armenia	8,000
India	7,000
Middle East and Africa	30,000
Iraq	7,000
Egypt	7,000
Philippines	6,000
Bangladesh	5,000
Syria	5,000
Other	33,000
USA	18,000
Australia	9,000
Canada	6,000
EU countries prior to 2004 Enlargement	36,000
U.K.	13,000
Germany	12,000
Italy	6,000
France	5,000
EU countries from 2004 Enlargement	30,000
Cyprus	17,000
Poland	13,000

* The list includes countries with 5,000 individuals or more registered at the census.

Source: Adapted from national census 2001, Table 3, www.statistics.gr.

The 2001 census covers both legal and undocumented aliens residing in Greece at the time. However, representatives of immigrant associations publicly argue that a large part of the undocumented immigrant population did not register for fear of being detected and deported by the police. The same associations and NGOs estimate the current number of immigrants in Greece at about 1.5 million people (excluding the co-ethnics with legal status listed below)

although the authors of this report are cautious towards such estimates that may be based on personal impressions rather than scientific evidence or reliable estimates.¹

Alongside the non EU citizens, we should consider as economic migrants in substance even if not in form the co-ethnic returnees and their descendants from the former Soviet Republics (Pontic Greeks) who arrived in Greece in the late 1980s and early 1990s. According to the special census administered by the General Secretariat for Greeks Abroad in the year 2000, 152,204 Pontic Greeks had settled in the country. More than half of them (about 80,000) came from Georgia, 31,000 came from Kazakhstan, 23,000 from Russia and about 9,000 from Armenia (Diamanti Karanou 2003).

It is unclear how many ethnic Greek Albanians (*Vorioepirotas*) (not included in the General Secretariat census data) had naturalised already and hence appeared as Greek citizens in the 2001 census. It is estimated that about 100,000 Albanian citizens who live in Greece have been issued with the Special Identity Card for ethnic Greeks from Albania although in the 2001 census data only 50,000 respondents stated that they migrated to Greece because Greece is their country of origin. Recently (2005), ethnic Greek Albanians who have had these Special Identity Cards for ten years or more have been given the option to renew them for a ten year period. However, this renewal process is currently still in course as the processing of applications lasts an average of 12 months.²

Table 2: Co-ethnic migrants/returnees in Greece

Country of origin		Sub-total	Total
Albania	100,000	100,000	252,000
Georgia	80,000	152,000	
Kazakhstan	31,000		
Russia	23,000		
Armenia	9,000		

Table 3: Stock of foreign population in Greece

(numbers rounded to the nearest thousand)

Population	1991	2001/2006
Total population of Greece, 2001 national census	10,260,000	10,964,000

¹ Immigrant associations' estimates cited here come from public discussion with several migration associations' representatives that took place in a research dissemination and policy dialogue event with title: *Discussing with representatives of immigrant organizations in Greece*. The event was organized by the authors of this report in Athens on 30 March 2005 under the auspices of the POLITIS project (2004-2007, contract no. CIT2-CT-2003-505987, DG RTD, Sixth Framework Programme, see <http://www.uni-oldenburg.de/politis-europe/index.html>) and the 'Communicating EU Values' Jean Monnet action promoting active European citizenship (2004-2005) DG EAC, both funded by the European Commission.

² Personal communication with several immigrants of Greek descent.

Of which foreigners, 2001 national census	167,000	797,000
In percentage of the total population	2%	7%
Co-ethnics from the former Soviet Union Republics registered at the special census of 2000	n/a	152,000
Authors' estimate of undocumented migrants (2006)	n/a	300,000
Total stock of foreign population (legal and undocumented, including co-ethnics from Albania and from the former Soviet Union Republics)	n/a	1,249,000
In %	2%	11.4%

In sum, we estimate at approximately 1.25 million the total number of immigrants (including co-ethnics) living in Greece, namely just under 12% of the current total population and over 15% of the country's workforce (see table 3 below). It remains unclear how many hold legal status, how many hold temporary permits (because they are in the process of renewing their stay/work permit and/or because they have failed to renew it and are currently applying through the new regularisation programme of 2005), or how many are long term undocumented immigrants (who have not yet tried to regularise their status at all). A significant peculiarity of the migration situation in Greece³ is that migrants emerge only temporarily from the underground economy and from undocumented status. They frequently fall back into irregular work or stay status because they fail to renew their stay/work permits. This has been a recurrent problem in Greece, partly addressed by the repeated regularisations (1998, 2001 and 2005) which has not yet found a long term solution.

We estimate an additional 300,000 undocumented migrants to have entered Greece after the 2001 census but we believe that further and more systematic study of the illegal population estimates in Greece is necessary to propose any kind of reliable estimates. In any case, even assuming that all aliens registered at the 2001 census had legal status, 300,000 undocumented aliens is a large number for a country of 11 million inhabitants as it accounts for approximately 2.7% of the total population. The persistence of undocumented migration to Greece suggests that long term migration planning and comprehensive – control and integration – policies are necessary if the Greek state is to effectively manage international population movements.

3. Major developments in Greek immigration policy since 1990

At the eve of the 1990s Greece lacked a legislative frame for the control and management of immigration. Migration was regulated by law 4310 of 1929, revised in 1948, which mainly dealt with issues of emigration rather than immigration. The first law that tackled the influx of foreigners into the country was law 1975 of 1991 with the eloquent title 'Entry, exit,

³ Unfortunately, the frequent shifts between legal and undocumented status seem to be a general feature of the migration phenomenon in several southern European countries (see also Reyneri 1998a; Jordan et al. 2003).

sojourn, employment, removal of aliens, procedure for the recognition of refugees and other measures'. Its aim was mainly to curb migration, to facilitate removals of undocumented migrants apprehended near the borders and, if that were possible, to remove all illegal aliens sojourning in Greece. The law made nearly impracticable the entry and stay of economic migrants, seeking for jobs.

In the years that followed, hundreds of thousands immigrants came to Greece without appropriate documents, nor permits. The northern mountainous borders with Albania and Bulgaria and the vast Aegean sea border facilitate human smuggling networks, while the most common means of entry are tourist visas. Holders of tourist visas usually overstayed or sought informal employment.

According to SOPEMI (1999), in 1997 there were 74,500 legal migrants in Greece. Of these, 6% were Albanians, 8% Bulgarians and 17% Russians (Romanians, Egyptians, Ukrainians and citizens from former Yugoslavia accounted for 4% each). These data included co-ethnics that had not naturalised (mostly ethnic Greek Albanians). During the same period, several researchers estimated that there were approximately 400,000 undocumented immigrants living and working in Greece (see Fakiolas 1997; Lianos et al. 1996, Triandafyllidou and Mikrakis 1995; Triandafyllidou 1996).

It took more than five years for the Greek government to acknowledge that immigrants were there to stay and the new phenomenon could not be managed solely through stricter border control and massive removal operations. The presidential decrees 358/1997 and 359/1997 inaugurated the first immigrant regularisation programme which took place during spring 1998. In total, 371,641 immigrants applied for the White card (limited duration permit), which was the first step for applying for the temporary stay permit, or Green card, (of 1, 2 or 5 year duration). Only 212,860 undocumented foreigners managed to submit an application for a Green card.

This first regularisation programme was ambitious in its conception and rather open in its conditions but met with insurmountable organisational and practical difficulties. The state services responsible for managing the programme were largely unprepared to receive and process the hundreds of thousands of applications. The main administrative problems had to do with some of the application requirements. For example, a 'good health' certificate provided by a public Greek hospital is a necessary requirement. However, Greek public hospitals were under-resourced and unable to examine thousands of applicants in a timely manner. Similarly, the Ministry of Justice was unable to issue at such short notice criminal record certificates to the thousands of applicants. Moreover, the Employment Institute (OAED) responsible for managing the programme suffered from staff shortages. The temporary personnel eventually hired did not have the necessary training to perform their tasks efficiently and transparently. The whole process was impregnated by ideological and ethnic bias (and sometimes outright corruption) that conditioned decisions on the eligibility of applicants (Mpagavos, Papadopoulou 2003; Psimmenos and Kassimati 2002, Kassimati 2003).

Thus, many applicants did not succeed in passing to the second but necessary phase of the Green card application and despite the repeated deadline extensions, presumably fell back into undocumented status. Nonetheless, the data collected through the regularisation procedure offered some first insights to the socio-economic and demographic features of the immigrant population (see for instance Cavounidis 2002; Lianos 2001).

In 2001, and before the first regularisation programme had come to a close, the government issued a new law (law 2910/2001) entitled 'Entry and sojourn of foreigners in the Greek territory. Naturalisation and other measures'. This law had a twofold aim. First, it included a second regularisation programme that aimed at attracting all the applicants that had failed in the 1998 'amnesty' plus the thousands of new immigrants that had arrived in Greece in the meantime. Second, the new law created the necessary policy framework to deal with immigration in the medium to long term. Thus, it provided not only for issues of border control but also for channels of legal entry to Greece for employment, family reunion, return to the country of origin, studies or asylum seeking. It also laid down the conditions for naturalisation for aliens residing in the country.

Another 370,000 immigrants applied to acquire legal status within the framework of the new programme. Even though the implementation phase had been more carefully planned, organisational issues arose quickly. In the Athens metropolitan area in particular, the four special immigration offices set up by the regional authorities to receive and process the applications were unable to deal with the huge workload they were faced with. Following repeated recommendations by trade unions, NGOs, and the Greek Ombudsman (Special report on law 2910/2001, submitted to the Minister of the Interior in December 2001, <http://www.synigoros.gr/porismata.htm#>) the law was revised and the relevant deadlines extended. Nonetheless, resources were still insufficient as work and stay permits were issued for a one year duration only. Hence, by the time one immigrant was done with the issuing of her/his papers, s/he had to start all over again to renew the permits. In addition to the cumbersome nature of the procedure, the costs (in money but also in time spent queuing) associated with this renewal process incurred by the migrants constituted a further hindrance. Only in January 2004 (Act 3202/2003) did the government decide to issue permits of a two-year duration, facilitating thus the task of both the administration and the immigrant applicants.

On 23 August 2005, the Greek government passed a new law (law no. 3386/2005 published in Gazette no. A212) which regulates migration and transposes Directives 2003/86/EC (regarding family reunification) and 2003/109/EC (regarding the long term resident status) into national law. It is too early to evaluate the results of this new law, which has come into force only since 1 January 2006, so this paper is limited to bringing forward the main elements of the new legislation (for a more detailed discussion see Triandafyllidou 2005).

Law no. 3386/2005 regulates issues of entry, stay and social integration of third country nationals. EU citizens, asylum-seekers and refugees are not subject to these regulations. The new law aims at rationalizing the procedure for issuing stay and work permits. It also covers a series of special reasons for which a foreigner may reside in Greece for a period of time (article 9). The new law merges the former stay and work permits into a single document: a stay permit for a specific reason (e.g. work, investment, independent economic activity, studies).

The aim is to rationalize the procedure for inviting a foreigner to Greece to take up employment (article 14). Like the previous law, the new system is based on an annual report prepared by the relevant ministries regarding the needs of the domestic labour market. This report determines 'the maximum number of stay permits that can be issued for work purposes to citizens of third countries, per prefecture, per citizenship, per type and duration of

employment as well as in relation to all relevant details'⁴ (article 14, paragraph 4). It is difficult to understand why citizenship is a criterion in the issuing of such permits. It is unclear whether the law seeks to establish a priority for citizens of specific third countries (for instance, Albanian citizens of Greek origin) or whether it seeks to exclude citizens of specific countries or impose quotas on them on the basis of their country of origin.

The procedure for inviting a foreigner to work in Greece is similar to that of the previous law and for that matter quite complex. The procedure includes the following steps: The aforementioned annual report is sent to the Greek consulates abroad; it is posted and made public so that interested foreigners may apply. The consular authorities are responsible for compiling lists of interested applicants and informing each region. On the basis of this list, interested employers then submit an application to hire personnel with a dependent labour contract to their municipality. This application is accompanied with a financial guarantee equal to three months of the basic salary of an unskilled worker. The General Secretary of the Region then issues an act to approve the employment of the specific foreigner by the specific employer. This act is sent to the relevant consular authorities so that these can issue a visa for work purposes. The foreigner, upon arrival in Greece, has to present an application to transform her/his visa into a stay permit for work purposes.

The procedure described above suffers from many problems that were already apparent under the previous law. The procedure involves too many steps, which are performed by different services and require a long period of time to be realized. It is logical to expect that interested employers need a worker soon to cover a vacancy in their business. Moreover, they are likely to prefer someone they know or someone who has been referred to them (by a relative or friend already working in Greece who may have recommended this person). The question that arises is to what extent the interested employer is ready to go through this procedure and wait until it is completed to hire the foreigner and also to what extent the interested foreigner, under the urgent need to migrate, is ready to wait and abide by the law. It is more likely, unfortunately, that both party will more easily engage in an informal labour relation and the foreigner will enter Greece undocumented or with a tourist visa and then take up employment illegally.

The new law foresees special stay permits for investment activities (articles 26-27) for foreigners aiming to invest amounts over 300,000 euro in Greece. It also foresees a separate stay permit category for people who engage in independent economic activity (articles 24-25). Special stay permits are also issued for a series of other reasons (study, special job-categories such as athletes, people coming to Greece for religious reasons, intra-company transferees etc.). It is worth noting that this law introduces special conditions for the protection and assistance of victims of trafficking (articles 46-52).

As regards stay permits for study purposes (articles 28-29), the new law emphasizes the development of the private education sector as it recognizes all types of institutes for professional training and higher education, not only public but also private ones. It does not set a maximum number of stay permits to be issued annually for study purposes and allows students to take up part time employment (article 35).

Articles 53-60 determine the right and conditions for family reunification transposing into national law the relevant EU directive. Articles 67-69 transpose into national law the

⁴ All translations from Greek into English have been made by the authors.

Directive regarding the long term resident status. The transposition however of either directive is yet to be completed through the adoption of relevant Presidential decrees.

Last but not least, articles 65 and 66 introduce an Integrated Programme of Action for the social integration of foreigners in Greek society with emphasis on the following areas: a certified knowledge of the Greek language, the attendance of introductory courses on Greek history, culture and life style. The programme also emphasizes the need to integrate migrants into the Greek labour market and to ensure their participation in public life (article 66, paragraph 4).

The new law (article 84) unfortunately forbids the provision of any services to undocumented aliens by Greek public services, local administration, companies of public interest and other organizations related to the public sector in some direct or indirect form. The law only excludes hospitals when providing urgent medical assistance and when assisting minors. It remains unclear whether the rights of children and minors are protected only as regards their health or whether the exemption includes also issues of education and general social protection, regardless of the legal status of their parents. This point is of special importance as such rights are enshrined in the UN Convention on the Protection of the Rights of the Child (see <http://www.unhcr.ch/html/menu3/b/k2crc.htm>) and are part of Greece's international obligations.

After over fifteen years of experience as a host country, Greece is a typical case of a country that re-acts to developments and tries to deal with migration flows *a posteriori*, applying fragmented measures rather than adopting a comprehensive approach to migration. Up to now, Greek migration policy's main objective was to limit immigration, considering that the latter was a liability for the country's economic prosperity and for its presumed cultural and ethnic 'purity'. With insufficient analysis of the economic or demographic effects of immigration flows, Greek governments sought mainly to stop migration at the national borders. Greek authorities, until recently, viewed international population flows as external developments from which the country could be shielded through effective policing and enforcement measures. The results of this policy were costly. Public expenditure for border control skyrocketed while an immigrant population of several hundred thousands people was left to 'survive' without papers and without rights. The undocumented migration had large indirect costs related to social exclusion and social pathologies that affected not only the migrant but also the native population (see also Lyberaki and Pelagidis 2000).

4. Immigrant workers in the Greek labour market

Greece is characterised by high unemployment rates especially among the youth, women and people with secondary education. The total unemployment rate was at 11.1% in 2000 with registered unemployed reaching half a million people. However, there is a severe gender imbalance in this rate. The female rate of unemployment is nearly 17% and unemployment affects particularly women with secondary (17.3 %) and higher (10%) education (Baldwin Edwards 2001).

At first glance, it may come as a surprise that more than half a million migrants find employment in the Greek economy. The explanation to the puzzle is relatively simple and unfortunately a common pattern among southern European countries: the Greek labour market is characterised by high segmentation with special employment niches occupied by migrant workers. The native population's living standards have increased in the last decades

and there is widespread participation in the tertiary and higher education. Thus, young Greeks prefer to wait for employment that conforms to their skills while being financially supported by their families in the meantime, rather than take up a low prestige, low skill and low pay job.

OECD comparative statistical data on participation and unemployment rates of foreigners and natives in southern European countries (OECD 2001, Table 5.3, see also Baldwin Edwards 2001) reveal a distinctive combination of higher immigrant participation rates and similar or lower unemployment rates than natives. OECD data (OECD 2001, Table 5.4) on employment by type of economic activity reveals about one fourth of all migrants work in construction, 20% in mining and manufacturing, 20% in retail and wholesale services and another 20% in households. Even if these data cover only a small part of the immigrant population in Greece, they clearly indicate the segmented nature of the Greek job market and the fact that immigrant employment is concentrated in specific economic sectors.

Empirical research on the insertion of immigrants in Greek economy showed high levels of employment in the agricultural sector and in unskilled work (about 30% and 12% respectively, in four regions of northern Greece) (Lianos et al. 1996). This research, conducted in the mid-1990s also showed that the salary of migrant workers was on average 40% lower than that of natives. As nearly all workers at the time were undocumented, they did not benefit from insurance coverage, and their employers 'saved' that cost too. This study concluded that natives and foreigners were only partly in competition for jobs, as the latter mostly took up work that the former did not accept to do.

Similar patterns of limited competition have been shown by a study concentrating on the agricultural sector (Vaiou and Hatzimichalis 1997). The authors pointed to the seasonal character of migration in northern Greece where immigrants from neighbouring (Bulgaria and later Albania) and even more distant countries (Poland) were employed in seasonal agricultural work. Such work had for long been turned down by natives and even before the massive arrival of immigrant workers, such jobs were usually taken up by members of the Muslim minority in western Thrace or by Roma.

Studies concentrating in the late 1990s paint a more complete picture of immigrant contribution in the Greek economy and in particular of their insertion in the labour market. Sarris and Zografakis (1999) argue that immigration overall has a beneficial impact on the Gross National Product (1.5% increase), on private investments (0.9% increase) and on the cost of living (contained). Immigrants also contribute to an increase in the national production, they take up jobs that natives reject, contribute to creating new jobs (or maintaining existing ones) as their work makes some small and medium enterprises economically viable, it revitalises some economic sectors (such as agriculture and construction), and overall while depressing low skill wages it comparatively increases skilled wages (see also Baldwin Edwards and Safilios-Rotchild 1999). These findings are similar to those of a study on the effects of immigrant labour on the Italian economy and job market (Reyneri 1998b).

Sarris and Zografakis (1999) suggest that due to the presence and work of immigrant workers, the income of native households has increased. Overall, apart from unskilled native workers and people with average or low incomes in urban areas, all other categories of the native populations, both in urban regions but also in rural ones (where all categories benefit from the immigrant employment), benefit from immigrant work. In sum, about 2/3 of the

population experience a positive impact while 1/3 a negative impact of the presence of immigrant workers.

To obtain a better understanding of immigrant insertion in the Greek labour market, it is useful to look closer at the case of Albanians who account for more than half of the total foreign population. Lambrianidis and Lyberaki (2001) have showed how Albanian workers in Thessaloniki (second largest city of Greece) have moved from unskilled farm work into construction, small firm employment, semi-skilled work and transport services. The authors highlighted the upward socio-economic mobility of Albanian immigrants who through increased language skills and a better understanding of employment possibilities in Greek society, managed to improve their employment situation and income. It is also worth noting that in the period covered by the research, the first regularisation programme took place thus enabling immigrant workers to obtain legal status and hence to enjoy insurance benefits. Among the sample studied by Lambrianidis and Lyberaki, 82% declared to hold steady employment and 57% paid social insurance. About one third of men interviewed worked in construction and one third of women in house cleaning. Among women another third were housewives while among men, 24% worked in small industries. These findings are confirmed by Hatziprokopiou (2003) who shows that Albanian immigrants in Thessaloniki apart from construction and domestic services are employed in small enterprises (commerce, transportation, hotels and restaurants) and in small and medium-scale manufacturing. Contrary also to earlier studies (Iosifides and King 1998), Hatziprokopiou notes that at the time of his interviews, most interviewees had legal status and social insurance. These findings are further confirmed by a more recent study (Lyberaki and Maroukis 2005) which points to the gradual improvement of the housing conditions of Albanian immigrants in Athens, and their move towards self employment and jobs outside the 'typical' migrant sectors like house cleaning and construction work.

The insertion of Albanian and other foreign workers in the Greek labour market at a time of relatively high structural unemployment reveals the structural imbalances of the Greek economy. Indeed Greek economy is characterised by insufficient labour supply and an over-regulated and rigid job market. At the same time, low productivity sectors are over-represented in the economy. Under these circumstances, the plentiful, cheap, flexible and often informal work provided by immigrant workers has fulfilled the needs of the Greek job market, counteracting some of these imbalances.

There is as yet no available research on the impact of immigrant employment on the Greek welfare system. Because of Greece's acute demographic problem and severe welfare system crisis (future pensions from public welfare funds are considered to be at risk as the number of people in employment is on the decrease while the number of retired people is increasing), it has been hypothesised that immigrant contributions to welfare funds will have a positive effect on the overall welfare system. However, for the time being there are no studies documenting this or the opposed hypothesis. Research on the impact of immigration on the US welfare system has shown that effects are mixed because low skill and low social mobility immigrant groups tend to drain the social welfare resources (see Lyberaki and Pelagidis 2000: 26-51 for a discussion). However, in the case of Greece, even a relative pressure on the welfare resources will probably be counter-weighted by the positive financial contribution of immigrants who in their vast majority are at a working age. Moreover, it is most likely that the financial and social costs of migration controls and widespread informal employment have been much higher than any welfare costs that could have been incurred by legal working migrants and their families.

5. Poles in Greece

In this section, we shall concentrate on the specific case of Polish immigrants in Greece. The subsections that follow discuss why Poles were chosen as a target group for Greece, the size of stocks and flows of Polish migration to Greece since the late 1980s; the reasons and motivations for migrating; their living and working conditions; their undocumented status; and their network of formal or informal institutions of support. In the last sub section we shall discuss what policies may have affected and still affect Poles in their migration plans in Greece.

Why Poles as a target group

The pilot study to be undertaken for MIGSYS in Greece will concentrate on Polish immigrants in the country. The reason for selecting this group is first a comparative one: Polish migrants in Greece are to be compared with Poles in Germany as regards how immigration and other related policies (employment, housing, health services, education, etc, see MIGSYS proposal for further details) affect their migration projects, whether and how they realise these projects and/or change them.

Poles are a mobile population in the European context. Since the end of the Iron Curtain across Europe in 1989, hundreds of thousands of Polish citizens have taken advantage of their freedom to travel, not least for economic migration purposes, to several western and southern European countries (Cyrus 2007). Also during the last two years since Poland's accession to the European Union, tens if not hundreds of thousands of Polish citizens have moved to Ireland and the UK, two among the three EU member states that did not impose any restrictions to the freedom of movement of the citizens of the 2004 member states. In Ireland, for instance, it is estimated that there were about 90,000 new Polish immigrants in the period 2004-2005 (Ugba 2007). They thus seem to constitute one of the most mobile nations among the new EU member states and within Central Eastern Europe at large. They are also an interesting group to compare with Ukrainians (studied as the target group in Poland, Hungary and Italy). Before outlining the main points of interest for the MIGSYS project rationale, we shall discuss briefly the existing research on Poles in Greece and the main research findings relevant for our study here.

Stocks and flows of Poles in Greece during the last fifteen years

There were a few Poles moving to Greece in the immediate post war period or later mainly due to marriage to a Greek citizen (Romaniszyn 1996: 327-8). Polish presence in Greece increased in the early 1980s albeit temporarily. After the imposition of Martial Law in Poland in 1981 some political dissidents left for Greece. Most applied for a tourist passport to visit Greece but their intention was to migrate to the country and from there apply for a visa to the US or Canada. Thus, Greece was a 'first asylum' country on their way to permanent settlement overseas (Lazaridis and Romaniszyn 1998: 10). The Solidarity political immigrants only minimally contributed to the increase of the Polish community because their vast majority left for overseas (Romaniszyn 1996: 328).

Polish citizens arriving in Greece in the 1980s were granted temporary residence permits and until 1987 were supported by a special scheme that provided them with provisional accommodation in chosen Athenian hotels and some pocket money (Lazaridis and Romaniszyn 1998: 10). The initial inflow of *Solidarity* members was followed in the late

1980s by people who were not involved in politics in Poland but who were lured from the perspective of higher earnings in Greece. Flows further increase in the late 1980s and early 1990s and mainly involved people who arrived in Greece as tourist but overstayed their tourism visas and a few who arrived illegally to the country (Lazaridis and Romaniszyn op.cit.)

Romaniszyn notes that there are no reliable estimates, much less any data that would allow us to know even approximately the size of the Polish population in Greece. Based on the tourism statistics (as Poles were obliged to obtain a tourist visa to visit Greece until mid 1995), there was a gradual and steady increase of Polish tourists arriving in Greece in the late 1980s. Although the numbers declined as the support scheme ended, there were still over 60,000 Polish tourists per year arriving in Greece in 1989 and 1990. The Greek tourism statistics do not provide for any information that could help distinguish between real and ‘fake’ tourists. Also some immigrants were quite mobile travelling back and forth between Poland and Greece out of their free will or because they were expelled by the Greek authorities (as illegal immigrants) but later returned to the country (Romaniszyn 1996: 324-5).

Estimates of the Polish undocumented immigrant population residing in Greece in the early to mid 1990s differ widely. The quality Athens daily *Kathimerini* noted 30,000 workers (Panoi 1993: 8), the priest of the Roman Catholic church also provided of an estimate of 30,000 Poles coming to church every month, while Petrinioti (1993: 18) and Chtouris and Psimmenos (1997: 18, cit. in Psimmenos and Georgoulas 2001: 50, table 3.1) estimated Poles at about 100,000. The IOM noted that there was a decline in the number of Poles waiting for an overseas visa between 1991 and 1992 (Romaniszyn 1996: 325) but it is unclear whether this should be taken to reveal a decline in the number of Polish arrivals/overstayers in Greece or a decline in the number of those among the new or old arrivals that wished or was able to migrate further.

According to the national census data (www.statistics.gr), there were 12,831 Polish citizens in Greece in 2001 of whom 5,876 (46%) are men and 6,955 (54%) are women. In an interview to the Warsaw Voice (a web-based magazine <http://www.warsawvoice.pl/view/1716>), Greece’s Ambassador to Poland estimated Poles between 40 and 50,000 in 2003. Taking into account the tourism data and estimates mentioned above, it is highly likely that there are at least three times as many Poles in Athens, if not a figure closer to the 100,000 estimate cited above. Finally, as of 1st May 2006 the Greek labour market (along with the Finish, Portuguese and Spanish) was also opened to immigrants from the new EU member states and it is expected that this will attract additional (skilled) immigrant workers from Poland.

Reasons and motivations for migration

Both the political refugees of the early 1980s and the ‘fake’ tourists of the late 1980s and more recently took up paid jobs in the Greek informal economy, mainly in Athens but also in the islands of Santorini, Crete and in some parts of the Peloponnese (Lazaridis and Romaniszyn 1998; Romaniszyn 1999). As Lazaridis and Romaniszyn note (1998: 10) these immigrants were of the pro-active type, that is their choice to migrate was relatively unconstrained: they were not forced to migrate but rather decided to move with a view to earning money to invest in Poland or, perhaps more often, to purchase durable goods like a car or a flat (Romaniszyn 1996: 331).

A recent study on the experiences of Albanian and Polish immigrant women (Kassimati 2003a; 2003b) confirms these findings. Polish women immigrants moved to Greece for economic reasons but not out of sheer poverty. They moved and stayed in Greece because they felt Greece could offer them a better, more comfortable life. As one informant put it: 'I came for three months and what I saw in the shops made me stay. From morning till dawn I was looking at the shop windows' (cit in Kassimati 2003b: 149). In the same book (Kassimati 2003a), Psimmenos (2003) investigates the meaning of home and the reasons that pushed Polish (and Albanian) migrants to move to Greece. Like Lazaridis and Romaniszyn (1998) earlier, Psimmenos notes that reasons for migrating were quite different in the two groups. Poles stressed that they migrated in search of higher standards of living. They saw migration as part of their path of personal development. They migrated in search of a better paid job but also in search of a more pleasant life outside Poland. Migration was thus interpreted as a flight away from an employee job with long working hours, very low pay and a very predictable life that gave them few possibilities for personal development. Contrary to Albanians, Poles did not see their migration as motivated by sheer poverty and they did not place their migration project within a larger nexus of family relations and obligations. Rather they saw migration as an opportunity, a short term change of plans that however turned out to last longer than they anticipated.

Romaniszyn distinguishes between those undocumented workers who aim for a short stay and the more long-term migrants. The former are employed in seasonal jobs throughout Greece, mainly in the agricultural sector or in catering and tourism services. The latter concentrate in the Athens area. Among the latter, men are predominantly employed in the construction sector and women in cleaning as non-resident part-time domestics (Romaniszyn 1996: 325). Polish women were also employed as baby sitters, dress-makers and seamstresses and at bars and night clubs (Romaniszyn op.cit.).

In the early to mid 1990s nearly all Polish workers were undocumented and hence employed informally by Greek employers (private businesses or families). Their working conditions varied in relation to their sector of employment. Jobs in fruit picking and greenhouses were relatively well paid but very harsh. The same is true for the jobs in the construction sector. Women generally preferred to work as non-resident domestics as they resented the lack of freedom and lower wages associated with live-in jobs. The available studies do not specifically refer to the wages of Poles and/or whether these were similar or inferior to those of Greek workers doing the same types of jobs. Apparently none among these workers at the time had public insurance in Greece (Lazaridis and Romaniszyn 1998: 18) although our findings from a similar study in Italy suggest that they may have had health and pension insurance in Poland related to their work or unemployment status there (Triandafyllidou and Kosic 2003).

The living conditions of Poles were relatively good already in the mid 1990s, if compared with those reported by Albanian immigrants in Lazaridis and Romaniszyn (1998). They rented their own flats, apartments, walkout basements or even houses. In some cases a larger flat would be shared by two families but generally they were not prepared to live below what they considered acceptable standards, e.g. in overcrowded rooms (Lazaridis and Romaniszyn 1998: 15). They rented mainly in central Athens but Polish individuals or couples could be found in different Athens neighbourhoods including the expensive residential areas. These findings that refer to the early and mid 1990s can be confirmed by the authors' personal acquaintances with Poles in the Athens area during recent years. It is also likely that longer stays and regularisation opportunities since 1998 have had a positive impact in patterns of

housing and employment among Poles, but we have no studies or data to substantiate this claim.

Undocumented status

Romaniszyn (1996: 330-1) notes the insecurity of the 'invisible' Polish community of Greece. She emphasises that the Polish population and its networks and informal institutions could disappear overnight if the Greek authorities decided not to tolerate their activities any more and to implement the law in more rigid and systematic ways. A more recent study elaborates more on this aspect of the Polish migrant presence, notably the experience of being undocumented (Kassimati 2003b). Indeed, Polish women came to Greece because they heard from friends that life in Greece was pleasant and that there were jobs. However, their everyday reality has often been much harsher than that. They have been faced with hostile and inimical attitudes at Greek public services even if they had legal status. They experienced random checks in public places where police officers were looking for and arresting immigrants without a valid stay permit. They also faced very harsh working conditions. Most but not all of the Polish women interviewed in the context of this study (in 2000-2001) worked as cleaners and carers. Some reported having a good relationship with the family that employed them but many noted that at least in the beginning they were faced with very demanding and exploitative employers. On the whole, however, the women informants of this study drew a positive balance from their migration experience: they thought it was better doing a low skill but relatively well paid job in Greece and have a more comfortable life than stay in Poland, have a clerk job but not be able to make ends meet.

Networks of support

What is peculiar of the Polish immigration to Greece is the existence and continuation of a relatively developed network of support institutions in the Athens areas (Romaniszyn 1996). These institutions include the Catholic Church, a Polish kindergarten and school ran by the Church, weekly press in Polish language, the Polish club (which included various cultural activities including lessons in English and Greek) and a larger informal network of private services such as baby sitting, hair dressers, one-person firms repairing domestic appliances. The informal private network of services caters for the needs of the undocumented migrants and has an economic rationale: the services offered are paid for. The pillar institutions, namely the Church, the school, the Club were taken up by the Solidarity political immigrants and were further developed to cater for the needs of the more recent arrivals. The kindergarten and school offered suitable daycare and education in Polish language recognised by the Polish Ministry. The Church and the Sunday congregation catered for the spiritual need to pray but also for the social and economic need to meet up with fellow Poles, chat and exchange information about jobs, goods for sale, houses for rent and similar issues. The Polish press was started by the Solidarity immigrants in the mid 1980s and still continues and has further developed to this day as a profitable private business [reference to be supplied].

Romaniszyn (1996: 329) notes also that several Greek businesses catered for the needs of the Polish community: Greek taverns and discos offered Polish dishes and music, doctors and lawyers offered advice in Polish, travel agencies organised tours in Greece with Polish speaking guides as well as regular and cheap bus trips to several Polish towns. In conclusion, Romaniszyn notes (1996: 328-331) that this network of formal and informal institutions satisfied most of the needs of Polish immigrants in Athens (if not in Greece generally, as these institutions and networks concentrated in the capital city) and allowed them to live in

Greece without necessarily learning Greek or mingling much with Greeks. She notes however that these networks should not be understood as an ethnic enclave or as a community seeking to preserve its cultural or ethnic identity. They seem rather to be functional in catering for the cultural, social and economic needs of their customers, the undocumented Poles in Athens. These networks have a pivotal role in partly rendering Polish immigrants autonomous from Greek society but also, to a certain extent, they act as places of contact between Poles and Greeks.

On this aspect Romaniszyn (1999) elaborates further noting the patronage relationships that sometimes develop between Greek employers and Polish employees and of which the latter appear to be proud of. Her informants note the positive stereotypes that exist in Greece about Poles (these are also confirmed by Triandafyllidou 2001). Such relationships seem also to compensate for the unrewarding jobs and for the general difficulties of living as undocumented migrants (Lazaridis and Romaniszyn 1998: 13). Romaniszyn notes the development of both individual relations and networks between Poles and Greeks but also some more organised expression of such networking and cultural exchange like the Polish Madonna icon placed in the Roman Catholic Church of a Greek island in 1993 and/or a gathering of money to help a Polish child that was ill again in spring 1993 (for more details see Romaniszyn 1999: 128-9).

Finally, Poles in Greece have been particularly civically active. Among the most prominent immigrant associations we can include the following: Solidarity of Polish Workers in Greece, Polish Association of professionals, technicians and engineers in Greece, Association of Sciences and Arts of Poles in Greece, Independent Movement of Polish Immigrant Women, The "F. Chopin" Greek – Polish Association, The Association of Poles in Dodekanez, the Children and Youth Aid Association "Wszystkie Dzieci sa Nasze" and the Greek-Polish Association of Friendship and Cooperation. In addition to four Polish language newspapers, the Polish community in Greece has also been successful in setting up a Polish schooling system. Created in 1988, the first school, Romek Strzałkowski, initially worked under the aegis of the Roman-Catholic community. A second Polish language school was created in 1994 by the Greek-Polish Association (Jerzego Szajnowicza). Since 1997, the Polish school is funded by the Polish Ministry of Education enabling children of Polish immigrants to follow the Polish primary and secondary curriculum including Greek language courses. According to the Polish Embassy in Athens, there are 1,000 students enrolled in this school in Athens and another 40 in the smaller Thessaloniki branch, while the teaching staff is Polish in its entirety. This network and institutional development is not common to most other immigrant communities in Greece.

Future perspectives

Although research on Polish migration in Greece has been limited, the findings reported are particularly interesting and promising as regards the focus of MIGSYS. The above findings suggest that Polish migration to Greece is different in nature from the bulk of Eastern European and Balkan migration to the country. While Bulgarians, Ukrainians and certainly Albanians were forced to move to Greece out of necessity (because they lost their jobs and/or were unable to make a living in their countries of origin), Poles chose to migrate to Greece because of higher expected earning and a higher standards of living. Poles also interpret their

migration experiences in a different perspective compared to Albanians (Psimmenos 2003; Lazaridis and Romaniszyn 1998): their movement was motivated by economic necessity but also inspired by the wish to experience a different life style, to get to know different countries and peoples.

It is worth noting here that the conditions for moving are different for Poles compared to several other Eastern European nationalities. Poles have been exempted from the requirement of a visa to travel for tourism in Greece already since 1995. Thus they have been able to travel to Greece legally seemingly for tourism purposes even if some of them had in mind to overstay and/or engage into some form of employment. It is therefore likely that the policies that may be particularly effective in conditioning the Polish immigrants' choices, plans and their actualisation go beyond the main issue of obtaining and preserving legal migration status. It is possible that border control and internal control policies are less relevant for Poles than for other immigrants as the former may always argue that they are in Greece for tourism and that they simply do not have their passport handy to show to the police officer. The above is confirmed by the relatively low numbers of Poles that applied for regularisation in 1998: only 6,894 in the Athens metropolitan area and about 8,500 in the whole of Greece (Psimmenos and Georgoulas 2001) while during that period it is estimated that at least 10,000 Poles lived in Greece.

The gradual lifting of labour restrictions (in Greece since 1st May 2006) is also another factor that renders the main migration policies to not be perceived as very important for Polish migrants. It is questionable whether education or welfare policy issues are relevant for Poles' migration plans as educational needs seem to be catered for by their community institutions and networks while there is little information about how they deal with health problems. In sum, Poles offer an interesting puzzle for immigration policy makers as they seem to respond more to their own motivations and needs taking advantage of windows of opportunity such as the non-visa requirement, rather than to act or react to policy changes.

6. Concluding remarks

In this paper we have reviewed critically the main features of immigration to Greece, the Greek immigration policy and the overall impact of migration on the labour market. The contours of the immigration situation in Greece are rather disappointing. After nearly fifteen years of massive migration the country still strives to accept its role as a host society. Migration policy planning lacks a mid- to long-term perspective and policy measures up to now have been short-term and fragmented. Immigrant integration policy needs to be reconsidered to address the social and economic challenges of migration.

In the last section of this paper, we have concentrated on the case of Polish immigrants living in Greece. We have provided for an overview of the stocks and flows of Polish migration to Greece since the late 1980s, discussed their reasons and motivations for moving, their living and working conditions, the difficulties of living without 'papers', and the formal and informal institutions and networks of the Polish community in Athens. Our main findings as regards the MIGSYS research focus suggest that Poles are an interesting group for study because they seem to be resilient to policy changes: they are not particularly eager to legalise their status, they have however taken advantage of moving with or without a tourist visa since the late 1980s, and they have developed their own institutions and networks (which however pre-existed the arrival of the economic migrants of the early 1990s) to cater for their needs.

Also in terms of integration in the host society they seem to develop a pivotal attitude: they are partly autonomous as a community but they do not develop the attitude or reality of an ethnic enclave. They appreciate and are proud of their friendly and social relations with natives and the good stereotypes that Poles enjoy in Greece but they also have negative stereotypes towards Greeks. Most seemed to have planned to move to Greece only temporarily but then decided to stay although they did not concomitantly decide to regularise their status. But maybe their lack of interest for regularising their migration status may be linked either to the prospect of returning to Poland or to the fact that Poland is now an EU Member State and access to other EU labour markets is gradually becoming less restricted.

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