

From reception to integration: migrant populations in Greece during and in the aftermath of the crisis

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1. INTRODUCTION

The aim of the present study is to present and evaluate policies and social practices regarding the social inclusion and integration of migrant populations in Greece over the last decade. In particular, the study investigates, through an extensive desk research and a qualitative analysis, the impact of policies and social practices on the social inclusion of migrant populations in Greece, as well as the challenges that still remain to be addressed. The conclusions of this work would identify both successes and areas for improvement -potential obstacles and remaining actions to be implemented- in order to foster a successful integration of migrants in the future. Our work will hopefully contribute to a better-informed public debate and to a better-targeted migrant integration policy making in Greece.

The book, which is the outcome of the research study commissioned by the Joint Research Centre, is structured in 5 main sections. The first section sets out the aim of the study and presents its contents. Section 2 provides the contextual framework of the study, namely conceptual definitions, profile of the migrant population in Greece and the institutional framework regarding the status and the integration of recent migrants. The extensive section 3 gives a detailed account of the scientific evidence produced by EKKE's rich body of projects on migrant-related issues over the last decade, covering a broad range of topics. Section 4 presents the findings of the qualitative research carried out in the island of Lesbos and in Athens, comprising 15 in-depth interviews and a focus group discussion with representatives of various stakeholders involved in the reception and integration of migrants and refugees. Finally, section 5 sums up the main conclusions drawn for the primary and the secondary research and puts forward a set of recommendations and policy proposals.

The authors of the present report are: Amalia Frangiskou (section 4.2.), Georges Kandyliis (sections 2.1., part of section 3 and section 4.2.), Alikí Mouriki (sections 2.2, 4.1, 4.3, 4.4, and 5), Nikos Sarris (section 2.3 and 4.2.), Theoni Stathopoulou (section 4.1.), Maria Thanopoulou (section 4.2.), Joanna Tsiganou (sections 3 and 5) and Christina Varouxi (sections 3 and 5). Additionally, the following research assistants actively participated in the desk research (section 3): Grigoris Gkougkousis, Dimitris Turlidas, Eleftheria Koutsiumba and Yannis Zafras. The study was coordinated by Alikí Mouriki, who also edited the present publication.

2. CONTEXTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. Conceptual framework, definitions and target group

The difference between a *migrant* and a *refugee* is a matter of analytical order but at the same time an issue of high political interest and one with multiple political implications that extend far beyond strictly conceptual debates. Both concepts refer to people who have moved from their places of birth and/or former habitual residence. Most delineations of their difference follow one of two possible routes. In the former, the two concepts are contrasted in terms of whether relocation occurs on the basis of free choice (migrants) or enforcement (refugees) (UNHCR 2016). In the latter, while the emphasis on free choice versus enforcement remains, the migrant is considered as the umbrella term for all relocations and refugees are a specific category of migrants that flee persecution or conflict (OHCHR undated).

Importantly enough the term ‘refugee’ has historically gained a key position in international law, as for example with the Geneva Convention of 1951 which gave the famous definition of the refugee as someone who:

“owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country”.¹

1. Or who, as the Convention continues, ‘not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it’.

The complex system of international protection that has developed by a variety of international and regional organizations (including UNHCR and the EU) and other actors (including major NGOs) has provided refugees with a level of legal recognition and policy intervention that is not available to migrants. On the other hand, there is no universal agreement on any legal definition of the term 'migrant' which is generally considered as 'a neutral [one] to describe a group of people who have in common a lack of citizenship attachment to their host country' (OHCHR/GMG, cited by Oberoi 2018: 132).

From an analytical point of view, the distinction between migrants and refugees is much less clear than usually implied in the legal provisions, for two reasons. Firstly, because while the fear of persecution and conflict that cause the displacement of refugees are not to be underestimated, the reasons behind migration may also involve extremely harsh living conditions that are overseen by the 'free choice' ideal. Exposure to poverty and deprivation, facing the risk of starvation, seeing one's prospects for education blocked by racial discrimination or fleeing the outburst of a lethal epidemic in a country with a collapsed health system, all can be severe 'push factors' that force people to move, despite not corresponding to the legal definition of a refugee (Mandal 2005, Gil-Bazo 2006). The relatively recent concepts of 'environmental refugees' and 'climate refugees', albeit contested (Black 2001, EPRS 2019), are also indicative of this kind of proximity between the migratory and the refugee status.

Secondly, despite the violence and the emergencies that refugees confront, seeing them as impotent victims is equally misleading. Refugees move using complex local and regional networks, they generally have to mobilize adequate resources and they are often able to select among different available pathways and strategies to overcome various obstacles that exist in their places of origin, on their way and in their destinations. These pathways and strategies are not necessarily less complex than those of migrants. Moreover, refugees' integration into host societies tends to follow routes that are similar to those of migrants, although states play more active roles in the integration of refugees (Hein 1993). All in all, migrants are not

necessarily those rational subjects that move in order to maximize their well-being, as opposed to refugees that allegedly move with anaemic control on their own lives.

Apart from long-term analytical considerations, there are also short- and medium-term practical reasons why the absolute separation between migrants and refugees is delusive. Firstly, depending on national and international legal systems and arrangements, many individuals fall successively and perhaps repeatedly into different categories. For example, one may be considered an 'irregular migrant' upon her illegal arrival in a host country, only to be considered an 'asylum seeker' after her application for international protection and then an irregular migrant' gain, should her claim be rejected. As Scalettaris (2007) argues, these are 'policy related labels, designed to meet the needs of policy rather than of scientific enquiry'. The very notion of the 'asylum seeker' and the prolongation of the period for which one may be considered as such indicate this protracted ambiguity.

Secondly, many major migratory movements (including recent arrivals in Greece and Europe) consist of people with various motivations and degree of enforcement. The coinage of the term 'mixed migration flows' (Sharpe 2018) which has been adopted by several international actors including IOM (2019) and the EU is representative of this complex reality.

It is after the above considerations that we decided to include refugee issues and refugee integration in the present study. The current moment of migratory movement and settlement in Greece makes this choice even more essential, since a large part of the refugees from Syria and other countries that arrived in the country in the last few years, after an initial period of emergency, are at the first steps of their integration process.

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2.2. *Profile of the migrant populations in Greece*

Migration flows into Greece are traced back to the 1970s and 1980s, involving mainly manual workers from countries such as Egypt and Pakistan and female domestic workers from Philippines. The collapse of socialist regimes in Central and Eastern Europe at the beginning of the 1990s triggered massive migration waves into Greece. During the 1990s, it is estimated that over one million third-country citizens entered the country irregularly or overstayed their visa. For many years, most of these migrants did not have access to a legal status. Four programmes for the regularisation of unauthorised migrants carried out in 1998, 2001, 2005, and 2007 allowed most of these migrants to become legal, albeit with severe delays.

In 2011, 818,836 citizens of non-OECD countries were recorded in the national population census. In 2018, the number of migrants legally residing in the country amounted to 523,715, while the number of asylum seekers registered between 2013 and 2017 amounted to 137,155 plus another 5,244 unaccompanied minors. The main countries of origin of migrants are Albania (67.5% of the total), countries of the former USSR (Georgia, Ukraine, Russia, Armenia) and Asian countries such as Pakistan, India, the Philippines and Bangladesh, while fewer migrants come from Europe (Serbia), North Africa (mainly Egypt), Middle East (mainly Syria) and China. Applicants for international protection come mainly from the Middle East (Syria, Iran and Iraq), while smaller numbers come from warring African countries.²

The majority of both documented and undocumented migrants works in sectors dominated by informal labour relations, such as agriculture, construction, hotels and restaurants, cleaning and domestic work. The economic crisis and the collapse of the construction sector that employed an important part of male migrants, led large sections of the migrant population to leave Greece.³ Of those who remained in Greece, some slipped from authorised into unauthor-

2. Figures from the revised *National Integration Strategy*, July 2019.

3. Within a period of just 19 months, from September 2011 to April 2013, 215,872 authorised third-country nationals left Greece (Ministry of Interior, 2013). By 2016, the majority of them had returned to Greece.

ised status, because they could not find declared employment necessary for permit renewal, whilst inflows of unauthorised migrants continued, despite the recession, albeit this time mostly from Asian and African countries (Cavounidis, 2018). As a result, the composition of the current migrant population in Greece varies substantially from that in the 1990s, both in terms of legal status, as well as in terms of a more diversified ethnic and cultural background.

In addition to the older cohorts of economic migrants settled in Greece, in 2014-2015, Greece witnessed a massive inflow of displaced populations when it became one of the two major entry points for hundreds of thousands of migrants and refugees fleeing war and poverty in Asia and Africa, in one of the biggest population mass movements in recent European history. According to Frontex,⁴ at the height of the crisis in 2015 and 2016, 1,067,000 migrants and refugees arrived at the doorstep of crisis-stricken Greece, on their way to the more advanced European countries. The EU-Turkey agreement in March 2016 and the closure of the Balkan route resulted in a significant drop in the inflows (only 35,052 arrivals in 2017 and 50,215 in 2018⁵). Greece was transformed from a transit country to a host country for tens of thousands of entrapped refugees and migrants who had no choice but to request asylum in Greece. Over the last 6 years, between June 7th 2013 and August 31st 2019, according to the Greek Asylum Service, 245,733 refugees and migrants, one third of which (78,615) are children under 18 and 9,806 unaccompanied minors, filed an asylum claim in Greece.⁶ As of August 28th 2019, the number of migrants and refugees who have filed an asylum claim in Greece, reached 81,683 people.⁷

At present, the total international migrant stock in Greece in 2019 is estimated by IOM at 1.2 million.⁸

4. See: <https://frontex.europa.eu/along-eu-borders/migratory-routes/eastern-mediterranean-route/>

5. See International Organisation for Migration: <https://migration.iom.int/datasets/europe-%E2%80%94-mixed-migration-flows-europe-yearly-overview-2018>

6. See: http://asylo.gov.gr/en/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Greek_Asylum_Service_data_August_2019_en.pdf

7. See IOM: <https://migration.iom.int/europe?type=migrants-presence>

8. See: https://migrationdataportal.org/data?i=stock_abs_&t=2019&cm49=300

2.3. *Institutional framework regarding the status and integration of recent migrants*

There is a strong link between migration and integration policies. Managing the effective integration of migrants has thus become an issue of concern, both in the State's migration policy agenda, as well as in the domestic public debate and opinion.⁹ Migrant integration gained further attention in the aftermath of the recent humanitarian refugee crisis and the increase in refugee inflows.

Over the previous years the Greek State has developed and implemented a wide range of policy initiatives supporting migrant integration in various sectors of social, political and economic life such as the institutional framework regarding the conditions of entry and stay of certain categories of migrants, citizenship and access to nationality, access to the labour market and entrepreneurship, education and training, healthcare and other public services and institutions, social protection and social inclusion, decent housing and living conditions, the promotion of a cross-cultural approach and the intermingling of natives and migrants, non-discrimination and equal opportunities and participation in the public and political life of the host country.

However, notwithstanding these initiatives, *“The organised reception and integration of migrants, applicants and beneficiaries of international protection for many years were not a priority for Greek migration policy. The main focus was on managing migration flows with emphasis on border security, legalisation of irregular migrants and the issuance of residence permits. The integration process was mainly about the individual effort of migrants and the small number of refugees, through the support networks of their co-nationals already established in the country. [...] Although actions for the integration of migrants have partially replaced the absence of an overall integration plan, they were fragmented, short-lived and without continuity”*.¹⁰

9. For data on the domestic public opinion see: Special Eurobarometer 469, “Integration of immigrants in the European Union”, April 2018.

10. See: *National Strategy for the Integration of Migrants and Refugees*, July 2019.

As a result, for many areas, migrants suffered from discriminatory practices and violation of their rights, thus reinforcing socio-economic inequalities between the migrant and the native populations. Today, challenges of integration and underlying governance weaknesses for both the short and long-term integration responses still remain.

A. Legislative framework for migration

Over the past few decades, Greece has been transformed from a 'sender' to a 'recipient' country of migratory flows (Pavlou and Christopoulos, 2004). The migration policy constitutes a critical and integral element that is inextricably linked to the overall growth strategy of the country, transforming society and the economy and ensuring social cohesion.

As a Member State of the EU, Greece had to adopt the primary and secondary law of the EU. The process towards a deeper harmonization between EU Member States on migration policy was intensified with the entry into force of the Amsterdam Treaty in 1999, and the Tampere European Council (1999), which set the basis for the creation of CEAS (Schuster, 2003, p. 114). The first phase of the CEAS focused more on the harmonization of common policy elements. To this end, a series of directives on the reception, temporary protection, family reunification procedures and conditions for the recognition of humanitarian status were adopted (Gerard 2014, p. 58). The Hague Programme (2004-2009) and the Stockholm Programme (2010-2014) have been less ambitious in the adoption of new legislation. Efforts in these two programmes focused more on establishing higher protection standards, outsourcing, greater harmonization between Member States and enhancing solidarity mechanisms.

Legalisation was a tool used by the Greek State, from 1998 until 2007, aiming at decompressing and regulating migrant groups, whose undocumented status was creating more problems, as it was associated with delinquent behaviour, "black" and undeclared labour, exploitation of male and female migrants being, as well as with a negative impact on society with the increase of phenomena of racism and xenophobia and subsequent ghettoisation of the excluded groups.

In order to regularise migrants who had entered the Greek territory illegally and had stayed in the country over a long period of time, successive and extended legalisation procedures took place, beginning from 1997 and ending in 2007 (P.D.s 358/97 and 359/97, Law 2910/2001, Law 3386/2005 and Law 3536/2007).

The codification of the legislation for the entrance, stay and social integration of third-country nationals in the Greek territory initially took place with Law 3386/2005, which was amended and completed with new laws 20 times during a 10-year period. National policy observes the distinction made in the European migration policy between legal and illegal migrants (Sarris, 2014). The common ground of all laws is the favourable treatment of the first category, implementation of the principle of equal treatment, that emerges from the principle of “equal treatment” of community citizens, recognition of a regime of integration for them in the country and preventive measures to deal with irregular migration (Papagiannis, 2001; Sarris, 2014). Law 3686/2005, as it was amended, focused on the triadic ‘legality-rights-social inclusion’, bearing in mind that national policy is dictated by the Directives and Regulations of the European Union’s migration policy. The main innovation of the Codified Law is the provision for granting a single permit that consists in the unification of the labour permit and the residence permit.

The stability of lawful residence is an crucial element of the social integration of third-country nationals and is adequately ensured only by obtaining long-term residence permits, since holders of these permits are not at risk of deportation for regular periods, for typical reasons, and, at the same time, have specific individual and social rights, which ensure and promote their social integration.

Until the codification of legislation on migration was introduced with Law 4251/2014, the institutional framework was characterised as egalitarian, counterproductive and ineffective, but at the same time contradictory and the source of ‘legal uncertainty’, which left room for the discriminatory and arbitrary treatment of migrants by the public administration services (Triantafyllidou, 2009, pp. 167-168; Simopoulos, 2005, p. 74; Spanou, 2008, p. 153).

The coding of the migration legislation with the introduction of the Social Integration Code (Law 4251/2014), as it was amended

and is in force, was drafted aiming at: a) gathering together the provisions of the legislation on migration, b) harmonising the national legislation with EU legislation, and c) rationalising the existing institutional framework and addressing the malfunctions detected during the implementation of the existing legislation.

In particular, the Code further simplified the procedures for the issue of residence permits, reduced the categories of residence permits, and increased their duration, re-examined the conditions of access to the labour market, created a friendly investment climate and facilitated long-term residence status. In addition, a child protection grid and a special favourable residence status for “second generation” male and female migrants was adopted, in order to facilitate their integration prospects and disentangle them from the general procedures and conditions of renewal of residence permits, that could at any time put at risk their legal status. At the same time, with Law 4018/2011, Aliens and Migration Services were converted to One-Stop Services (Stratoudaki, 2016, p. 21). Regions became responsible for issuing and renewing all permits.

Furthermore, the Code establishes a protective framework for rights, so that third-country nationals enjoy enhanced protection according to the principles of equality and non-discrimination on the grounds of race, gender, language or religion, and respecting their particularities, which is based on social justice, placing particular emphasis on the rights of children.

In addition, the terms and conditions of access to long-term residence permits were reviewed, aiming at promoting long-term residence permits, which, due to increased rights and equal treatment in various areas of social and economic life, constitute a type of “reward” for those migrants who prove that they have developed strong bonds with Greece, and who are living and working in Greece lawfully for a number of years. As for long-term national statuses, i.e. ten-year and infinite-term residence permits of the previous legislation, these were maintained, but their automatic renewal and their transition to long-term EU resident status with more favourable terms were abolished.

Furthermore, with Law 4332/2015 and the transposition of Directive 2011/98/EU “regarding a single procedure of submission

of an application to grant third-country nationals a single residence and working permit in the territory of the Member State and regarding a common set of rights for workers coming from third countries and lawfully residing in a Member State”, a set of common rules was established, which govern the procedure of the examination of applications for single permit granting, aiming at making the overall residence permit issue procedure effective and transparent, in order to ensure the appropriate level of legal safety for those concerned.

A significant piece of legislation is the operation of a parallel system of reinstatement to a status of legality or legitimisation of third-country nationals through an individualised procedure (extraordinary reasons), for those who were either holders of a final residence permit during the last decade or reside in the country for more than seven years, as long as they can provide evidence that they have developed bonds with the country. In addition, the conditions for ensuring the legality of second-generation residents became more favourable, as the right to access third-country nationals’ residence permit is granted, regardless of the legality or the legalisation title they possess, and provided they have successfully completed six grades of the Greek school before their 23rd birthday.

Moreover, a set of rights was enacted in order to establish the equal treatment of the citizens of a Member State or a third country, who have not yet acquired long-term resident status. These citizens have either become accepted in the territory of the Member State in order to work and reside, and are thus legally working there, or have been accepted for other reasons, besides work (e.g. family reunification) and were subsequently granted access to the labour market of the Member State, according to the provisions of the EU or national law.

In particular, the right of equal treatment with nationals, which is granted to third-country nationals – holders of a single residence permit, maintaining, where provided for, specific deviations or reservations of the specific national legislation, has to do with the following areas:

- a) the terms of employment, including minimum legal age of employment, working conditions, including pay and dismissal, working hours, leave and holidays, as well as health and safety at work;

- b) the right to strike and participate in trade unions, according to national law, the freedom to associate and join and participate in employee or employer organisations or in any organisation, the members of which practice a specific occupation, including the advantages provided by these organisations, among which are the right of negotiation and drafting collective agreements, without prejudice to the provisions on public order and public safety;
- c) education and vocational training. The right of equal treatment is granted to third-country nationals, who are working or have worked in the past, and who are registered as unemployed, and does not include benefits and study loans and living benefits or other benefits and loans granted for educational reasons. Regarding access to university and tertiary education and to vocational training, not directly linked to the specific job position, special conditions apply, including adequate knowledge of the language and tuition fees, according to national law;
- d) the recognition of diplomas, certificates and other professional titles, according to the relevant national procedures;
- e) social security rights, as they are set in Regulation (EU) no. 883/2004 of the Council, for the coordination of social security systems for salaried persons, non-salaried persons and their family members who are moving within the European Union. The competent services cannot limit these rights for third-country employees, who are working or have worked for a minimum period of six months and who are registered as unemployed;
- f) tax advantages, provided the employee is considered a resident for tax purposes in the Greek territory. The competent services grant equal treatment in cases where the registered or standard place of residence of the third-country employee's family members, eligible for the benefits, is within the Greek territory;
- g) access to and acquisition of goods and services that are offered to the public, including housing procedures according to national law, without prejudice to the freedom to draft contracts according to EU and national legislation. The competent services provide equal treatment to third-country employees, who are working, while they may not apply equal treatment regarding access to housing;

h) counselling services, which are offered by employment offices (National Strategy for Integration, pp.18-19).

The replacement of residence permits in the form of independent documents and the use of biometric data was a key element in the process of granting and renewing residence permits.

At the same time, in 2016, with Law 4368/2016 and Joint Ministerial Decision no. 25132/4-4-2016 the right of free access to all public health structures for the provision of nursing and medical care to uninsured persons and vulnerable social groups, including migrants and international protection applicants and beneficiaries, was established. The health coverage that is guaranteed by the new framework is full and includes their nursing, diagnostic and medical coverage.¹¹

The Centres for Migrant Integration, established as branches of the municipal Community Centres (Law 4368/2016), play a significant role in the integration of migrants. In terms of the implementation of migration policy, these new structures have a double role. Initially, as it is described in the respective law (Law 4368/16), one of the actions of Community Centres has to do with the social integration and socialisation of migrants. At the same time, the Centres for Migrant Integration can also operate as branches of the Community Centres, with the appropriate personnel, according to the principles of the Code of Migration on the one hand and of all the Regulations, Decisions and Announcements of the European Parliament on the other. In the Community Centres without a Centre for Migrant Integration, the actions concerning migrants are by law carried out by the centre itself, which takes a number of initiatives to combat social exclusion and enhance the social integration of vulnerable groups.

Law 4375/2016 re-established the Directorate for Social Integration, whose aim was to study, plan and implement the social

11. The new government elected in July 2019 abolished the right of uninsured third-country nationals to have full access to healthcare services, except for cases of a life-threatening situation. A new system of providing access to healthcare and social security to third country nationals via a provisional number, introduced in November 2019 (law 4369/2019), has only recently come into force.

integration policy of international protection beneficiaries and migrants into the Greek territory, thus further reinforcing the significance attached to the issues of social integration.

In 2016, an autonomous Ministry for Migration Policy was established (P.D. 123/2016), having as its objective the administrative, institutional and symbolic upgrade of the management of migration and asylum policies and the promotion of social integration. Since July 2019, following the change of government, this Ministry became a General Secretariat for Migration Policy and is part of the Ministry of Citizen Protection.

Supportive to migrant integration is also the role of Migrant and Refugee Integration Councils, the competences of which are described in Law 4555/18 (“Kleisthenis I” Programme). The Migrant and Refugee Integration Council is a consulting body, which is established following a decision made by the Municipal council, in order to replace the institution of Migrant Integration Councils provided for by the “Kallikratis programme of Law 3852/2010” (Sarris, 2016). The main objective of the Migrant and Refugee Integration Council is to act as a consultant in order to enhance the social integration of migrants and refugees in the host society, to promote their participation in the community, as well as to resolve the problems they face. Therefore, the significance and the decisive role of the Migrant and Refugee Integration Councils in local communities with large migrant populations are evident, particularly when there is also a Centre for Migrant Integration structure. Even though these are two clearly independent entities, what is highlighted here is the convention of a parallel action at the local level.

Articles 33, 34, 35, 36 and 37 of Law 4604/2019 made amendments to articles 6, 7 and 9 respectively of the Greek Citizenship code, regarding the supporting documents required for the naturalisation of foreigners, the naturalisation procedure, as well as oath taking respectively, facilitating the acquisition of the Greek citizenship.

B. Legislative framework for the asylum

In 2000, Greece was under pressure to implement the common European standards for the reception and asylum procedures, while at the same time it struggled to secure its borders against migrants who entered illegally (Afouxenidis et al., 2017). Until 2008, the asylum process and social rights of asylum seekers were regulated by Greek Law 1975/1991, as amended by Greek Law 2452/1996 and the relevant Presidential Decrees (Karamanidou & Schuster, 2012, p. 173). In addition, by 2008 the European directives on temporary protection, reception of asylum seekers, minimum standards and the identification procedures were transposed into the Greek legislation.

A new law on asylum was voted in 2011 (Law 3907/2011) that significantly reshaped the Greek legislative framework. This law provides for the establishment of an “Asylum Service,” consisting of a Central Office and Regional Offices (Article 1). The Law also introduced the establishment of a “First Reception Service” (Article 6), with the mission to “effectively manage third-country nationals illegally entering the country”.

The Asylum Service (which was enacted on June 7th 2013), today falls under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Citizen Protection and acts as an independent service directly reporting to the Minister. The Service’s competence extends to the entire territory. Its mission is the implementation of the legislation on asylum and other forms of international protection of foreigners and stateless persons, as well as the contribution to the planning and formulation of the national asylum policy. The Asylum Service is also competent for the implementation of the New York Convention of September 28th 1954 on the legal status of stateless persons.

The Asylum Service implements P.D. 141/2013, which adapted national law to the redrafted Directive 2011/95/EU of the European Parliament and the Council of December 13th 2011 (L 337) on the requirements for the recognition and the status of foreigners and stateless persons as beneficiaries of international protection, for a single status for refugees and female refugees or for persons entitled to subsidiary protection and for the content of the protection provided in combination with Law 4375/2016, as amended and enforced

(with Law 4399/2016, Joint Ministerial Decision no. 13257 and Law 4485/2017), by which the provisions of redrafted Directive 2013/32/EU of the European Parliament and the Council on the common procedures for granting and revoking the status of international protection were transposed into national legislation, while, at the same time, revised provisions for the employment of international protection beneficiaries and other provisions were taken into consideration. The same law reorganised the Asylum Service.

In the framework of the implementation of the European legislation on the provision of international protection, the Asylum Service implements redrafted Regulation (EE) no. 604/2013 of the European Parliament and the Council of June 26th 2013, on the establishment of criteria and mechanisms for the determination of the Member State that is responsible to examine the application for international protection submitted to a Member State by a third-country national or a stateless person, and Regulation (EU) no. 603/2013 of the European Parliament and the Council of June 26th 2013, on the establishment of “Eurodac” for the comparison of fingerprints, for the effective implementation of regulation (EU) no. 604/2013.

After the EU-Turkey Agreement in March 2016, the Greek Parliament made amendments to the asylum law, including the creation of the General Secretariat of Reception, which includes the Reception and Identification Service (R.I.S.) (Article 26, Law 4375/2016). Its object is to perform the procedures for the reception and identification of incoming people in the Greek territory. The R.I.S. comprises the Central Service and the Regional Reception and Identification Services, which include the Reception and Identification Centres (R.I.C.), the Reception and Identification Mobile Units, the Open Temporary Reception Structures and the Open Temporary Accommodation Structures (Article 8, Law 4375/2016). In this context, the General Secretariat of Reception is responsible for establishing, operating and supervising structures for four different regional services: initially, the R.I.C., which performs the procedures of registering, identification and data verification; secondly, the Reception and Identification Mobile Units, which have these respective responsibilities; thirdly, the Open Accommodation Structures for asylum seekers. In addition, the pre-departure accommodation structures

for those in the deportation process. The Central Service plans, directs, monitors and inspects the actions of the Regional Services and ensures the necessary requirements for the exercise of their responsibilities, in cooperation with the other competent services (Article 8, Law 4375/2016).

The purpose of each Structure's operation is to provide a stable, short- and medium-term residence framework. The services provided include housing and nutrition, information on the residents' rights and responsibilities in the host country, their psychosocial support, facilitating their access to health services, providing basic personal hygiene products, clothing and footwear and teaching the Greek language, as well as access to training and skills development programmes (Article 110, Law 4172/2013) (Kourachanis, 2018).

In 2016, in order to deal with the growing number of NGOs that appeared mostly after the 2015 refugee crisis, the Ministry for Migration Policy created a National Register of Greek and foreign NGOs active in the areas of international protection, migration and social integration, pursuant Joint Ministerial Decision no. 39487/2016. This register includes today 61 Greek and 9 foreign NGOs (https://mkoypes.gr/home_in_mitroo_report).

Moreover, P.D. 122/2017 establishes the Directorate for the Protection of Asylum Seekers, the strategic objective of which is the implementation of national policy for the reception of international protection applicants, mainly through planning, monitoring and implementing protection programmes, with particular emphasis on vulnerable groups.

Law 4540/2018 adjusts the Greek law to the provisions of Directive 2013/33/EU of the European Parliament and the Council of June 26th 2013, on the requirements for the reception of international protection applicants (redrafting, L 180/96/29.6.2013) and other provisions – Amendment of Law 4251/2014 on the adjustment of the Greek law to Directive 2014/66/EU of May 15th 2014 of the European Parliament and the Council on the prerequisites for the entry and residence of third-country nationals – Adjustment of asylum procedures and other provisions.

In 2018, Greece was the only European Union country making it to the top 5 list of countries that receive the most asylum seekers,

both in absolute numbers, as well as proportionately to its population (Eurostat 2018). In the second quarter of 2019, Greece was in the fourth position among the EU countries, as to the highest number of first-time asylum applicants, with 13,300 first-time applicants registered, or 9% of all first-time applicants in the EU Member States (Eurostat 2019).

C. Institutional framework further supporting the exercise of Migration Policy

During the past two years there were many legislative initiatives, which created a new, enhanced institutional framework to support, among other things, the implementation of Migration Policy. These include:

- a) the establishment of the *National Mechanism of Monitoring and Evaluation of Social Integration and Social Cohesion Policies* (by Law 4445/2016), whose main objectives are:
 - to set down the social needs of citizens, to coordinate the process of social integration and cohesion policies;
 - to monitor and evaluate their implementation, to determine the priorities of social solidarity, based on individual emergencies;
 - to contribute to the strengthening of briefing, transparency, efficiency and effectiveness of the social protection system;
 - to substantiate and specify policies and actions, with regard to the cumulative characteristics of the persons at risk of poverty, extreme poverty and social exclusion;
 - to plan, supervise and evaluate the institutional framework for the universal introduction of the Social Solidarity Income (passage 2.5.3, par. C', article 3 of Law 4336/2015).
- b) the establishment of the *National Council against Racism and Intolerance* (Law 4356/2015), with the following duties:
 - the formulation of policies for preventing and combating racism and intolerance, in order to ensure the protection of individuals and groups that are targeted due to race, colour, na-

- tionality or ethnic origin, genealogy, social origin, religious or other beliefs, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity or characteristics;
- the supervision of the implementation of the legislation against racism and intolerance, and its compliance with international and European law;
 - the promotion and coordination of the activities of participating bodies for the more effective handling of the phenomenon, as well as the strengthening of the collaboration with civil society on these issues.
- c) the establishment of the *National Mechanism for the Elaboration, Monitoring and Evaluation of Action Plans for the Rights of Children* (articles 8-12 of Law 4491/2017), with the following competences:
- the elaboration of National Action Plans for the Rights of Children, including base reports;
 - the consultation with Civil Society during the formulation of Action Plans. The National Mechanism also provides for the participation of children in the consultation process;
 - the promotion and publicity of Action Plans;
 - the monitoring of the implementation of Action Plans, and the drafting of interim reports on their implementation;
 - the evaluation of Action Plans, and, in particular, of their degree of implementation, as well as of their total effectiveness;
 - the preparation of subsequent Action Plans.

In July 2019, the Ministry for Migration Policy¹², in order to respond to the new migration realities in the country such as “*the mass influx of mixed migratory flows, as well as applicants of international protection and migrants from war zones which face high levels of unemployment and poverty and with an increased number of vulnerable people (children, women, people with post-migration trauma)*”, launched

12. Which was abolished as a ministry following the July 7, 2019 elections and its competencies were transferred to the Ministry for Citizen Protection. In January 2020, the ministry was re-instated with a new title ‘Ministry of Migration and Asylum’.

a revised *National Strategy for the Integration of Migrants and Refugees*, that replaced the previous one from 2013, which describes the priority policy areas and the main interventions and actions to be implemented towards integrating the refugee and migrant populations in the Greek society. The new *National Strategy for the Integration of Migrants and Refugees*, while targeting third-country nationals legally residing in Greece, also includes actions to address the specific challenges faced by asylum seekers, beneficiaries of international protection and refugees. For a more detailed account see below section 3.1.2.

D. Return of third-country nationals

The Greek Ombudsman has been proclaimed as the national monitoring mechanism for the return of third-country nationals on the basis of Directive 2008/115/EC (“Return Directive”) and Law 3907/2011 which transposed it into the Greek legislation. After entry into force of EU Regulation 2016/1624 for the conversion of FRONTEX into the European Border and Coast Guard Agency and the bolstering of its competences in the management of external borders, the Greek Ombudsman was called upon, as a national mechanism for the protection of rights, to work with the newly founded European reporting mechanism of FRONTEX, as well as to appoint investigators for the establishment of an EU pool of monitors, to be called upon by the European agency to participate in European return operations.

According to Eurostat, in 2017, 188,905 third-country nationals were returned, out of 618,780 residing in the EU illegally, in other words slightly less than 1/3 of those registered.

The fact that the dramatic reduction in the numbers of forced returns of third-country nationals in 2018 does not correspond to the high number of administrative detainees to be returned, is highlighted in a special report by the Greek Ombudsman, in its capacity as national monitoring mechanism for returns, according to EU law. The Ombudsman points out that the police return operations are affected by certain dysfunctions in the asylum process and the lack of fully connected data systems. The Ombudsman stresses the im-

portant role of transparency and protection of fundamental rights in planning an effective system of returns at the European level, focusing its critical remarks on the EU Commission's proposal for a Recast Return Directive. Last but not least, the Greek Ombudsman's initiative to engage in networking with its counterparts in other Member States and the Council of Europe, aims at achieving transparency and an independent external monitoring on European forced return operations by FRONTEX, in view of the relevant EU Regulation being under amendment (The Greek Ombudsman 2019).

E. Concluding remarks

Significant efforts have been made so far for the integration of migrants and refugees in the Greek society, although there is still plenty of room for further fine-tuning. Improvements to the legislation in force have contributed to the access of migrants and refugees to basic rights and services. The two main laws 4251/2014, *Migration and Social Integration Code*, and 4375/2016 on asylum issues aim at the social integration of migratory flows. The first piece of legislation introduces important reforms in the area of residence permits for third-country nationals, as well as new organisational arrangements for their social integration in the Hellenic Republic. In an effort to address the negative effects of the economic crisis in Greece, the *Code of Migration and Integration* attempts to institutionalise a series of Migration Advisory Committees, reflecting on the important role of social inclusion. Law 4375/2016 on the organisation and operation of the Asylum Service, the Appeals Authority, the Reception and Identification Service, the establishment of the General Secretariat for Reception, the transposition of the provisions of Directive 2013/32/EC into the Greek legislation, improves the organisation of the asylum issues. The main problem, however, remains the implementation of the legislative framework.

There is no doubt that the Greek state found itself largely unprepared to deal with the dramatic increase in the inflow of asylum seekers and unauthorised migrants, both in terms of procedures and infrastructures. Until 2015, the Greek state was mainly pursuing the

policies of a transit country (Spyropoulou and Christopoulos, 2016). The closure of the borders by the Balkan countries and the EU-Turkey agreement in the spring of 2016 made it necessary to transform Greek temporary accommodation policies into a long-term social inclusion system for larger numbers of people.

In July 2019, the Greek government announced a new national strategy for the integration of migrants and refugees, taking into account new data that dictated the re-examination of the targets of the Greek State in the area of migration. This new strategy is an attempt to reflect the new realities, mainly the massive influx of mixed migratory flows and the economic situation of the country. The integration strategy of asylum applicants and international protection beneficiaries, unaccompanied minors and male and female migrants, as well as of migrants and refugees belonging to vulnerable groups, constitutes a horizontal policy the realisation of which calls for the collaboration of the Ministry for Citizen Protection (which has assumed, following the July elections, the competences of the former Ministry for Migration Policy) with other competent Ministries and the Local Government, as well as a dialogue with Civil Society agencies.

In Greece, a major problem continues to be the prolonged stay and the geographical limitation of asylum seekers, at the Reception and Identification Centres, in numbers that hugely fall short of the rate of readmissions to the neighbouring country, as the EU-Turkey Agreement of 18/03/2016 aspired to.

The issue of managing irregular migrants remains above all a political issue, for Europe, as well as for Greece. In 2018, the limitations of the current European and national policies for the management of mixed, migrant and refugee, flows became even more salient. The European Union, having already sealed the case of relocation of asylum seekers from Greece and Italy, as a temporary measure that expired on 26/9/2017, has not to date gathered the necessary consensus to reform the common European asylum system.

In order to improve the management of the mixed migration flows, a policy based on three pillars is required: firstly, the government must seek to internationalise the problem to the maximum

degree, and, at the same time, to pursue its management in proportion to its size and capacity. Greek boundaries are finite, and the Greek economy, due to the recent crisis, cannot absorb such waves of migrants and refugees. Secondly, it is imperative that the richest and more powerful European countries (Germany, France) negotiate with Turkey, in order to find points of contact and understanding, so that refugees are no longer used as an alibi for other, obscure aims. Thirdly, competent authorities must be equipped with managing skills and capabilities. The authorities dealing with refugees cannot carry through with asylum applications and the control of refugees and migrants, nor can the Greek Armed Forces and the Coast Guard decisively contribute *ad infinitum*, with limited resources and capabilities, to the control of the phenomenon.

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3. EVALUATION OF RECENT POLICIES AND SOCIAL PRACTICES ON MIGRANT INTEGRATION: KEY FINDINGS

3.1. The state of play regarding access of migrants to basic rights: education, health, employment & entrepreneurship, decent housing, with emphasis on vulnerable groups

3.1.1. Introduction

In order to address the complex migration realities and integration challenges, new evidence-based integration policies must be developed, the design and implementation of which must rely on research results and an ongoing collection of reliable facts and figures. The successful integration of migrants in the host society is a key issue for policymaking at the national and local levels, and it can influence the overall perception of migrants by the locals and ensure social cohesion and respect for diversity and human rights for all.

The present section aims to provide scientific evidence for a follow-up on the issue of migrant integration in Greece, produced by EKKE's research findings over the last decade. EKKE's projects on migrant-related issues address a wide range of topics and demonstrate that migrant integration and social inclusion are inextricably linked to key social, political and economic concerns such as economic development, employment, social protection and welfare, health, youth, gender, education, political participation and social cohesion. Moreover, the updating and deepening of EKKE's research findings in priority areas of migrant integration policy would provide MPs and other policy makers such as the European, State and

Local authorities the necessary knowledge and information for evidence-based and well targeted policymaking on the issue.

3.1.2. *Policy and conceptual framework for migrant integration*

In view of developing a common migration policy, the European Union Council adopted the *Common Basic Principles for Migrant Integration Policy in the European Union* in November 2004.¹³ This set of principles set out a common approach to the integration of third country nationals across the EU, covering the main aspects of integration – employment, education, access to institutions, goods and services, and integration into the society in general. Most importantly, these common principles define integration as a dynamic, two-way process of mutual accommodation between migrants and host-country nationals, which implies respect for the basic values of the EU. Later, in 2011, the European Commission set out a *European Agenda for the Integration of Third-Country Nationals*,¹⁴ focusing on actions to increase migrants' economic, social, cultural and political participation and emphasizing local action. In 2014 the Justice and Home Affairs Council reaffirmed the EU Common Basic Principles for Migrant Integration Policy adopted in 2004.¹⁵ The *European Agenda on Migration* which was proposed in May 2015¹⁶ recognizes migration both as an opportunity and a challenge for the EU. The Agenda has four pillars: a) reducing the incentives for irregular migration; b) saving lives and securing external borders; c) strengthening the common asylum policy; d) developing a new policy on legal migration. In June 2016, an *Action Plan on the Integration of Third Country Nationals* was adopted by the European Commission¹⁷ which addresses the integration of migrants, including refugees, who are nationals of non-EU countries and who reside legally in the EU. The

13. Council conclusions of the Justice and Home Affairs Council of 5-6 June 2004.

14. COM (2011) 455 final of 20.7.2011.

15. Council conclusions of the Justice and Home Affairs Council of 5-6 June 2014.

16. COM (2015) 240 final of 13.5.2015.

17. COM (2016) 377 final of 7.6.2016.

Action Plan includes actions across all the policy areas that are crucial for integration such as:

- Pre-departure and pre-arrival measures, including actions to prepare migrants and the local communities for the integration process.
- Education, including actions to promote language training, participation of migrant children in Early Childhood Education and Care, teacher training and civic education.
- Employment and vocational training, including actions to promote early integration in the labour market and migrants' entrepreneurship.
- Access to basic services such as housing and healthcare.
- Active participation and social inclusion, including actions to support exchanges with the receiving society, migrants' participation in cultural life and fighting discrimination.

Within the above EU policy context, Greece has developed its own national integration policy across different policy areas and government levels. In the last decade, Greece's approach to migrant and refugee integration was largely affected by two developments. First, since 2008, Greece has been facing an economic crisis that has triggered high unemployment rates and drastic public budget cuts. Second, in 2015 and 2016, Greece received unprecedented inflows of asylum seekers and refugees, adding pressure on the delivery of public services in a number of sectors that deal with the reception and integration of migrant populations. During these years, notwithstanding the efforts made by the Greek government, the socio-economic situation of the migrant population in Greece is in several respects worse than that of the Greek citizens, particularly in terms of employment, education, and social inclusion outcomes. The same outcomes apply also across the EU, with third-country nationals being in a worst position than native-born citizens.¹⁸

According to the revised *National Integration Strategy* “the term *integration* describes an individual or group process of migrants, appli-

18. See Eurostat, *Migrant Integration Statistics* (2018) and OECD/European Union (2018), *Settling in 2018: Indicators of immigrant integration*.

cants and beneficiaries of international protection that lies within their attempt to adapt to a new country and reality". As is underlined in the document, a new model of integration is promoted in Greece which is based on social inclusion and adjusts to the dynamics and particularities of the Greek society and state. Its final aim is interculturalism. In particular, the Strategy:

- aims at creating and maintaining an open society that respects diversity
- safeguards the rights and obligations of persons residing in Greece, in terms of respect, implementing the same conditions and restrictions that apply to nationals of the host country
- enables and fosters interaction, cooperation, dialogue and constructive criticism between different communities (national, cultural, etc.) in terms of democracy and equality
- enhances mutual understanding and acceptance, as well as social cohesion
- promotes the development of the host country, at all levels, with the participation of all its inhabitants, who realize that the public interest and the future of their host society concerns them both individually and collectively.

The *National Integration Strategy* treats integration policy as a multidimensional, multi-speed process which is formed around two levels and three target groups: a) Reception, which concerns applicants for international protection and to which the State is required to provide protection, as well as basic material reception conditions (such as housing, financial aid, access to health, etc.) and b) Integration, which concerns the beneficiaries of international protection and migrants to whom the state is called upon to secure all the necessary conditions for their successful integration into the host society (such as housing, access to the labour market, health, education, public participation and reliable information). Actions and measures aimed at integrating this population are different and relate to the needs of each group. In the case of newcomers who have acquired international protection status, integration aims at a smooth transition from the applicant's protection status to their entry into the host society through programmes that combine temporary accom-

modation, financial assistance, courses of Greek language, access to the labour market, etc. Respectively, in the case of the migrant population, integration aims at a faster and more efficient residence permit process, their return to legality, their non-discriminatory access to health care, social security, employment and education, the improvement of the services provided to them as well as their civic participation.

The new document which *'reflects a revised strategy for the integration of migrants, applicants and beneficiaries of international protection in the country and incorporates new data both locally and in the European and international levels'*, sets out the following policy guidelines of the National Integration Strategy:

- Cooperation with local authorities to promote integration at the local level
- Access to basic goods and services
- Promotion of integration to education
- Promotion of labour market integration
- Interculturality
- Civic participation
- Combating racism and xenophobia
- Targeted policies for vulnerable groups of migrants and beneficiaries of international protection
- Targeted policies for 'second generation' third country nationals.¹⁹

Considering the above policy developments and in the light of the pressing migratory challenges, Greece needs to develop more effective integration policies for all legally residing third country nationals and people with a migrant background. This approach is supported by the European Parliament which calls *inter alia* for full participation and early integration of all third country nationals, including refugees. In its resolution, the European Parliament, after underlying that *integration measures for all legally residing third-country nationals should promote inclusion, rather than isolation, [...] empha-*

19. Each line of action incorporates targeted policy initiatives and concrete measures.

sizes that hosting Member States must offer refugees support and opportunities to integrate and build a life in their new society; notes that this should necessarily include accommodation, literacy and language courses, inter-cultural dialogue, education and professional training, and also effective access to democratic structures in society –as provided for in the Qualifications Directive; notes that –just like Union citizens –refugees have both rights and obligations in the host Member States; emphasizes therefore that integration is a two-way process and that respect for the values upon which the Union is built must be an integral part of the integration process, as must respect for the fundamental rights of the refugees”.²⁰

In conclusion, integration is a multidimensional process of interactions between migrants and the receiving societies. Therefore, in order to realize the full potential of migration and respond to changing circumstances, a sustainable integration policy for refugees and other legally residing third-country nationals is crucial for Greece as a hosting country. As the European Commission also underlined in its recent report on migration management “integration is a key step in the migration process, to ensure that skills and competences of those who have a right to stay are used and developed for the benefit of all, but also to ensure inclusive and cohesive societies. Successful integration of legally residing third-country nationals is thus critical to making migration work both economically and socially – given the gaps in outcomes between third-country nationals and EU citizens in terms of employment, poverty and access to key services such as education and healthcare. Supporting the integration of legally residing third-country nationals and people with a migrant background is a focal point of the proposed Multi-annual Financial Framework for 2021-2027. Actions generally centered on the early phases of integration would include basic language training, civic orientation, and one-stop-shop advice centres. Other types of measures would cover more systematic labour market integration and the social inclusion of third-country nationals and people with a migrant background”.²¹

20. See: European Parliament Resolution of 12 April 2016 on the situation in the Mediterranean and the need for a holistic EU approach to migration (2015/2095[INI]).

21. COM (2019) 126 final of 6.3.2019.

3.1.3. The scope of the desk research study

The aim of our desk research study is to present and evaluate policies and social practices regarding the social inclusion and integration of migrant populations in Greece over the last decade. To this end, the present report describes the ‘state of the art’ by presenting key research findings and conclusions of relevant studies and research projects carried out at the National Centre for Social Research during the past decade (secondary analysis). It also includes evidence-based policy recommendations. The study will contribute to identifying both successes and areas for improvement -potential obstacles and remaining actions to be implemented- in order to enhance the successful integration of migrants in the future. In this sense, it will contribute to a better-informed public debate and to a better-targeted migrant integration policy making in Greece.

Over the last decade EKKE has participated, either as a coordinator or as a partner, in a significant number of international and European research projects on migrant-related issues. Emphasis has been given on key areas of migrant management and integration policies, both at national and local levels, with the aim of providing solid scientific knowledge to policy making on the issue. The expertise gained through EKKE’s research has also resulted into a significant number of publications on the topic, both printed and digital (open access), many of which can be viewed and downloaded via EKKE’s website. Indicatively, research projects relevant to the scope of the study that have been carried out at EKKE from 2008 onwards include the following:

- Meta-analysis on existing migration research in areas relevant to integration (healthcare, social security, employment, education etc.)
- Mapping existing structures providing integration services to third country nationals in Greece, as well as evaluation of needs for such structures
- Health inequalities among migrant population (MIGHEAL)
- Refugees’ Healing (REHEAL)
- Pilot Study on safety and protection among Unaccompanied Minors in Greece (REHEAL-UAM)

- The development of networks of co-operation among representatives from the Mediterranean member states for the exchange of ideas, views and experiences related to the social integration of third country nationals in the host countries
- Migration and Criminality: Myths and Reality
- Study of Female Migration in Greece
- Integration of second-generation migrants in Greek society
- Information campaign for the promotion of migrants' integration in the local communities
- Research on Good Practices applied in Greece and European countries regarding Migrant Women's work
- Combating Discrimination in the Area of Entrepreneurship: Women and young Roma and Muslim migrants
- Governing Urban Diversity: Creating Social Cohesion, Social Mobility and Economic Performance in Today's Hyper-diversified Cities
- Recording and analysis of housing demands of asylum seekers and unaccompanied minors
- Developing a network of cooperation linking representatives of Mediterranean countries facing similar problems with Greece, relative to the integration of third country citizens
- Migration and urban conflict at the neighborhood level: The center of Athens and the case of Aghios Pandeileimon Acharnon
- Aspects of the refugee issue in Greece during the crisis
- CVET and accreditation framework to up skill interpreters to support the social inclusion for refugees
- ReCULM: A VET course for Cultural Mediators to address the refugee crisis' skills needs
- Tackling multiple discrimination in Greece: Delivering equality by active exploration and enabling policy interventions.

The data collected within the framework of the above-mentioned migrant-related surveys, as well as the resulting top line research outputs and detailed analysis, shed light on different aspects of migrant management and integration issues, thus providing the context for a better-informed debate and policy making on the subject. The

aim of the present study is to gather and present in a single corpus the accumulated knowledge of EKKE's recent research work on migrant integration issues, with regard to contextual information, key research findings and main conclusions of the relevant studies and principal policy recommendations. The present account can be used as a roadmap on what works and what does not work in policy design and implementation, in order for the stakeholders to be able to assess the efficiency and suitability of migrant integration management in Greece. Emphasis is placed on four key areas of integration policy (employment, education, housing and health) and on specific vulnerable migrant groups (e.g. children and women).

3.1.4. Rationale and structure of the study

Research on the migrant issue in Greece is rich with data and policy recommendations and is continually building up. EKKE has investigated this issue from different perspectives, using multiple research techniques. A great number of research projects, reports, books and studies has been produced over the past years which attempt to shed light on various aspects of the migration question. The present study includes only a fraction of the research carried out at EKKE during the past decade or so, as the Centre has invested in research on migration ever since its foundation in 1959. However, the distinct characteristics of emigration and immigration through various historical periods have led us to adopt a time span of the last decade or so, and refer to studies on the issue in question, in order to conduct a robust secondary analysis of data and policies. As a result, a number of important research studies have been excluded from the present literature review on the issue, as being beyond the scope of the present desk research.

Nevertheless, although research on migrants in our country over the last ten - fifteen years has shown a dynamic development, it has only shed light on some of the aspects of the phenomenon. The levels of the social and economic integration of migrants according to the corresponding indicators have not been tested. The same holds true for investigating xenophobia and racism towards migrants, as well as their attitudes towards Greek nationals. Various theoretical

models can be applied to the above end, especially considering the levels of tolerance and multiculturalism. Relevant media analysis is still pending, especially of papers analysing migrants' views on social inclusion, their stereotypes of Greek society and their treatment. So, the pending issues are significant, leaving considerable room for further research. Understanding how Greek society is gradually transformed from a host society to a multicultural society also requires further research studies. This way, updated research will help to develop a more meaningful dialogue between present and past research results, enriching our knowledge of the diversity of our society and issues of national identity.

The selection criteria adopted for including EKKE's research projects and studies in the review were twofold: a) their relevance to the scope of the study and b) their completion within the period of the last ten years or so. Major emphasis is placed on research projects, although the contribution of particular case studies was not disregarded.

The structure of the present study is built upon a schematic typology of the reviewed research according to the emphasis placed on important European and national policy initiatives for migrants' integration. The reviewed material is being presented in two main sections, the key findings and the policy recommendations, with concluding remarks for each section, followed by a section assessing the lessons learned and projecting the challenges ahead. Sub-sections with data and policies focus on specific key areas of migrants' integration, such as employment, housing, health, education and aspects of human rights (i.e. civic engagement, diversified practices, discrimination etc.) which are considered important in assessing the integration process. The presentation of the collected research output in thematic areas as the above was dictated by the importance attributed to them not only by the MIPEx integration index, which has oriented respective research accordingly, but also by the European funding grants and protocols which put emphasis on the above indicators. Research on refugees was also reviewed, since in the present study the refugee population is conceptualised as part of the mixed migrant populations. The study has included quantitative and qualitative research data, as well as material collected through case studies.

The research studies carried out by EKKE that have been reviewed are listed in the annotated bibliography attached at the end of the book (section 6). Overall, a total of 80 EKKE's research studies were reviewed. Their distribution among the specific integration areas, namely employment, housing, health, education and aspects of human rights, shows a major research investment on the issue of employment and labour market access and a disparate distribution among the other integration areas. Further, in a meta-analysis study (Balourdos & Tsiganou, 2013: 85) conducted at EKKE, out of the 1.106 total research texts examined, 232 qualitative and quantitative studies have been selected for meta-analysis and/or meta-synthesis. Their concluding remarks have also been incorporated in the present study.

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3.2. *Key findings and extended synopsis of EKKE's research studies*

3.2.1. *Key desk research findings*

- EKKE's research has shown that migrants' integration in Greece is largely depended on their legal status in the country and their integration in the Greek labour market. Research studies have pointed out that the legalization of migrants has a positive impact on the Greek labour market, contributing to the economic development of the Greek countryside. Migrants did not substitute indigenous workers in the labour market, as they are employed mainly in jobs that are not attractive to the native workforce. However, Greeks are better remunerated for the same work than migrants. There is also a significant problem regarding migrants' uninsured work and access to welfare services. The employment rates of migrants are higher than those of indigenous people in low paid jobs, as migrants work in the secondary labour market and are concentrated in 'secondary' sectors of the economy that are not preferred by natives, such as the construction sector.
- The legalization framework is considered rigid, bureaucratic and unfriendly to the migrant, putting particularly severe restrictions on the legalization process through extremely harsh procedures. Legalization is treated as a temporary phenomenon and migrants as people «under departure» or «in transit». The general policy is

to deter. As a result, all legislative measures, institutional mechanisms and administrative procedures are closely associated to the constant assertion of migrants' temporary status as a 'negotiating card for the future', and as an implicit target of migration policy.

- The impact of migration on the Greek labour market and economy is strong, regardless of the characteristics of the individual studies. In policy studies, one of the major research challenges has been to work out ways to promote the social and economic integration of third country nationals. However, migrants in Greece remain among the most vulnerable groups at risk of poverty and social exclusion. They are over-represented among the lower socioeconomic groups and are disproportionately affected by unstable and precarious employment and unemployment, homelessness, poor housing, poor health, and deficient consumption patterns. Migrants not only experience exclusion but the experience of exclusion is often more severe or extreme for them.
- The dominant direction that has been developed in the field of social policy is the management of migrants' exclusion based on their labour market participation, making it the most dominant mechanism of social inclusion. The view that labour market participation constitutes a sufficient condition for social inclusion prevails in a number of texts, which lay the foundations for the development of relevant policy actions. In these cases, labour market participation is inherent in social inclusion, whereas unemployment enhances the risk of marginalization and social exclusion.
- However, despite the fact that most migrants work in the low-skilled and labour-intensive sectors of the Greek economy, migrants' access to the labour market alone is not sufficient for their further professional development; it is often observed that migrant workers remain in low-paid unskilled jobs which often do not correspond to their high formal and tacit skills and they work in the so-called 3D professions: Dirty, Dangerous, and Demeaning jobs. Studies have shown that while employment is important per se, so is its quality. Jobs are migrants' chief source of income and they also help them to take their place in society by, for ex-

ample, finding decent accommodation, interacting with others at the workplace, and learning the host-country language. Work further confers social status in the eyes of the migrant's family, particularly children, and with respect to the host-country population.

- › On the other hand, the structure of the Greek labour market comprises a significant number of small and medium-sized, family-owned businesses, which have various forms of relationships and dependence with other larger and similar sized businesses (within and outside Greece), labour supply and local agencies (public organizations, banks, trade unions, civil society). Surveys to date show that migrants are mostly employed in labour markets where the definition of the object of work and the employment relationship is moving beyond or exceeding the boundaries of formal transactions.
- › The migrant group of Third-Country Nationals remains one of the at high-risk of poverty groups. Indicatively, during the first years of the economic crisis (2008-2011), the trend of poverty risk was upward, rising from 32.7% to 45.9% and was higher than the national average. This illustrates the need to plan and undertake targeted actions to combat poverty and exclusion across a wider range of policy areas for the active integration of Third-Country Nationals. However, although by 2015 through various legalisation programmes migrants' integration had progressed, the impact of a pro-longed economic crisis, coupled with the refugee crisis, has undermined all prospects and projects in process. In the area of employment, the collapse of the construction sector led to increasing unemployment rates for the migrants employed in this sector. Furthermore, the economic crisis made housekeeping expensive, so the demand by native households for migrant women as house assistants decreased.
- › In the areas of employment, skills, competences and educational credentials, the much-needed migrant social capital is still being seriously 'under-utilized'. Studies have focussed on migrants' skills and how they integrate in the labour market, which is fundamental to becoming part of the host country's economic fabric. Although skills and qualifications are decisive determinants in

migrants' economic and social integration, they do not indicate how well migrants actually integrate in the labour market, but rather their ability to do so. Skills have a strong bearing on career paths, and influence what kind of job they find.

- Research at EKKE has also shown that migrants' integration has not only economic but spatial and social facets as well. Migrants' ability to generate sufficient income and to meet essential needs such as decent housing and healthcare is crucial if they are to take their place in the host society. Employment status and job quality largely shape living conditions, as earnings from work account for the bulk of family incomes and higher income is associated with better health and housing conditions. Moreover, decent living conditions can, in turn, trigger a virtuous circle leading to improved general well-being, which includes better employment prospects. Income is a decisive factor in many socio-economic outcomes. Poverty adversely affects the well-being of migrants in Greece in a number of ways, such as poor housing and lack of skills development. Beyond poverty itself, unequal distribution of income can lead to marginalisation and damage social cohesion. Housing is also a key factor in well-being. The economic situation of some migrants and their poor knowledge of the rental market restrict their choice of accommodation. They are also prone to discrimination from property owners.
- Health is integral to well-being, affecting the degree and mode of engagement with society as a whole. Healthier migrants are able to work and earn more, and to build broader social networks. Research has shown that migrants are experiencing high levels of exclusion, especially if they are irregular migrants. Moreover, exclusion has been increasing over time, given that while the number of documented migrants remains almost constant, the number of migrants without a residence permit is increasing and, as a result, the number of migrants - third country nationals, who are institutionally and practically excluded from the Social Protection System in Greece, is increasing too.
- Research has also shown that being actively involved in the Greek society is a key element in migrant integration and has strong implications for migrant well-being. By making their voices heard,

taking an interest in how their host society functions, and participating in the decisions that shape its future, migrants feel that they have become an integral part of their new country. The nature of the relationship between the native and the migrant population is also a critical factor in integration: where social cohesion is strong, it promotes integration; where it is weak, migrants find it harder to fit in. Further, empirical evidence suggests that obtaining host-country nationality undoubtedly represents a key step in that process. To this end, participating in elections has proven to be a sign of integration.

- Research shows that migrants are often discriminated against in their efforts to find adequate housing, thereby failing to meet basic living needs and suffering violation of their fundamental rights. A large percentage of migrants –mainly undocumented– are often confronted with Greek landlords that refuse to rent them, presenting as an excuse their temporary residence or the volatility of their work. Thus, the migrant population is often forced into inhumane housing and hygiene conditions, or is wandering in temporary “sleeping quarters” in degraded urban neighbourhoods. One issue that is strongly highlighted is the geographical / residential isolation of migrant communities in degraded neighbourhoods and the consequent creation of ethnic ghettos in these areas.
- Key aspects of social cohesion have been studied in view of exploring the Greek society’s degree of acceptance of migration, migrants’ attitudes– compared to those of the native-born – towards gender equality, the extent to which migrants feel part of the host society or their resultant sense of belonging, the perceived incidence of discrimination against migrants on the grounds of ethnicity, race or nationality and, finally, overall life satisfaction or the extent to which migrants are satisfied with their life in the host society. Overall research results indicate that discrimination and negative stereotypical perceptions hinder migrant populations’ integration in the Greek society. They also hinder progress at school for migrant children and subsequently educational achievement and promising career paths. Migrants’ qualifications and level of education seldom match formal job requirements.

- › Female migrants' past gendered experience has also an impact on integration outcomes. Moreover, migrant women are less likely than men to be labour migrants. Their motive for emigrating is much more often for family reasons, which can reinforce gender disparities in employment and social outcomes. However, gender gaps also exist among the native-born. Disparities between male and female migrants do not, therefore, necessarily suggest more or less successful integration, but reflect persisting gender bias in the Greek labour market and society itself, as well as different choices made by women and men. Research on gendered experiences of discrimination on the grounds of ethnicity, race or nationality has shown its widespread incidence in both the workplace and social life.
- › The degree of integration of children with foreign-born parents can be considered as a yardstick to assess host countries' success in integration policies. Owing to the fact that these children may have attended school in their parents' country of origin or may have arrived in Greece at a very young age, they should not, in theory, have encountered the same difficulties as adults who arrive from a foreign country. Ultimately, their educational attainment should be similar to that of young people with no migrant background. Yet, this is not what happens in Greece. Research has shown that children with foreign-born parents exhibit lower rates of access to early childhood education and care, over-concentration in some schools (that become downgraded), poor educational outcomes in terms of school performance and increasing rates of dropping-out. Moreover, migrant kids' sense of belonging suffers from incidents and practices of discrimination against them.

3.2.2. Extended synopsis of relevant EKKE's studies

3.2.2.1. General Remarks

Since the 1990s, when massive migration flows started moving towards Greece, research on migration has proliferated. Piling up evidence on stances and attitudes of the Greek public in confronting

the growing numbers of newcomers of foreign origin, has become one of the basic cornerstones of socio-political research. At EKKE, certain epistemological questions raised about the historical and socio-cultural parameters involved, created a fertile ground for the reconsideration of the conceptual tools used so far, especially in the case of the comparative study of the migration issue. It gradually became clear that research should move away from the dualisms of the past, as the national identity question is not an issue of dichotomies between “us” and the “others”, alone. The refugee issue added more lines of thought and research in this direction. Therefore, the present desk research study, reviewing all relevant EKKE’s research on the migration question, aims at providing basic research background information on regular and irregular migration to Greece and attempts to increase transparency through a critical appraisal of data and estimates. The quantitative information provided, accompanied by substantial background material, both on issues of general concern and on the situation in Greece, contribute to the attempt to construct a body of critical knowledge. Conclusions are drawn through the examination of interrelated policies in Greece and abroad.

3.2.2.2. Results on migration flows and integration framework

The research results of the present desk research study can be better understood if one considers the numbers of migrants and refugees arriving in the country. The 2011 national census data registered 713,000 third-country nationals and 199,000 EU citizens (non-Greek) living in Greece, accounting for 6.5% and 1.8% respectively of the total resident population – hence a total of 8.3% of the resident population in the country. According to the Ministry of Migration Policy statistics on valid stay permits, the total number of third country nationals (TCNs) legally residing in Greece on 31st August 2018 was 520,260. More recent data from the 2018 Labour Force Survey (2nd Quarter) suggests a slight decrease in the total migrant population (aged 15 or older), with 328,300 third country nationals (TCNs) (compared to 331,700 in 2017) and 76,600 EU citizens (non-Greeks) (compared to 74,600 in 2017), corresponding to 3.6%

and 0.83%, respectively, of the total resident population in Greece (4.43%) of the same age cohort.²²

Considering the socio-demographic characteristics of the migrant population in Greece, the analysis of relevant data concludes that Greece is the only EU country where over half of its migrant population originates from one country alone, Albania. The overwhelming majority of migrants originate from Europe (about 80%), of which 75% from the Balkans and Eastern Europe. Another 15% are from Asia. About 82% of migrants are economic migrants since, as they claim, the main reason for migrating and settling in Greece is to find a job.

Other main reasons for settling in the country include family reunification (12%), marital relationship with EU citizens (3%) and studies. The migrant population in Greece belongs to the productive ages ranging from 15 years to 64 years, with a significant presence of young people, while the percentage of older people is particularly low. The average age of the migrant population is about 10 years younger than the average age of the indigenous population. Urbanization characterizes the choice of settling into Greece for the majority of migrants. Most migrants reside in urban areas (87%) and mainly in the country's two major urban centres. However, it is worth noting that a significant number of migrants reside in areas with large-scale tourist or agricultural activity.

In terms of their professional characteristics, the overwhelming majority of migrants were employed (94%), while before the advent of the current crisis, 70% of them held a more or less steady job. The majority of the active migrant population work as unskilled workers or craftsmen, mainly in manual jobs, while significant professional migrant groups are also working in the service sector or as retailers in shops and open-air markets. About 1/3 of the migrant workforce is employed in the construction sector. Other sectors with significant migrant workforce are housekeeping (almost exclusively for the female working population), manufacturing and

22. See also Gemi E. & Triandafyllidou A., (2018) *Migration in Greece: Recent Developments in 2018*, Report prepared for the OECD Network of International Migration Experts, pp. 8-10.

crafts, trade and repairs, services in hotels and restaurants and the food industry.

After 2009, with the onset of the economic crisis and the recession that followed it, the number of resident permits for third country nationals (TCNs) issued by the Ministry of Interior declined. The decline has been attributed to the deep economic recession and the austerity policies, that have particularly affected migrants.²³ Research has shown that the practical difficulties faced by migrants to fulfil the requirements necessary to obtain or renew a permit contributes to a continuing or lapsed state of illegality, also due to the largely informal and seasonal character of migrant employment in Greece. This is particularly true of female migrant domestic workers who are largely confined to undeclared work.

Since the 1990s, the successive migration laws reflected a perception of migratory inflows in Greece as a temporary phenomenon, thereby awarding short-term residence and work permits to hundreds of thousands of irregular migrants living in the country during the 1990s. Unwelcoming and xenophobic views were reinforced in the media, and influenced public discourse on migration, which mainly revolved around issues of crime and border control. Nonetheless, undocumented migrants provided a source of cheap and unprotected labour, which was vital for certain sectors of the economy such as agriculture and the service sectors. In the absence of a coherent integration policy, and confronted with the increasing presence of undocumented migrants, i.e. visa over-stayers and illegal entrants, Greek governments sought to manage migration flows by mainly relying on ad hoc, mass regularization programmes (1997, 2001, 2005, 2007).

Such regularization programs provided the opportunity to large numbers of undocumented TCNs residing in the country to obtain short-term and renewable (subject to conditions) residence permits. Principally driven by an instrumental view of migration, regularization programmes were geared towards providing migrants with

23. See also Anagnostou D., (2016), *Local government and migrant integration in Europe and in Greece*, LOMIGRAS project, ELIAMEP, EEA GRANTS, "Mainstreaming and Monitoring Immigrants' Integration in Local Government in Greece" (LOMIGRAS).

a temporary legal status, renewable as long as the criteria for its granting continued to be met, thus eventually perpetuating residence insecurity. While those regularization laws cannot be seen as tantamount to integration policy, the legalization of residence (even if temporary) that they provided formed the basis for an essential sense of security as a precondition for migrants' social integration. Mass regularization policies were also prompted by the need to include large numbers of undocumented migrants in the formal sector of the economy, and thereby to increase revenue for the country's social security system.

Nevertheless, in the course of the 2000s, the need to promote the integration of migrants in the Greek society gradually entered in the policy agenda as an inescapable and irreversible reality. Thus, Law 3386/2005 on the "Entry, stay and integration of TCNs in Greece" recognized the reality of migration as a long-term and permanent phenomenon, even though it did not explicitly address integration issues. Its main aim was to transpose the EU directives 2003/86 on the right to family reunification and 2003/109 on the status of long-term residents. Basic knowledge of Greek language, history and culture were determined as prerequisites for acquiring long-term residence status. Law 3386/2005 also introduced a new regularization programme (continued on a smaller scale with law 3536/2007) for undocumented migrants who had entered Greece before December 2004. Law 3386/2005 also included provisions that reflected a concern with integration. Under these provisions, integration was perceived as the equal participation of migrants in the country's economic, social and cultural life, but also as their obligation to respect the fundamental norms and values of Greek society.

The promise of equal treatment of integrated migrants was also to be delivered by law with the transposition of the EU's Race Directive that prohibited discrimination on the basis of ethnic origin. The Action Plan for the integration of migrants that Law 3386/2005 introduced highlighted the principles of non-discrimination and equal treatment of TCNs, along with respect for their cultural and religious identity. At the same time, the same law provided as necessary actions and initiatives for the certified knowledge of Greek language, successful enrolment in courses on history and culture of Greece, in-

tegration in the labour market and active social participation. Thus, integration policy clearly reflected the EU member states' consensus, as described in the *Common Basic Principles for Migrant Integration Policy in the EU* adopted in November 2004.

During 2007-2013, a *Multi-Annual Programme of the European Integration Fund* (EIF) for TCNs was adopted. The influence of EU standards in the formulation of this Multi-Annual Programme was diffuse and far-reaching. Its main priorities were to implement the EU Common Principles for the Social Integration of TCNs, with particular emphasis on the development of indicators and methodologies in order: a) to assess the results and progress of integration measures and policies, b) to collect statistical data and create data bases related to integration, and c) to supply the results of assessments and indicators in the process of (re)formulating policies. Although the Multi-Annual Programme 2007-2013 aspired to streamline social integration goals into all relevant policy sectors, such as health, education, justice, and social policy, to establish inter-ministerial cooperation, and to actively engage local, regional and national authorities, it did not succeed in meeting these goals. Apart from the fact that the Multi-Annual Programme comprised a variety of different actions that were not well interconnected in achieving its highly ambitious objectives, the resources earmarked were obviously insufficient for doing so. In the already limited budget forecast for the six-year period, the co-funding from the Greek side became increasingly difficult to secure after 2010 when an acute fiscal crisis undercut Greek public spending.

From 2010 onwards, the social integration of migrants entered more dynamically into the political and policy agenda, largely as a matter of contention rather than as a broadly espoused goal. In the first place, this dynamic was set in motion by a controversial 2010 law that for the first time focused on second generation migrants and facilitated their naturalization as a vehicle of integration. Along with extending political rights to TCNs at the local level, Law 3838/2010 was the most important and politically challenging attempt to promote their social integration in Greece, as it made it possible for children who were born in Greece and who had at least one non-Greek parent residing legally in the country for five con-

secutive years, to acquire nationality at birth. Children of migrants, who had attended at least six grades of Greek school, could also acquire citizenship through a simple declaration by their parents within three years following the completion of the required six-year schooling period. In addition, migrants who legally resided in Greece for at least seven consecutive years could apply for naturalization. The Law also required passing a test verifying an individual's knowledge of Greek history, institutions and civilization. Besides facilitating nationality acquisition, it also extended to TCNs the right to vote and stand as candidates in local elections. However, this major reform was short-lived. In 2013, the provisions facilitating nationality acquisition and extending political rights to TCNs were declared unconstitutional.

In 2014 the integration of migrants was addressed in a new law that codified all pre-existing migration legislation and emphasized long-term residence status (Law 4251/2014 "Code of Migration and Social Integration and other provisions"). The *Migration and Social Integration Code* (ISIC, or the Code), promoted: a) the status of long-term residents on the basis of the respective EC directive (2003/109/EC), which provides an extended set of rights, and b) a special residence permit for second generation migrants. The Code made it easier for those holding permits of long-term duration to acquire the long-term residence status (defined by EU law and accompanied with an increased set of rights that its holders enjoy across EU countries). However, the conditions for qualifying for a long-term residence permit after a minimum of five years of living in the country are very demanding. In addition to an eligibility criterion related to residence and income, the Code requires that applicants meet "the conditions for integration into the Greek society". These are considered to be fulfilled if they can prove a level of language proficiency and knowledge of history and civilization, if they hold a residence card as family members of a Greek citizen, or if they have been living in Greece for the last 12 years.

Legal migrants have equal rights with Greek citizens but also new obligations, the key one being to respect the laws and fundamental values of Greek society. Policies and actions in pursuit of migrants' integration must be based on the prohibition of any kind of dis-

crimination based on constitutional principles, and they should respect the fundamental rights of TCNs and their cultural differences. The Code also sought to address the issue of the second generation, however by disconnecting their integration from nationality acquisition. As an alternative to naturalization, the Code introduced the right of long-term residence status for second generation migrants. Second-generation migrants were defined as 'adult TCNs who are native-born or who have successfully completed six years of Greek schooling.' The Code allowed them to acquire a special residence permit for the second generation upon reaching 21 years of age, provided that they reside legally in Greece. This permit put them on an equal footing with those holding long-term resident status and endowed them with all the rights. While these provisions sought to grant a secure legal status to second generation migrants, they did not address their exclusion from various professions, where Greek nationality is a prerequisite. The Code also abolished the right to vote and be elected at the local level, which was introduced with Law 3838/2010.

Many of the provisions that were included in the Migration and Social Integration Code (ISIC) were laid out in the first National Strategy for the Integration of TCNs, which was designed by the General Secretariat of Population and Social Cohesion of the Ministry of Internal Affairs in 2013 and presented a coherent framework for promoting integration.

In the following years, Law 4332/2015 increased the length of parents' residence, whilst making more stringent the related requirements (i.e. type of residence permit). It also increased the required years of school attendance (from 6 years to 9 years) in Greece, for second generation migrants to obtain Greek nationality, arguably at the expense of restricting the number of migrants who are immediately eligible for Greek nationality. Significantly, this law did not revert to the discretionary and individualized process of naturalization of the 2004 Greek Nationality Code (GNC), while it entirely left out the issue of voting rights at the local elections for TCNs.

Thus, it is not possible to identify a model of migrant integration that is either characteristic or preferred in Greece – there is no elaborated and coherent approach on the issue. The few policy documents

on the issue largely reflect the norms and standards found in the EU soft law documents. Further, as is common in many EU countries, integration policy in Greece is largely a competence of the national government rather than of the local government. However, municipalities have an array of competencies that directly as well as indirectly but profoundly affect the position of migrants. Furthermore, over time they have *de facto* acquired an increasing role in this area, either by implementing national law on migration, and/or by providing services to local inhabitants, including TCNs.

As early as 2001, Law 2910/2001 gave municipal authorities competencies in the implementation of regularization programme and in matters related to migrants' documentation. The legal framework granting municipalities specific competencies with regard to migrants' integration was established with the Code of Communes and Municipalities (Law 3463/2006). However, the competency to receive applications for residence permits was withdrawn from municipalities in 2010 and transferred to the regional administration. Since 2010 though, the involvement of municipalities in integration-related matters has grown, especially in the large cities of Greece, through a major administrative reform of local government structures known by the name of 'Kallikratis', which was adopted in 2010, and strengthened municipalities by transforming them into entities with potentially augmented capacity, however still with no fiscal, administrative and political autonomy from the central state.

In the framework of the 'Kallikratis' reform, an institutional innovation specifically related to integration was the establishment of the Migrant Integration Councils (MICs) at the local level. The purpose of MICs is to promote the political and civic participation of migrants. Their mission is to inform the municipal government about the problems that the migrants face in the respective region, to present proposals for actions aimed at the integration of the migrants in the local government and policy-making structures, and to assist migrants in accessing the regional and municipal services. They can do so by undertaking a variety of tasks, such as mapping migrant communities and their associations, involving them in local government structures and policy-making, and identifying integration-related problems that must be redressed in municipalities

with a high concentration of TCNs. Even though they have no decisive and decision-making powers, the Migrant Integration Councils (MICs), could also serve as important bodies for coordinating synergies and cooperation between municipal authorities and migrant associations. The MICs were intended to function in tandem with the granting of local political rights to TCNs in 2010, and promote their integration through political participation.

EKKE's research has shown that the MICs have so far remained largely inactive, with the exception of councils set up in the municipalities of Athens and Thessaloniki, where large migrant populations are concentrated. In part, an important constraint has been the lack of adequate resources and administrative support, which has not allowed the MICs to perform the role envisaged in the 'Kallikratis' reform. In the few municipalities where they exist, they operate as a consultative, rather than an active body. Most importantly though, the main factors that undermined the key role, which the MICs were set to play, were a) the suspension of the right of TCNs to vote in the local elections, b) the non-allocation of resources to MICs, which would enable them to formulate policy proposals for integration and to engage in more than a few sporadic interventions, and c) the lack of political will, as well as the lack of political interest and incentives in empowering these councils. The institutional, organizational and other obstacles preventing the MICs from becoming meaningful tools for the integration of migrants are well-documented.

By 2018, data on the evolution of stay permits indicate 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 residence permits has considerably increased, along with naturalisations (particularly for the second generation – i.e. children born in Greece or who arrived in Greece in their early school years).

As regards the purpose of third-country nationals' stay in Greece, 57% of men hold permits that fall in 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%) and residence permits for employment purposes (14%). The majority of women hold family reunification

permits (54%), followed by “other” category permits (38%) and employment permits (7%). Student permits are considerably lower in number. There is a clear shift of permits from employment permits (for men) and from family reunification permits (for women) towards 10-year or indefinite duration permits, 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.

As an important step towards integration, the Migration Code (L4251/2014, Article 7) includes the following types of permits in the category of long-term migration permits: the 10-year long permit, the second-generation permit, the indefinite duration permit, and the long-term resident permit. More specifically, the long-term resident permit refers to EU long-term resident status (as defined in 109/2003 EC). The 10-year and indefinite duration permits reflect national long-term permits and do not constitute subcategories of the EU long-term permit. All four types constitute long-term residency arrangements. The goal is to unify all long-term residence permits under the EU long-term resident status (L4251/14, no 138); as a result, 10-year permits are no longer renewed automatically as in the past but are converted into the EU long-term resident status when the conditions are met.²⁴

3.2.2.3. *Research output based on indicators for migrants' integration*

Considering migrants' access to important areas of social inclusion, research has shown that Greece performs worst vis-a-vis the European average in the areas of civic engagement and participation, legislation, labour market access, anti-discrimination policy, whilst it exceeds, albeit marginally, the EU average in the areas of citizenship and access to education. Studies have also shown that integration policies, to a certain extent, allowed for migrants' integration, in the areas of labour market, housing, health and care, education,

24. See also Gemi E. and Triandafyllidou A., (2018), pp. 11-13.

psychological / socio-cultural adjustment and social / political participation. However, the individual dimensions of employment, social security, educational attainment and political participation show a low degree of integration and consequently a deficit of relevant inclusion policies. Further, migrants in Greece fall below the OECD average in the areas of income and welfare, housing status, political participation and naturalization, while they are above the OECD average in health status and access to health services. The status of migrants in Greece in the areas of labour market and education of their children is precarious. All estimated status indicators show a clear deficit of integration of migrants compared to the EU population.

Qualitative research on individual perceptions of natives and migrants has shown that migrant integration processes are considered to have contributed to migrants' knowledge of the language, their ability to find work, respect for the host country's cultural values, and the absence of social and geographical segregation. Qualitative research has also identified widespread discrimination against migrants due to structural factors ("fear of foreigners", competition for national public goods and contextual economic crisis), thus confusing public opinion. The encouragement of concepts such as «illegal migrant» and the lack of knowledge of the natives regarding the effects of the migration phenomenon in the host country had a bearing on Greece's higher than average European level of discrimination based on ethnicity. Comparative research results also indicate that the Greek attitudes towards migrants in the European context are recorded as the most negative in the EU. Relevant data include negative stances for migrants' entry into Greece by natives, since they consider the impact of foreign labour employment on the Greek economy to be negative, they perceive migrants as a threat to their cultural homogeneity and they evaluate negatively the migrants' stay for their quality of life and the level of internal security. The impact of the economic crisis has intensified discrimination against migrants.

3.2.2.4. *Migrant skills and labour market integration - employment*

The special features of Greek society and economy (dominated by small businesses that operate partly in the informal sector) have led to an increased demand for migrant workforce. A significant number of studies point out that the arrival of migrants played a key role in restructuring labour relations in rural areas. Migrants supported both the survival and the expansion of farms. Migrants' participation in the rural economy was 'favoured' by the specific characteristics of the agricultural sector, the existence of small and informal enterprises with employment opportunities and the general socio-economic features of the rural areas. Wage labour in Greek agriculture almost doubled in size after the arrival of migrants, contributing to 1/4 of the total workforce in farms. Further, migrants have provided significant low-cost services in many areas of economic activity, such as construction, tourism and personal services, as they constitute a flexible workforce. They also contribute significantly to the organization and management of agricultural businesses by relieving family members from manual labour.

According to the findings of a considerable number of studies, migrants do not substitute the local workforce previously employed; this is true not only for the rural sector, but also for the other sectors of the economy. So, their presence cannot be held "responsible" for the natives' growing unemployment rate. Employers tend to hire migrants in specific occupations requiring hard work with low pay, not attractive for the native population. Yet, there seems to be an established perception in the Greek economy and society that jobs performed by migrants cost lower. In general, the assessment of the presence of migrants in Greece is positive. They have contributed to economic growth because they are a source of "cheap labour" in workplaces little or non-attractive to Greek workers. Greeks are better paid for the same work with the estimated wage gap ranging between 40% -50%; this pronounced wage gap between the employment of migrants and their real potential is based on their human capital. Greek workers enjoy higher remuneration than migrants for the same job; the observed wage gaps cannot be interpreted or justi-

fied by differences in the employment characteristics of these two groups of workers. A significant part of the divergence is due to differences in the demographic and productive characteristics of the two groups, the different occupations and sectors they are employed in, and the size of the businesses in which they work.

Wage gaps between nationals and migrants in Greece are wider than in other EU countries. The analysis of migrants' wages shows that the two predominant factors that influence the level of wages include the time spent in Greece and the stability of employment. The very small percentage of migrants employed in science and technology professions does not correspond to the large number of migrants who hold significant educational credentials and qualifications. The lack of competence in the Greek language and the extremely unfavourable conditions they faced during the initial stages of their stay in Greece did not allow migrants to negotiate their terms of employment. Informal social networks contribute to migrants' employment issues and play a key role in finding a job. Migrants often have the formal and essential skills to find a better job, but are not given the opportunity to project and make good use of them. The lack of language skills and the difficulties faced by migrants in recognizing their professional skills and qualifications constitute significant barriers. However, special efforts are being made to improve the career guidance of migrants. The potential of migrants to become entrepreneurs is increasingly being recognized. The involvement and commitment of the social partners in this area is growing, but remains limited. The effectiveness of policies is rarely evaluated. However, the 'exploitation' of migrant workers seems to have receded over time.

A significant number of migrants do not report a change in their position in the labour market after they have gained resident status. Many, however, experience a significant improvement in their lives. Documented migrants were given the opportunity to return home for the first time after many years of absence; they were also allowed to open bank accounts in Greek banks, thereby reducing remittances through illegal channels. The residence permit criterion does not affect the employment status as migrants work in non-registered jobs. Low-skilled migrants are more vulnerable to recession. More and more migrant families are turning to the personal services

or care sectors of the economy. The choice of migrants to embark upon businesses as employers, rather than work as employees, is favoured by the knowledge of the Greek language, the acquisition of expertise in specific sectors of businesses and the conditions of their practice, previous job experience, being employers or self-employed in their own country and their previous job experience in commerce (wholesale or retail) and repairs. Looking at the sectors in which businesses involving foreign nationals as owners or co-owners are active, it is observed that 42.6% relate to retail, 40.7% to wholesale commerce, 5.5% to the retail sector, while 1.9% deals with the maintenance and repair of cars and motorcycles.

Migrant entrepreneurship can be seen as a form of economic assimilation. There is a strong link between migrant entrepreneurship and migration policy. Some surveys refer to 'survival entrepreneurship' in the 'grey' zone of the economy and others to the creation of legitimate businesses by the employment of individuals from the ethnic and / or the wider migrant community, including family workers. However, the degree of migrants' integration in the labour market also relates to the career development prospects that the TCNs themselves have anticipated vis-a-vis the various sectors of employment.

The decision to send remittances abroad is strongly influenced by the migrant's marital status, namely the total number of children, the number of children in Greece, the presence of a spouse in Greece, and the presence of parents. The size of remittances also seems to be influenced by the amount of income gained. Before the advent of the current economic crisis, the proportion of migrants sending remittances to their country of origin exceeded 50%, while according to estimates remittances amounted to one billion euro annually.

Qualitative research has pointed out that in the area of the labour market, migration flows into Greece are mainly directed towards informal labour market structures, especially in the sectors of domestic work, primary agricultural production and the construction industry. To a lesser extent, formal or informal integration of migrants in the tertiary sector services (such as tourism, for example) and the pursuit of small business are also found. Meta-synthesis of

qualitative research on migrant domestic work has also shown the following: domestic work that mainly concerns women is characterized by fragmented working hours, multiple employers, transience and uncertainty about the timing of the relationship and the content. It is also characterized by lack of job mobility and self-exclusion from potential jobs in the Greek labour market corresponding to the qualifications of migrant women and their expectations.

It is also found that a key prerequisite for securing better working conditions for both employers and migrants is obtaining legal documents. This means that legal integration is a *sine qua non* condition for the smooth integration of migrants in the labour market and their withdrawal from informal and exploitative labour. Nationality plays an important role in the labour strategies adopted by migrant populations. The marital status of the migrant population also plays an important role. Domestic work is signified differently on the basis of national identity and on the experience of migration, while for Greek employers the issue of nationality plays a role in the recruitment of migrants, as they tend to attribute emphasis to the issue of migrants' diversified culture.

On the other hand, the nature of work defines relationships and practices in other areas of social activity. Work can lead to deteriorating family ties, it can also operate as a means of economic and social progress, but also as a means of gaining prestige and goods. Different management practices are also identified by nationality, and employment differentiation occurs owing to nationality and / or social origin.

Another aspect of domestic work is that there are some "untouchable" areas in the division of labour between "Greek masters and migrant servants", meaning that Greek employers do not give up their sovereign authority to 'run' their own 'house' and exercise management control over all aspects of domesticity. In any event, domestic work can be seen as a special case, as in-door housekeeping jobs have no limitations and boundaries, allowing for no personal space and time. This type of domestic work primarily aims to save money for families left behind. But it also leads to a fusion of life and work. For migrant women who live in their employers' homes as "in-house" housekeepers, the lack of personal space equates to the

lack of personal time. They therefore develop distance strategies, as the awareness of the negative effects of intimacy which may be developed by performing work at home, leads to practices that shape a distance between them and their employers.

Another body of findings from qualitative research concerns the social division of labour in the countries of origin. Migrant women, who lived during their childhood and adolescence at a time when their country was experiencing high industrial growth, cannot imagine a jobless life. For migrant women who have had in the past similar work experience with their Greek employers, engaging in domestic housekeeping is associated with social and economic degradation. Migration thus emerges as an identity crisis associated with changing the business environment and moving back to a purely feminine model of work.

Concerning the integration of the second generation of migrants in the area of employment, research has shown that in Greece, as in other countries of the European Union, the children of migrants (second generation) start their professional life with fewer qualifications and a significantly reduced social capital compared to indigenous/native children. Within the overall landscape of migrant employment, second-generation migrants often face serious problems of survival, while at the same time their potential as human resources is wasted, at the expense of the national economy and society as a whole. There is no doubt that it is urgent to devise and implement a coherent policy, aimed at the equal participation of second-generation migrants in the labour market and the best use of their human resources, so as to avoid the reproduction of exploitation at the workplace and exclusion.

In short, research focusing on migrants' skills and labour market outcomes, living conditions and integration in Greece, also provides comprehensive background information on migrants and their lives. In most areas, migrants tend to have worse economic and social outcomes than the native-born, although these gaps tend to reduce the longer they stay and become more familiar with Greece as their host country. Education helps migrants to successfully integrate, but having a higher education level does not necessarily provide them with the same returns that it does for the native-born. Although by

2008 labour market integration of migrants had slightly improved as had their qualification levels, the impact of the prolonged economic crisis did not allow them to catch up with the outcomes of the native-born. The impact of the crisis and the refugee question hindered their social integration. Over the last decade, differences in the unemployment rates of migrants and native-born have widened, due to the difficult economic situation. When unemployed, migrants are generally less likely to receive unemployment benefits than the native-born. Migrants are over-represented in the lowest income deciles. At the same time, income inequality among the foreign-born tends to be greater than among native-born and relative poverty is today more widespread among the foreign-born than a decade ago. Having a job provides protection against poverty, although less so for migrants than natives. Migrants' social integration is also dependent on views of migration. The more the native-born actually interact with the foreign-born, the more likely they are to consider migration as an opportunity for their country rather than a problem.

3.2.2.5. *Housing*

Migrant housing surveys are scarce and usually constitute a small part of broader investigations. As a result, the collected material on migrants' housing conditions covers a very long period of time with significant variations, depending on the migrants' integration phase and their ethnic composition. Research often focuses on particular migrant groups, thus covering a wide range of economic and social situations that allow us to make sound comparisons. However, the quantitative and qualitative adequacy of the available material is often questionable. Much of the published research is based on narrative descriptions, while large-scale statistical investigations based on representative sampling techniques are relatively few. However, reliable statistical sources on housing are available from EKKE's «Panorama» Programme which, in cooperation with ELSTAT, provides valuable insight on migrants' housing and residence conditions.

In terms of spatial concentration and segregation, the most systematic geographical statistical analyses available are mainly descriptive: that is, the spatial distribution of migrants in major cities

(mainly Athens) is recorded, often by nationality, and is measured by standardized indicators. Often enough the differences in the geographical distribution of migrants compared to that of the natives (Greeks) are used as a presumption of social segregation. However, such comparisons do not seem to take into account important control variables that will allow for a valid isolation of the influence of the specific determinants that shape integration problems in the case of housing and accommodation of migrants. In the absence of sound empirical findings, the ability of investigations and explanations to reach valid policy conclusions is extremely limited. However, the existing research material suggests that renting a home was the only «way out», the only viable option for the settlement of migrant incomers. The need for cheap housing has led the majority of them to less desirable housing, namely low-floor apartments in degraded densely-populated areas around downtown and old buildings with limited amenities in central or suburban areas. The majority of settled migrants live in dwellings smaller than the minimum acceptable size standards. In urban areas, the concentration of low-income housing for migrants is an indication of low housing rates for them. More generally, research concludes that the housing conditions of migrants are significantly worse than those of the lower income layers of the indigenous population.

Research projects have also indicated that housing affordability is connected to the idea that as some individuals, households or groups are unable to fulfill their housing needs in a housing market, they should be entitled to some kind of support in order to gain access to appropriate dwellings. Whichever definition of ‘appropriate dwelling’ is applied, it is evident that affordability concerns those with relatively little exchange value in the market, those who should, in conditions of housing scarcity, accept as appropriate what is not necessarily appropriate for others: affordable usually means cheap and substandard. In the event that not even this is achievable, there are fears that not only the life of the deprived but also the social order might be at risk.

Research has also shown that since the first arrivals of foreign migrants in Greece and especially since their massive increase in the early 1990s, their access to the private rental market has emerged

as the best (if not the only feasible) affordable solution. This is not paradoxical considering the limited development of public housing in Greece. Apart from that, such a *laissez-faire* approach seemed for some time to generate a win-win situation. Migrants occupied dwellings that were inexpensive since they had progressively been less attractive for –and often abandoned by– locals, either because of their own or their neighborhood's degradation. Migrants contributed to the renewal of their dwellings and slowed down or reversed their gradual devaluation, often by investing personal work, even at their own expense. They also ensured a massive demand for the depreciated properties of the native lower and lower-middle strata.

Rent constituted an important complementary income for Greek households of various socioeconomic groups, but crucially, rent levels were low enough to allow for the massive integration of migrants, men and women, in low-paid job positions in the shadow and the official labour market. As the affordable housing stock was available in different parts of the metropolitan area, no systematic trend in residential segregation occurred. Nevertheless, important housing inequalities between the native and migrant groups emerged, even at the micro-scale of the urban neighborhood. Such a housing regime was verging on unsustainability even before the recent massive arrival of refugees. The increased commodification of access to housing, following the demise of traditional practices like self-construction, as well as the increased role of mortgages, led to steep housing price increases and propelled greater levels of social inequality in access to home ownership.

The whole system was shaken up during the years of economic recession, ongoing austerity and increasing poverty. Massive increase in unemployment destabilized both Greeks and migrants, and despite the general reduction in rents, the share of housing costs in private expenditure increased. The new taxes imposed on private property also increased the housing costs for homeowners. These developments forced many migrants to consider repatriating or relocating to other countries, and a number of them did, although the exact number is unknown. For the newcomers who never stopped entering Greece, the same developments and their ambiguous legal status meant long-term entrapment under difficult living condi-

tions. A rudimentary system of protection developed in response to housing the most vulnerable, offering temporary accommodation in shelters, sometimes forcing the beneficiaries to move far away from their previous living environment. In quantitative terms, however, protective accommodation remained negligible.

The situation changed when increasing refugee arrivals started to be perceived and framed as a 'refugee crisis' in Greece and the EU: new accommodation solutions were employed. On the one hand, innovative initiatives to offer rented or free temporary housing in regular urban apartments have been tested by a partnership between the EU (which provides funding) and the UNHCR (which is responsible for governance), in collaboration with local authorities and NGOs. On the other hand, refugee camps remain in the agenda of the authorities.

Considering, further, the relationship between the public and private spheres, research has shown that during the last few years a massive increase has been observed of male migrants wandering in the streets of Athens with supermarket trolleys to collect scrap which they sell to foundries for a pittance. Their numbers and the typical choreography of their exhaustive work, locating and moving vendible objects in the bins, no matter their size and weight, suffice to make them highly visible. However, their limited interaction with passers-by indicates that this is rather a case of «*visible invisibility*». Scrap collection is a good example of a dense public appearance that fails to create a public scene. The ambiguous position of private life in the public realm is further evidenced by refugees settling in an open place as is the case of a park. Their public appearance is marked by necessity and temporariness (considered as private), but it mobilizes organized public acts of solidarity. Whether those acts empower refugees and treat them as potential (co-)actors instead of helpless pariahs is an open question.

However, migrants as a whole are not isolated from Greeks in the residential area of Athens. This is the result of the dispersal of affordable dwellings in the private rented sector in large and socially mixed areas of the metropolitan region, either in the apartment blocks of the densely built residential areas of the city centre and the older suburbs, or in deteriorated detached houses in niches

of the city centre and the periphery. An interaction index of 0.81 at the census tract level indicates a strong possibility of contact in the immediate residential environment. Against widespread fears of 'ghettoisation', migrant groups tend to be highly exposed both to the native population and to each other. Furthermore, the value of the index is even higher (at 0.85) for migrants who have been in Greece for more than five years, denoting that interaction tends to increase with time. At the same time, available data from the Athens Land Registry show that migrants accessing homeownership also tend to disperse in areas of different social status.

Refugee accommodation centres in Athens and other parts of the country constitute a spatial institution devoted to making refugees live a 'regular' life. Research focusing on the issue of the affordability of migrants regularized life, considers as significant five specific spatial and organizational features of the accommodation centres:

- The spatial form of most accommodation centres is typical of encampment. Either in old army camps or in other plots, rows of shelters are regularly arranged within fenced and gated spaces. In some cases, official mapping and regular counting are techniques performed in order to enable supervision and control. On the other hand, several additional self-help constructions and informal secondary exits are characteristic of the residents' effort to resist the typical form of encampment.
- The selected locations reveal a general willingness to segregate the accommodated newcomers. Most of the accommodation centres are isolated from regular residential areas and generally invisible from them. Some are poorly serviced by public transport. Residents occasionally have to walk long distances to get from the centres to the closest commercial district.
- The extended use of temporary shelters such as tents, rub halls and containers and of a similarly transferable infrastructure reveals that most accommodation centres are intended for a limited period. No matter whether this intention is realistic or not, accommodation centres can be rapidly removed if such a decision is taken, leaving almost no traces behind.

- Service provision in the camps is undertaken by multiple actors, including state authorities (the civil service, armed forces and the police), international organizations (especially UNHCR and IOM) and a variety of national and international NGOs that share various responsibilities, including for example health care, legal advice, technical support and overall site management. Beyond questions of coordination and conflicting approaches, what this combination of duties reveals is the prolongation of a state of emergency. Non-state actors are expected to provide urgent and temporary humanitarian services, while state actors are primarily responsible for providing security, both in terms of guarding and distributing the accommodated population.
- At least at the discursive level, the administration of the camps is supposed to rely on communication with residents and on the involvement of their communities using various formal and informal means. Refugees are often called to organize their everyday life in the camp, establishing institutions of representation and collective management. While in many cases this rhetoric remains vague, certain related initiatives raise questions about the expected content of participation, the manner in which it is formed for expressing collective goals and, more generally, the balance between state power, NGO mobilization and self-government in the camps.

Considering the relationship between housing status and social status, despite the different levels of migrants' upward social mobility and integration processes, by 2001 different positions in the socio-economic hierarchy and housing inequalities between the Greeks and most migrant groups persisted in the metropolitan area of Athens. The varying rates of residential mobility of the migrant groups are not in a linear relationship with their socio-economic status and do not imply similarly varying prospects for integration. While for some groups there seems to be a connection between residential mobility and some aspects of social status and/or residential integration, this is not the general rule, especially in the case of the single biggest Albanian group. Better socio-economic conditions seem to

be more clearly linked to relocation in the case of the less mobile (and relatively deprived) groups of Pakistani and Filipinos.

Research also indicates that in the absence of positive regulation of their integration conditions, migrants in Athens have to exploit the opportunities in the labour and housing markets, while being exposed to the restrictions created by them. The improvements that some who relocate achieve regarding housing space indicate that the private rented housing market provided opportunities that were not necessarily restricted by the conditions in the less favourable labour market. For some, residential mobility is even connected with access to home-ownership. For many others it is only a means to combat severe integration restrictions by exploiting opportunities in the private housing market. The spatial patterns of migrants' relocation show some degree of preference to the inner suburbs of the city. As Greeks relocate primarily to more peripheral suburbs, this does not provide a more even ethno- spatial distribution (notably of an already non-highly segregated migrant population) at the metropolitan scale. It produces, however, an ethnic mix in the already socially mixed inner suburbs, expanding the ethnic diversity of these densely populated areas. The residential areas in the city centre, an important place of residence for many migrant groups, are not attracting a proportional part of internal relocations. They constitute, however, an important (albeit not the only) destination point for many groups of newcomers.

Moreover, research using 2001 census survey data indicates that successive relocations from the inner city to the suburbs do not always imply successive waves of integration. Data help to identify three interrelated reservations. First, while residential mobility seems to be the spatial expression of social integration for some, it might only be a strategy to mitigate severe socio-spatial restrictions for others. People may move in quest of better living conditions or simply following existing job and housing opportunities. The boundary between planned individual and household strategies and roaming in the city is of course far from clear-cut, but it may be useful to remember that relocations may be differently experienced, even by people 'similar' from a socio-demographic perspective. Second, ethnically mixed residential areas are not *ipso facto* spaces of less in-

equality between members of different groups. Low segregation of migrant groups (indicated here by a quite even distribution together with non-isolation) may coexist with the emergence of intrinsically polarized residential areas. Third, the effect of residential mobility on the pattern of residential segregation between migrants and Greeks is also conditioned by the residential preferences and choices of the latter. The study of residential mobility also reveals that despite certain similarities, different migrant groups follow different paths of spatial integration, indicating an increasing diversity of the migrant population in Athens.

Considering the resettlement of refugee incomers, state authorities and organizations of the national and international humanitarian system responded by providing refugees with accommodation in organized refugee camps that produce spatially isolated and socially marginal living spaces. As in other parts of the world, accommodation in refugee camps in Greece has been thought of as a necessary tool to address humanitarian needs in circumstances of emergency. But the humanitarian accommodation in the camps is not a remedy to displacement. Research has shown that the development of the camp system and the everyday reality in the camps result in the prolongation of displacement. Further filtering processes enforced raise crucial questions about how displaced people are forced to conform with vulnerability criteria and about the kinds of perceptions of the 'deserving refugee' that are promoted.

3.2.2.6. Health and social insurance

Research on migrants' integration in terms of health and social security indicators has shown that migrant workers who hold a residence permit and are registered with the official pension schemes do not appear to experience any differences in the terms and conditions of receiving social care and benefits compared to natives. However, incomplete or inadequate information on migrants' rights and obligations has been identified. The informal nature of most migrant work and employment seems to predominate, impeding their integration in the area of healthcare, irrespective of their integration status. Yet, research has shown that in most cases, migrant employment is not

accompanied by social security coverage. The impact of migration on the social security and pensions' scheme of the country, however, is considered to be positive. Most migrants have recently been integrated in the social security system and are subject to a pension scheme. Nevertheless, as insurance coverage is compulsory for all, one in four to five migrant workers cannot find employment with the same labour and social security rights as indigenous workers.

An overview of the available research data indicates that there is no evidence that the use of social welfare services differs significantly between foreign and indigenous people. Access to public social services varies at approximately the same level. On the other hand, there is a shortage of social services for both Greeks and foreigners. From the information available, as regards the specific legal framework governing health care and the use of health services by migrants in Greece, it is deduced that health and social security services differ dramatically between migrants with residence and work permits and those who do not hold such documents. Some studies indicate that migrants' access to public health services in Greece is directly linked to the guarantee of a relevant social security right and the use of health services by uninsured persons is permitted only in emergency situations. As a result, irregular migrants and uninsured migrants are experiencing severe exclusion problems in this area, as a result of which they have been forced to adapt their strategies and resort to public hospital services, almost exclusively in case of emergency.

An overview of the conditions that must be met for the establishment of the right to healthcare in Greece reveals the fragile situation in which even legally resident migrant workers in our country are found. In particular, due to the negative effects of the financial crisis on the Greek labour market, third-country migrants are at any time at risk of losing the right to health and social security benefits because of their inability to obtain the required number of working hours and stamps. As a result, they are excluded from fundamental services and benefits of the National Health System. A similar gap in the right of access to the use of healthcare services is found among refugees - asylum seekers who have been recognized as having similar rights. However, certain alleviating measures permitting

free access to the national health system were provided from early 2015 to July 2019.

Regarding the health profile of the migrant population (third-country nationals) in Greece, we observe a limited number of relevant studies and a lack of appropriate epidemiological data. Most research work in this area addresses the prevalence of infectious diseases, such as hepatitis and HIV infection, among the migrant population. Other risk factors for migrants' health relate to their working conditions. In particular, due to the type of jobs undertaken by migrant populations, they are more prone to job-accidents and occupational diseases. It has also been found that the levels of stress and anxiety are higher in the case of migrants compared to natives, resulting to a higher degree of negative psychological symptoms, but not mental health problems.

Accessibility to social welfare services and consequently equal access to social goods and services, as well as to any targeted actions promoting the social integration of Vulnerable Social Groups, concern only migrants with a particular type of resident status. Hence, irregular migrant populations are typically excluded from the provision of social care services. Under these circumstances, the gaps in the public system of social protection and the exclusion of almost all migrants without legal residence documents from the public social services are addressed by various non-governmental organizations (NGOs) which are involved in meeting migrants' social needs.

With regard to the overall integration policies and practices in the Social Protection System (Social Security, Health, Social Welfare) in Greece, research has shown that migrants - third-country nationals are experiencing high levels of exclusion, especially if they are irregular migrants. Moreover, the level and intensity of exclusion have been increasing over time, given that while the number of legally resident migrants remains almost constant, the number of migrants without a residence permit is rising; as a result, the number of migrants - third country nationals, who are institutionally and practically excluded from the Social Protection System in Greece, is also rising.

Qualitative research has also indicated insurmountable structural difficulties in accessing health care, while access to social security does not appear to be a visible dimension of migrants' social life

but an unrealistic goal. Living and housing conditions are associated with potential health problems and strategies are being developed by migrants to seek private schemes of health protection and insurance. At the same time, employees working in the national social security system are accused of discriminating against migrants and showing reluctance to serve them. Finally, there is evidence of migrants developing disdain towards the credibility of the healthcare system and the services provided, while stereotypical perceptions of the rights and the behaviour of migrant groups are formed by indigenous people, hindering their integration in this particular area. However, there is also a strong symbolic dimension to the availability of social security, as it coincides with the individual right to legal presence in the country.

In short, in the area of healthcare and social security systems, some patterns seem to be repeated. Achieving a level of comparability with indigenous people remains a key feature of integration, while adaptability and flexibility are seen as crucial to this end. The survival strategies adopted by migrants depend to a large degree on persisting migration policies, while their integration in the informal labour market has consequences not only on the 'informal' nature of their participation, but also on the formation of their self-image and self-esteem, as well as on the natives' perceptions, stereotypes and attitudes towards migrants, thus facilitating or hindering their integration.

Further research in this particular area conducted among migrants and non-migrants in Greece, in order to investigate inequalities in self-reported health, healthcare use and unmet healthcare needs between the migrant and the native population²⁵, has provided evidence at the national level regarding social inequalities in health and healthcare use; however, no significant differences were found between migrants and natives with respect to unmet needs. The European comparison, on the other hand, reveals that Greeks

25. See "Health inequalities among migrant population- MIGHEAL". Coordinator: National Centre for Social Research in collaboration with the Norwegian University of Science and Technology- Trondheim. Funded by the EEA Financial Mechanism (2016-2017).

report rather low levels of poor or very/poor self-reported health. In contrast, they have the highest prevalence of self-reported depressive symptoms across Europe. With respect to self-reported health, the findings reveal that women, regardless of their citizenship status, are more likely to report very poor or poor health than men.

In contrast to previous studies based on ESS data indicating that migrants in European countries have slightly higher odds of reporting unmet need, analysis showed that there is non-significant difference between migrant and non-migrant groups in Greece, even though migrants report slightly higher rates. Findings also reveal a gender gap, with women reporting the highest rates of unmet needs in healthcare, with waiting lists being cited as the most common reason. These results are in line with previous studies that show the association of unmet needs and financial strain and report higher rates of unmet needs among individuals with a lower income status.

A key research finding is the alarming rate of self-reported depressive symptoms across all population groups in Greece. A mixture of risk factors associated with the high depression rates, including financial strain, provision of unpaid care, as well as experiences of domestic conflict or economic hardship during childhood, has been identified. Such symptoms were less prevalent among migrants than non-migrants and were exceptionally high among Greek women. The observed association between childhood experiences and depressive symptoms is of particular importance, as it may suggest that negative childhood experiences of conflict in the family of origin or deprivation may be sparked off or reinforced by negative experiences in adult life. This connects to both the theory of the 'accumulation' of disadvantage and life-course approaches, but also to psychological theories regarding the long-lasting impact of early life experiences that render traumatized people more vulnerable than others.

The comparatively higher levels of unmet health care needs in Greece, as well as of economic hardship, risk behaviors and provision of unpaid care (all of which could be crisis-related), confirm previous studies that have found a negative health impact of the crisis, particularly among women. Women in the Greek society are particularly burdened by gender discrimination, both outside and

inside the labour market. As for the latter, women's employment rates were among the lowest in EU-27 before the economic crisis, while during the recession women's job opportunities decreased to a greater extent than those of men. Contrary to men, the largest decline in employment rates for women is found among the highly educated. Women are over-represented in sectors where flexible working patterns, lower earnings and diminished pension rights prevail, as well as in unpaid work in family businesses. Although the dual-earning model has gained ground during the recession, due to the austerity's impact on male employment at the initial stages of the crisis, women still carry the burden of domestic and care work, a role that further hinders their working potential and independence from the family and adds extra physical and psychological demands. When it comes to migrant women in particular, concentration in flexible, low-skilled and low-paid sectors without social security is even more pronounced. The loss of income incurred by the indigenous population, as a result of the prolonged austerity, has led to a significant reduction in the demand for domestic services, previously covered mainly by migrant women; this drop in demand of personal services, combined with the deregulation of employment conditions and the shrinking of welfare provisions, have further deteriorated the socioeconomic status of a large share of migrant women. These developments highlight how women have been disproportionately affected by the economic recession and seem to play an important role in widening the gender gap in depression, as has been argued elsewhere.

As a result, certain *priority areas* for policy intervention based on key-findings on unmet needs were identified:

- Unmet needs

Overall, unmet need is high among all ethnic groups (15%-30%), but highest among Greek and third country females. The most common reason is inability to pay (7%-15%), but this is fairly evenly distributed among Greeks and migrant groups, and higher among females. Non-availability of appointments and long waiting lists are also quite common (5%-10%), mostly among Greek females.

- **Quality of services**

High rates of poor quality of services or care are reported by both the migrant and native population. However, over 80% of respondents did not report problems in using health services.

- **Discrimination in health care provision**

Discrimination in health care is relatively rare. However, migrants report significantly higher discrimination than Greeks, although the differences appear to be rather small in absolute terms.

- **Risk behaviours**

Ergonomic and material hazards are significantly and substantially higher among almost all migrant groups, while risk behaviours (i.e. smoking, alcohol consumptions, and no physical activity) are most prevalent in Greek population.

- **Primary Health Care**

GP use was found to be low overall (10%-15%), while specialist use is fairly widespread (30%-60%).

- **Mental Health Care**

Depressive symptoms are prevalent overall (25%-40%), but most common among Greek females.

Research on the relationship between the migrant background, social integration, and health status has shown that there are differences in health status between first- and second-generation migrants, as well as in their level of social integration. These findings underscore the role of social integration and social involvement in explaining self-reported health. It is thereby important to distinguish between different cultural and ethnic backgrounds, as social activity is largely driven by one's upbringing and cultural environment. Research results reveal that it is quite important to single out individuals' cultural origins in order to correctly assess the relationship between social integration and self-reported health. This, however,

is only possible by using specific survey data that focus on diverse migrant populations, such as the data derived from the MIGHEAL project (see footnote 25).

Research findings on self-reported depression among migrant and native populations in Greece in times of crisis confirm previous evidence that women are more vulnerable to depression than men and that there is a strong link between depression and socioeconomic position. These findings are consistent with the evidence provided for most Southern and Eastern European countries. However, the gender gap in the risk of depression is most pronounced between native women and men and less so between migrant women and men. These gender differences in depression can be attributed to a number of gender-specific social risk factors which are associated with the social roles and the social positions of each gender. Women are faced with a higher risk of depression on account of their conflicting social roles, their lower status levels and powerlessness and their low social esteem. Country-specific gender stratification systems and gendered welfare state regimes also influence the degree to which women are more susceptible to depression than men. Greece is not an exception in this respect. Overtime, prevalence rates of depression were found to be twice as high in women as in men and they are strongly correlated to a sharp increase in illicit and legal drug use, especially among adolescents, and to a significant increase in suicidal behaviour from the mid- 90s onwards. Apart from female sex, other determinants such as age, perceived discrimination and bad or very bad self-reported health appear to be more decisive determinants of self-reported depression than migrant background, as they are significantly associated with self-reported depression for all groups examined.

Recent studies provide evidence on the rise of health inequalities in times of financial crisis, especially with regard to employment status, age and family type. Financial strain is positively associated with self-reported depression only in the case of Greeks. Both native males and females who are struggling to make ends meet are more vulnerable to depression, contrary to migrants, who do not seem to be affected by these conditions. Findings confirm previous evidence as to the long-term effect of the Greek prolonged economic crisis

and austerity measures on depressive symptoms among the Greek population. It appears that the economic crisis can amplify the role of risk factors such as financial strain and health status and weaken the protective impact of other factors such as age. The analysis does not confirm previous evidence that migrants face an increased risk of depression, especially when they suffer discrimination and social exclusion. Male migrants in Greece report similar levels of depressive symptoms as native-born men, whilst women from Albania and other countries report lower rates of depression than do native females. It seems that the native population is less resilient to stressors such as an economic downturn than the migrant population. A possible explanation is that as migrants have already experienced economic hardship in their countries of origin, they are less susceptible to the adverse effects of a sharp deterioration of living standards in the host society and are thus more resilient. Cultural variations in the perception of depression among different ethnic groups may also account for this result.

Other studies have found that women living in Greece are more vulnerable to NCDs and that gender inequalities in NCDs are subject to migration status and ethnic origin. This suggests that gender has an influence on the health of both men and women, albeit to a different extent across migrant and non-migrant groups. This reinforces the idea that an intersectional approach in health inequalities gives a more accurate picture of complex health conditions and relationships of health inequality. Policies targeted at reducing the risk of NCDs need to consider how gender, migration status, ethnic origin and their intersections render certain social groups more vulnerable than others, in our case migrant women of non-Albanian origin. Further, data have shown that occupational factors encourage rather than explain these gender inequalities in the Greek context and this calls researchers as well as policy makers to pay particular attention to the underlying structural factors such as working conditions, labour market regulations and employment initiatives. Although gender inequalities in NCDs are prevalent, they are not inevitable as there is variation across groups, as well as across different types of NCDs. Further work is needed to explore how institutional factors contribute to the creation and maintenance of gender inequalities in

NCDs, and how contextual factors may mitigate the effects of gender inequality on NCDs.

In a study on “Safety, Health and Trauma among Newly Arrived Refugees in Greece” (REHEAL [Refugees’ Healing] project), certain factors that affect safety, health and trauma among newly arrived refugees and asylum seekers accommodated in Greece, are identified. Data were collected through the REHEAL (Refugees’ Healing) project—a population-based survey conducted in six Greek refugee camps during the summer of 2016. Safety, health and trauma among refugees appear to be attributable to both pre- and post-displacement factors. The analysis shows that the mental and physical wellbeing of refugees and asylum seekers is strongly affected by post-displacement factors and, more specifically, by exposure to stressors in host countries, such as poor living conditions, limited access to health care services and uncertainty about the future. In this study, safety, health and trauma, through different sets of determinants that combine demographic and psychological factors relevant to refugees’ experiences both in their country of origin and in Greece, were examined. Although the majority of the refugees rated their health as good or very good, this study reveals the high levels of exposure to extreme trauma and the lack of a sense of safety among newly arrived refugees in Greece.

Uncertainty about the asylum procedures further increases distress. Meeting with a medical doctor in the refugee camps was extremely beneficial to establishing a sense of safety. However, it seems that feeling safe is often a matter of both physical and psychological safety. Analyses demonstrate that safety, trauma and loss of personal health because of fleeing home, had statistically significant effects on self-rated health status. More specifically, those who were feeling unsafe and those who considered the loss of personal health as the most negative result of fleeing were more likely to evaluate their overall health as poor. Similarly, those who scored higher with respect to traumatic experiences were more likely to rate their health as poor. These results are consistent with previous evidence on the prevalence of depression in refugees and its association with adverse health outcomes. Refugees are often traumatized by pre-displacement events. Self-rated health and being accompa-

nied by children emerged as statistically significant determinants of trauma.

As other studies indicate, being accompanied by children is an important risk factor for major depressive disorder. These results, along with the established association between health and safety, confirm the interplay between pre- and post- migration factors on psychological wellbeing. The country of birth and access to medical services in the host country emerged as important determinants of safety. Syrians were found to be healthier and less traumatized compared to Afghanis. The high levels of exposure to extreme trauma and the lack of a sense of safety may be explained by the lack of early screening and treatment of depression, limited access to medical services, as well as poor living conditions in the Greek refugee camps. Uncertainty about the future in host countries and barriers to accessing social support and health-care services may further hinder refugees' recovery. Moreover, as the health care needs of refugees evolve over time they have to be addressed in a more systematic way by the health care systems of receiving countries, in order to effectively respond to public-health challenges.

Therefore, it emerges from the above that the post-migration physical and psychological wellbeing of refugees and asylum seekers is strongly associated to the policy effectiveness and institutional capacity of the host country, the provision of adequate living conditions and integration prospects, as well as to the overall European strategy regarding refugee flows and settlement. Humanitarian responses to the growing needs of refugee populations across Europe and beyond, need to take into account refugees' traumatic experiences. Early assessment of the physical and mental-health needs of refugees is expected to minimize future disability and chronic distress among refugees, thereby contributing to public health and facilitating the integration of refugees in host countries by containing the growing intolerance towards them.

Another EKKE project related to refugee trauma was the study on unaccompanied minors (Pilot Study on safety and protection among Unaccompanied Minors in Greece REHEAL-UAM), which was designed in collaboration with the Harvard program for Refugee Trauma and was conducted in four UAM shelters in Athens between June

2016 and January 2017. At the time of the study the population of UAM in Greece was estimated at 4,500 children. The majority of the forty-four interviewees were boys from Syria with a mean age of 15. The study has shown that the minors are at risk of depression and anxiety mainly due to the multiple traumatic events they had experienced while in their home countries and during their journey to Greece²⁶. More than half were feeling safe in their current location, but uncertainty about the future was a factor of distress. The findings indicate that addressing the needs of UAM in terms of safety and protection should be a priority area for policy makers and the state as a significant percentage is homeless or living in informal/insecure housing²⁷, outside permanent or temporary accommodation facilities. Policies have to address the risk of exploitation, violence, and sexual abuse of this population.

3.2.2.7. *Education*

Regarding the social integration of migrants in the area of education, research has shown that primary and secondary school students with a migrant background (parents living in the country) have higher rates of compulsory education drop-outs than the natives. In addition, surveys on student populations have concluded that early school drop-out is more common among these children, while enrolment in higher education is less frequent. Even more upsetting is the finding that, in some cases, second-generation migrants have lower school performance than the first generation. This shows that the social divide can worsen over time. At the same time, there is clear evidence that the trend towards segregation for socioeconomic reasons is becoming stronger, as socially disadvantaged parents tend to withdraw their children from school. Thus, inequalities between migrant children and native ones tend to increase over time. On the other hand, many studies have shown that young migrant people experience social inequality in education due to their exclusion

26. Stathopoulou, T., (2019) Surveying the hard-to-survey. Refugees and Unaccompanied minors in Greece. In M. Suarez-Orosco (Ed.), *Humanitarianism and Mass Migration*, California University Press.

27. See: http://www.ekka.org.gr/images/EKKA_Dashboard_30-11-2019.pdf

from the most promising educational paths. Migrant children are usually under-represented in general orientation schools and over-represented in technical and vocational schools. Overall, their school experience is subject to a high level of discrimination.

Education is a key contributor towards the social integration of migrant children in the host society. Their integration is a gradual process that initially takes place at school, among peer groups, in the neighbourhoods, through media representations and continues with their professional career paths. In this context, ensuring equal access to the educational system for second generation migrants is an issue of prime importance, inextricably linked to their integration process. Research on the educational integration of migrants has pointed out that there is an 'educational challenge' that needs always to be addressed in the context of social cohesion, as failure to fully integrate migrant students in the educational system and / or the failure to address their poor school performance is very likely to lead to failed professional and social integration.

Low educational attainment, low school completion rates, and respectively low school performance and high school drop-out rates, undermine the chances of migrants, and in particular of second-generation migrants, to successfully integrate in the labour market and socially advance in their lives. Failure to integrate in the educational system may also prevent the development of positive social bonds and interaction between different groups, which is essential for a cohesive society. As a result, the social capital available to migrant children is reduced and, consequently, the ability of their family and other informal support networks to support them successfully is undermined. As a result, research findings support the view that migrant children leave school experiencing low school attainment and performance, multiple discrimination, and segregation at school. Even when they do complete some levels of compulsory education, there is a risk of reproducing over time situations of not only educational but also social exclusion which tend to take an irreversible form for migrant children. On the contrary, if the educational system succeeds in satisfying the needs of migrant pupils with poor educational attainments, it may also facilitate their integration in the labour market and ultimately in the Greek society.

Summarizing research results, one can validly conclude that in Greece, as well as in the rest of Europe, children of migrants are starting their professional life with fewer qualifications and with significantly reduced educational and social capital compared to indigenous children. In addition, it is clear that a coherent policy for the integration of skilled migrants in the labour market has not yet been designed and implemented. As a result, migrant workers cannot make the best of their skills and educational credentials and, therefore experience higher rates of poverty and social exclusion, even though their unemployment rates are lower than those of the indigenous working age population. Within this context, migrant children are also facing a high risk of educational and social exclusion, while at the same time human resources are wasted, to the detriment of the national economy and society as a whole.

Qualitative research in the area of education also indicates that although structured provision of pre-school childcare and education is a key step in the integration process, migrant children have limited access to formal pre-school care arrangements. The institutional framework on migrant students' inclusion is deficient also with regard to the next stages of education, a fact recognized by the broader educational community. Migrant students' parents are not well informed, and to some extent avoid contact with teachers, while they are feeling uncomfortable about the school environment, as they are conscious of their social disadvantage.

In the light of the above, migrant students develop informal integration practices. Imitation is adopted as a mainstreaming strategy and learning the Greek language is recognized as a key factor for their autonomy and emancipation, whilst its lack is projected as a means of educational exclusion. Informal support networks (e.g. informal childcare) are activated as well as non-statutory educational initiatives aimed at integrating children with migrant parents. In the area of symbols, the school space emerges as a place where migrant students negotiate their new identity. At the same time, while the school environment seems an environment of coexistence between Greek and foreign students, at the same time it is often also an area of cultural conflict.

Concerning the Education and Vocational Training of migrant stu-

dents, their participation in the country's vocational training schools is significant. However, their participation rates vary depending on the educational level. Fewer migrant students participate in the second cycle of secondary education, compared to their participation in compulsory education. After completing the compulsory 9-year cycle of education, they are turning more frequently than the indigenous students to technical-vocational education. Yet, the over-concentration of migrant students in specific school units, combined with the use of their home country language for communication with their peers, creates learning problems with the Greek language and problems with their school performance. As a result, their drop-out rate is reinforced.

Despite the increasing number of migrant students and the lack of intercultural education, there are limited racist and xenophobic incidents in Greek schools, although there are some incidences of direct and indirect discrimination against migrant students. On the other hand, education is seen by migrant parents as an important element of social inclusion, as well as a tool to improve the social and occupational status of their children.

When examining school segregation, it appears that in Greece there is tolerance towards the migrant student population, but not acceptance for the participation of different ethnic and racial groups in reception classes within the educational system. Schools with reception classes, when unique in one area, constitute a major attraction for migrant students. As a result, the participation rate of migrant students in those schools is dramatically increased and the specific school is labelled as 'undesirable' for parents and students of native and foreign origin 'wanting to make a progress'.

In Greece, second generation migrants begin their professional life with fewer qualifications and a significantly reduced educational and social capital compared to natives, despite the fact that the overwhelming majority of migrant children in the 15-21 age group participate in the educational system. Second generation migrant students of primary and secondary education have higher drop-out rates from compulsory education compared to natives, and the respective rates are deteriorating over time. At the same time, evidence suggests that the trend towards socio-economic segregation is

growing, as socially disadvantaged parents tend to withdraw their children from schools with a high number of migrant pupils. Low educational attainment, low school completion rates and respectively low performance and high school drop-out rates, undermine opportunities for second generation migrants to successfully integrate in the labour market. Ensuring equal access for second generation migrants to the education system is thus a matter of prime importance, inextricably linked to their integration in the host society.

As far as adult education is concerned, research has highlighted an important area of education and training where education deficits and skill shortages have been identified. This is the area of intercultural mediation. Research on intercultural mediation has shown that cultural mediators hold a key role in addressing the needs of migratory populations in the context of the current migratory movements and refugee crisis in Europe, as they are directly involved in facilitating relations between newcomers and the host environment. Furthermore, following the massive increase of refugee flows that have been perceived as a 'refugee crisis', skills needs are changing rapidly, calling for updated training with a more comprehensive and inter-disciplinary approach combining social psychology, conflict and crisis management, international law and international studies, inter-cultural communication and mediation, sociology and counseling, among other disciplines. Cultural mediators should be in a position to offer adequate consultation to refugees, asylum seekers and migrants facilitating not only the communication and exchange between them and the host authorities and societies, but also their social integration, well-being and guidance within the EU environment. In order to address the training needs of cultural mediators and the official recognition of cultural mediation as a profession, cultural mediators need to be empowered with a set of knowledge, skills and competences required to keep up with the demands of the current and emerging reality in Europe, as regards the needs of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, strengthening their working reflexes and adaptability, and eventually, increasing their professional efficiency and expertise. To this end, and in order to strengthen key competences in VET provision for the Cultural Mediators professional community by developing and making widely

available updated educational resources and training materials, a mapping of the current IVET and CVET needs of Cultural Mediators has been carried out, together with an up-to-date modular course on migrant/refugee management, with easy and free access, complying with the objectives of the Open Educational Resources, as well as an original Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) to support large-scale participation in training activities and lifelong learning of Cultural Mediators.

The professional role of the cultural mediator is recognized differently across the various European countries and their educational and training needs differ by country. Migratory populations need the Cultural Mediator to accompany them during the reception and integration process, from their arrival to the social, cultural and job integration phases. It is within the Cultural Mediators' role to enable cohesive links between the migrants/refugees and their new society, helping them to decode cultural and social codes of the people involved. To this end, at the European level, there is a common need to up skill cultural mediators for qualified work with migrants. In order to identify the main competences of this professional role, learning outcomes must be defined and a course must be structured as a comprehensive course including both basic and general knowledge, skills and competences required for cultural mediation and specific contents for working with migrants, refugees and asylum seekers.

3.2.2.8. Aspects of vulnerability and discrimination

Considering migrants **social and civic participation**, research results suggest that the participation of migrants in civil society (cultural organizations, associations, and other social activities), in political affairs through alternative mechanisms (party initiatives or other political actors), in the public life through institutional bodies (such as trade unions) and in local government through local initiatives, is limited. Research also shows that in order to make progress in the above areas, it is important to strengthen the dialogue with migrant organizations. The development of dialogue is an essential prerequisite for promoting the integration of migrants and for maintaining social cohesion.

According to article 78 of Law 3852/2010, Migrant Integration Councils (MICs) were introduced in order to operate at the local level and enrich the decision-making processes in the municipalities not only in matters of migration, but more broadly in matters of culture, sport, labour, education, etc. EKKE's research has shown that the establishment of MICs was a failure in the architecture of Local Government. Integration Councils have been set up without meeting migrants' needs and without developing a comprehensive action plan. The MICs would undoubtedly have been a positive step in multilevel governance, provided they had received appropriate support from the competent municipal authorities and local communities. EKKE's research has also shown that the MICs have so far remained largely inactive, with the exception of councils set up in the municipalities of Athens and Thessaloniki, where large migrant populations are concentrated. In part, an important constraint has been the lack of adequate resources and administrative support. Institutional, organizational and other obstacles preventing the MICs from becoming meaningful instruments for the integration of migrants, have been studied and are well-documented.

Looking into research on **gender and migration**, we observe that it was initially concerned with "adding women" to existing migration research. Prior to this, migrants were either assumed to be non-gendered beings, or all migrants regardless of gender, supposedly experienced migration in the same way. A recognition of the importance of gender led to a large number of studies focusing on women's flows and experiences, as previous research had been male dominated. This focus on women led to an expansion in the areas of research interest, moving away from structural approaches based on labour markets and the economic sphere, to micro-scale studies, often concerned with gender norms in source communities and gender relations within sending households.

Changes in gender and migration research have not only reflected developments in gender and women's studies; broader migration research has also experienced changes, reflecting global processes and new academic approaches, and this became evident in the gender and migration literature. "Traditional" migration research often focused on more permanent forms of migration and issues of set-

tlement and assimilation for both national (usually rural – urban movements) and international migration. As economic globalization spread and improved transport and communication routes were developed, migration has increased in scope. Flows of international labour migration have increased and, importantly, there has been a feminization of many of these flows. In addition, migration has become more transient and complex. Complexities have been highlighted by the development of “transnational communities”, where issues around gender and national identities are complicated as a result of the “in-between” status of many migrants.

It is to be noted, however, that the trends in gender and migration research do not mean that there has been a linear progress from one set of topics or approaches to another. Rather, that there have been general shifts over time, and that there is now more diversity than ever as a range of themes exist side by side.

Given its diverse nature, it is not surprising that a variety of methods have been used to investigate migration. While quantitative methods, such as analysing census data and mounting large-scale questionnaire surveys, have always been popular, interest in migrants’ experiences and questions of identity have highlighted the importance of other methods, such as life histories and in-depth interviews.

Research on gender and migration at EKKE has developed during the last decade, mainly due to the attention this issue attracted at the European level. While research on migration has led to important and increasing contributions from Greece, as well as from elsewhere, the introduction of the gender dimension in analyses has developed quite recently, mainly as a result to European funded research projects. Despite the “feminization” of migration trends in Greece, this phenomenon has been partially examined as a “supplementary theme” of other research on migration undertakings. Until today, most research on gender and migration has been conducted exclusively at the micro - level and by means of qualitative research. However, EKKE conducted a large survey on migrant women in the first half of 2011. The scope of the study was to understand the mechanisms and procedures of social integration of migrant women in the Greek society by means of quantitative and qualitative research tools and on the basis of certain international integra-

tion indicators. Integration involved migrant women's inclusion in the formal Greek labour market, in the educational system, in the healthcare and social security systems, their legal integration, their political and social participation and the development of subjective feelings of social belonging.

Key findings from the quantitative research include the following: migrant women of Albanian origin constitute almost half of the migrant population in Greece. The nationality distribution corresponds to the percentages of the recorded women's population by ethnicity. The age categories correspond to the productive age intervals between the 18th and the 65th year of age. The majority of the research population is living in Greece for more than a decade. The migrant women's population in Greece has a good quality of educational credentials. The majority of migrant women come from cities. It is primarily an urban population and only 1/3 is from rural areas. Even during the prolonged economic crisis, empirical research found that the majority of our sample seemed to have a steady occupation, although a significant number were employed in temporary jobs, housekeeping and/or were seeking work. The occupational categories show that a significant percentage of migrant women are employed in housekeeping and house care activities, while secondarily they are occupied in low-paid and low-status clerk and shop assistance jobs or provision of services. Their occupational status indicates that they fall under the wage labour categories, while only a small percentage is self-employed.

The majority of migrant women have access to the social security system, either public or private, depending on the sector of the economy they are employed in (that is, depending on whether they hold formal or informal jobs). The main reasons of dissatisfaction with their job include low wages and excessive fatigue, while other poor working conditions contribute to their sense of disappointment and future occupational plans. Research also revealed that migrant women in Greece have limited if any upward social mobility. Moreover, migrant women feel that discrimination against migrants in general overshadows discrimination on the grounds of gender, sweeping away all specific types of discrimination, disapproval and rejection. On the contrary, when comparing women's populations

alone, migrant women feel that they are much more discriminated against in the labour market than native women.

Only one third of migrant women wish to stay in Greece permanently. From many aspects, they are actually in the border-line between the host country and the country of origin, although they seem very well adapted in the cultural milieu of Greece. On the other hand, as shown, by the ways they spend their free time, assertions about the migrant man as a cultural hybrid seem to have good chances of being verified. Considering certain parameters of migrant women's living conditions in Greece, it is evident that they are mostly migrating in order to gain but mainly to save income for their families living either in Greece or back home in their countries of origin. They do not hold high expectations and their ambitions have been adjusted to their low socio-economic status. However, as a result of the economic crisis, a significant percentage is dissatisfied with their earnings, as these are hardly enough to support them.

Financial problems seem to be the main headache for migrant women. On top of that, the issue of residence permits is also a major problem. Insecurity, loneliness, lack of respect and excessive fatigue make their lives miserable. Migrant women seem ambivalent and uncertain as to whether they consider Greece as their own country. However, 47.5% declared with no reservations that they had arrived at a state of doing so. Most migrant women feel that their attempts were aimed at making their lives easier, but mostly at improving the lives of their children.

On the other hand, qualitative data suggest that the economic crisis is experienced differently by various categories of women, depending on their social position. Personal feelings and experiences of women reflect objective conditions and factors that directly affect their life trajectories. After investigating the interconnections between objective conditions and subjective perceptions of the economic crisis by the specific social category of migrant women, we have concluded that these are women who, due to their "vulnerable" social status, experience strong social and gender inequalities.

In short, research findings revealed that in the life trajectory of these women, the economic crisis appears as one more 'link' in the chain of crises they have previously experienced. It also appears that

the economic crisis has had cumulative and interrelated effects on their lives in Greece and incites intense feelings of uncertainty and insecurity, directly intertwined with their vulnerable social position. Finally, their previous life experiences under crisis conditions affect the present strategies and practices adopted by them in order to cope with the present crisis.

The “feminisation” of certain labour migration flows has been the result of changing production and reproduction processes worldwide, with female migrants being over-represented in multinational factory production and reproductive activities, such as domestic services and the sex industry. Migrant and minority women occupy disadvantaged positions in European labour markets, whether they migrated primarily for employment reasons, or they accompanied their husbands. While migrants, both male and female, often experience a decline in their occupational status when migrating to Europe, women’s position is generally worse than that of men. This reflects the restructuring of female-dominated employment sectors, their involvement as unpaid workers in family business, limited employment opportunities due to their legal status as “dependants”, and employers’ perceptions of their skills.

Data have also shown that while migration may provide opportunities for enhancing women’s status, such processes are not inherent to migration. Migration usually represents relocation to a new social context. While this “minimal space” may create opportunities for renegotiating gender relations, it is also likely to result into new social constructions of the migrants themselves. These social constructions will be gendered and racialized, and may be the product of the host community or of certain members of the migrant community itself. However, such constructions are not necessarily accepted passively by the migrants. Meanings of actions, dress and language are contested by migrant groups, although perhaps not as part of a conscious strategy. Constructions of female migrants may also be used in creating and reinforcing national identity.

Gender roles and relations are also important in examining migrants’ engagement with, and participation in politics. As migration involves a fall in labour market status for many men, political activity within the migrant community is a way of gaining and

maintaining status. In comparison, women who do not experience a decline in their labour market status do not feel the need to engage in activities that bolster their standing. Finally, women's migration motivations are often not related to their labour force participation but to that of their husbands.

On the other hand, the study of the Greek experience of good practices in the area of employment of migrant women reveals that these are related to the relevant European policies and the European funding frameworks which largely determine national actions, policies and programmes. At the same time, the Greek experience is expanding due to the activity of companies that have recently started to implement Corporate Social Responsibility policies and adopt diversity management as a good practice.

At the policy level, data suggest that national migration policy is structured around the areas of migrants' life and work. Since 2000, policy design has been focussing on family reunification laws, the status of "long-term resident", as well as on individual issues such as employment, education of children etc. This policy is to a large extent in line with the corresponding European one and is also embedded in the implementation of programmes attempting to address, *inter alia*, the issue of the employment of migrants as a key component of their social integration in the Greek society. Consequently, integrated programmes and actions are implemented with public and private stakeholders, NGOs, trade unions etc.

At the level of funding frameworks for the employment of migrant women, it has been found that migrants, and in particular migrant women, fall under the general category of the socially vulnerable groups. Projects and actions focus mainly on addressing the exclusion of individuals from the labour market, as well as the discrimination that they suffer from and / or derive from it. A positive aspect of the above initiatives is that access to employment for migrants constitutes a strategic option; on the negative side, they do not always address the needs of the groups they are designed for.

Good practices regarding the employment of migrant women, fall under five broad categories, according to the type of actions to which they refer. The first one focuses on the provision of counselling and support services to migrants, as well as on the training of

local authorities' executives as employment consultants, namely the involvement of the local community in the employment of migrants, the acquisition of professional qualifications in the agricultural sector, the training of migrants themselves etc. The second pillar of good practices concerns migrants' labour market integration. The good practices identified relate to the promotion, certification and upgrading of qualifications for labour market integration, training, learning the Greek language etc. It is worth noting the good practice promoted for training migrant women in primary sector jobs and in agro-tourism, as well as in new forms of tourism and new technologies. The third pillar of good practices relates to awareness raising and combating racism and xenophobia. The good practices identified, have developed actions to raise employers' awareness of equal treatment of employees in the private sector, raise awareness and mobilize media workers to eradicate prejudices etc. The fourth pillar of good practices concerns access to work and entrepreneurship, through recruitment and support schemes for migrants, job promotion through job subsidies, business development and support etc. The fifth pillar is about managing diversity at the workplace. A number of good practices guides were promoted, which aimed at diffusing workplace diversity, treating all employees equally, applying a code of ethics, collaborating between businesses and NGOs, etc.

In addition, as the results of qualitative research have shown, a high degree of expertise in providing services to this target group is observed in organizations and NGOs implementing programmes and actions for migrants' integration. The fact that migrants were not the sole beneficiaries of those programmes had a negative impact on their integration process. Research has also shown that despite shortages in funding, the above organisations continued to provide ad hoc support to the migrant populations even after the completion of the projects, thanks to their know-how, experience, expertise and the contacts they maintained with the targeted migrant populations. As for companies implementing corporate social responsibility policies, their presence is relatively small and easy to identify. In the area of corporate social responsibility, their commitment is long-lasting and has a positive impact on the corporate image. These companies, according to research data, collaborate systematically with consult-

ing and support agencies and structures, whose work is financially and organisationally supported. Migrants are also involved in these partnerships. Foreign workers are treated on an equal footing with their Greek counterparts, and some even hold specialist or administrative positions. Data also reveal the following:

- a) Gender and nationality have so far been treated as distinct in Corporate Social Responsibility initiatives. Thus, actions were promoted for the employment of women or the employment of migrants, but not for the employment of migrant women.
- b) There are interesting examples of CSR initiatives that relate to migrants, mainly coming from large domestic and multinational companies. At the same time, there seems to be a small but growing number of small businesses that could, with appropriate support, transform their self-commitment into migrant employment, in line with the principles of diversity management as a CSR practice.
- c) Some businesses are beginning to realize that migrant workers are just as good as Greeks and that the employment of migrants can prove beneficial to the business, as well as to its image. Recognition by other businesses, but also by the broader society, of the positive effects of social integration of migrants and their equal access to the labour market can in the long run lead to their long-term commitment.
- d) In the area of corporate social responsibility, the role played by NGOs and structures is important.
- e) Diversity does not constitute a recruitment criterion, hence, there is no recruitment of migrants in lieu of indigenous people. Businesses are open to the prospective employee without setting criteria for either 'positive' or 'negative' discrimination. The philosophy behind it is choosing the right person for the right position and providing equal opportunities to all. This approach also enables on-the-job training of the staff and provides the opportunity to advance both at the hierarchy level and through the rotation of sectors. Particular emphasis is placed on the human factor, as well as on strategies aimed at satisfying the employee within the business. g) These good

practices are in fact a structural feature of their functioning and concern the placement of migrant women in employment. According to company representatives, it is the overall operation of each business that enables every prospective employee and therefore indirectly favours diversity.

As a result, part of the Greek experience of good practices in the area of employment of migrant women is directly related to migration, employment and social cohesion policies and is addressed in European and national programmes, actions and interventions targeting primarily the socially vulnerable groups and secondarily migrants. Another part of the Greek good practices experience relates to the management of diversity by corporate social responsibility companies. In both cases, however, migrant women are rarely treated as a separate target group. A critical appraisal of the Greek experience of good practices in the area of migrant employment has shown that the components of this experience vary. Good practices depend to a large extent on the programme and constraints imposed by their funding frameworks, as the specifications predetermine both the type of actions and the target groups. In this context, the programmes implemented emphasize employment promotion rather than employment itself and are generally targeted at socially vulnerable groups, without considering the specific characteristics and needs of migrants. Also, these programs do not incorporate the gender dimension, nor do they address the specific needs of migrant populations. Although the Greek experience of good practices concentrates on innovative and multidimensional initiatives, it remains at a pilot phase, as the continuity and evolution of the resulting actions is not guaranteed. The lack of continuity of good practice programmes has a negative impact on the accumulation of know-how by the stakeholders involved, as well as on the further exploitation of the experiences gained.

Research on discriminatory perceptions and attitudes regarding the social position (status) of female and young Muslim migrants in the business sector of the Greek labour market, as well as policy conclusions for the facilitation and empowerment of their access to it has shown, in short, the following:

At the theoretical level, the study has drawn its epistemological

considerations from three main traditions: the ideas around the issue of “competition and social cohesion”, the conceptualisation of “entrepreneurship”, especially in conditions of “risk” and/or economic crises, and the issue of discrimination. The documentation of the employment and unemployment characteristics of women and young Muslim migrants has been coupled with the search for career development parameters, especially those related to vulnerable social categories, such as the populations of women and of young people. In connection to the above, the mapping of specific situations and conditions that prevent, delay or facilitate the development of professional and employment careers of the above groups was also undertaken. The exploration of stereotypes that contribute to the generation and enhancement of multiple, on-going and intense discrimination in the labour market on the grounds of gender, ethnicity and religion has been a key element of research processes. Most importantly, the issue of gender-based discrimination - especially with regard to balancing the career development of female Muslim migrants and their personal family lives - has been a core item of research undertakings. The same holds true as to the exploration of ways to respond to labour market inequalities by the above groups.

Quantitative and qualitative research techniques have been employed in order to construct a general analytic and research framework for the deciphering, not only of the ‘visible’, but also of the latent and ‘subtle’ forms of discrimination in the area of entrepreneurship of female and young Muslim migrants in contemporary Greece. The data produced are useful not only for understanding the subject under consideration, but also for future plans and policy design on behalf of the competent authorities at the national, as well as the European and international levels. Considering the nature and the specific characteristics of migrant (ethnic) entrepreneurship in Greece we can conclude the following:

Although many migrants and people from ethnic minorities are motivated to become entrepreneurs, even amidst the economic crisis, there are certain difficulties, specific to this group, which prevent them from realising their business projects. Certain pressing problems have been identified mainly related to access to finance, access to support services and knowledge of such services, language

barriers, awareness and pursuit of rights and limited business, management and marketing skills. Most Muslim ethnic minority businesses are relatively small and manager-owned, and they operate in an urban environment. Certain features of migrant and ethnic minority entrepreneurship encountered elsewhere are also present in the Greek case. Contrary to what is required in other labour market systems, however, the first generation of Muslim migrant and ethnic minority entrepreneurs often confront considerable entry barriers and significant capital requirements when they enter the Greek labour market. Skill and educational credentials, as well as previous experience, although important, do not obstruct the business process in the first place.

Muslim entrepreneurs in Greece operate in a rather competitive environment, where prices constitute the main parameter. This results into labour intensive production, long working hours, low wages and so on. In general, Muslim migrant businesses rely less on formal providers of support than the average business; they prefer informal networks for obtaining information and assistance. This is partly due to a general lack of integration in the host society and a resulting lack of knowledge and familiarity with the business culture and the administrative environment.

For similar reasons, the businesses often raise capital from family and friends and not from banks or other institutional sources. Research findings confirmed that Muslim migrant businesses required a specialised kind of support, since they relied less on formal help and support providers than the average business and preferred informal networks for obtaining information and assistance. Lack of knowledge of what is available, lack of trust towards the advisors from mainstream support organisations and trust-based relations with persons from their own ethnic group led prospective migrant entrepreneurs to seek help from family and friends in obtaining finance, instead of approaching formal institutions like banks. Discriminatory practices, coupled with the administrative and bureaucratic regulations in force, are viewed as burdens for migrant and ethnic minority business activity, while lack of business skills was observed in necessity-driven entrepreneurial endeavours rather than opportunity-driven.

Most of Muslim migrant businesses are *micro businesses* with no or very few employees. They are small also in comparison with indigenous businesses, as regards turnover and profit and they are typically managed by their owner – usually a man (female ethnic entrepreneurship is still extremely rare, if existing at all). The majority of Muslim migrant businesses reflect strategies of survival than a clear-cut desire to enter the entrepreneurial field. The first generation of Muslim migrant entrepreneurs often start in a market with demanding entry barriers. As a result, the existing businesses are those with the lowest capital requirements (e.g. mini-shops of various kinds) and low skill requirements. The owners' knowledge of marketing techniques tends to be limited; as a result, even when the opportunity arises, they usually do not manage to turn their business into some unique venture. There are various additional reasons for not expanding, such as uncertainty of a permanent residence status in the country and discrimination against them. It was also observed that different ethnic Muslim groups have a different inclination for certain economic sectors. The number of years residing in the country is an important factor of flourishing businesses settlements and future successful prospects, as in the case of the Egyptian ethnic group.

The typical Muslim migrant business is located in areas with ethnic clusters and usually in relatively poor and deprived suburbs or inner-city neighbourhoods. Customers usually include members of the Muslim migrant's own ethnic enclave, while discrimination severely hinders plans for expanding to the indigenous population. In certain cases, however, a diversity of customers is observed, but despite that, there still persists a relatively strong reliance on ethnic resources and especially on co-ethnic employees and very often even on family members. Nevertheless, given an increasingly non-ethnic clientele and ethnic resources, Muslim migrant business can be considered of a "hybrid" nature in Greece.

Empirical evidence seems to suggest that many of these entrepreneurs were attracted into businesses in order to be autonomous and realise their own ideas. Status also appeared to be an important reason for becoming one's own boss. In other cases, Muslim migrant entrepreneurship rather represented the exploitation of special market opportunities, closed to indigenous business. There is ample

evidence that Muslim migrant entrepreneurship tends to cover the gaps emerging from the withdrawal of indigenous entrepreneurship from various sectors of the economy. Thus, Muslim migrant businesses have infiltrated in entrepreneurial activity in areas previously held by the indigenous population. However, as data suggest, Muslim migrant businesses owners and personnel, even when qualified, often face legal difficulties, limited labour markets and career opportunities, that, amplified by a lack of information, knowledge and language skills, make them fail.

In fact, research shows that Muslim migrant entrepreneurship contributes to economic growth and employment, often by rejuvenating neglected crafts and trades, and increasingly participates in the provision of value-added goods and services over-looked by the indigenous population. They also constitute an important bridge for the integration of migrants into paid employment, creating employment not only for themselves but also increasingly for the migrant population directly and for the native population indirectly. It seems that the assertion stating that *migrant entrepreneurs also enhance social opportunities for migrants, create more social leadership, are role models in society, especially for young people, increase self-confidence and promote social cohesion by revitalising streets and neighbourhoods*, holds equally true for the Greek case.

Considering the case of Muslim migrant women, gender segregation is perpetuated in the Greek labour market, where women are extremely under-represented in the business sector and paid work. This seems to be attributed to their having to carry the main burden of unpaid domestic chores, such as childcare and housework. Traditional culture barriers also hinder their employment and business activity. Moreover, despite the achievement of greater educational equality, this does not guarantee equality in labour market outcomes, since most Muslim migrant women may have the credentials for proper employment but their poor employability reflects the traditional cultural heritage, in that as long as they continue to bear the main brunt of unpaid household tasks, childcare and caring for ageing parents, it will be difficult for them to realise their full potential in paid work. Moreover, discriminatory social norms enhance early marriages or limit access to credit for women, thus cancelling out

the significant gains made in educational attainment for girls, that could otherwise lead to increased formal employment and entrepreneurship. Muslim migrant entrepreneurship is also deeply affected by religion and the particular cultural ethics of outdoor appearance – most salient in the case of women.

Owing to the tendency of Muslim migrants (as well as of other ethnic minorities) to concentrate in particular localities, the development of some local economies, and the living standards within them, have been heavily influenced by the nature and extent of the Muslim migrant business development. At the same time, not all Muslim migrant minorities are equally represented in terms of self-employment and small business ownership. There are variations in the levels of entrepreneurship between Muslim migrant ethnic groups, suggesting that there may be unfulfilled potential for business ownership when viewed at the macro-level. Research results also draw attention to similarities and differences with other types of small firms. As shown, the extent to which a firm displays distinct behavioural attitudes and experiences distinct support needs, is likely to vary according to the length of time a particular Muslim ethnic group has been resident in the host country, the circumstances in which their migration occurred and the degree of ethnic solidarity or assimilation in the host society. Since research endeavours focus on the first-generation of Muslim migrants, it is reasonable to assume that the distinctiveness of their business activity and the support issues that stem from this, might be more acute in the case of firms owned by first generation migrants, especially those established in the midst of the crisis. Yet, Muslim migrants' small firms share many of the characteristics and problems faced by small firms in general. These include problems in raising finance to start a business and/or expand and deficiencies in core management competencies, such as marketing and financial management skills. Evidence suggests that finance is typically perceived as the greatest single problem by Muslim migrant entrepreneurs at the start-up stage, while discriminatory practices are equally important.

In addition, the informality that is commonly found in the recruitment practices of small, and particularly very small Muslim migrant enterprises, can be associated with a reliance on co-ethnic

labour. At the same time, it is important to recognise the diversity of small firms among the different Muslim migrant groups, which can affect the special characteristics of certain types of enterprises compared to other small firms. Cultural factors strongly affect the value placed on entrepreneurship and the motives for starting a business, although it is important to also recognise the role of 'opportunity structures' presented by the social and economic context, as a contributory factor, as well as cultural influences. Clearly, there are many interrelationships between ethnicity, culture and enterprise, suggesting that Muslim migrant entrepreneurs consist of a heterogeneous group, whilst sharing many of the underlying characteristics of the small business population more generally.

On the assertion that *migrants are more entrepreneurial* and therefore they should be encouraged to contribute to economic growth by exploiting their inherent talents, the Greek case of the Muslim migrant entrepreneurs indicates the following: although a high proportion of foreign-born entrepreneurs work in sectors more traditionally associated with migrant businesses (i.e. wholesale and retail trade), many work outside their traditional ethnic business sectors, such as the construction sector, the technical support sector, manufacturing, human health and social work services. With the advent of the economic crisis, which deeply affected the construction sector and had a significant impact on the health and social work services, many Muslim migrant people were pushed to start their own business (usually small shops) in order to survive.

The general profile of Muslim migrant entrepreneurs differs considerably than that of the natives in that they tend to be skilled and male, with more than three out of four being over the age of 35. Migrant and native entrepreneurs are on average older than wage and salary workers. On the part of the migrants, this may be attributed to the need to accumulate enough social and physical capital, as well as experience, before being able to start a business; for the native population it may also be the case of young people's mentality in seeking a salaried job rather than undertaking entrepreneurial risks, especially in the midst of the country's debt crisis. Yet, the crisis *per se* cannot be considered as a push factor for enhancing entrepreneurial activity among both natives and migrants alike, since

the austerity measures and the high unemployment rate (50-60% among young people) have led to massive emigration waves of both populations in seeking job opportunities abroad.

Muslim migrant entrepreneurs, further, possess a *high average educational level*, since a significant number of them hold a tertiary education credential. In Greece, the migrant entrepreneurial experience by region of origin is not homogeneous. Migrants from different regions of origin have different propensities to become entrepreneurs. Differences in education and wealth may explain an important part of the differences in entrepreneurship behaviour between migrant groups. Some origin countries traditionally have a higher share of entrepreneurs in their economies, and individuals that emigrate from such countries are more likely to establish a business in the recipient country. Traditional trade relations between the country of origin and Greece are also important, as in the case of Egyptians or earlier the Lebanese.

In short, the mapping of Muslim migrant entrepreneurship in Greece indicates that the number of Muslim migrant entrepreneurs is growing, despite the economic crisis, as a survival strategy. There are significant variations among the different ethnic groups, as some are more active than others. Female entrepreneurship is quasi non-existent. Tradition and customs impose significant obstacles not only to women's entrepreneurial activity, but also to their employment activation outside the family milieu. Religion poses further impediments, while appearances are also important, as they provide the ground for multifaceted discrimination. Muslim migrant entrepreneurs have a strong presence in classic vacancy-chain sectors such as retail trade, ethnic restaurant and catering, but their presence is gradually increasing also in growth sectors such as personal and business services. Furthermore, Muslim migrant entrepreneurs are usually located in working-class ethnic neighbourhoods, in the form of ethnic enclaves, rather than in central business districts and suburbs. Language barriers and lack of access to financial capital forces many Muslim migrant entrepreneurs to the lower end of the market. In these markets, production is mainly small in scale, low in added value, and usually very labour intensive; earnings are typically low, and working days are long and hard.

Overall, bureaucratic rules and regulations may constitute barriers for entrepreneurs starting out, especially for those with language problems and poor educational qualifications who have difficulties obtaining credit loans or other forms of financial capital. Banks and other financial institutions tend to be reluctant to give credit loans to small migrant start-ups. Thus, Muslim migrant entrepreneurs are funnelled towards lower-end markets and resort to informal credit systems. They often rely on their relatives, who constitute a convenient, flexible and cheap pool of labour. Little information is available on the implications of this tendency on labour relations. Many Muslim migrant entrepreneurs seem reluctant to ask for support or apply for outside help, or are not aware of the availability of support schemes. At the same time, governmental and non-governmental agencies that offer a variety of support services do not reach out to them. In Greece too, this discrepancy points to a serious lack of communication and raises questions as to the efficiency of the support services.

Research at EKKE has also been devoted to the study of diversity as an urban asset, examining how European cities can benefit from diversity.²⁸ Today, most European cities are characterized by diversity. People from diverse ethnic socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds cohabitate in cities, establishing dynamic patterns of everyday living and interaction. Research on how diversity is experienced by the residents of an inner-city area of Athens, Academia Platonos, which has been constantly receiving migrants since the 1960s, showed the following: initially, the urbanizing population from the rural areas settled in this southern-west part of the city centre, in order to be close to jobs in the nearby small-scale industries. After the 1990s, migrants from Eastern European countries, and especially from Albania, settled in the area; by the beginning of 2000s, new waves of migrants from the Middle East, Pakistan and African countries arrived as new residents. Lately, new Greek households with strong cultural capital have started settling in the

28. DIVERCITIES - Governing Urban Diversity: Creating Social Cohesion, Social Mobility and Economic Performance in Today's Hyper-diversified Cities Athens: EKKE.

area, attracted by the green spaces and the tranquility of this neighborhood.

Focusing on the way people perceive or experience diversity in this area (Academia Platonos), researchers have paid attention to people's housing preferences and choices. Economic reasons, such as low housing and rent prices, as well as property reasons, for example owning or inheriting a house in the area, were put forward by most of the inhabitants. Social reasons were also highlighted. For many Greeks, place attachment and the presence of the family were indicated as a basic factor for living in the area. Many migrants stressed that the presence of co-ethnics, relatives and friends was a crucial pull factor. Residing in this area is considered as an improvement only by the newcomers, characterized by strong cultural capital, who have settled in the area recently. The rest of the residents pointed out that their housing decision was mostly related to low earnings which imposed restrictions on their housing choices. Hence, in terms of housing, diversity has not played a role in the households' decisions.

The inhabitants of the area have described their neighbours following standard categorizations like nationality, income, age, education and profession. People with high cultural capital and education held a positive view about their neighbours, while people of low cultural capital expressed themselves in rather negative ways. For some Greek people, there is a strong evidence of feelings of discomfort and fear against otherness. At the same time, many migrants expressed feelings of fear against "other" social groups like the Roma population and some Greeks, mostly having in mind the police and the neo-Nazi violent behaviours. Hence, in a case study in the area of 'Academia Platonos', fear against "otherness" is a shared characteristic for most of the inhabitants. Such perceptions put at stake every positive approach towards diversity, as fear creates barriers in the interaction, communication and the creation of social bonds amongst different groups. By contrast, other people perceive diversity in a neutral or in a positive way. The fact that migrants have settled in the area is either considered as a fact of today's inner city living, or as a positive dimension which brings about multiculturalism and a mixture of different cultures and lifestyles. Nonethe-

less, this positive perception of diversity still remains at a theoretical level, as respondents claim that they hardly develop strong relations with the migrant population in their area. At the same time, for many residents, diversity is considered as a negative aspect, or as a neutral one. According to such perceptions, strained co-habitation has turned into tolerance of diversity, as living in a peaceful environment with good neighbouring relations is considered as the basic aspiration. It seems that in Academia Platonos residents live quite parallel lives, isolated from each other.

However, everyday interactions in local associations, the public schools and the public spaces, create spaces of micro-encounters, where people come closer and develop social bonds. In such micro-spaces where social cohesion and interaction is encouraged, diversity is encompassed and developed; people with different lifestyles and cultures develop stronger bonds with each other. It may be argued that although diversity is not a driving force in the development of social relations in the area, it emerges as a secondary force in the construction of the local social world. Yet, as social solidarity in the context of the fiscal crisis is put forward, people of different cultural backgrounds and lifestyles interact with each other and build social bonds aiming at alleviating the social burdens. Although diversity is not the main concern of the local associations, nor does it act as a magnet for people's participation in the associations, it is enhanced through the need to boost social cohesion and solidarity in the area. Within the framework of the local associations, differences and fears are left aside, and ideas, such as improvement of the built environment and solidarity for all in times of crisis, are expressed.

Moreover, the public spaces of the area emerge as spaces of encounter and interaction, especially for people who are active in the associations, as well as for the ones who are not afraid of the "other". Diversity is not a pull-factor in the use of public spaces. However, it is related to the need of the residents to accompany their children and to meet and interact with their neighbours. Hence, diversity emerges as the outcome of the act of using public space, as the interaction and bonding of people of diverse ethnic backgrounds, of different lifestyles and cultures. However, people who are afraid of the "other" avoid the use of the public spaces. According to their

broadier perceptions, the deterioration of the public spaces is related to the presence of the migrant population; to their view, migrants' delinquent behaviour puts their lives at stake. However, as the majority of inhabitants faces impoverishment, the economic distance amongst the various social groups has started to shrink, creating a sense of social equality. Many migrants have pointed out that they now feel more equal to the Greek population, as the crisis has affected all social groups in the area in the same way, and vice versa. Their interaction is further enhanced through the outdoor activities in the area and the use of public spaces.

In general terms, diversity does not play a major role in people's activities, public associations or in their use of public space. The inhabitants arrange their activities in relation to their spare time, their family status and their age. Relations mostly develop among people with the same socio-cultural and ethnic background. Nonetheless, social bonds may emerge in the micro-spaces of the neighborhood, i.e. at the level of the building and/or the street. Life in the same street or in the same building breaks down mainstream stereotypes against the migrants. In these micro-spaces people create stronger bonds and good neighbouring behaviours end up in the construction of strong social interaction and networking, in bridging social capital. Moreover, typical relations that are interpreted as "weak ties" construct feelings of security and frequent daily encounters may turn into bonding and exchange of support and solidarity in times of need. Within this framework, diversity is an aspect of good neighbouring relations which contributes to the improvement of social cohesion in the area.

However, in the broader area, diversity does not seem to affect the inhabitants' egocentric networks. Personal networks are established amongst family members (broader or nuclear family), amongst people of the same political or environmental dispositions- active in local associations, or amongst people with children of the same age, while social bonds develop mainly amongst people of the same ethnic background. Participation in local associations or children's schooling and playing habits, are the main spaces where friendships emerge amongst neighbours. Nonetheless, feelings of insecurity by many Greeks, mainly with low cultural capital, evolve into hostile

attitudes, which create feelings of fear among the migrant population, who prefer to live their daily lives within the enclosed circuits of co-ethnic people. Such attitudes and reactions jeopardize social cohesion and interaction.

Finally, in the area Academia Platonos, there is hardly any relation between diversity and social mobility. As the country faces severe economic restructuring, the impact of austerity is shop foreclosures, wage and pensions cuts and increased levels of unemployment for both the Greek and the migrant population. Unemployment has mainly hit people with low educational capital and men, especially migrants. Those active in the labour market are either employed in routine occupations, especially migrant women, or in tertiary positions, mainly Greek men and women away from the neighborhood. There is strong evidence of downward social mobility, as many inhabitants indicated that they are unemployed and others that their economic abilities have diminished as the household income has shrunk significantly. Social mobility in the area seems to be related to the broader social networks, as job opportunities have diminished due to the crisis, whilst, as this case study bears witness, diversity seems to be irrelevant to social mobility.

A particularly distinct aspect of migrants' vulnerability is their stereotypical perception as responsible for increasing crime rates in Greece. EKKE's research has shown that to a large degree, the creation of myths and prejudice about the risk of crime associated to migrants' presence in Greece – as elsewhere in Europe – is attributed to the attention devoted to this issue by the mass media which, by focusing on selective cases, cultivate and reproduce the stereotype of the 'migrant criminal mind'. EKKE's findings support the view that relevant data constitute a transmission of Greek people's agonising fears and insecurity from the domain of the economy to the domain of social life.

Another myth is cultivated by the relentless exposure and descriptive analysis of available official quantitative data on the increasing intensity of migrant crime in the country. Findings of this kind constitute a second transfer of visible risks and dangers from 'us' to 'others', to 'migrants', to 'deviators'. A third fiction is cultivated by the inspiring power of the discourse of experts who often, without

sufficient empirical confirmation, transfer images of international recruitment as significantly applicable to the Greek case. A fourth myth identifies the justifications formally put forward for the need to establish an integrated conception of regulation and management of both migrant and refugee flows, adjusted to the country's dominant values and jurisprudence.

In the context of the above research studies we conclude the following:

- Migrants do not commit crimes differently, neither at an increasing rate than natives. They are more visible and therefore more prone to arrest. Their increasing crime rate is proportional to the increase of the migrant populations entering the country.
- Migrants also commit crimes - including wrongdoing as they are legally unprotected - in their effort to enter employment and stay in the country.
- Migrants are often victims of perpetrators of Greek, migrant and international organised crime networks.
- It is a common belief among criminals that high rates of offenses against property is an expression of feelings of social and economic injustice rather than a peculiar characteristic of a particular social category (migrants). The same holds true for the increasing attention to juvenile crime (domestic and foreign), of a generation that is largely excluded and hopeless.
- Migrant women, likewise, commit crimes differently, but not at an increasing rate than native women. Their criminality is based on their social role, largely imposed by social conditions and burdened by their most vulnerable social position.
- The case of a migrant person entering the country illegally should be treated in terms of victimization rather than in terms of criminal activity.

EKKE's research findings illustrate the need for more empirical investigation of both the crime phenomenon and the issue of migration, as well as quality assessments, in order to reach reliable conclusions. This is because criminality factors seem to relate to both structural and cultural parameters, in the same way and to the same

degree. The question of the social structure of the society of origin, as well as of the host society, and the question of the system of values held by individual social subjects - perpetrators and / or victims - need urgently to be addressed. The fears and insecurities of domestic and foreign nationals must be appeased. Specifically, on the issue of the crime rates of second-generation migrants, research indicates that the related debate has fallen into the trap of shifting the attention of both the Greek state and the European Union, increasingly to the younger generations. The intensity of attention itself may create rather, than address, social problems and situations. The very concept of generation seems to be put under a total theoretical and methodological reconsideration as an analytical category. Research has concluded that instead of adopting a dichotomy between domestic criminals and migrant criminals, a new way of classification is required which is not far from the classical view of crime and is based on dichotomies either conditional, subordinate or assimilative, or on the integration - exclusion divide, or even on life satisfaction, obedience or deviance from law-abiding behaviours of natives and migrants alike. In addition, research is pointing to the fact that much of the crime is committed because the circumstances allow it, by accidental or incidental factors. Therefore, this parameter must be taken into account, as well as the fact that the perpetrators are arrested not only because the law enforcement authorities are moving in the right direction, but also because the circumstances allow it.

3.3. Evaluation of recent policies and social practices on migrant integration. Persisting challenges and shortcomings

3.3.1. Key research findings on policy - making and implementation processes

Overall, the migration policy since the early 1990s failed to regulate migration effectively and continues to suffer from severe imbalances. Migrants from third-countries obtain, with difficulty, a permanent residence permit, despite their long-term residence in the country,

and second-generation migrants have limited access to Greek citizenship. Legal residence in the country is still associated with employment (despite a recent reduction in the number of insurance stamps required to obtain permission); as a result, fluctuations in the employment status can lead to the loss of the residence permit at any time. The crisis and high unemployment levels resulted to tens of thousands of previously regularized migrants losing their residence permits. Furthermore, Greek governments insist on a differentiated treatment of 'legal' and 'illegal' migrants on one hand, and Greek citizens and third country nationals on the other. At the same time, partly as a consequence of the implementation of the Dublin II Regulation, Greece has become responsible for examining the asylum applications of a growing number of migrants who have irregularly crossed its borders.

The continuous movement of refugees to Greece and Europe create the conditions of a humanitarian crisis that seems to render superfluous the questions of citizenship and belonging. However, a humanitarian crisis can more easily turn into a disaster, if those endangered are viewed as strangers that have (at best) to be protected, but must remain without political rights. Cities, as actual scenes where strangers engage in acts of citizenship, have always been places where belonging is invented, contested and renewed and where citizenship is enacted against existing articulations of power. It is primarily in cities where new acts of citizenship are invented, in order to empower the pariahs who risk once again to be expelled at the backstage. For this to happen, scenographies of common human political acts rather than of one-way philanthropic humanitarian acts are needed.

Migration has emerged as a decisive, highly complex area of public policy planning and practice. The globalization of the economy and labour market developments, new needs and prospects, are transforming Greece into a host country and a settlement destination for large numbers of migrants and refugees. As a result, significant structural changes are observed in the Greek economy and society.

- The extent and complexity of the characteristics of the migratory flows, the need to integrate migrants in the structure of the econ-

omy and their acceptance by society as a whole, call for a revision of the approach and analysis of the new social and economic realities that have been shaped. They also call for integrated public policies and strategic planning, at the national and regional level.

- Migration touches upon all the factors that determine the dynamics and prospects of the economy and society; therefore, priority should be given to regulating and managing policies that ensure that the potential of migrants is fulfilled. On the other hand, social exclusion is mitigated. It is therefore necessary to strengthen the administrative structures for a more effective migration management, in order to develop and implement comprehensive policy approaches at the national and local level.
- In this respect, migration policies emerge as a critical area for the relationship between society and the state. An area where the effectiveness of state policy and regulatory interventions are reflected in the development of an effective migration policy, aiming at regulating migration in a comprehensive manner. But also an area which is critical for social cohesion, social relations, social values, political choices and the mitigation of political and social conflicts.
- However, as the Greek case indicates, inadequate and inefficient planning, bureaucratic obstacles, lack of infrastructure and of a rational allocation of resources, complex legislation, inadequate and inefficient information systems, and deterioration of the quality of service provision, may have severe consequences on the effective implementation of policy designs. Policy implementation encounters significant problems at the central, regional and local administration levels; mostly problems relate to poor organization and malfunctioning, which make it difficult for migrants to be effectively welcomed and integrate in the Greek society.
- The problem of dealing with migration is not only of an organizational or functional nature. There is a dividing line for all the issues associated with the assessment of migration policies and the management of migrants. A polarized relationship is established that does not contribute to eradicating prejudice and negative attitudes and to creating a climate of trust between the adminis-

tration and this segment of the population. The general problem of credibility and effectiveness of the public administration, is thus further accentuated. As a result, critical problems are not addressed and the growth of social exclusion and the marginalization of broader social groups become an issue of concern.

- › The challenge for the public administration is to mainstream the issue of integrating migrants in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies in all relevant areas. This depends mainly on the political commitment of the top leadership. It also depends on the commitment of all stakeholders involved, that need to change behaviours and attitudes in order to support the integration of migrants.
- › Greek migration policy, from the early 1990s to the present, has been far from integrated, consistent and effective. Its contradictions caused serious gaps, malfunctions and inefficiencies, which the public services and agencies, the local authorities, as well as the non-governmental organizations involved, were called upon to address. Although the unregulated framework did not create the conditions for the harmonious cooperation between the above actors, public servants - sometimes collectively in one service, and sometimes individually and at their own initiative - were able to address the problems, though not always in the best possible and lawful way. Of course, this situation also left plenty of room for arbitrariness, discriminatory treatment of migrants and the development of xenophobic attitudes and behaviours.
- › Legalization programmes in the early 2000s reduced the intensity of such behaviours, while for documented migrants from third countries, contact with the state and its services - centralized and decentralized - became less traumatic. However, this relationship has always been extremely bureaucratic, time-consuming and complicated. In this context, NGOs have played a crucial role in welcoming and informing migrants, providing counselling, education and training and other integration services. At the same time, some communication and information networks between state and local government agencies, civil society organizations and migrants and their associations were restored. In the absence

of an appropriate institutional framework, these networks were mostly informal and thus vulnerable to any changes of public administration officials.

- › It should also be born in mind that, at the same time, the European Union has been reformulating its policy on third-country migrants, by establishing the *Common Basic Principles* and the *European Integration Fund* and by implementing many integration assistance programmes and other services. In this changing environment, the gap between the official Greek migration policy, legal and other institutional arrangements and their incorporation into administrative practice gradually widened, while problems continued to arise.
- › Surveys conducted from the late 2000s onwards, on government and local government officials, as well as on representatives of social actors and civil society organizations working with government agencies to implement migration policy and provide integration services, illustrate the existence of specific, persistent problems in the overall planning and implementation of migration policy, in the area of legislation, practice and efficiency of the public administration.
- › It has been almost a quarter of a century since Greece was transformed from a sending country to a migrant receiving one. During this time, an institutional and administrative framework was developed that was contradictory and ineffective. In order, however, to address the new realities of migrant populations in Greece, a stable and coherent migrant integration policy is required. That means *inter alia*, multilevel convergences in different state policies or public authorities and services, which are not at all easy, as EKKE's long-standing research shows.
- › Achieving the integration of migrants requires enhancing the provision of services at the local government level, by supporting actions and initiatives of the local authorities, as well as their staffing and networking with other levels of central administration. It also requires a unified information infrastructure, setting up a mechanism for keeping up-to-date information, and last but not least, funding of migrant integration policies from national sources, so that there is a continuity in integration policies and

not only actions that the EU decides to fund through the programmes that are being implemented.

- Finally, the political determination for a different approach to migration is a decisive factor for a successful integration. An approach that will not consist of “inaction” or “omission” policies –as it has been repeatedly emphasized in EKKE’s qualitative surveys– but that will involve the active inclusion of the principles of integration in the administrative practices. Only then will a coherent, unified, multifunctional and mutually acceptable organizational concept of integration be established, the convergence between policy goals and objectives with practices will be strengthened and a common organizational plan for the integration of third-country nationals in the Greek society will be developed.
- Compared to previous EKKE’s surveys, administration officials, while still reporting legislative gaps and ambiguities, seem to have formed a well-established and fairly clear concept of migrant integration. Indeed, this concept, based on EU policy, constitutes and operates as a common ground for communication among them, a forum for consultation and a measure for the evaluation and implementation of national migrant and integration policies.
- In particular, representatives of public administration that participated in an EKKE’s recent survey, when asked to assess the existing policies on migration and integration of migrants, insisted on the absence of a clear and solid legal framework for migration and migrant integration. This awareness creates a feeling of legal uncertainty for both migrants and public officials, burdening the relationship between them and with the Greek society as a whole. It has been argued that the gaps in migration policy are a political choice rather than a “technical” error or legislative failure. It is clear, however, that the legislative production of the 2000s, as well as the legalization programmes, have improved the situation, without fully responding to the problems. To this end and in order to address the complex migration phenomenon, a lot remains to be done.

A number of shortcomings have been identified in managing migration in Greece. These include:

- › The compartmentalisation of knowledge and policies. A large number of public agencies, government departments, bureaus and organisations are involved in the design and implementation of migration policies. However, only one fifth of these agencies provide services exclusively to migrants.
- › Most of the agencies provide legal services (documents, permits, etc.), information and communication services, health care services, while issues of residence receive the lowest attention.
- › Information and communication channels from one agency to another seem to operate to a large degree, as most front-desk employees (77%) provide information on services dispensed by other than their own agency. The competent public servants seem very well informed and are able to share information with migrants (77%). However, 32% admit that there are information gaps.
- › Claims are dealt with in most cases within a month, a parameter which has been improved during the past years. Most problems arise from the complicated migration policies and bureaucracy.
- › Informal practices have been developed in order to help migrants with their stay in the country. Only half of the agents responsible for dealing with migration issues have been trained to this end. Only half of the competent authorities believe that the services provided are compatible with migrants' needs. Most of the competent authorities believe that the services provided are incompatible with their agencies' administrative potential and capacity. This is true to a greater degree for local authorities' agencies personnel. The compliance of the services provided with European standards is minimal.

The actual implementation of migration policy presents a number of problems, deficiencies and inconsistencies. The consequences of the lack of coordination between agencies at the policy level can be summarized as follows:

- › The agencies launch different actions for the same issues, while at the same time important aspects of integration are disregarded. The lack of strategic action plans and of prioritization lead

to overlapping and ineffective policies. The political agenda lacks realism in tackling the migration question.

- At the level of human capital resources, certain issues of vital importance can be identified such as: lack of feedback information, lack of agencies networking, limited capacity of personnel. These result into gaps in the services provided and a lack of coordination among important stakeholders.
- The above problems can be alleviated by the adoption of best practices successfully implemented in other EU member states, suitably adjusted to meet the Greek particularities. EKKE has made proposals for the expansion and better organization of the “one stop shops”, the more efficient use of cultural brokers and cultural mediators and the implementation of Back-End Offices for the networking and coordination between all communication and information channels. We have also proposed to amend the structure of “one stop shops” so as to encompass in one single unit the coordination services with back-end and front-line approaches of all the related competences.

In short, in an era of a widespread shift towards the abuse of legal channels and document fraud in order to enter illegally the EU, which results into facilitators being able to operate remotely and inconspicuously, rather than accompanying migrants during high-risk activities such as illegal border crossing, the agencies dealing with the legal entrance, permits of stay and documentation rights should get more attention and operational funds, better programming and training and a bigger share of funding.

Greek migration policy is ineffective because it is not based on a serious assessment of “real data”, it does not regulate legal migration in realistic context and ignores the flow of migrants in the country. The legislative and institutional framework is ineffective because it provides for a system of legal migration which is inapplicable and which leads to the abuse of migrants’ rights. Greece’s migration policy does not aim at and does not invest in the integration of migrants into the country because it has not decided “if it really wants it”.

The central political leadership does not perceive the integration of migrants as a major national issue; as a result, it does not invest

the appropriate resources for its definitive management, but rather allocates them to address issues of a more practical nature that have an impact on the everyday life of the citizens. The political decision to fully integrate migrants would require a dynamic legalization process, social support, ensuring their residence status and combating their sense of temporality, in line with the concern to protect human rights and eliminate discrimination against migrants. The promotion of human rights, equal opportunities for all and non-discrimination are central to the integration process and therefore to the design and implementation of an effective migration policy.

3.3.2. Summary of research findings on the Greek migration and integration policy design and implementation

Policy framework

Traditionally, migration policies, both in sending and receiving countries, have been based on economic considerations, in order to obtain surplus value, and are little pre-occupied with safeguarding the human rights of migrants. The low priority given to human rights in the design of migration policies is reflected in their structure that focuses exclusively on controlling migration flows and on developing the economy. Migrants, and especially irregular migrants, are particularly vulnerable to violations of their rights. They often experience multiple discrimination and exclusions in every sphere of their lives, from access to work, health care and social services, to participation in public life and decision-making processes.

In Greece, the issue of migration is closely linked to a number of critical issues of national identity and acceptance of diversity, while in the traditional Greek perception, universal values such as equality and human rights that should apply equally to all, are perceived in a national context and are mediated through a national culture. As a result, rights are seen as indigenous privileges, and migration is viewed as a threat, socially linked to public order and national security. Moreover, there is a strong reluctance to recognise migrants' rights, both at the level of political planning and public administra-

tion, as well as within the national society. In Greece, migrants have no political rights; deprived of basic mechanisms to exert pressure and negotiate with political leadership, they thus have limited social rights, in terms of institutional discrimination between 'national' and 'foreign' populations, while the economic rights that are recognised are enforced on extremely unequal terms.

Based on research findings, we can assert that the country's current legislative and institutional framework for migration policy fails to guarantee adequate levels of protection of migrants' rights. Migrants suffer violations stemming not only from the state's failure to comply with international law and institutional human rights texts, but mostly from its reluctance to ensure that migrants' rights are taken into consideration in state institutions' practices, by exercising effective control and introducing accountability mechanisms. It follows that the protection of rights is problematic; the same holds true with regard to migrants' dealings with the Greek state and public administration.

Research has shown that an integrated migration policy, as a set of measures and social practices that regulate and control the entry and stay of foreigners and of the already settled migrant populations, in association with integration policies, does not exist in Greece. There are only fragmentary, ad-hoc and 'seasonal' arrangements, which are characterized as a "panic response to the migrant influx", as well as "a mixture of indifference and nationalism". A key policy priority is the regulation of the legal status of migrants on terms of restriction, exclusion, policing and control. As a result, the debate on the rights of migrants in Greece is mostly carried out from the perspective of unauthorised migration and not with a view to protect the fundamental freedoms that every human being has the right to exercise; a 'grey zone' of insecurity, obedience and migrant discipline is thus maintained.

As research shows, the country's migration policy is limited to the ex-post legalization of unauthorised migrants, which, due to the rigid procedures and stringent conditions attached, is far from successful. Migration policy in Greece is a 'survival strategy' rather than an evidence-based choice to manage the increasing influx of migrants into the country. Issues such as the integration of migrants,

social racism and the fight against discrimination are not rated high on the scale of the Greek public's priorities. As a result, the migration policy is designed and implemented bearing in mind the 'political cost' and the need to accommodate political considerations; migration arrangements thus address the balance of interests that shape national policy. Within this framework, migrants and the administration are nothing more than lobbying groups, among many other powerful agents, such as the church and employers, to mention just a few. Because of the predominance of these traditionally established clientelist pressure groups, migrants' fair participation in the country's social and political life is not guaranteed, while their financial participation is often achieved on terms of discrimination and inequality.

Although Greek migration policy and legislation declare as their goal the integration of migrants, in practice they prevent it, as their tacit aim is to ensure a relationship of distance with migrants. The legalization system is considered rigid, bureaucratic and unfriendly to the migrant; it is a system that, through extremely harsh procedures, imposes particularly severe restrictions on the legalization process, leading to exclusion rather than integration. Migrants' legalization is treated as a temporary phenomenon. The general attitude is to deter; as a consequence, all legislative measures are implicitly directed by the concern of keeping migrants temporarily in the country. Research has also shown that migrants' integration is only being announced and introduced as a policy, in order to comply with the EU policy obligations.

In short, research results indicate that migrants' integration cannot be achieved without providing a framework of stability for the migrants. What is institutionally required is that "everyone feels that there is regularity and something steady to go on". In particular, the establishment of long-term residence permits is a prerequisite for the enjoyment of rights to health care, work, housing and education. The excessive rigour and rigidity of the regulations provided for by Greek migration law, coupled with the institutional problems in the legalization and residence permit process, undermine the notion of integration, prompting migrants to choose to remain "illegal" and 'ghettoizing' an important segment of the population. As a result,

migration laws are often not enforced, but remain in force for deterrence purposes.

Reception System and Support Networks

Research has shown that there is no public reception system for migrants in the country “unless we call detention as reception”. There is a lack of infrastructure, organization, staff and willpower. The reception is not properly regulated and is organized on an *ad hoc* basis; it is restrictive and selective, depending on the point of entry and the service or public servant with whom the first contact of the migrant is made. Furthermore, there is no clear and defined competence of the receiving organizations, so assisting migrants is left to the goodwill and “patriotism” of state employees and to local communities that host migrants. In fact, as research shows, the state has set up a system of “non-reception”, in order to contain the current and deter future migration flows.

Research also suggests that there is a large deficit in information mechanisms that could provide assistance and guidance to the migrants, with direct consequences on the protection of their rights. It is estimated that the second biggest problem after legalization is the lack of information. There are only a few points of dissemination of information by the Greek government and the information disseminated is not always clear or fully reliable. As there is no effective reception system for migrants and no public service guidance mechanisms, the alternative for migrants is to resort to informal information and assistance networks, which are often people smugglers’ networks, and to illegal mechanisms addressing migrants’ needs.

Finally, it is estimated that in the absence of an effective state reception mechanism, migrants are not informed of their rights, or of the legal residence procedures in force, and any efforts made are largely voluntary. In short, as a result of the huge deficit in information, legal support and social assistance for migrants, the majority of the country’s migrant population is kept in a state of semi-legality, insecurity and ignorance of its rights.

Compliance with international human rights standards

Concerning the compliance of the national legal framework with international human rights standards, research has shown that, so far, it falls short of incorporating the international and European guidelines and has serious implementation problems. The major problem lies in the implementation and interpretation of laws by the administration and in the absence of effective accountability and control mechanisms. As a result, huge deficits in the protection of migrants' rights emerge, not only within the administration and administrative practice, but throughout the Greek society, leading to a dichotomy of rights, depending on the nationality and country of origin. This, in turn, generates a vicious circle of inadequate protection of rights; the public administration is not 'obliged' to comply with the legal rules, since it does not upset a 'public sense of law'. The legal framework in Greece only partially ensures that the country complies with international human rights standards; many gaps and ambiguities still persist.

According to research data, human rights violations are recorded within the framework of both legal and irregular migration. However, survey results show that there is a close link between the legal status of the migrant and the extent to which his/her rights are violated, with many more violations occurring in relation to irregular migrants. Indicative examples show the failure of the state to provide adequate protection from human rights violations in relation to: the treatment of asylum seekers and refugees by the police and asylum authorities; the protection of victims of human trafficking; the right to life and personal integrity; the right to health, education and employment; the administrative detention and deportation of non-unaccompanied minors; the conditions prevailing in detention centers and police stations; the mistreatment of migrants during their arrest and detention by security officers.

As mentioned earlier, the current legal and institutional framework does not sufficiently guarantee migrants' rights, as it does not address the practices that lead to the violation of human rights and does not protect against discrimination. The very process of legalization itself is characterized as "an open wound of violations", be-

cause of its inability to secure the legality of the entry and residence of migrants on realistic terms. Migration irregularities are considered as “crimes” and irregular migrants are often treated harshly, they are arrested and detained until deportation without being individually examined, while quite often vulnerable groups such as minors and women are held in inhumane conditions, due to the lack of infrastructure that ensures respect for human rights. Furthermore, access to interpreters, cultural mediators and lawyers, or the right to be informed on the reason of detention and to appeal, are not guaranteed.

In short, while the institutional and legal framework for migrant protection is in place, in practice the rights of migrants are violated. The main problem is not the absence of law but the inability of the administration to enforce it. Violation of migrants’ human rights are the result of, on one hand, the inadequacy of the existing legal framework, which fails to fully comply with international standards on the protection of migrant and non-migrant rights, and on the other, of the reluctance of the administration to effectively implement national and international legislation that guarantees the individual, social, economic and cultural rights of migrants and refugees.

Claim and Legal Protection of Rights

Research indicates that the difficulties encountered over time by regular migrants to maintain their legal status, as well as the de-legalization and non-restoration of legal status on a case-by-case basis, compounded by the frequent discriminatory treatment of migrants by the judiciary, make the public system of human rights protection virtually inaccessible and not operational. Of particular importance are: the inability of the administration to secure access to restitution mechanisms; the inability of legal protection institutions to operate effectively and timely; and the lack of effective control and accountability mechanisms, combined with the absence of sanctions. According to survey data, allegations of rights’ violations relate mainly to the legality of entry and residence of migrants and concern incidents of misinformation, lack or refusal of information, administrative omissions and practices, maladministration and bureaucracy, abuse of power

by public officials, abuse by security forces (police, coast and border guards), the misconduct of officers and the overall reluctance of the public administration to listen to and resolve migrants' problems.

In short, research data suggest that the legal and institutional frameworks do not effectively ensure compliance by the state institutions with the rule of law and the protection of migrants' rights. In general, there is a sense of impunity for public officials, that leads to serious deficiencies in the protection of rights, as well as a lack of independent procedures and mechanisms for investigating complaints and imposing sanctions. The responsibility of the state, however, extends to its obligation to punish those responsible for the violations, while providing effective remedies to migrants. To date, human rights structures remain ineffective and inaccessible to migrants, while existing control mechanisms need to become more effective and independent.

Human rights are key to the migration process. States must ensure that their migration and asylum policies, as well as their domestic law and practice, are in line with the principles of international human rights law. This requires striking a balance between the State's sovereign right to define migration policy, and the respect for and protection of the rights and fundamental freedoms of all persons in its territory, irrespective of their ethnic origin or legal status. To date, state migration policies have failed to ensure the respect of migrants' rights. The securitization of migration policies and the tendency to view migration solely as a matter of state sovereignty pose a serious threat to migrant's rights. Fear politics feeds upon a whirlwind of human rights abuses, in which no rights are inviolable and no human is safe.

Research findings indicate that the Greek state has so far failed to elaborate and ensure the implementation of an effective migration policy framework that is oriented towards the respect and protection of human rights. Greek migration policy and the legal framework are aimed at, but in practice preventing, the integration of migrants. The problem is political, and so is the solution. The state must commit itself to promote the implementation of international human rights standards and seek to integrate migrants in the country's social fabric, through targeted policies and concrete measures. Human rights

management of migrant flows must be integrated into all national policies, at all levels and in all measures and actions adopted.

The integration of migrants requires respect for the principles of freedom, democracy, equal treatment, human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law. The acquisition of rights such as access to education, healthcare and work, access to social security and welfare services, freedom of expression and religious freedom, civil rights and equal social participation, are integral to any integration process. The contribution of civil society to the protection of migrants' rights, although growing, fails to meet the increased needs of the country's migrant population and cannot substitute the state's international obligations. It is the state's responsibility to develop and implement an effective and real-time migrant integration policy which will ensure the social coherence of the Greek society. A human rights-oriented management can greatly contribute to this end.

Handling public perceptions towards migrants

Research has shown that there is a widespread perception that the inefficiency and inadequacy of the migration policy and its implementation process adversely affect the way in which migrants in Greece are treated by the public administration and society at large. As noted above, the influence between society and politics is bi-directional. Politics sends the message that migrants are not equal with the Greek citizens, as holders of inviolable rights and freedoms. As a result, a large part of the society is prejudiced against migrants, treats them very cautiously and with disdain, while fear among citizens undermines respect for human dignity, freedom, equality and the rule of law.

Drawing on research results, the problems arising between public services and migrants include, in a hierarchical order, the institutional framework regarding migration, the bureaucracy and the attitudes and perceptions of civil servants. In particular, within the public administration, there is a widespread cautiousness, depreciation and prejudice against migrants, reflected in behaviours of deterrence, rejection and racism on the part of public officials.

This hostile behaviour by the administration has a negative impact on society, since it conveys the message that migrants constitute a “problem”. In these conditions, the process of effective integration of migrants is hindered, while migrants are negatively affected in how they perceive the Greek state and society. Migrants feel that they are only provisionally “tolerated” in the country, and as a result, they too develop the corresponding feelings, dislikes and “mutual hatreds”. There is a resentment that is difficult to manage, especially among the second generation of migrants.

Research findings also indicate that the public administration reacts “emotionally” and is “ideologically prejudiced”. Moreover, owing to the lack of clarity of the legislative and institutional framework, the margin for arbitrariness among public officials is widening, while the administrative experience gained is not capitalized for the future, due to the discriminatory treatment of migrants.

Nevertheless, the positive contribution of migrants to the economic and social development of the Member States, as well as their contribution as carriers of cultural diversity, has been repeatedly emphasized within the European Union.²⁹ Given the demographic aging of the European continent, the prolongation of life expectancy and the gradual contraction of the working-age population, it is recognized that migrants contribute to the demographic and economic development of the Member States, by increasing both the overall population and the working-age population. As a result, the issue of the effective integration of migrants in the EU is one of the focal points in the public debate within the European institutions, on issues of diversity, equality and respect for human rights.

As part of the EU’s policy on enhancing migrant integration, a number of important studies, surveys and reference documents have been prepared, and a series of actions and programmes for integration have been carried out, with a view to encouraging the full participation of migrants in every aspect of daily life in local communities, their non-discriminatory access to fundamental rights, goods and services, the fight against racist attitudes and behaviours

29. European Agenda for the Integration of Third-Country Nationals, European Commission, COM (2011) 455 final, 20/7/2011.

and the mainstreaming of the migration perspective in all public, national and European policies. Integration is a bottom-up process linked to initiatives related to migrants' access to work, education and training, language learning and the fight against discrimination. To this end, measures focus on:

- establishing an integrated legal framework promoting equal treatment and protecting human rights
- implementing concrete actions and measures to promote equality and combat discrimination, in order to tackle social and institutional racism against migrants
- encouraging mutual respect for the culture, traditions and values of both migrants and the host society
- facilitating migrants' access to the labour market, by recognizing their work skills and past experience, training or retraining them, or enhancing their entrepreneurship
- facilitating migrants' access to education and training, by establishing supportive language and host language learning programmes
- facilitating migrants' access to healthcare, social welfare and support structures
- facilitating migrants' access to decent housing and living conditions
- enhancing the political participation of migrants, through the provision of voting rights at the local level, and the strengthening of the representation of migrants in collective bodies and enhancing the participation of migrant communities in developing and implementing integration policies
- supporting local authorities, in order to promote interaction between native and migrant populations and avoid urban segregation of migrants in degraded neighbourhoods
- assisting countries of origin in the integration process, by supporting migrants prior to their departure, during their stay in the host country and in preparing for their temporary or permanent return to their countries.

As emphasized in all of the above initiatives, integration is a dynamic, two-way process of mutual adaptation,³⁰ whose main focus is on the host society's commitment to welcoming migrants, respecting their rights and culture and informing them about their obligations, but also on the willingness of migrants themselves to integrate and respect the rules and values of the host society. However, based on these principles, as a number of reports, studies and surveys reveal, it appears that the reality of hosting societies and migrants is not always in line with these institutional goals. Host societies have displayed racist attitudes and behaviours towards migrants, which vary only in their degree of intensity, and migrants themselves remain institutionally and socially excluded, without any means or prospect of decent living and equal treatment. To date, the goals of integration for migrants remain unfulfilled. The following part presents some of the key research findings of recent years, at the EU and national level, especially those concerning Greece.

The pilot study of the Statistical Office of the European Union has attempted to map the economic and social situation of migrants in relation to the entire EU population and to create common integration indicators in the key areas of employment, education, social inclusion and active citizenship.³¹ In these areas, the indicators examined record significant deficits in employment, educational, economic, social and political integration of migrants, which are even wider when it comes to migrant women or older migrants. Among the most important findings of the study are:

- extremely high unemployment rates of the migrant population
- low labour market participation of women migrants
- extreme differences in the rates of self-employed migrants and the EU total population
- high rate of mismatch between qualifications and work done by migrants

30. Common Basic Principles on Integration of Immigrants in the EU (Council Document 14615/04)

31. Eurostat, Methodologies and Working Papers, *Indicators of Immigrant Integration, A Pilot Study*, Eurostat (2011), European Commission

- educational deficit of migrants, low school performance and high rates of school drop-out
- huge income differences between the migrant and the EU total population
- high rates of migrants at risk of poverty or social exclusion
- only a small number of migrants have acquired the nationality of the host state or long-stay permits.

The findings of the above study undoubtedly illustrate the existence of strong inequalities and gaps between the migrant and the EU population as a whole. In addition, research results of a Eurobarometer Survey on Migrant Integration³² which addressed separately both the general public and migrants, show that the general public considers as major obstacles to the integration of migrants the lack of their desire to integrate, resulting in their isolation and segregation to their ethnic communities and ghettos, coupled with a lack of knowledge of the host country's language. On the other hand, migrants consider as major obstacles to their integration the lack of language skills, cultural and religious differences between them and the host societies, as well as stereotypes, negative attitudes and the lack of understanding on the part of the native population.

Research shows that in many countries, migrants are not welcome in the host societies, with the degree of rejection growing over time, either because of the increasing flows of migrants, or because of the economic crisis and rising unemployment in the host societies. Key parameters identified by survey participants as constituting poor reception of migrants in the host societies, relate to: discrimination in employment and housing, poor living conditions, inadequate social integration policies, a dismissive public discourse, the difficulty of access to public services and bureaucracy, the discriminatory treatment on behalf of the state authorities and, in particular the police, the stereotypes and negative attitudes against migrants, racist attitudes including verbal insults, the increase of right-wing parties and the moving out of locals from areas where migrants reside.

32. Qualitative Eurobarometer, *Migrant Integration Report*, spring 2011, European Commission

With regard to Greece, these findings are also confirmed by the results of the European Social Survey (ESS),³³ according to which in 2009 the Greek society shows particularly high rates of rejection of migrants. Specifically, Greek citizens believe that only a few (46.6%) migrants or none (13.5%) should be allowed to enter and stay in the country, even if they belong to the same race or are Greeks staying abroad. The overall rejection rate (60.1%) is high, with the respective rates in previous rounds reaching 68.1% in 2003 and 66.1% in 2005. In addition, eight out of ten (83%) Greeks do not accept the entry and residence in the country of migrants who belong to a different race or ethnic group. The rate of rejection of migrants (83% overall, of which 54.5% ask for only a few and 28.5% ask for no one to enter) is significantly higher (almost double) than the European average (48.4%), with similarly high levels of Greek rejection in 2003 (82.7%) and 2005 (79.8%). Rejection rates for migrants increase even more when migrants come from poorer countries. The vast majority (83.8%) of Greeks believe that Greece should allow only a few (49.6%) or none (34.2%) poor migrants to enter and stay in the country. Greece has extremely high rejection rates compared to all European countries (the average European rejection rate is 51.4%, with 34.1% requesting a few and 17.3% requesting no one to enter). Comparing the results with those of previous ESS rounds, it is found that Greeks' rejective attitudes were at relatively high levels both in 2003 (82.6%) and in 2005 (79.8%).

Furthermore, one in two Greeks (51.7%) believes that the presence of migrants is harming the country's economy. In this case as well, the Greek insecurity in relation to the impact of migrants on the national economy is higher than the European average, which is limited to 26.2%. Comparing the results of 2009 with those of previous ESS rounds, the Greek percentages are high both in 2003 (48.4%) and in 2005 (47.6%), while the European percentages are significantly lower (24.3% in 2003 and 29.1% in 2005). In addition, one in two Greeks (50.4%) feels that the country's cultural life (cohesion and homogeneity) is "threatened" by migrants, in the sense

33. European Social Survey: 4th wave 2008/2009, 2nd wave 2004/2005, 1st wave 2002/2003, European Social Survey Data, Rounds 1- 4. Available at: <https://www.europeansocialsurvey.org/>

that it is being degraded by people who come to live in Greece. In this case too, the Greek insecurity rate is higher (twice as high) than the European average, which is limited to 21%. Finally, according to ESS results, Greek citizens (53.5%), unlike most European citizens, believe that the arrival of migrants in the country makes it a worse place to live. In this case too, the Greek insecurity rate is higher than the European average, which is 24.9%.

As reflected in the above findings, the majority of Greek citizens consider that the entry and presence of migrants in the country constitutes a continuous “threat” to the citizens and the quality of life in Greece. Research data highlights the issue of racist attitudes towards migrants as a major political, social and cultural problem. It seems that the rapid increase in the number of migrants in Greece in recent years has activated defensive reflection mechanisms related to national identity and the particularities of the Greek political culture. At the same time, the intensity of the country’s political and social problems, mainly related to the economy and the labour market, has incited a general sense of fear, insecurity and personal or collective threat from migrants. Within this xenophobic environment, the majority of migrants experience multiple discrimination and exclusion. However, promoting equality and combating discrimination is a fundamental step in the integration process.

According to Eurobarometer surveys,³⁴ discrimination on the grounds of nationality is the most commonly reported form of discrimination within the European Union. These findings are also confirmed by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) survey about discrimination based on ethnic or racial origin,³⁵ which focuses on the perceptions and experiences of migrants, members of ethnic minorities and persons belonging to the majority of the EU population. Key findings include the following:

34. Discrimination in the EU in 2009: (Special Eurobarometer 317, Fieldwork May-June 2009), Discrimination in 2008: (Special Eurobarometer 296, Fieldwork February-March 2008), Discrimination in the EU in 2006: (Special Eurobarometer 263, Fieldwork June-July 2006), http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ebs/

35. *European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey (EU-MIDIS), Main Results Report*, 2009, European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, <http://fra.europa.eu/eu-midis>

- widespread perception and experience of discrimination and victimization, based on ethnic or racial origin in key areas of daily life and in particular in the areas of work and education
- widespread practice of discrimination by police, on the basis of ethnic or racial origin
- lack of awareness by vulnerable groups of their rights and related legislation
- lack of awareness of victims of racial discrimination and racist crime as to which competent authorities they can address
- reluctance of the overwhelming majority of victims to report cases of racial discrimination or racist violence against them and difficulty of accessing justice
- failure of official criminal justice data collection mechanisms to record incidents of racial discrimination and racist crime
- lack of reliable data on the extent of discrimination and racist violence and the need to establish effective 'bottom-up' mechanisms for recording relevant incidents.

As regards Greece, similar problems of discrimination towards migrants are reported in all spheres of their public and private, economic, social, political and cultural life. At the same time, the national legal framework for the implementation of equal treatment and the fight against discrimination presents serious shortcomings in its range and effectiveness. In particular, according to the results of an EKKE survey on female migration in Greece,³⁶ significant deficits are found in key areas of law, employment, education, health, housing and justice, which often result in direct or indirect discrimination on the ground of ethnic origin and which impede the social integration of migrants. More specifically, the survey reports discrimination against migrants and migrant women in particular, in the following areas:

- legal guarantees to the right to legal residence and work in the country. The right to legal residence is considered a holistic

36. Tsiganou, J. and Maratou – Alipranti, L. (eds) (2014). *Female immigration in Greece: A roadmap of social integration policies*. Athens: EKKE.

right, since it constitutes the basis for migrants to exercise other basic labour and social rights

- access to decent and fair employment. In particular, questions are raised regarding the respect of migrants' labour rights, their working conditions, the level of pay, their social security, the recognition of academic qualifications and professional skills acquired in the country of origin and the presence of effective control mechanisms for the implementation of labour legislation
- access of migrants and their children to education and training. Discrimination is reported with regard to access of migrant children to school and the response of the educational system to the particular needs of this vulnerable group (e.g. lack of introductory and language learning courses, lack of support structures for the education, training or retraining of the migrant population)
- access to the democratic process and the involvement of migrants in the design of public policies concerning them. Issues raised include, inter alia, the participation of migrants in elections and local, regional and national advisory bodies, as well as the participation of migrant associations and communities in public consultation and decision-making
- access to healthcare and social welfare. A major problem identified with public healthcare and welfare structures is the lack of special training of the professionals who come into contact with the migrants and the lack of interpreters and cultural mediators who can ensure communication with the migrant populations
- access to decent housing and segregation of migrants in degraded neighbourhoods with a high concentration of poverty and the creation of ethnic ghettos, which prevent the coexistence of different populations and increase the risk of antisocial behaviour or organized (racist) crimes
- access to justice and judicial mechanisms. As noted previously, the Greek judicial system is complicated and ineffective (e.g. excessive delays in the delivery of criminal justice, difficulty in accessing judicial protection, etc.), with court officials

often unaware of migration issues or non-responsive to the needs of the migrant population

- access to public services and offensive behaviour on the part of public servants. Public services are often racially prejudiced, while deficits in the information, education, professionalism and knowledge of public servants can create conditions for discriminatory practices and racist violence against migrants.

In conclusion, the research data summarized above, confirm that the current integration policies do not handle migration issues on terms of equality, human dignity and respect for fundamental rights. Furthermore, as it is reported, the violations of migrants' rights and discrimination regarding their access to basic political, economic and social rights, are often associated to the lack of an effective legislative and institutional framework to combat discrimination, as well as to the inability of the state to wipe out negative stereotypes that prevail in large sections of the host society. The data highlight an endemic xenophobic tendency within the European and Greek societies, which could, in the current economic and political turmoil, lead to a violent degradation of European values and social life. For this reason, policies aimed at the social integration of migrants must, in principle, include and address society itself, they must be designed with a view of ensuring its multicultural cohesion and must be implemented bottom-up, with the participation of both natives and migrants.

Combating vulnerability and discrimination at the local level

Research has shown that the 'absence' of the state is compensated for by the local level, by solidarity initiatives and structures. This can provide policy makers with ideas on how to encourage the social restructuring of the crisis-stricken country. The enforcement of local bottom-up solidarity initiatives can facilitate the government to design and implement social programmes, thus reducing the cost of a project elaborated from the top. Within this framework, the narrowing of the social distance that exists amongst various groups that live in the centre of Athens can reinforce the positive aspects of a di-

versified and bursting city. Moreover, such an approach could counterbalance the despair and the distrust towards local policy makers.

As “employment creation” was put forward as the main objective of policy design, policy makers and city planners should focus on the creation of working environments and employment opportunities, especially for the most under-privileged groups. Diversity can become an important economic asset of the city centre of Athens; the promotion of each culture can introduce diverse dynamics in the local economy. As many migrants become unemployed due to the crisis, policy makers should think about promoting incentives which focus on the economic and cultural creativity of each group. However, economic incentives should be given to the Greek population as well, in order to avoid creating social tensions amongst the various groups.

Although diversity is not the main driving force in determining everyday life in the cities, it is important in the formation of social capital, at least at the neighborhood level. In the context of the current crisis, and the ways in which people organize their everyday practices, diversity can be interpreted as a threshold for social bridging, solidarity and self-sustaining practices. As such, the notion of diversity should be better encompassed and embraced in the future urban practices of city planning.

Inequalities are also a matter of politics. Corrupt politicians and administration officers are blamed for the abandonment of “our” area to “migrant invaders” and the loss of “our” previous status. At first, inequalities are politicized in the quite banal form of ‘those in power (at different levels, from the local to the supra-national) conspiring against “us” who have no power’. But then, the degradation of “our” way of life calls for collective action. Moreover, the struggle against degradation exposes those that, while of Greek origin, do not belong here. Interestingly enough, politicians as well as anti-racists cannot understand the aggravation of inequalities, because they are not affected by them. In terms of space, the collective action is meant to solve the immediate problem of migrants’ over-concentration in a given area and at the same time to set an example for the national community. In terms of time, the urgent character of “our” losses calls for an urgent response.

3.3.3. *Assessing the effectiveness of integration policies and public administration's involvement in the integration process*

EKKE's research on the effectiveness of integration policies and their implementation by the public bodies involved in the migration process shows that the problems in the relationship between public services and migrants were further exacerbated by the prevailing institutional framework on migration and bureaucracy, as well as by the mentality and attitudes of public servants. With regard to the effectiveness of integration policies and implementing bodies, research has pointed out the following:

Aspects of social inclusion

Legal status

The legality of residence of a migrant is an essential prerequisite for a smooth integration in the host society. As pointed out, "legal integration is a holistic right, as it forms the basis for the right to exercise other basic labour and social rights". Important parameters of the process of acquiring and maintaining the legal status of migrants include the following:

- Issuance and renewal of residence and work permits.
- De-legalization and restitution/ return to legality.
- The acquisition of Greek citizenship.

In Greece, the intensity of the migration phenomenon and the lack of a clear migration policy are reflected in the inadequacy of the legislative framework and, in particular, in the inability to implement the legal provisions regarding legal and illegal migration. Legislation, although explicitly aimed at the social integration of migrants, lays down conditions for legal residence and work that are hard to fulfil and have a deterrent effect. As a result, there are significant deficits in terms of legalization, de-legalization/deprivation of legal status and restitution/reinstatement to legality. Such deficits result from:

- (a) The continuous revision of policies regarding the legal integration of migrants, which confuses both migrants and the officials called upon to apply them;
- (b) The under-staffing and lack of expertise of the personnel dealing with migrant issues, leading to significant delays in handling cases.
- (c) The transfer of responsibilities from the local to the central level and changes in the implementation of residence permits policies. These reversals cancel the experience previously gained and create problems for both the public services and the migrants themselves.
- (d) The ineffective or non-existent cooperation between the competent services at the different levels of integration governance (Ministry, Municipalities, Social Security Funds, etc.).

Among the most important problems identified are: the stringency and rigidity of the legislation regarding the conditions for granting and renewing a residence permit; the lack of a permanent restitution mechanism; the rigidity of work permit legislation and the association of the legal status with the possibility to work; the absence of autonomous rights of migrant women independent from the legal status of the spouse; the need to reform certain institutions of family law; the rigid terms and conditions for family reunification and the difficulty of legalization on humanitarian grounds, as well as the ‘omission’ of the law to grant irregular migrants access to basic public goods and services, a situation which is bypassed “informally” by developing inter-personal relationships within the institutions. Another important issue raised is the lack of gender mainstreaming and the fact that problems faced by migrant women are not taken into account in the residence permit process.

If legal residence is the first step towards social inclusion, acquisition of citizenship can be considered as the successful conclusion of the social inclusion process. Thus, the acquisition of citizenship by migrants who have established permanent links with the country is an important parameter of their legal integration index. With regard to this issue, the problems highlighted by research include the complexity of the procedure envisaged and the inability of the

Greek public administration to respond promptly and effectively to its management, as well as to the restrictive naturalization policy which has been applied by the Greek state over time.

Fight against discrimination

An important aspect of the integration process is the promotion of equality and the fight against discrimination. According to the *Common Basic Principles* of the European Union's migrant integration policy, "migrants' access to bodies, as well as to public and private goods and services, on an equal footing with the citizens of the Member States and without discrimination, is vital for better integration" (EU Council 2004). In Greece, migrants - and especially migrant women - often suffer from multiple, direct and indirect, discrimination on the grounds of their ethnic origin, in all spheres of their public and private, economic, social, political and cultural life. Migrant women in particular are subject to multiple discrimination on the grounds of gender, social status and ethnicity, while they also suffer from racism, poverty, difficulties in accessing education, work, welfare and housing.

The following parameters of discrimination have been recognised as important:

- institutional and social racism in key areas of daily life
- inability of the national legislative and institutional framework to ensure equal treatment and the fight against discrimination
- lack of awareness of rights and lack of information on the principles that can be applied to victims of racial discrimination
- reluctance of the majority of victims to report cases of racial discrimination against them
- rise of racism and tolerance of racist violence by the official state.

Everyday discrimination is further accentuated by the fact that discrimination against migrants, as well as their racial victimization, is embraced by a large section of the Greek society, as well as

of the Greek public administration. As it is noted: “There is a serious issue of racist behaviour of public servants towards migrants. As isolated as they may be, the state is responsible for these behaviours because it fails to train, inform and sensitize public servants who are supposed to communicate with migrants in order to help them resolve their problems”. At the same time, the national legislative framework on equal treatment and the fight against discrimination presents serious weaknesses in its scope and effectiveness.

Research data also indicate that migrants often ignore their rights and how to exercise them. Furthermore, victims of racial discrimination and racist crime are not sufficiently informed about the competent authorities whom they can address, while, quite often, they decide not to appeal because they believe that nothing will change in the event of a complaint. For the above reasons, emphasis should be placed on the need to carry out information campaigns for victims and potential victims of violation of fundamental rights, alongside with awareness raising campaigns in the host society. Data also underline the need for horizontal interventions to promote equality and combat discrimination across the full range of public policies.

Labour market integration

Access to employment is one of key indicators of migrants’ integration in the host countries, as it directly relates to most of the other areas of integration and ensures access to social rights, education, healthcare services and social security. Key parameters of labour market integration of migrants, include the following:

- Issuance and renewal of a work permit
- Access to the labour market
- Access to state support services
- Labour rights

The policies of managing labour flows from third countries implemented so far by the Greek state, seem to reinforce illegal economic migration, to encourage undeclared work, and to ultimately hinder the process of integration of migrants, owing to the association of declared employment with the right of residence in

the country. The administrative requirements laid down by law for the legalization of economic migrants' employment in Greece are so stringent and complex that instead of facilitating, they end up deterring legalization. The policy of linking the residence permit to social security stamps as a prerequisite for migrants' access to rights is not only ineffective, but leads to the de-legalization of migrants' status and to undeclared work. As a result, as survey data have pointed out, a large part of the migrant population in Greece is or has become illegal, thus holding back its professional and social integration in the Greek society. This finding is increasingly true for migrant women who work mainly as domestic staff - often without a residence and work permit - and who, without the guarantees of the legal status, are particularly vulnerable to physical, mental and sexual abuse.

Regarding migrants' access to the labour market, the most important issues raised are the recognition of work skills and qualifications acquired in their countries of origin, and their access to supportive public services (vocational training, re-training, lifelong learning, learning the host language). Recognition of migrants' qualifications and previous experience is a key element in accessing the labour market and achieving their social integration. Vocational training programmes and Greek language courses in particular, are recognized by public sector representatives as key factors for job integration. At the same time, the issue of encouraging the entrepreneurship of long-settled migrants has been raised as an alternative way of migrant integration and financial participation, that also contributes to the development of the local labour market.

The most important gaps in migrants' employment integration are identified in the area of labour rights. Uninsured work and poor working conditions for migrant workers are the most pressing problems. As research has pointed out, the work of women migrants is almost entirely uninsured, and in the present financial crisis, migrants easily fall victims of labour exploitation. The question of the working conditions of migrant workers who work as housekeepers or in the cleaning and catering sector, which have been characterized as particularly problematic in terms of social security and low pay, has been repeatedly raised.

Another problem identified by research concerns the extremely low rate of unionisation amongst migrant workers and their non-representation by trade unions and other collective associations in defending their rights. It has also been pointed out that migrants - and especially migrant women - do not report labour law violations, even if they have legal status. This finding raises the issue of the absence of effective labour control mechanisms, as well as the issue of access to justice for migrants.

Access to education

The educational competence, language skills and vocational training of migrants and their descendants are considered as the cornerstones of the integration process. Improving the educational and language skills levels of migrants would help strengthen their independence, encourage their socialization and improve their employment opportunities and access to the labour market.

As parameters of integration, survey data recognize:

- The acquisition of language skills
- Equal access for the children of migrants to all levels of education
- Provisions in the educational system which address different educational needs of children with a migrant background.

Acquiring language skills is a priority for participating in the social life and social integration in the host country. As pointed out, everything in education starts and ends with language competence. Language competence is the first element of culture and a key tool for integration and equality. However, research findings point out that as far as programmes for the reception and support of migrants and their children are concerned, there are no proper educational structures or language courses which address the needs of migrant populations. Among the major problems highlighted are the following:

- (a) Most programmes are implemented as pilot projects, without stability, feedback and continuity in the process, resulting in fragmentary actions and the absence of stable training structures and infrastructures.

- (b) The programmes are usually not targeted to areas of direct interest to migrants.
- (c) The programmes are not accessible to migrants, either due to lack of information or due to their irregular status.
- (d) The programmes are not organized, staffed or evaluated by people with expertise knowledge and experience.

Research findings highlight the significant contribution of educational integration to the social integration of the whole migrant family. As for the institutional framework for addressing the needs of migrant children at school, survey data identify policies that directly or indirectly facilitate the integration of migrants: reception classes, flexible zones, all-day schools, intercultural schools. Problems identified relate to poor migrant-related teachers' education and the urgent need for special training for teachers working in schools with a strong migrant presence. The latter issue is also related to the development of teaching methods and tools which address the inadequate knowledge of the Greek language by migrant children. In the context of targeted responses to the specific needs of migrants, through formal as well as informal educational integration, special emphasis has been placed on the role of sports, social and cultural activities that take place at school, as well as outside school hours. These activities are considered to make a significant contribution to the integration of migrants and their family members. In short, the importance of Greek language competence and the full integration of migrant students in the Greek educational system have been brought to the foreground.

Political Rights - Political Participation

The participation of migrants in the democratic process and their involvement in the design of public policies can greatly contribute to their social integration. Through political participation, the intercultural dialogue between different groups of the population is enhanced, the exchange of knowledge on the values, standards, institutions and coherent rules of operation of the host society is promoted, and the value of integration of migrants is consolidated, thus contributing to the social and political coherence of the host society.

As parameters of the political integration of migrants, survey data usually identify the following:

- The right to participate in elections, especially at the local level.
- The right to participate in local and national consulting bodies.
- Empowerment of migrant associations and communities.
- The participation of migrant associations and communities in public consultation and decision-making processes.

A common research finding is that granting migrants the right to vote in local government elections and the establishment of *Migrant Integration Councils* are vital to their engagement in the social and political life of the host society and enhance their participation in the political dialogue, local politics and the host country's life. Survey data suggest that the right of legally resident migrants to vote in local elections is, in principle, an important step towards enhancing their participation in the community and their integration into the country's social fabric. The established but rarely operating Migrant Integration Councils can function as advisory bodies to the local authorities, in view of enhancing the integration of migrants in the local community and involving representatives of migrant communities. These councils are an innovative form of positive institutional action that envisages the involvement of migrants in its advisory board. However, the limited competence of local governments on migration issues, as well as the under-representation of organized migrant communities in social action represent serious shortcomings. The request repeatedly put forward by representatives of public bodies is to strengthen the self-organization and financial independence of migrant communities, so as to reinforce their position as privileged interlocutors and expand their capacity to negotiate and represent the migrant population.

Access to healthcare and welfare services

Access to healthcare is an essential dimension of migrant integration. Moreover, access to healthcare and preventive care is an inherent human right that is directly linked to the right to life and

cannot be abolished or ignored because of migrants' legal status in the country.

As parameters of access to healthcare and welfare services, survey data have identified:

- The difficulty of access of irregular migrants to public healthcare and welfare structures.
- The risk of migrant women being exposed to human trafficking, smuggling, domestic violence and sexual exploitation.
- The difficulty of access to protection and support structures for victims of violence and human trafficking.

A common research finding is that a major problem in the health and welfare sector is the legal restriction imposed on public hospitals and the medical staff to provide their services to undocumented migrants. The provision of healthcare only to individuals that are insured is an important obstacle for migrants' equal access to healthcare services. The exclusion of irregular migrants from the national healthcare system, apart from violating the right to health, puts at risk the health of the local population. In practice, however, the rigidity of the law and the institutional exclusion of irregular migrants from public hospitals are often informally by-passed by the medical staff in cases of a serious health problem.

Other serious shortcomings in the provision of healthcare and welfare services include: the lack of structures and services for the protection and support of victims of violence and human trafficking; the lack of co-ordination; and the lack of integrated, targeted actions to prevent and suppress crimes, such as human trafficking and violence. At the same time, there also seems to be a lack of awareness and sensitization of the host society about the particular needs of the vulnerable group of female migrants, so as to eradicate prejudices and stereotypes against them.

In conclusion, the state must make sure that all victims of violence and trafficking receive appropriate counselling, psycho-social and medical care by qualified staff, sensitive to gender and cultural particularities; women that have fallen victim of violence need to be protected in safe hostels, for at least a period of time, and receive legal assistance in seeking justice. This care is the minimum require-

ment in relation to the needs of the victims and is often provided only by non-governmental organizations, rather than by state-owned structures, that would ensure a continuous operation.

Access to housing

Access to decent housing is also a key factor for the smooth integration of migrants. Migrants often experience discrimination and exclusion in terms of their right to housing, which has negative consequences for their living conditions and quality of life, while also creates serious public health problems for both local and migrant populations.

As regards housing issues, impediments are reported with regard to the following:

- The difficulty of accessing decent housing.
- The over-concentration of migrant populations mostly in urban areas.
- The residential segregation/isolation of migrants in disadvantaged neighbourhoods and the creation of “ethnic migrant ghettos”.

Research shows that migrants are often discriminated against in their efforts to find adequate housing, thereby failing to meet basic living needs and suffering violation of their fundamental rights. A large percentage of migrants - mainly “undocumented” migrants – are often confronted with Greek landlords who refuse to rent them, giving as an excuse their temporary residence or the volatility of their work. Thus, the migrant population is often forced into inhumane housing and hygiene conditions, or is wandering in temporary “sleeping quarters” in degraded urban neighbourhoods. One issue that strongly emerges is the geographical / residential isolation of migrant communities in degraded neighbourhoods and the consequent creation of ethnic ghettos in these areas. The over-concentration of migrant populations in such areas tends to isolate migrant communities from the rest of the population, thus creating favourable conditions for racist behaviours, and encouraging the spread of anti-social behaviour, crime, racial violence and organized racist crime.

Access to social life

Research findings suggest that the locus of daily living, namely workplaces, schools, public places and local society are key points of contact, communication, social interaction and integration of migrants into their host communities. Important parameters of social interaction include:

- The development of local policies and social inclusion networks.
- The social networking of migrants in their neighbourhoods.
- Strengthening local cohesion and social interactions between migrants and natives in neighbourhoods.
- Raising awareness of the local community through intercultural dialogue.

It is common to believe that communication and social and cultural interaction between the local and migrant populations has not been sufficiently developed. Research particularly emphasizes the absence of female migrants from the public sphere and discourse. While it can often be attributed to cultural and religious restrictions, this absence is mainly due to the lack of specialized services and targeted actions and the inability of central and local authorities to develop local networks to promote the social integration of migrants. The social networking of migrants and migrant women at the neighbourhood and local community level, through the development of local networks to raise awareness and foster social cohesion, is crucial to their participation in community events.

It has also been recognized in survey research that local governments are closer to the citizens and, therefore, the integration process can be better promoted by developing local policies that appeal to all members of the local community and act as a bridge between the local community and central government. The development of local integration networks can stem from the implementation of innovative local integration programmes, provided these programmes invest in structural change and infrastructure.

In short, research findings suggest that the empowerment of municipal and local authorities on issues related to the integration of

migrants constitutes a key factor for a coherent approach to the migrant populations' problems.

3.3.4. *Persisting challenges and shortcomings*

The evaluation of the policy framework has highlighted various shortcomings and gaps that constitute barriers to the effective functioning of the administration in relation to migrants' integration. At the origin of these shortcomings lies the political choice to address migration flows not with a view of integrating migrants, in line with the European integration framework and the acceptance of diversity, but rather to deter migration with practices of rebuff, repression and punishment. The persistence of serious deficiencies and gaps implies that, eventually, malfunctions and fragmentary actions constitute a policy option.

Migration policy has so far been vague, volatile and sketchy. The absence of a categorical definition of social inclusion, before and beyond the principles, actions and means of achieving it, creates uncertainty and confusion, while at the same time, it opens up a crack in administrative practices, which allows for divergent interpretations to emerge, both at the individual and the organizational level. As a result, a regime of legal uncertainty is maintained, both at the level of the services themselves, as well as at the level of migrants and civil society actors, which renders the issue of legality (and thus integration) an area of perpetual incertitude. The continuous revision of policies regarding the legal integration of migrants creates confusion not only to the migrants, but also to the officials who are required to apply them.

In addition, the distance that separates the declared migration policy from its implementation constitutes a serious obstacle to the integration of migrants. As noted above, politics and politicians adopt the EU rhetoric and guidelines for the integration of migrants, but at the same time, the legal and institutional framework remains complicated, with excessive requirements and limited duration of the legal status, thus exposing migrants to the constant risk of being de-legalized. Furthermore, the policies implemented are often restricted to ad hoc, fragmentary and inadequate interventions, or are

imposed by central authorities without understanding and assessing their (direct or indirect) impact on migrants and the local or host society in general.

Despite the rhetoric, these *ad hoc* policies indicate a lack of strategic planning. The deficit is most pronounced when implementing ready-made or “copy-paste” European policies, without attempting to adjust them to the local conditions or the traditions of the host society. Thus, the lack of a stable migration policy has resulted to a constantly changing legislative framework that is often impossible to implement. It is also noteworthy that migrant communities are generally absent from the decision-making process for policy-making and implementation, and their participation is more formal than substantial. Their involvement in planning integration actions at the local level has only recently been institutionalized, to a certain degree, through the Migrant Integration Councils.

The problems described above are also reflected in the quality of the integration services provided to migrants. The complex and bureaucratic nature of the institutional framework entails the involvement of a multitude of policy makers, public services, social actors and implementing bodies in the area of integration services. These implementing bodies, public services and executive officials, however, have little or no expertise on migrant integration issues, little or no understanding of basic concepts such as ‘integration’ or the ‘legal status’ of migrants, no institutionalized networking, no backing from information systems; they are scattered all over the territory, often in isolated areas, and have to provide their services while being seriously under-staffed and un-qualified.

Quality under-staffing, that is, the shortage of cross-cultural specialist migration skills, as EKKE’s surveys show, leads public officials to admit that despite the efforts made, the services provided do not meet either the European standards for migrant integration, nor the needs of migrants themselves or the local society, while, quite often, they exceed the capabilities and the potential of the public services. In this context, informal ways of dealing with problems and ‘self-action’ of employees are adopted, which is an illegal phenomenon even when effective. As a result, the policy of managing migration flows is sometimes translated into a stereotypical xenophobic or

even racist behaviour and practice, which hinders the prospects of integration of migrants in the Greek society.

It has been over a quarter of a century since Greece was transformed from a sending to a receiving migrant country. During this time, an institutional and administrative framework was set up that proved contradictory and ineffective. Addressing, however, the new realities of migrant populations in Greece, requires a stable and coherent migrant integration policy. That means *inter alia*, multi-level convergences between the different state policies and the public authorities and services, which are hard to achieve, as EKKE's long-standing research shows. The successful integration of migrants requires improving the provision of services at the local government level, by supporting actions and initiatives by the local authorities, as well as their staffing and networking with the other levels of central administration. It also requires a unified information infrastructure, a mechanism for keeping up-to-date information, and last but not least, the funding of migrant integration policies from national sources, so as to ensure continuity in integration policies and not only actions that the EU decides to fund through the implemented programmes.

Finally, the political will for a different approach to migration is a decisive factor for a successful integration. An approach that will not consist of "inaction" or "omission" policies - as it has been repeatedly emphasized in EKKE's qualitative surveys - but that will actively incorporate the principles of integration into administrative practices. Only then will a coherent, unified, multifunctional and mutually acceptable organizational concept of integration be formed, the convergence of policy goals and objectives with practices will be strengthened, and a common organizational plan for the integration of third-country nationals in Greek society will be developed.

The role of public services

Although European principles are gradually being incorporated into national law and public rhetoric, it is clear that their implementation is largely left to the discretion of the bureaucratic mechanisms

of the state and the local government. It is therefore not surprising that, although a large number of research surveys on migration have been published in Greece since the early 1990s, very few actually deal with the relation between migrants and the state and even fewer with the views of government officials.

Among the problems that arise in the relation between migrants and the public services, research has identified the following:

- The *scarcity of resources*, in particular the serious under-staffing of migrant-related services, compounded by the lack of appropriate experience, expertise and education-training of employees, that would allow the relevant administrative process to function properly. It is worth mentioning that “for civil servants, their placement in these services is viewed as an unfavourable placement”.
- The *conflict between the declared migration policy and the administrative procedures* envisaged for its implementation. Migration policy is consistent with EU guidelines and seeks to ‘integrate migrants in a legal framework’. However, its enforcement undermines the stated objectives, because they are complicated, with “disproportionately demanding controls” and lead to an extremely limited period of legitimacy, increasing the risk of de-legitimization.
- The *complicated and often contradictory legal and institutional framework* can create legal uncertainty for all parties involved. At the same time, any ambiguities or gaps are addressed ‘emotionally’ by the public administration, resulting in “the margin for arbitrariness of public administration executives being broadened”.
- The *insufficient coordination* of services at all levels of administration. It has been argued that the lack of coordination and co-operation structures has contributed significantly to the adoption of conflicting practices by the administration. As EKKE research shows, public servants often downplay the issue of coordination and other service-related problems, shifting the responsibility to migrants’ ignorance, their alleged suspicion of public administration and the difficulty of communication.

According to research results, with regard to public administration's shortcomings, the Greek public administration proves to be particularly inadequate and ineffective in managing the issues of interest to the migrant population in the country. As noted above, the key weaknesses of the public administration stem from the 'institutional awkwardness' of the state to effectively safeguard the rights of migrants, an embarrassment which in turn is due to the difficulty of the political body to reconcile itself with the idea of the permanent residence of foreigners in the country. As a result, the existing procedures for implementing migration policy and legislation are complex and confusing, creating an additional burden for both migrants and public services.

Regarding the problems of the administration, shortcomings include the suspicion of public services towards foreigners, the lack of training, interest and availability of public servants, as well as the clarity of the institutional framework. Cooperation and contact with the public administration, both locally and centrally, are often impossible, mainly because of the individual perceptions, attitudes and behaviours of public servants and only secondarily, because of an inherent organizational difficulty of the administration to deal with migrant issues. As it is noted, civil servants adopt a clearly 'procedural' and 'compulsory' attitude –like a 'check list'– when handling migrants' cases, without actually trying to solve their problems. Often this lack of a 'sense of duty' is accompanied by bureaucratic procedures and the ignorance of the cognitive framework within their competence, due to insufficient training and unfamiliarity with the legal issues and situation of migrants. Lack of trained staff and ignorance of guarantees provided by law to migrants are seen as a major shortcoming in the functioning of the public administration, which can lead to violations of migrants' rights. The issue of ignorance of their rights, both by migrants themselves and by the public authorities to which they are addressed, is regarded as particularly problematic.

The inadequacy of the administration is further exacerbated by the ambiguity, the gaps and the complexity of the legislative and institutional framework. As a result, officials are often called upon to interpret or fill gaps in the law, and the interpretation is usually

in favour of exclusion and rarely in favour of facilitating migrant integration. In conclusion, the combination of gaps and ambiguities in the legislative framework with a reluctant administration and the lack of strong political will to tackle the issue of migration, create a dysfunctional framework for implementing migrant policy, which does not and cannot address the realities and the needs of a coherent society, the state and the migrants residing in Greece.

Factors that facilitate integration

The most important factors facilitating the integration of migrants include the following:

1. Preservation of an *environment of social peace and security* that enhances safety and eradicates racist violence, which affect both migrants and Greeks.
2. *Access to the labour market* and decent work, not only for economic but also for social reasons. In particular, it is argued that “economic relations with migrants are a coherent fabric between the migrants and the host society”.
3. *Learning the language* of the host country, as the key to communication, social contacts, independence and protection from exploitation, claiming rights and access to institutions. Language competence is understood as a tool of cultural communication that facilitates integration, brushing aside stereotypes.
4. *Access to goods and services*, such as education, justice, housing, social welfare and healthcare.
5. *Cultural exchanges*, in conjunction with respect for local cultural traditions.
6. *Respect for the religion and traditions* of migrants.
7. The promotion of *social inclusion at the local level*, by sensitizing the local community and by developing communication channels between local authorities and migrant associations.

Factors that hinder integration

A number of factors are thought to hinder the integration of migrants such as:

1. The *social “introversion”* of migrants, who often prefer to channel their sociality towards the communities of their country of origin, thus limiting their integration prospects in the broader local, political, cultural and social collectivities. Gender also contributes to introversion, as women have even more limited social contacts outside their group of origin.
2. The *spatial segregation* of migrants and the creation of ethnic ghettos, which deepen “introversion” and prevent integration.
3. The increased *distrust* of migrants towards the public administration. Representatives of public services consider this mistrust sometimes unjustified and attribute it to cultural reasons, such as migrant identity or national cultural and political particularities. Combined with the lack of an effective state system for receiving and informing migrants, mistrust often leads migrants to informal networks of assistance and support that undermine their integration efforts.
4. *Religious and cultural particularities*, especially those related to gender, which hinder the integration of women migrants.
5. The *limited visibility* of migrant women, which is due both to their type of work (housework, uninsured employment, etc.) and to their position within the ethnic migrant community.
6. The *economic crisis* which negatively affects all vulnerable social groups, and especially migrants, who are experiencing deteriorating living conditions due to reduced income and social benefits. At the same time, the economic insecurity of the indigenous population fosters the spread of racist behaviour.

The responsibility of the State

A number of problems regarding the integration of migrants, whose management is considered to be the main responsibility of the state, persist such as:

1. The *lack of a clear-cut, consistent and integrated migration policy*, which leads to legal uncertainty and makes legality (and thus integration) an area of constant speculation. A very interesting point of view on this issue is that the absence of a migration policy is itself a policy, and indeed an extremely clear one: the State, through omission, has produced concrete results in the relationship between the Greek society and the migrant population.
2. The *lack of a stable legislative framework*. With regard to the integration of women migrants in particular, it is noted that the existing legislation lacks a gender perspective; women are not a distinct target group and their multiple roles are not recognized.
3. The *absence of reception and information mechanisms*, as well as *support structures* for the migrant population.
4. The *fragmentation, discontinuity and lack of co-operation between state actors* in policy design and in promoting initiatives for the social integration of migrants in general and women migrants in particular.

3.3.5. Concluding remarks

The above evaluation of the prevailing policies on migration and integration of migrants, highlights the absence of a clear and solid legal framework for migration and migrant integration. This creates a feeling of legal uncertainty for both migrants and public officials, thus burdening the relationship between them and with the Greek society as a whole. It has been argued that the gaps in migration policy are a political choice rather than a “technical” error or a legislative failure. It is clear, however, that the legislative production of the 2000s, as well as the successive legalization programmes, have improved the situation, without, however, fully responding to the problems. To this end, and in order to address the complex migration phenomenon, a lot remains to be done.

A number of interventions for the legal integration of migrants from third countries, from legalization to acquisition of citizenship, and from the fight against discrimination to participation in the

country's political life, have been put forward. The most pressing problem that needs to be addressed, however is the flawed legalization process. The strict formal requirements regarding migrants' residence status in the country increase the risk of their de-legalization, and deprives them of the opportunity to return to legality, mostly because the financial crisis has been having a negative impact on their employment, which is directly linked to their work permit and, hence, to their residence status. In response to these problems, the following are *inter alia* suggested:

- Simplification of the procedures for legalizing migrants who meet the requirements. A change in this direction would not only benefit migrants, but the administration as well.
- Disconnection - subject to conditions – of the residence permit from the work permit. This change would make it easier for migrants to remain legal in times of crisis, thus facilitating the smooth process of integration. To this purpose, a permanent mechanism for restoring legitimacy must be established.

The main challenge, however, to address, in order to ensure that migrants remain legal, from the moment they enter the country onwards, and that their integration is smoother, is the formulation and implementation of a sustainable policy to deal with migration and migrants in a humane way. As one research respondent has put it *"when we talk about migration governance, we are not just talking about 'flows', 'numbers' or 'routes' of migrants, but about people. In order to be appropriate, effective and sustainable, policies must be designed to meet the expectations, needs and problems of the people concerned"*. A similar approach would allow the state to be proactive and become involved in regulating migration flows not only after migrants' entrance in the country, but also in their country of origin, before their departure.

As far as the acquisition of citizenship by migrants is concerned, a target which somehow testifies the successful completion of integration, it implies certain prerequisites which, in general, are compatible with the EU's *Common Basic Principles*. Such prerequisites include the possession of basic language skills, the adaptation of the host community and of migrants to social and economic life, and

their political participation, which is mainly achieved through local government elections. Again, a lot remains to be done in this direction. However, the most pressing issue that needs to be addressed, is that of combating racial discrimination in the Greek society and administration, in order to ensure equal access for migrants to basic goods and services. Research has shown that racist behaviours on the part of civil servants continue to persist to a certain extent. At the same time however, the responsibility lies with the (impersonal) state, which, in the absence of an integrated plan, over-burden the under-staffed public services with unnecessary bureaucratic work. Surely, public servants' perceptions are not disconnected from the evaluative hierarchy of the public administration's policy priorities, nor from consolidated practices, that need to be addressed. However, as it has already been pointed out, discriminatory or even racist behaviour is also related to the education, vocational training and personality or culture of each public employee. Therefore, a number of issues emerge that warrant solutions, in order to eliminate such practices on behalf of the administration. In response to these questions, survey data *inter alia* have suggested:

- The reinforcement of public administration and front-line services dealing with migration, with qualified staff, including interpreters and cultural mediators. It has also been suggested to recruit third-country officers in public services, such as the courts and the police.
- The provision of migrant related training and expertise knowledge to front-line public officers who handle migration issues and come into contact with migrants.
- The establishment of reception and information mechanisms for migrants, given that, to a certain extent, their inconsistent access to goods and services is attributed to their inadequate information on their rights, obligations, competent authorities and administrative procedures.
- The operation of one-stop services to provide support on migrants' residence and integration issues, by simplifying procedures and improving equal access to public goods and services.

Another area of concern is labour market integration. Problems at the workplace, which have a direct impact on migrants' social and economic integration, stem from the formal requirement to associate migrants' legal status to social security stamps. This arrangement, as it stands, distorts the relation of migrants to the labour market, leads to undeclared work and creates conditions for work exploitation, thus hindering labour integration, if not blocking it altogether. Combined with the lack of provisions for recognizing migrants' professional qualifications, migrant workers have difficulties in exercising their rights, find themselves excluded from trade unions and become potential victims of labour exploitation. To address some of these problems, specific labour market reforms have been proposed such as:

- The establishment of a public labour mediation service between migrant workers and their employers.
- The establishment of an effective mechanism for ex-officio controls of companies to check their compliance with labour legislation, without the need for prior reporting by the migrant.
- The recognition and accreditation of the professional qualifications of migrants.

Education has also been identified as a crucial area for migrant integration. There are two aspects to this issue: the first concerns the education of migrant children, and thus the social integration of the whole family, and the second concerns adult education. The first parameter seems to have been satisfactorily answered by the Greek State, as children's access to school is not restricted by their legal status, or that of their parents. To this end, it is worth mentioning the positive effects of educational innovations, such as the flexible zone, supportive teaching and the all-day school. Further improvements suggested include:

- The enhancement of teacher training in relation to migrant issues and multiculturalism.
- The operation of reception classes that support students with multicultural educational needs and different language competence levels.

- The strengthening of extracurricular activities within school, as well as beyond school hours.

Migrant adult education on the other hand, presents more problems than school attendance for minors, mainly because of its direct link to the legal status of the potential beneficiaries and the temporary and pilot nature of most language courses.

Concerning the participation of migrants in public life, survey data focus on the right of migrants to vote in local government elections and on the operation of the Migrant Integration Councils, an institution that needs to be further enhanced.

Another area with acute integration problems is the healthcare and welfare sector. Access to healthcare and welfare services depends on the legal status of migrants, a formal requirement which restricts access to the basic right of all people in need, including migrants, that of health and protection of life. Faced with such a reality, doctors and medical staff, quite often, override the provisions of the law, especially when migrants' health is in jeopardy. At the same time, there is a serious shortage of services for the care, support and protection of migrants, and especially of migrant women, who are victims of violence and human trafficking. To address the problems in this area, the following are, *inter alia*, suggested:

- Detachment of access to health care services from the legal status of migrants.
- Strengthening and empowerment of existing structures, and creation of new ones to provide shelter and protection for victims.
- Establishment of a national system for the identification of victims of human trafficking.

Another area strongly linked to integration problems is gender-based discrimination. Gender-related issues are often associated to the religious and cultural perceptions of migrants, as well as to practices and discrimination of the migrant societies of origin. These perceptions result into multiple forms of exclusion of female migrants, as compared to male migrants. Research refers to this double exclusion in the areas of education, healthcare and especially in the

protection of victims of violence and human trafficking. Equally important are the problems faced by the medical and nursing staff, in dealing with practices that endanger the physical integrity of female migrants, as well as with the limitations on the treatment of migrant patients. Once again, the question of intercultural skills or the use of cultural mediators comes to the fore. The successful integration of migrants, and in particular of migrant women, requires moving away from the traditional roles of female migrants and granting migrant women equal status to men, a shift that needs to be also embraced by the host society. It is important to remember that such a shift does not only facilitate the integration of women, but also that of male migrants and the migrant community as a whole. However, regardless of the host society's efforts, through its institutions and competent authorities, this adjustment cannot be imposed by force, but with respect for and in compliance with migrants' cultural traditions. That is why research findings insist on the importance of cultural mediators, who can grasp the issues at stake for both sides- migrants and the host society – thus reinforcing mutual understanding, cultural dialogue and osmosis. In the context of this intercultural dialogue process, the host society is also called upon to change, accepting the cultural particularity of migrants, and to be more actively involved in combating all forms of racism. To this end, certain suggestions to enhance migrant women's emancipation are put forward, such as:

- Disconnecting the legal status and rights of migrant women from the status of their spouses.
- Ensuring that the children of migrant women have access to social welfare structures, such as nurseries and childcare facilities, regardless of the legal status of the parents.
- Ensuring that migrants who have fallen victim of racist violence are protected, regardless of their legal status.
- Supporting the participation of women in training programmes.
- Addressing the institutional gaps regarding the employment of migrant women who work as in-house migrants, the majority of who provide undeclared work and face the risk of imme-

diate expulsion as far as social security and remuneration are concerned.

- Supporting the social networking of migrant women with the local community.

As documented in EKKE's survey research, the proposals for reforms and changes put forward by public servants indicate that they have a genuine interest in reinforcing the integration of migrants in the Greek society and are willing to support such reforms; however, the main responsibility lies with the government. Political willingness to develop a consistent and sustainable legal and institutional framework that will replace the current attitude of inertia and 'omission' regarding the state's interaction with migrants is also extremely important. Establishing such a framework would narrow the range for arbitrariness of certain public officials and would provide the legal certainty required to promote further reforms for migrant integration. Within this context, gender, as a parameter of integration, not only for women but for all migrant family members and the Greek society, as well as the barriers that women migrants face, though systematically researched, are not yet effectively addressed by the Greek government.

In short, following the 2015-2016 peak of refugee arrivals in Europe, attention has shifted towards effectively integrating mixed migration flows in the reception countries. While migration and integration policies remain a national responsibility, central and local authorities, in coordination with all levels of government and other local partners, play a key role in integrating newcomers and empowering them to contribute to their new communities. Recent increases in new arrivals have further exacerbated the underlying governance weaknesses in providing both short-term and long-term answers to the integration problems. Such weaknesses often stem from the lack of policy coordination between different sectors (such as labour, health, housing and education), as well as across levels of government. It is necessary to develop coherent responses at the local level, involving also non-governmental actors. The effective integration of migrants is a critical issue for regional development. In this respect, regional economic development strategies could consider the im-

portant role that migrants can play in boosting the local economy. Retrieving data at the right scale is essential in improving policies for migrant integration.

It is hoped that the present desk research study contributes to achieving the above goals.

4. QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE IMPACT OF POLICIES AND SOCIAL PRACTICES ON THE SOCIAL INCLUSION OF MIGRANT POPULATIONS IN GREECE

4.1. Key findings from the interviews with stakeholders involved in the integration process in the island of Lesbos

Contextual information regarding the field work

The face-to-face interviews were taken by EKKE's researchers Theoni Stathopoulou and Alikí Mouriki during their visit to the island of Lesbos from June 6 to June 9 2019. A total of 8 persons were interviewed, representing a variety of stakeholders, such as managers of accommodation and identification camps, international and local NGOs, advocacy groups and regional authorities. The researchers applied a semi-structured questionnaire and 7 of the 8 interviews were recorded, with the consent of interviewees. Each interview lasted between 45 minutes and one hour and 45 minutes, depending on the availability of the interviewee, but also on the prevailing external conditions (e.g. interruptions). All the stakeholders approached accepted to be interviewed and there were no refusals. The insight they provided on the delicate and complex issue of dealing with the reception and integration of the tens of thousands of migrants and refugees that landed in Lesbos over the years, is invaluable to our study.

The interviewees include the following:

1. Head of Civil Planning, Regional Government. Responsible for coordinating meetings with other agencies involved in the management of the refugee crisis.

2. Chairperson of a civil society enterprise (local NGO), volunteer and health professional.
3. Project coordinator for the local branch of an international NGO.
4. Educator of adult migrants and refugees in Lesbos.
5. Manager of Accommodation Centre.
6. Manager of RIC.
7. Former active member of a local NGO.
8. Co-coordinator of a local NGO.

Methodological note

As a result of mixed migration flows, the boundaries between migrants and refugees are becoming increasingly blurred and their distinction is often arbitrary.³⁷ As more and more asylum-seekers apply for asylum in Greece, receive refugee status and are set to remain in Greece, the challenge for the host country is to support their integration into the society and the economy. In that sense, regardless of the initial motives of their displacement, the displaced persons eventually become part of the migrant population. Our approach, therefore, in collecting interviews and information has been to consider the refugees and migrants that have arrived in Greece in recent years, and mostly since 2014, as one group, falling under the definition of 'mixed migration'.

Background information

Lesbos has traditionally been one of the primary gateways for migration flows from Turkey into Greece. From 2012, when the flows started picking up, until early 2015, the situation was manageable. However, the situation got out of hand in 2015 and early 2016, when arrivals reached 3,000-4,000 every day, sparking off a long period of turmoil and tension in the island. Following the EU-Turkey agreement concluded in March 2016, migration flows from Turkey to Greece substantially decreased and the situation in the island

37. See section 2.1. for a detailed conceptual analysis.

seemed to be under control and relatively well organised, at least at the time of our visit, thanks to the huge efforts, will power and dedication of all those involved.³⁸

All asylum-seekers arriving at the shores of Lesbos are taken by the Coast Guard and the police to the Reception and Identification Centre (RIC) at Moria, which is the registration point (hotspot) and accommodation centre. At the time of our visit (June 7 2019), the RIC at Moria accommodated 4,912 people from 58 different nationalities (of which 312 unaccompanied children), although its capacity is for 3,000 people. However, by the end of September 2019, owing to the increased influx of migrants and refugees from Turkey since July, the Centre was once again overcrowded with a record number of over 12,600 persons, more than four times its capacity.

As for the other official hosting facility, the Accommodation Centre run by the Municipality of Lesbos at Kara Tepe, hosts 1,300 migrants and refugees from vulnerable groups (families with children, unaccompanied minors, disabled persons and other vulnerable people). Two grassroots refugee camps run by NGOs, the overspill camp “Olive Grove” next to Moria and the *Lesvos Solidarity* PIKPA camp, hosted, at the time of our visit, another 900 asylum seekers (approximately 800 and 100 respectively). Additional accommodation places in urban houses, apartments and hotels are provided by the UNHCR and its local partner *ILIAKTIDA*.

The living conditions in the accommodation facilities vary greatly; the most problematic camps are Moria and the adjacent “Olive

38. As of 31 August 2019, the total number of refugees and migrants that arrived in Greece since 2015 was **88,750**, of which 25,250 in the islands of the Aegean (see UNHCR Fact Sheet, Greece/1-31 August 2019: <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/71310.pdf>). Over one-third of arrivals in 2019 are children. Of those, more than 6 out of 10 are below the age of 12. Additionally, 16% of all children were registered upon arrival as unaccompanied or separated (see UNHCR Greece, Sea Arrivals Dashboard, August 19: <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/71287>). The islands of North-East Aegean in particular (Lesbos, Samos and Chios) continue to receive weekly hundreds or thousands of asylum-seekers arriving at their shores. According to the UNHCR, from January to September 2019, the total number of arrivals in Greece by sea was **36,141** persons (36% children), of which 16,078 in the island of Lesbos. See: <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/71691>

Grove” and the dire conditions prevailing there are well documented in numerous reports by international organisations, NGOs, the international press and scholars³⁹. By contrast, the situation in the Kara Tepe and PIKPA facilities is commendable and gives the population staying there a sense of safety and normality.

According to the organisation *Human Rights Watch*, the containment policy enforced since the March 2016 EU-Turkey agreement, confines asylum seekers on the Aegean islands including Lesbos, until their asylum claims are adjudicated, a process that can take months or even years. **Vulnerable asylum seekers** may be transferred to the mainland, but delays in the vulnerability assessment procedure and the lack of accommodation on the mainland imply that thousands of eligible individuals and families remain trapped on the island. According to the *UNHCR*, over 4,000 people already identified as vulnerable and eligible for transfer are stranded on the islands.⁴⁰ The responsibility for this deplorable situation lies primarily with the EU authorities and the other EU member states that have failed to provide two-thirds of their quota (40,000 places) and thus alleviate some of the pressure on Greece, under the joint relocation system (*ibid.*).

Regarding the handling by the Greek authorities of the continuing migratory flows, it can be described as a mixture of deterrence (containment), belated reactions and ad-hoc solutions towards an overwhelming situation, with occasional incidents of misinformation and violation of basic human rights. There are, however, also some notable exceptions, such as the gradual integration of migrant and refugee children into the educational system and the provision of healthcare to migrants and refugees by an over-burdened public health system. Overtime, the managerial capacity of central and local authorities has improved, thanks to the know-how and expertise acquired and the assistance of NGOs and international funding. There remain, however, many challenges to be addressed.

39. Apart from overcrowding, the most pressing problem regarding the RIC at Moria is the absence of a sewage system and the over spilling of dirty waters, leading to a high risk of infections (incidents of hepatitis A have been recorded according to an interviewee who has been working in the health sector)

40. See: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/11/21/greece-dire-conditions-asylum-seekers-lesbos>

4.1.1. Assessment of the integration process in Lesbos

Interviewees were asked to give their view on several aspects of the integration process of migrants and refugees stranded in the island of Lesbos.

The main obstacles that asylum-seekers face in the process of integration include their own unwillingness to integrate as they do not see Greece as a place of permanent stay, the poor living conditions, the uncertainty about the future and their negative portrayal by certain media, that has been fueled by the delinquent behaviour of some of the displaced persons and the xenophobic rhetoric of the Golden Dawn party and some media.

Regarding their access to the basic rights that would contribute to their integration, most of our interlocutors pointed out that the most problematic areas include the non-availability of decent housing conditions, adequate health services and, in particular, mental health support, a most pressing need that is not adequately addressed.

The process of integration would be greatly enhanced if the asylum-seekers lived in decent conditions (in houses and apartments rather than at the Reception Centres) and if they could have a sense of normality in their lives and a job. There is a widespread view that refugees and migrants are not treated with dignity and respect: according to an interviewee *“they are humiliated”*.

4.1.2 Challenges to be addressed

(a) Asylum procedures

A major issue that refugees and asylum-seekers are faced with is the blurred institutional framework regarding their asylum application and the long delays in processing their claim; as a result, asylum-seekers do not know how long they will stay in their present situation in Lesbos, as no major relocation is taking place any more. Some applicants may have to wait for 2-3 years to have their papers processed because of the lengthy bureaucratic procedures with the processing of the asylum claim. The seriously under-staffed Asylum Committee is working under tremendous pressure. “Some refugees

are in Lesbos for over two years because their claim has been rejected". The Asylum Service rejects some applications as a deterrent measure. The asylum-seekers cannot travel to mainland Greece, unless they have their legal documents in order. At the time of our visit, significant delays were also recorded in getting a National Insurance Number (AMKA)⁴¹ and a tax identification number TIN, to be eligible for certain social benefits (healthcare access, school enrollment). According to an interviewee "it was wrong to link asylum to vulnerability".

(b) Over-burdened state infrastructure (Coast Guard, Police, healthcare, education, accommodation)

The central and local authorities have been overwhelmed by the continuous influx of migrants and refugees in Lesbos and at first showed limited capacity in addressing the problems that emerged, although gradually things started to work out better.

According to an interviewee, the central state does little to help the integration process ("only in specific cases") and often acts as a buy-stander, watching the NGOs compete between them, while the local authorities mostly provide only accommodation services, with very few initiatives in other areas.

This is the result of the fact that the support services are seriously under-staffed. The Coast Guard, the police force, the health services and municipal workers have been seriously overburdened, and often suffer from the burn-out effect themselves, due to the difficult situation in Lesbos: "they also need psychological support and de-compression". It would be fair, as an interviewee suggested, a part of the considerable EU funds to address the refugee crisis, to be directed towards supporting the front-line staff who offer the most

41. One of the first initiatives of the newly elected New Democracy government in July 2019 was to suspend the process of issuing a Social Security Number (AMKA) to third-country nationals that do not fulfill the legal requirements. This decision left the newly arriving asylum-seekers without access to healthcare and medications, with the exception of emergency situations. The new system granting access to healthcare and medication to asylum seekers was announced in November 2019 but has only recently come into force.

and yet continue, with few resources, to “do a tremendous job”, especially in healthcare.

The tendency of some NGOs (who, otherwise, do a great job) to emphasise the deficiencies of state agencies, so as to attract more funding for themselves, creates a distorted picture of what is happening on the field, thus cancelling out the huge efforts of the personnel involved, a front-line senior executive pointed out.

In a nutshell, as one interviewee from an international NGO underlined, the criticism towards the Greek authorities regarding their handling of the refugee crisis is unfair:

“you cannot point fingers against Greece. Greece is unlucky. It’s a very cheap argument to throw money on the problem on behalf of the EU”.

(c) Living conditions and access to basic rights and services

Accommodation

The accommodation needs of migrants and refugees are constant and complex, but, according to an interviewee, some international bodies: “don’t know how to read the picture”.

The RIC at Moria and the Accommodation Centre at Kara Tepe are the two camps that host the vast majority of migrants and refugees arriving on the shores of Lesbos. The camps are guarded but they are not ‘closed centres’ and residents can move in and out. As stated above, at the time of our visit, dire conditions prevailed in the over-crowded RIC of Moria and the adjacent over-spill camp “Olive Grove”, where around 800 migrants and refugees live in make shift tents: long queues for food and toilet, fear for their physical and mental integrity, very poor hygiene, lack of privacy and growing tensions. Efforts are made for vulnerable groups (children, women, disabled persons) to be quickly moved to the Kara Tepe site where living conditions are significantly better. However, as an interviewee from an international NGO pointed out, some vulnerable people may have to stay in Moria for as long as two years, especially those from Africa, because their vulnerability is hard to establish (for example, the survivors of torture).

The Accommodation Centre at *Kara Tepe* hosts 1,300 vulnerable migrants and refugees and their families in 261 boxes. The camp, which is a 'green site', as 60% of its energy requirements are covered by solar panels (provided by the Dutch NGO "Movement on the Ground"), is under the authority of the Municipality of Lesbos and is run by 16 employees, who are paid by EU funds, and 20 volunteers. A large part of the necessary works to organise the camp were carried out by NGOs, thus cutting short a lot of red tape procedures. The living standards at Kara Tepe, which most of the time works at full capacity, are considered as exemplary. The management of the camp makes no distinctions between migrants and refugees or between the various ethnic and religious groups. Instead, the focus is on building mutual trust and understanding, thus protecting the population living in the camp from misinformation and fake news spread around deliberately. The factors that contribute the most to the successful adjustment of the populations hosted in the camp include "the spirit and the oxygen that the camp offers them"; the support from formal and informal networks and the local community which is hospitable; and the educational programmes that are attended by the majority of refugees and migrants staying in the camp (by most of the children but by many adults as well), as well as the good access to socio-psychological support provided by the "Doctors without Borders".

A considerable number of asylum-seekers are also hosted in hotels and apartments. The local NGO ILIAKTIDA, in partnership with the UNHCR and the Programme ESTIA, provides short-term accommodation places to over 730 vulnerable asylum-seekers, of which 150 children, in 97 guesthouses (hotels and apartments) in Lesbos.

Healthcare

Access of migrants and refugees to healthcare and medical treatment is perhaps, along with accommodation, the most urgent problem that authorities and NGOs need to address on the ground.

Unmet medical needs, including mental health issues, constitute a major issue for the displaced populations. Inside the over-populated camp of Moria, diseases that are related to the living conditions

prevailing in the camp and difficult access to primary healthcare add to the exasperation of asylum-seekers. During the day, patients usually go to the NGOs operating inside the RIC for healthcare, as the official medical authority unit run by the National Public Health Organization, the successor of the Centre for diseases control and prevention (EODY-former KEELPNO) is understaffed, whilst between midnight and 8 a.m., there is only one medical doctor inside the camp, who cannot be accessed directly. MSF operates two clinics outside the Moria camp, of which one pediatric; they provide family planning, sexual and reproductive health services with two midwives, and other medical services from 9 a.m. to 4.30 p.m. daily.

Difficult medical cases that need to be taken to Athens for treatment may take 2-3 months, according to one of our interlocutors. The risk of suicide is high, and it cannot be averted, as those at risk cannot be taken to shelters where they can be supervised. The assessment of vulnerability takes time and EODY (former KEELPNO) rejects 50% of the cases.

There are also serious unmet needs regarding **mental health problems** owing to the very small number of qualified doctors (there are only 2 psychiatrists in private practice and 2 in the island's public hospital). There are many asylum-seekers that are treated for PTSD symptoms, but many others receive no treatment at all or are not even examined. Asylum-seekers are quite likely to attempt suicide, while the presence of a total stranger, who acts as an interpreter during the medical visit, makes their treatment even more difficult, as they are reluctant to give a sincere account of their situation.

The situation is further complicated by the fact that, due to the financial crisis, the public health care system has been under severe pressure during the last decade and is going through a process of change. Occasional incidences of racist behaviour, on behalf of the medical staff have also been mentioned, but they are the exception.

Employment

Another major problem facing asylum-seekers, especially males, is the unavailability of **paid employment** (with very few exceptions such as seasonal oil picking, working in a restaurant, making bags, etc.), despite their eagerness to work:

- “they want to work, mostly the men”;
- “any kind of work would help these people, many of whom are deeply traumatized, feel better”.

Education

Access to **education and training** and the learning of the Greek language constitute the most important tools in the integration progress, according to most of our interlocutors. The NGOs in Lesbos have offered great services in the area of education, making up for the gaps in public education and creating educational material that can be further exploited, elsewhere. One local NGO, in collaboration with a German organisation, provides classes to adult migrants and refugees living in Lesbos since 2016. The classes are open to anyone willing to attend and the aim is to provide “a safe social space in the city”.

Greek classes last 3-4 months and offer basic language skills so that students can respond to their daily needs. Alternatively, students can take classes in English and computing. So far, a total of 130 students have attended classes, selected either on a ‘first-come-first served’ basis or depending on their medical condition (e.g. if they need mental health support). The students can change class following a test, while class modules continuously adapt to the particular needs of the students, a real challenge for the teachers. The age range is 18-58 years and the main countries of origin are: Afghanistan, Iran, Cameroun, Sierra-Leone and Guinea.

As for school-age children, access to education is much better, despite the discontinuities (there is no follow-up when the children are relocated to mainland Greece). School enrolment has become mandatory for all refugee and migrant children aged between 6-15 years but availability of places still lags behind, especially for pre-school children. More importantly, children living at the RIC of Moria do not have any access to education as the RIC is outside the authority of the Ministry of Education, whilst for children living in accommodation centres, there are many informal arrangements inside the camps or in other structures run by NGOs. Refugee and migrant children are so keen to attend school that they disregard the

pain caused by the mandatory vaccinations that are required in order to enroll and urge one another to get the shot. However, in some cases parents are reluctant to send the children to school as they see their stay in Greece temporary.

Communication

Language and communication problems are gradually being addressed through initiatives by NGOs and volunteers (e.g. MOSAIK). Cultural mediators play a crucial role: “we cannot function without them”.

The EU-Turkey agreement in 2016 to some degree changed the attitudes of migrants and refugees who, conscious that they may spend a long time in Greece, decide to take classes in Greek language, which was not the case before. The majority still considers Greece “as a passage” or a transit country.

(d) Attitude of EU countries and authorities

The EU authorities are strongly criticised for handling the continuing migratory flows in an unacceptable way, as their policies encourage the entrapment of the asylum-seekers in the islands and make their relocation to the mainland extremely difficult, in order to deter more arrivals.

Moreover, the other EU countries continue their “wishy-washy” attitude towards the problem and do not take their fair share of migrants and refugees:

“we will have problems with Dublin-II. There are bizarre scenarios about relocating people back to Syria”.

The understanding among the interviewees that the migration policy is being formulated at the EU level leads them to presume that the pressure on Greece will not ease and that peoples’ smugglers will continue to send people to Greece, undisturbed, as a camp manager put it.

(e) Role of the NGOs

The role of NGOs in dealing with the migratory flows in Lesbos is ambivalent. On one hand they assisted an unprepared Greek state to cope with the refugee crisis; they set up networks that help migrants and refugees in their quest for housing, learning the language and finding a job. On the other, they “went over the board”, in the sense that at the peak of the crisis there were over a hundred NGOs stationed in the island: “careers have been built on the refugee crisis”.⁴² In some cases their staff is arrogant, unwilling to cooperate with the local management teams: “they act as they like”. Others have good intentions but lack experience. Overall, NGOs are under pressure to deliver results in a short space of time, but they lack coordination between them: “there is no pathway for coordination”.

Overtime it seems that, as one interviewee put it, the overwhelming presence of NGOs in the island of Lesbos “was a bubble that burst. Not many foreign volunteers come here anymore”. By contrast, according to one international interlocutor, the local volunteer organisations are the ones that look most ahead, whilst the international NGOs are more focused on providing food, basic services and improved living conditions. The help provided by NGOs has in some cases “pampered” the refugees and led to their inactivation.

Intense competition for funding among NGOs and often the creation of artificial needs so as to ensure donations, are also issues of concern that need to be addressed. Some of our interlocutors pointed out the many moral dilemmas that emerge regarding some of the NGOs operating in Lesbos, despite the fact that were it not for the NGOs, there would have been huge problems in the island:

“some want to raise more money to increase their funding, others want to raise their profile and some even do money laundering”⁴³.

42. The case of the PIKPA village under the name “All together for the crisis” constitutes, according to one of our interlocutors, a typical example of how a very successful undertaking came to an end when individual ambitions interfered.

43. This is a serious allegation that we could not, in any way, confirm. Yet, it shows how the uncontrolled activities of a few NGOs in Lesbos, some of which without any credentials, create impressions that do not do justice to the noble cause of the large majority of them.

At present, most NGOs are in a very precarious situation and they do not know if they will continue to receive funding and provide their services. As a result, the migrants and refugees feel very vulnerable.

(f) Exploitation of migrants and refugees by peoples' smugglers and organised crime

One critical dimension in the continuing influx of migrants and refugees into Greece is the role played by people's smugglers' networks, often associated with organised crime. According to many of our interlocutors, the people smugglers in Turkey attract migrants and refugees by promising them a 'full package' in Greece that includes transfer, accommodation, nutrition and healthcare⁴⁴. More importantly, migratory flows are heavily dependent on the geopolitical games played by Turkey, who controls the flows as it wishes, and the EU authorities which –according to an interlocutor “use Greece like a ‘whore’. ‘I pay you to do the job’.”

Once in the island of Lesbos, migrants and refugees often fall victim of trafficking and forgery networks that operate in the island and that promise to help asylum-seekers willing to pay the price, leave the island before their status has been defined.

Last but not least, instances of sexual exploitation, mostly of women, have been reported.

(g) Interaction with the local communities

With few exceptions, the majority of the local population seems to have come to terms with the continued presence of the refugees and migrants arriving in scores in the island, and to co-exist with the latter with no serious problems. Only some parents of Albanian origin have reacted against migrant and refugee children attending the same school as their kids.

44. Interview of the former manager of Moria RIC Mr. G. Balpakakis, who resigned in September 2019. See: <https://www.kathimerini.gr/1042440/article/epi-kairothta/ellada/g-mpalpakakhs-sth-moria-den-mporw-na-3anapaw>

At the peak of the refugee crisis in 2015-2016, when thousands kept arriving at the shores of Lesbos every day (on one particular day in 2015, 8,500 arrivals were recorded), the reaction of the local people was deeply moving, and an outburst of humanism was displayed. Ever since, the local society has shown a remarkable resilience in dealing with the humanitarian crisis. On the other hand, some locals made a fortune by transferring refugees from the shores to the city of Mytilene. The media, however, tend to manipulate the public opinion, by giving a negative portrayal of migrants and refugees, cultivating a “climate of fear” in some cases.

According to another interviewee, the attitude of the local communities towards migrants and refugees is ambivalent. Cultural differences (“the refugees are 40 years behind from us”), their negative portrayal in the media and the reluctance of refugees themselves to integrate do not make their acceptance any easier. As another interlocutor pointed out, the local population is reluctant to come closer to the migrants and refugees that live in Lesbos (some of whom may be living there for two years), but “at least, they show a better attitude than Chios and Samos” (the other two Aegean islands that receive the bulk of the mixed migration flows).

On the other hand, most of the interviewees pointed out that the refugee crisis has also benefited the local population, in terms of income-generation and jobs:

“the money spent for the refugees stays here, that’s why the local people don’t protest so much”.

The occasional excursions organised by the management of the accommodation facilities to other parts of the island, in view of becoming acquainted with the place in which the migrants and refugees live, also play their part in connecting with the local communities.

(h) Uncertainty about the future

Until the EU-Turkey agreement in 2016, the vast majority of migrants and refugees wanted to leave Greece and head further North, as “they do not consider Greece to be part of Europe”. They feel

trapped in Lesbos, not knowing when and where they will be allowed to go next. The waiting process “freezes” their lives condemning them in a limbo situation. Nowadays, an increasing number of asylum-seekers, especially unaccompanied children, want to stay in Lesbos and eventually find a job. However, in Greece it takes 7 years to be eligible for a work and residence permit.

Serious housing and survival problems are expected to arise when the EU-funded cash assistance programme for the asylum-seekers is terminated (€90 euro per adult per month plus €50 per child per month). Many migrants and refugees will become homeless.

Lengthy bureaucratic procedures regarding the acquisition of citizenship also constitute a serious obstacle to the process of integration.

What fuels the most the uncertainty is the fact that, as one of our interlocutors put it:

“there is still a war in Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, so it’s not a success the EU-Turkey agreement”.

4.1.3. Suggestions-recommendations

A number of suggestions and recommendations –both general and specific– were put forward by our interlocutors regarding the improvement of the integration process of migrants and refugees. Special emphasis was put on the access to paid employment and skills acquisition as a prerequisite for a successful integration, the speeding up of the asylum process and the treatment of post-traumatic disorders and other health problems related to displacement. Of equal importance for the integration of migrants and refugees is access to decent housing, their freedom of movement to mainland Greece and the improvement of the economic situation of Greece that would attenuate the reactions of the local population and their feelings of having to compete for limited resources.

A list of proposals follows:

“there are one million ideas that can be implemented but first they need to be discussed and prioritised”:

Health care provision

The deployment of the programme Philos-II by the Ministry of Health will make a huge difference, as it will allow the recruitment of additional medical staff in Moria and in the other Reception Centres.

Employment

- provide job opportunities to refugees and migrants through employment programmes adjusted to their skills; conclude state agreements with employers to recruit an equal number of Greeks and refugees;
- refugees and migrants could help reinvigorate depopulated villages, cultivate abandoned fields and carry out rural work;
- provide access to vocational training and make the best use of their skills, especially in the social economy sector;
- assign tasks to migrants and refugees in order to mobilize and activate them.

Education

- emphasis should be put on school attendance, as school is essential in providing a sense of normality in the disrupted lives of children
- despite the difficulties of adjusting to a radically different school environment, school attendance by refugee and migrant children is a process that also benefits Greek children.

Policy interventions

- need for a holistic approach to the problem and a clear integration policy, “that needs time, synergies, a plan, patience and infrastructure”;
- speeding up of the asylum application process and swift transfer of migrants and refugees arriving in Lesbos and the other islands to mainland Greece;⁴⁵

45. A camp manager gave as an example the process that takes place in Italy:

- reduction of the excessive red-tape that complicates significantly and delays the procurement of material resources needed in the camps, as well as greater transparency;⁴⁶
- stricter control and transparency in the management of NGOs to make them more efficient;
- closer cooperation between all the stakeholders, that need to work as a ‘chain’;
- sustainability of measures: “the parachuting interventions do no good”;
- the integration period is a complex and difficult process that should last longer than just two years.

EU-level policies

- the central authorities and the EU authorities need to have knowledge of the field, to come to grips with the real problems and not be limited to a magical image from a distance;
- need to find a fair solution to the problem.

Empowerment of migrants and refugees

- refugees and migrants need to feel a sense of belonging and become “visible”; they should not be treated as “sheep”, as “lazy people who live on benefits”;
- “normality opens doors”;
- “people [refugees] are very resourceful” although “it is very difficult to create a space”;
- what makes migrants and refugees resilient is “their social capital, their trauma, and what they continue to experience here”; “they need to overcome their own resistance to [their new reality]”.

within 24 hours all newly arrived asylum-seekers are registered, and after attending some vocational training course, they are swiftly distributed to the various regions.

46. A point in case is the considerable delays in the replenishment of fire extinguishers at the RIC in Moria, that expose the residents to the dangers of an uncontrolled fire. Recently, an Afghan woman died in Moria because her dwelling caught fire.

As one interviewee put it:

“by caring for people and protecting them, by making them feel useful and by giving them a sense of purpose, the process of integration is made much easier”.

Challenges for the local communities

- although many local people are very supportive, the local community needs to become more involved in the integration process of migrants and refugees;
- fears of growing racism and xenophobia, despite the fact that the refugee crisis provided an opportunity to improve some of the infrastructure for the local population as well.

4.1.4. Concluding remarks

Most of our interviewees are not at all satisfied with the overall integration prospects. They believe that the state lacks a long-term plan in dealing with the migratory flows:

“very few steps have been taken, without forward looking planning and infrastructure. We are left very much behind”.

Even though many of their basic needs are being covered, the degree of integration of asylum-seekers is minimal. The uncertainty about the future, the communication difficulties, the lack of employment opportunities, the contradictory information on their rights, poor healthcare and social services and security issues, add to the exasperation of asylum-seekers and compromise their integration prospects. Evidence from the empirical study conducted by EKKE in 2016 in six refugee camps⁴⁷ has shown that uncertainty about the future is strongly associated with feelings of insecurity and poor

47. See Stathopoulou, T, Avrami, L, Kostaki, A, Cavounidis, J, Eikemo, T.A (2019) Safety, Health and Trauma among newly arrived refugees in Greece. *Journal of Refugee studies*. Oxford University Press. Jervelund S.S, Nordheim O, Stathopoulou T, Eikemo TA. (2019) Non-communicable diseases among refugee claimants in Greek refugee camps – are their healthcare needs met? *Journal of Refugee studies*. Oxford University Press (2019). de Montgomery C, Stathopoulou, T, Eikemo, T.A. (2019) Asylum seek-

physical and mental health status among refugees. Early health and especially mental health assessment are thus essential and should be a policy priority to the benefit of migrant and public health⁴⁸.

As for the on-going political controversy regarding the overwhelming presence of refugees and migrants and its repercussions on the local population, it should be said that there are two sides to the coin: on one hand, the local communities have to come to terms with the imposed upon them co-existence with a very diverse and numerous migrant population mostly living under emergency conditions and eager to leave the island; on the other, the refugee crisis has benefited the local population, in terms of income-generation and jobs.

As these displaced populations are set to stay for an indefinite period of time in the island of Lesbos, waiting for their asylum application to be processed, the question of their integration prospects comes to the foreground. As it emerged from the interviews with the stakeholders, the most important factors that can contribute to the integration process include the empowerment of migrants and refugees, the provision of clear information on the institutional framework, stability of interventions and security. Equally important is the support from the local community formal and informal networks and access to socio-psychological support services from the very first moment of the arrival of migrants and refugees. Special care should be given to the needs of children and adolescents, both accompanied by their families or unaccompanied.

All of the above, of course, pertain to 'normal' circumstances of controlled migration flows. However, no integration process can take place, nor the access to basic rights can be guaranteed, when the islands are overwhelmed by new arrivals of migrants and refugees every day, that, in the words of a UNHCR recent report, "worsen the situation in already dangerously overcrowded facilities there".⁴⁹

ing parents' reports of health deterioration in their children since fleeing their home country. *Journal of Refugee studies*. Oxford University Press (2019).

48. WHO (2018) Report on the health of refugees and migrants in the WHO European Region: No public health without refugee and migrant health. Copenhagen: World Health Organization.

49. See: <https://news.un.org/en/story/2019/10/1048312>

Urgent measures are, thus, required, that will ease the burden on the islands and improve the conditions in the reception facilities. To this end, over the last 2 months, the Greek government has transferred (not without problems) almost 4,000 migrants and refugees from the islands to the mainland. But as new arrivals drastically outnumber the transfers, the situation resembles a 'bottomless pit' that could easily become, once again, a hard to manage humanitarian crisis.

4.2. Key findings from the interviews with stakeholders involved in the integration process in Athens

Contextual information regarding the field work

A total of seven in-depth interviews questionnaire were carried out in Athens with representatives from various stakeholders involved in the integration process of migrants and refugees in Greece.⁵⁰ The persons interviewed came from a diversified background and provided an informed and stimulating insight of the challenges associated with the integration of migrants and refugees in the Greek society. The interviews were taken in July and September 2019, at a time when Greece was going through a change in government, as well as a recalibration of migrant policies. In 6 out of 7 cases the interviews were recorded, following the consent of the persons interviewed. The interviewees include the following:

1. A Special Scientist from the Greek Ombudsman with 25 years of experience in dealing with migrants and refugees.
2. A Special Scientist from the Greek Ombudsman with 20 years of experience in dealing with migrants and refugees.
3. A Vice-Mayor (at the time of the interview) from the Municipality of Athens, in charge of the integration of migrants for 3 years at the local government and another 6 years of previous experience.

50. The interviews were taken by researchers A. Frangiskou, G. Kandyliis, N. Sarris and M. Thanopoulou.

4. A senior-level officer from the General Directorate of Migration Policy, Reception and Asylum, Ministry of Citizen Protection, dealing with the issue of integration since 2010.
5. A senior-level officer from the Social Inclusion Department of the General Secretariat for Migration Policy, Ministry of Citizen Protection, dealing with integration issues for over 20 years.
6. The Manager of an international humanitarian NGO with 20 years of experience in dealing with vulnerable populations in war-stricken zones and in crisis areas.
7. A young asylum-seeker from Afghanistan who arrived in Greece in March 2016 and has applied, together with his mother and two siblings, for family reunification in Germany. Today he works as an interpreter for a local NGO which is active in issues concerning second-generation migrants, but also provides services to newly arrived refugees and migrants, including career counselling, non-formal education and advocacy (his account is presented separately, to distinguish it from the views of our Greek interlocutors).

4.2.1. Assessment of the integration process

General overview

Most interviewees pointed out that significant effort has been made over the past decades for the integration of migrants and refugees in the Greek society, without, of course, having reached the ideal result, as one interviewee put it. To a large degree, and despite the delays and the absence of coherent and clear migration policies, at the legislative level at least, many pending issues have been addressed. Improvements to the legislation in force have contributed to the access to basic rights and services, yet the main problem remains the implementation of the legislative framework, that lags behind.

A key informant involved in policy making provides a more pessimistic assessment of the integration process: “integration has never gone well, nor is it at present”, whilst he makes the distinction between “self-integration” through hard work, which he considers is

the case of the Albanian migrants, and the systematic implementation of an integration policy. To his view, until 2015, the degree of integration was below average. This is due partly to the fact that there is no mandatory system for migrant integration, as there is for asylum application (a European *acquis* that has been incorporated into Greek law). The only initiative worth mentioning was the Greek language courses funded with about 1.5 million euro per year. But in 2015, everything changed, with the refugee crisis acting as a catalyst. All the money and the attention started going towards the refugees: “the refugee issue absorbed the migration issue”, even though there are about 600,000 authorised migrants living in the country (holders of a residence permit), whilst asylum seekers do not exceed 75,000. Under these circumstances the interviewee believes that “there is no integration process. It’s all about reception policies”. In this sense the waiting time for the asylum to be granted or rejected, that can take up to two years, could be considered as “a premature integration” for those involved in the process.

In the same line of thought, another interviewee pointed out that the integration process in Greece so far “is not a benchmarking exercise” and that integration should not be only about reception, accommodation or hospitality, but about programmes that provide effective integration as well. Undoubtedly, the decisive factor is the will of the migrants themselves to be integrated in the Greek society: “there are migrants who are passing-by and migrants who wish to stay here”.

Looking back into the early years of migratory movements to Greece, another interviewee described the various distinct phases of integration: from the early 1990s to about 2005/2006, integration had an economic dimension and was more of a self-integration process in terms of gaining access to housing, education and health. Since 1997, integration was about the legalisation process of migrants so that they could acquire citizens’ rights. After 2004, the profile of migrants started to gradually change from families and individuals that came from the former socialist countries to young men from a broad range of nationalities. The turning point was in 2014, when the first Syrian refugee families arrived in Greece and benefited from ‘positive discrimination’ measures. The massive in-

flux of refugees that followed, and which concurred with the economic crisis, in many cases led to dis-integration, whilst the first generation of refugees and migrants felt resentment for the treatment of new-comers.

The process of integration varies greatly depending on the legal status of migrants and refugees. As far as legislation on the integration of migrants is concerned⁵¹, there are provisions in the *Migration and Social Integration Code* (Law 4251/2014), as well as in other legislative initiatives regarding recognised refugees, socioeconomic inclusion and equal treatment. The main implementation problems are of two kinds: the first relates to the difficulty of many migrants and refugees to gain access to certified documents from their war-stricken country of origin (e.g. educational and skills qualifications); the second regards the loss of authorised legal status suffered by many long-established migrants because (a) of their difficulty, especially during the economic crisis, in finding paid employment with social security contributions, that are needed in order to qualify for the residence permit and (b) the under-staffing of and lack of co-ordination between the competent authorities. There are also legal loopholes regarding the rights of those in need of international protection: they can send their children to school, but accommodation is often in reception centres that have become ghettos and the local communities are often hostile towards them. No measures exist to support their access to paid employment.

Nationality, according to the law, is an important criterion for the enjoyment of rights, not necessarily political rights, but mostly social rights such as access to health services, housing, food and nutrition, education, and work. Third-country citizens face discrimination on the grounds of their nationality. For example, they are not eligible for the elderly peoples' housing benefit, as the legislative framework does not allow this benefit to be granted to third-country citizens. The same is true for other social rights and services.

According to an interviewee's informed opinion, integration is viewed as a stage *after* the residence permit and *before* citizenship acquisition. In this sense, the integration programmes implemented so

51. This is not associated with the process of granting the Greek nationality.

far (92 initiatives between 2007 and 2015) were targeted towards authorised migrants and refugees.

At the local level, the role of Local Administration is important; wherever Municipalities and Regions have undertaken initiatives, results have been positive. The establishment of Migrant Integration Councils (MICs), which operate as advisory bodies within municipalities, in which representatives of migrants and refugees also participate, has contributed to this end. Some issues, however, require improvement in the institutional framework, so that social rights can be enjoyed and access to services will not depend on nationality, but on the fact that they are long-term migrants in Greece. On the positive side, the right of all children of a migrant or refugee background to be able to enrol in the Greek school system is a step forward towards a successful integration.

The *National Strategy for the Inclusion of Third-country Citizens, 2015-2019* launched in 2013, as a first systematic attempt to develop an integration policy for third-country citizens legally residing in Greece, was characterised by one interviewee as too general and largely dependent on the local government organisations for its implementation.⁵² The establishment of the Ministry for Migration Policy in 2017 was “a desperate, go-ahead reaction” to the refugee crisis, but its lack of capacity, in terms of infrastructure and human resources, was blatant; inevitably it became a ministry “dealing with itself rather than with migrants”, as an interviewee put it.

Overall, as another interviewee pointed out, Greece continues to act today as it did during the peak of the refugee crisis in 2015, with no plan, as if under emergency conditions. Migration policies continue to have a very short-term perspective, they are circumstantial and they do not consider the long-term implications of the various agreements concluded at the EU level (namely, Dublin-II, Schengen, etc.), nor do they have a sense of continuity.

52. A new action plan, *The National Strategy for Inclusion*, was launched in February 2019 by the previous administration, reflecting the Ministry of Migration's view on the rights of refugees and migrants, and taking into account the massive influx of mixed migratory populations and of asylum-seekers in quest of international protection, but also the economic recession in Greece between 2009-2017. See: <http://www.opengov.gr/immigration/?p=801>

Assessment of various aspects of the integration process through the eyes of the young migrant O.

Legal issues

Bureaucracy is one of the most important obstacles migrants face in their everyday life in Greece, especially because the validation of legal documents often takes too long, without any official explanation. There are cases where civil servants could have delivered the documents earlier but failed to do so, for little-known reasons.

Employment

Refugees and migrants could have the opportunity to find a job if adequately supported and advised. The main challenges relate to their limited competence in Greek (although speaking English increases the chances of being offered a job) and to Greek employers' prejudices towards foreigners. Migrants in Greece have various levels of education, skills and work experiences, but it is hard for them to get into contact with local employers.

Citizenship

Non-formal courses are organised by NGOs, for people who wish to apply for Greek citizenship (and have to prove their familiarity with the Greek culture).

Education

Learning the Greek language is a prerequisite for integration, communication and equality in the Greek society.

While there is a quite long list of organisations that provide Greek language courses, not all immigrant groups (e.g. in terms of age and language level) have access to them. School-age children often find themselves in areas that are isolated and far away from local schools. For the younger (those at the age of primary education) there are usually classes organised in the camps but older children (especially over 16) have to cover long distances to attend the 'Intercultural School' in the Municipality of Elliniko (in Southern Athens). As a result, their capacity in the Greek language does not improve and it is very difficult

for them to integrate into the Greek society. Vocational training is also necessary but it is rather restricted until now.

Healthcare

Migrants face serious difficulties with regard to access to health services (“as there are similar problems for Greek citizens”), especially so for people residing in the camps. One may need several hours to be transferred from a camp to the hospital, even in the case of an emergency. There is also an issue with migrants’ and refugees’ registration in the Social Insurance Registry (AMKA), which is necessary in order to have access to the public health system. The new government decided to change the existing procedure and the new one is not yet defined. Healthcare professionals are often unwilling to provide services to unregistered individuals, as he experienced once himself.

Racism

Our interviewee thinks that it sounds “embarrassing to speak about racism in the 21st century”, but he gives the example of doctors unwilling to examine someone when they see a non-Greek name in the patients’ list. He mentioned a personal experience of discrimination and violence that he suffered from a Greek doctor in a local hospital in Athens. In this case, there were Greek people who defended him.

Housing

Despite the inflow of money from the EU for accommodation purposes, “nothing has been done yet”. Only the most vulnerable and families have access to urban apartments that are rented for this purpose by UNHCR and the Municipality of Athens (ESTIA programme) and then only for six months. This is far from a solution to the housing problem. Recently the government decided to evacuate squatted buildings in Athens, whilst at the same time the camps in the islands (like Moria) and in mainland Greece are heavily overcrowded. He suggests that since there are so many vacant urban apartments, they could be used to house migrants and refugees in need. Local homeowners would also benefit from such a policy. Apart from decent living conditions, this would enable better communication between Greeks and migrants in their common residential areas.

Factors that contribute to the successful integration of migrants and refugees in the host country

The process of integration depends on a broad range of policies, ranging from the legislative framework to the access to basic rights and services, but also on the demographic and cultural characteristics of the host country and the migrant populations. Our interlocutors gave emphasis on the following factors.

- (a) Access to education for all children, irrespective of the legal status of their parents (law 1975/91). The educational community was very active in promoting the integration of all non-native children into the school system.
- (b) Knowledge of the Greek language by adults.
- (c) Legal status and legal support so that migrants and refugees can claim their rights.
- (d) Access to employment, which is a pre-requisite for the authorised stay and the access to healthcare services and other benefits.
- (e) Access to decent housing.
- (f) The family situation. It is easier for a family to become accepted in a neighbourhood.
- (g) The interaction with the local communities.

As for the agencies that contribute the most to the integration process they are, to the view of one interviewee, by order of importance, the international organisations, followed by the local government (with the Migrant Integration Centres) and finally NGOs and local organisations and volunteers. As for the central government, it provides as much funding as it can afford but no further than this: "If you have a weak public sector... what can you do?"

Main obstacles encountered by migrants and refugees in their integration process

- (a) The perception of Greeks that the population of Greece is composed only by natives, a perception that creates prejudices, especially on the question of religion.

- (b) The integration policies of the Greek state are mostly addressed to EU citizens and not to third-country citizens, whom it treats as 'second-class' citizens.
- (c) The policy of isolation and ghettoisation of migrants and refugees that is being enforced, rather than an inclusion strategy with positive measures.
- (d) Language barriers and lack of knowledge of the Greek society. The Greek state has not set up a system of teaching Greek as a foreign language to migrants and refugees, so as to facilitate their integration.
- (e) Cultural differences.
- (f) Religion. It is harder for the local communities to endorse people from a different religious background (e.g. Muslims).
- (g) The distorted image of mass media and social networks.
- (h) Lack of vocational training, especially during the crisis.
- (i) Under-utilisation of funding resources from European and international organisations.

4.2.2. Challenges to be addressed

The lack of long-term central planning and of coherent and effective integration policies regarding migrants and refugees (with the active involvement of the local government and the local communities) has been stressed by almost all our interviewees. A 'regular' and not circumstantial policy is required, with synergies between the various authorities involved in the integration process, rather than the fragmentary approach that prevails, which leads to inconsistencies. All our interlocutors emphatically pointed out that the biggest challenge that needs to be addressed is the lack of co-ordination and co-operation between all the stakeholders involved in the integration process, whilst one interviewee also mentioned as a problem the central administration's inertia.

The availability of the appropriate legislative framework on integration so as to comply with the formal obligations that Greece has as a European country is not enough; what is more important is to implement the legislation and to improve the living conditions of migrants and refugees, help their integration and allow them to

enjoy the same rights as everyone and gain a perspective in their lives. The European policies do not help towards that direction, as the EU has opted for the securitisation approach (“let’s put them all in prison”). As an interviewee reminded us, when the first wave of migrants and refugees arrived in Greece, the European approach was that of establishing controlled reception centres.

As one interviewee put it, although Greece is faced with systemic challenges on the issue of migration, other than the *Migrants’ Integration Councils*⁵³, the administrative bureaucracy lacks the tools that would evaluate the integration initiatives implemented so far, map the unmet needs and suggest new policies. At the level of the central administration, such a tool would be the establishment and operation of an inter-ministerial body that would coordinate efficiently, develop synergies and design policies. The institutional framework already exists (Law 4251/14), but at the moment there is only an informal mapping team involving 11 ministries, coordinated by the Direction of Social Inclusion.

(a) Asylum procedures and legalisation process

The reception services treat all newly arrived migrants and refugees alike, without making any distinctions. The term “illegal migrants” is not used by the authorities anymore, who instead use the term “undocumented migrants” to describe the migrants and refugees without legal documents (thus focusing on the act and not on the person).⁵⁴

According to one interviewee, there are three distinct procedures regarding asylum, the regular one, the faster one and the procedure at the borders. There are big delays in asylum granting, sometimes reaching a whole year. This delay creates insecurity to asylum-seekers regarding the outcome of their application, and, even though recognized asylum-seekers have access to the labour market, they

53. There are only 11 MICs in 10 municipalities in the country.

54. For a detailed explanation of the use of the terms “illegal” and “undocumented” migrants see UNHCR terminology leaflet (in Greek): https://www.unhcr.org/cy/wp-content/uploads/sites/41/2018/09/TerminologyLeafletGREEK_PICUM.pdf

face problems as they cannot have access to the public services of their country of origin in order to adduce necessary supporting documents, e.g. vocational training certificates etc., so that they can enjoy specific rights and benefits and have access to health, accommodation and employment.

The legal framework regarding foreign residents (*Aliens Right*) has changed and detention cannot take place as a preventive measure for security reasons, but only in view of returning migrants back to the sending country or their country of origin. To Ombudsman view, the deprivation of freedom should only be used as a last resort measure. As for asylum-seekers, in order to cut- short the lengthy process, interviews using Skype have been suggested, but it is not known how well this system has worked.

Another important point that was raised by most of our interlocutors is the conviction that the process of integration of documented migrants has been thrashed aside because of the refugee crisis, since the migration authorities cannot devote time on that issue. As an interviewee pointed out, most of the funding that is made available to help with the integration of migrants and refugees is now directed to the reception process rather than the integration process.

(b) Over-burdened state infrastructure (healthcare, education, accommodation)

Refugees living on the islands, where there is only one hospital or health centre that serves both the local population and the thousands of refugees and migrants, are faced with a gruesome situation and conflicts often occur between the members of the local society and refugees, which undermine social peace.

As for the integration of refugee children in the school environment, there is no infrastructure (interpreters, particularly for Arabic and Urdu speakers), that would facilitate the smooth integration of these children in the class. Long delays are been recorded because this process had to be planned in coordination with the Regional Education Directories.

(c) Living conditions and access to basic rights and services

Living conditions at the Reception and Identification Centres and hotspots are extremely dire, exacerbated by the access failure to health services. Hotspots are located in the islands of Eastern Aegean (Samos, Lesbos, Kos), while Hospitality Centres on the mainland are temporary structures (containers) or camps. The state has no obligation to provide accommodation to migrants, and, therefore, they should find it themselves or through their networks. There were a few programmes for refugees, by Municipalities and other agencies, providing accommodation solutions, but the main concern is access to decent accommodation.

A UNHCR **accommodation** scheme has been in place since November 2015, primarily dedicated to asylum seekers eligible for relocation, and including Dublin-II family reunification candidates and vulnerable applicants since July 2016. This housing programme called ESTIA⁵⁵, runs in cooperation with various NGOs and Municipalities (e.g. Athens and Thessaloniki), and it has given incentives to house owners to rent their houses to migrants and refugees, and thus avoid their ghettoisation in certain neighbourhoods. However, it is not enough to place those people in a neighbourhood; additional measures are needed to help them integrate into the urban tissue. The scheme is targeted to the older cohorts of asylum seekers; the newcomers do not have access to accommodation once they are allowed to leave the hotspot and accommodation centres. So, there are different speeds and different measures for the accommodation of migrants and refugees.

In terms of access to **employment**, authorised migrants can benefit from a system implemented by the Decentralised Authorities that collects job requests at the area of their competencies and forwards them to the various embassies. By contrast, migrants whose status has not been definitively defined cannot work legally; because

55. The scheme is funded by the European Commission through DG ECHO. On October 1, 2019 21,442 refugees and asylum seekers were accommodated in urban apartments in various Greek cities, through this housing programme. See UNHCR Factsheet: <http://estia.unhcr.gr/en/estia-accommodation-capacity-weekly-update-1-october-2019/>

of long delays in issuing or renewing residence permits, they are forced to work illegally in order to survive. In order for migrants to be able to renew their residence permit, they must prove that they have been employed for a specific number of days, as work is a prerequisite for their social insurance, and, sometimes, for their access to health services. As for asylum-seekers, a critical problem they are faced with is that their academic and professional skills cannot be recorded at the registration stage.

First generation migrants face difficulties in communication (language barriers), owing to the fact that there were only few Greek language teaching programmes, and these were not implemented effectively or people could not attend them. By contrast, there is no problem for second generation migrants or for the integration of their children in the school environment.

(d) Attitude of EU countries and authorities

By providing the institutional and legislative framework through regulations and directives, and by granting funding resources, the EU authorities can contribute to assisting and supporting migrants and refugees, since, in collaboration with national states, they are responsible for planning. To this end, the role of the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) is also important.

Central and local authorities should cooperate, because the central state is responsible for the policy formulation and local authorities can undertake initiatives to support the integration of migrants and refugees, especially through the social services provided by municipalities.

(e) Role of the NGOs

Both at the national and the supranational level, NGOs can contribute, through programmes that will help migrants and refugees integrate in the local communities, and also help them obtain language skills and contribute to their access to basic rights and services, such as healthcare, accommodation, education and employment.

(f) Exploitation of migrants and refugees by peoples' smugglers and organised crime

Due to the lack of communication skills and the lack of adequate information provision regarding their rights, migrants and refugees may become victims of smugglers, organised crime members, local community residents, as well as lawyers.

(g) Interaction with the local communities

The steady influx of migrants was a constant until 2015, when the numbers rocketed to unprecedented levels. Whilst previous cohorts of migrants were gradually settling down, and the local population was becoming familiar with their presence, the refugee crisis created an inverse momentum and the first signs of islamophobia appeared, according to one interviewee. The negative attitudes of the population are not limited only to Greek-born residents, according to an interviewee; often they are also characteristic of migrants who live in Greece for many years.

The attitude of local communities is not uniform of course and should be judged per case. It often depends on the organised civil society. Some communities are xenophobic and introverted, particularly regarding the school enrolment of migrant and refugee children. As one interviewee reminded us, in the past there have been huge controversies on the question whether a migrant or refugee student is entitled to hold the Greek flag in the National Day parades.

These hostile reactions are often fuelled by the negative portrayal of refugees and migrants in the media and the social networks, which incite xenophobic reflexes to the local communities; by contrast, when local populations get into contact with foreigners, or collaborate and work with them, their perspective changes.

(h) Uncertainty about the future

All these problems make migrants and refugees feel uncertain about their future in general, in every sector. In particular, the main fear of refugees is the outcome of their asylum application and the possibility of its rejection, while for migrants, it is the delay in the re-

newal of residence permits that incites a feeling of fear to them and excludes them from access to various services.

4.2.3. *Suggestions-recommendations*

Integration is a matter of policy initiatives, as well as of political will. A systemic approach with a long-term perspective at the administrative and legislative levels, is called for, in the form of an *Action Plan* that will make the best use of available resources⁵⁶, take into account the pre-existing knowledge in terms of mapping and recommendations, assign responsibilities and be subject of assessment. But, integration is also, and most importantly, a European issue. As an interviewee suggested, a European Commissioner for Inclusion who can interact with local stakeholders, would enhance the integration process in all the EU countries (provided, of course, that *there is* a European policy regarding the integration of migrants and refugees, as another interviewee pointed out).

Integration policies need to be specific, coherent and tailored to the particular needs of the various sub-categories of migrants and refugees (e.g. old vs. new migrants), and address the broad spectrum of integration policies (healthcare, education, employment, housing, rights and obligations, adjustment to the local social life and cultural rules): “we should move away from both the emergency approach and the solidarity approach”, as one interviewee put it. The same person firmly believes that a change of perspective of the migration phenomenon is necessary, an approach that views it not as a European or a national problem, but as something inherent in human history. This implies an internal reflective process, both within Europe and Greece. It also requires -since we ask for solidarity from the other European countries- a mandatory system of distributing the migrants and refugees within Greece as well. The collective memory of a local community can help in this respect: if it has received refugee populations in the past, it can receive them again.

56. An interviewee from an international NGO gave the example of Turkey, which uses EU funding to build clinics for migrants and then exploits the human capital of immigrants by staffing these clinics e.g. with Syrian doctors.

A point that was raised by an interviewee brings to the fore the delicate issue of the socially excluded and vulnerable people in Greece that are neither migrants nor refugees, who feel left out from the integration process and have to compete for the limited state resources, thus inciting social tensions.

More specific recommendations have also been put forward by the interviewees, regarding the different areas of integration.

Improvements in the legislative framework are a priority, so that migrants and refugees are entitled the same opportunities as the native population. To this end, the transformation of the administrative culture is imperative so that migrants and refugees are not treated as 'second class' citizens and their rights are protected. **Synergies** between the central government and the local authorities are of crucial importance too, in view of implementing effective integration policies and avoiding inconsistencies. **Living conditions**, particularly for asylum-seekers at hotspots, must be drastically improved. Overcrowded camps like the RIC in Moria, where almost 13,000 people are crammed in facilities which are for 3,000 people, create grave problems, such as health issues, diseases, epidemics etc.

Access to employment, healthcare and social services is a prerequisite for a successful integration. Support services in particular, such as access to healthcare, cultural mediation, interpretation, legal aid, psychosocial support, should be made available, especially for victims of torture and trafficking, as well as for people with disabilities.

Learning the Greek language is a crucial tool for the integration of migrants and refugees in local communities, and the Greek State should move very quickly towards organising courses in the Greek language, as well as in the Greek culture. At the same time, the Greek State should work with migrants and refugees speaking both Greek and their maternal language as cultural mediators, interpreters and tutors, to help with the integration of less educated, in terms of language skills, migrants and refugees. This will facilitate employment policies for second generation people, and help the state respond to emergencies and other needs (medical etc.) of people who do not speak the Greek language yet. It will also contribute to the integration of new entrants.

Access to **education** in the broad sense is also significant, as it can help not only the foreign populations that wish to integrate, but also the Greek citizens, to tolerate diversity, to become familiar with the history of other people and to understand migratory movements over time, thus making it easier for them to accept the integration of migrants and refugees in the Greek society.

Last but not least, greater sensitivity and responsibility on behalf of **media** on migration issues is required.

Suggestions of the young migrant to improve integration policies

At the general policy level, there needs to be a more systematic effort and coordination among different organisations. Local people should try to get in contact with the newcomers, beyond the barriers of colour, religion etc. Human contact is necessary and natural and at the same time it is an advantage that a country like Greece has, in contrast with Germany.

Regarding access to employment, there needs to be a campaign addressed to employers and at the same time to improve migrants' skills. Furthermore, employers should be mobilised and get in touch with NGOs expertise in the field, in order to benefit from existing migrants' skills and professional experience.

In the area of education, all authorities and organisations concerned should immediately collaborate for the systematic provision of Greek language courses to migrants and refugees. It would be better to organise mixed classes with students of Greek and non-Greek origin. The Greek language should also be taught in the camps, in order for the children to be able to attend Greek schools.

Finally, media discourses should stop dispersing negative stereotypes (e.g. portraying foreigners as 'rapists' or 'terrorists', or claiming that migrants are taking jobs from unemployed Greeks) which generate racist attitudes. Migrants and refugees are also taxpayers and make a significant contribution to the national economy and this should be acknowledged.

4.2.4. *Concluding remarks*

The legislative framework regarding the integration of both migrants and asylum-seekers appears to be satisfactory, but it remains problematic in terms of implementation. There are long delays, especially in the renewal of residence permits of long-established migrants, since there are no automatic mechanisms for renewal. Those who are in the process of authorisation cannot work, thus fuelling informal or undeclared work and tax evasion. Refugees and migrants face particular difficulties in accessing health and housing services, either in terms of legal limitations or in terms of prejudices and problems caused by the Central Administration that denies them access. Furthermore, migrants and refugees often cannot have access to the public services of their country of origin, and, thus, cannot certify any capacities or skills that they may have acquired, and hence become entitled to rights and services in the host country. Finally, access to employment is difficult for migrants and refugees not only owing to the language barriers, but also if they lack appropriate education or if they cannot certify their vocational qualifications. As a result, they often become victims of labour exploitation.

A diversified, well thought, solid integration system is required, one for the long-established migrants, and another for the new arrivals. A system with simple and clear rules that are supported by the state authorities and that can be adjusted to changing circumstances: “you need time, money and people” as an interviewee put it. The issue of limited material and human resources was also raised by other interviewees, who believe that the process of integration would be greatly enhanced if there was more funding for the centrally designed policies and a significant increase in the personnel involved. To this end, efforts are made for EU funds to go through the Ministry (for the year 2020), unlike what has been happening so far, when the largest part has been directed to UNHCR, NGOs etc.

Not all interviewees share the same view on the prospects of the integration process in Greece. A bleaker perspective on the issue of integration, but on the prospects of the country as well, was given by one of our interlocutors who believes that the issue of integra-

tion is closely related to the structural problems of the Greek state: “these people live in Greece...the fate is the same, but it’s a little worse for migrants than for Greeks, since they have no voice”. And he adds: “following missions in various countries, when I came to Greece, I never imagined that I would find this situation. Complicated and old-fashioned processes, corruption, bureaucracy... The system is rotten. A system that does not work neither for Greeks nor for migrants. There is no hope in this country.”

Despite the pessimistic approach of many front-line activists and policy makers regarding the future prospects of the integration process, it remains that changes in the institutional framework regarding the integration of older cohorts of migrants are urgently needed. Changes that will ensure that access to rights and benefits does not depend on nationality, but on the fact that these people are long-term migrants in Greece. Better implementation of the legislation will lead to better results, if all authorities involved cooperate with each other. The contribution of the local government is significant and necessary, since it constitutes the competent body to execute all policies and procedures that will help with the integration, and provide feedback to the central state.

Integration is an issue of great concern for migrants and refugees. However, cultural differences with the Greek population should always be taken into account, and integration should be facilitated, while respecting all aspects that could easily become reasons for discrimination, for example migrants and refugees should never be asked to deny their origin, culture or religion.

An in-depth discussion as to the characteristics and content of a national integration system is a matter of utmost priority, taking into consideration the overall geopolitical context, the fragile state of the Greek economy, the demographic ageing of the indigenous population and the complexity of the mixed migratory flows.

4.3. Key findings from the Focus Group Discussion

A Focus Group Discussion was held at the National Centre for Social Research headquarters on September 25, 2019, with the aim of assessing the integration process of migrants and refugees in Greece, through the eyes of major stakeholders, such as representatives from the General Secretariat for Migration Policy, the Special Service for the Co-ordination and Management of AMIF Programmes, the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), Caritas Hellas and the Greek Forum of Refugees. A total of 6 persons took part in a three-hour long stimulating and informative discussion that was coordinated by members of the research team and recorded with the consent of the participants. Our main findings are presented below.

4.3.1. Assessment of the integration process

Integration, according to our interlocutor from the central administration, is a key concept connoting mutual respect, recognition of rights, but also adjustment and will to integrate on behalf of migrants themselves. So far, a lot has been done at the level of services, facilities and commitment on the part of EU authorities and millions of euro have been spent. A major initiative has been the establishment of the Migrants Integration Councils at the local level (10 in total), with the participation of migrants. Their main activities include Greek language courses, employment promotion and various activities involving both migrant and native-born children.

The main pieces of legislation regarding the integration of migrants and refugees include the *Migration and Social Integration Code* (Law 4251/2014), the *National Strategy for the Inclusion of Third-country Citizens, 2015-2019*, and the *National Strategy for Inclusion*, launched earlier this year, that, for the first time, is also addressed to asylum-seekers and persons in need of international protection.

The process of integration has improved over the years, according to a participant, but it still suffers from inconsistencies and setbacks, like in the case of the right to vote, the suspension of the issuance of a Social Security Registration Number (AMKA), and the erratic school enrolment of refugee children, not to mention the se-

rious delays in the asylum procedure, especially in making an appointment with the Asylum Service.⁵⁷ A long-standing problem that was also pointed out is that often the authorities cannot make the distinction between a migrant and a refugee.

Regarding the earlier cohorts of migrants, a process of 'self-integration' has taken place, as a participant pointed out, giving several examples of successful self-integration though finding a job, learning the language, becoming an entrepreneur, etc. The key to their success was their eagerness to integrate. He also gave counter-examples of Pakistani migrants who do not wish to integrate; they want to go back home and they send all their money to their families left behind.

Major obstacles encountered by migrants and refugees

The several barriers to a successful integration of migrants and refugees that emerged from the Focus Group Discussion, broadly relate to the institutional framework in place, the structural problems of the Greek economy and the subjective and practical problems daily encountered by migrants and refugees. A list follows:

Institutional barriers

- Lack of a central integration plan involving all stakeholders, as well as lack co-ordination between the competent authorities
- Loss of access to a Tax Identification Number (TIN) and a Social Security Registration Number (AMKA)⁵⁸
- Difficulty in the recognition of educational qualifications of migrants and refugees
- Under-functioning and under-financing of the Migrants' Integration Councils
- Lengthy legalisation procedures
- Discontinuities and amateurism in the integration initiatives

57. According to a participant, sometimes, asylum-seekers are so exasperated by the long delays that they decide to give themselves up to the police, in order to speed up the process.

58. The new requirements regarding third-country nationals' entitlement to AMKA were announced in November 2019 but have only recently come into force.

Structural problems

- Limited resources of local authorities
- High unemployment rate, for both natives and migrants.

Subjective barriers

- Language, cultural and communication barriers
- Poor health status and mental health problems (“an unresolved issue”)
- Difficulties in having a permanent address
- Impact of fake news dispersed
- Uncertainty about the future, unwillingness to integrate.

Factors that contribute to a successful integration

According to the Focus Group participants, the factors that can contribute the most to the successful integration of migrants and refugees include the following:

- Easier access to decent housing and paid employment. The Catholic organisation Caritas runs a community shelter project in Athens (Neos Kosmos), for vulnerable migrants and refugees, that encourages their interaction and osmosis with the neighbourhood. The beneficiaries can stay for 12 to 18 months.⁵⁹ In the area of employability, the same organisation runs the pilot project ‘Livelihoods’, aiming -amongst other things- at preparing recognised refugees for entering the Greek labour market (with the collaboration of an experienced Greek recruiting agency); it has also developed an online platform and an application to help refugees and migrants get information about training and employment opportunities and thus come to grips with the labour market reality.⁶⁰ Caritas Hellas also operates 4 Social Spots (Centres for Social Inclusion

59. For further details see: <https://caritas.gr/en/intervention-en/accommodation/>

60. For further details see: <https://caritas.gr/en/intervention-en/economic-integration/>

and Employability) (3 in Athens and one in Thessaloniki), that provide a variety of services (work counselling, training courses, Greek language classes, seminars, psychological counselling and intercultural activities) to migrants and refugees.⁶¹

- Language competence. Informal language courses for adults can help migrants and refugees overcome the barriers in communication. A positive example is the 'Piraeus Open School for Migrants' established in 2005 in view of providing educational and training support to migrants and refugees residing in Greece. The Open School is run exclusively by volunteers and it provides classes during the weekend to migrants and refugees from every ethnic and religious background. At present, there are 15 classes attended by 700 to 800 students.
- Integration courses. The programme HELIOS⁶² launched by IOM in June 2019, offers integration courses to recognised refugees (beneficiaries of international protection currently residing in temporary accommodation schemes) within the 'Integration Learning Centres', as a nudge towards their integration, after they have gone through the emergency stage and the asylum claim. Each course cycle lasts for 6 months and consists of modules on Greek language learning, cultural orientation, job readiness and life skills. The emphasis of the programme (which runs until November 2020) is on encouraging mutual cultural understanding, acquiring soft skills and empowering the beneficiaries in 3 areas: accommodation, education and employability. In the area of accommodation, it supports beneficiaries towards independent accommodation in apartments rented in their name, whilst in the area of employability, the programme provides individual employability and job readiness support, including through job counselling, access to job-

61. These initiatives are part of the project «METAVASIS Project – Participation, Empowerment and Social Inclusion of Refugees / Migrants in Greece» run by Caritas Hellas and funded by Caritas Germany, and the project “Social and Economic Integration of Refugees and Immigrants in Athens” funded by Caritas Switzerland. See: <https://caritas.gr/en/intervention-en/social-inclusion-en/social-inclusion/>

62. A pilot project funded by the Directorate General Migration and Home Affairs of the European Commission (DG HOME).

related certifications and networking with private employers. The programme also monitors and assesses the integration progress of the beneficiaries, to ensure that they will be in a position to confidently navigate through Greek public service providers once they will exit from the HELIOS pilot project and start living independently in Greece.⁶³ So far, around 2,500 recognised refugees attend the integration courses.

- School enrolment of migrant and refugee children. The role of the ‘Coordinators for the Education of Refugees’ is crucial in providing access to education to children living in accommodation camps, but also in bringing together refugees with the local population (“an integrated person is one who has friends from the local communities”).
- Improving every-day life in the accommodation sites. A positive initiative brought to the light during the Focus Group Discussion is the IOM programme ‘Improving the Greek Reception System through Site Management Support and Targeted Interventions in Long-Term Accommodation Sites’, implemented in all the mainland open accommodation facilities (28 in total). The ‘Site Management Support’ programme provides psychological and legal support, interpretation services, child protection and the creation of safe spaces for children and women living in the camps. It also provides non-formal education to children (homework support classes) and adults (Greek and English classes) inside the camps, whilst it manages ‘Safe Zones’ within selected sites for the protection of Unaccompanied Migrant Children, to ensure maintenance, provision of food and non-food items, recreational activities and specialized legal and psychosocial support.⁶⁴ A similar initiative to improve everyday life in the camps is the ‘Emergency Response Plan’ run by Caritas Hellas inside five refugee accommodation sites, targeted at both men and women refugees (“Men’s Space”, Women’s Safe Spaces).

63. See also: <https://greece.iom.int/en/hellenic-integration-support-beneficiaries-international-protection-helios>

64. See also: <https://greece.iom.int/en/improving-greek-reception-system-through-site-management-support-and-targeted-interventions-long>

- Access to accommodation. The programme ESTIA is a short-term solution for recognised refugees but it cannot help their integration as they have to move out from the apartments after 6 months.
- Availability of cash. The cash assistance (provided by UNHCR to eligible refugees and asylum-seekers, as part of the ESTIA programme) restores dignity and empowers asylum-seekers and refugees who can choose how to cover their basic needs⁶⁵; cash assistance has also contributed to eliminate the sexual exploitation of children, as one participant pointed out.
- Resolution of the implementation problems related to integration policies and simplification of asylum and legalisation procedures.
- Greater involvement of the migrants and refugees themselves in policy design.
- The *National Strategy for Inclusion* launched earlier this year, is a great tool for integration as it organises the disperse activities and sets priorities. The establishment of the Asylum Service and of local government initiatives such as the Co-ordination Centres for Migrants and Refugees also contribute to facilitate the integration progress of earlier and newer cohorts of migrants and refugees.

4.3.2. Major challenges to be addressed

- Perhaps the single most pressing problem to be addressed is the emergency situation prevailing in the accommodation sites in the Aegean islands, owing to the increased influx of migrants and refugees. The further deterioration of living conditions in the camps disrupts the daily routine of the camp residents and cancels out all previous efforts to integrate migrants and refugees and connect them to the outside world, as a participant pointed out.
- The suspension of the automatic issuance of a Social Security Registration Number (AMKA) for third-country nationals

65. See: <http://estia.unhcr.gr/en/greece-cash-assistance-february-2019/>

poses a major health risk, not only for the vulnerable migrant and refugee populations (especially the children) who cannot have access to health-care services unless it is an emergency, but also for the local communities. The first big problems have already appeared, especially regarding the vaccination of children in order to attend school, which is a pre-requisite for their enrolment.

- The health of migrants and refugees is also compromised by the vastly inadequate healthcare services in the accommodation sites, especially at the RIC of Moria and the camp in Malakasa, a risk further exacerbated by the scores of “spontaneous arrivals”.
- Though considerable, the available funding to address the continued influx of refugees and migrants falls short of the growing needs. It is expected that more funds will be made available during the next programming period through AMIF.
- A major shift in the allocation of funds has been recorded following the refugee crisis in 2015. As the participant from the agency that manages AMIF funding pointed out, in the context of the National Programme 2014-2020, 300 million euro have been allocated to Greece towards reception and asylum needs, and only 30 million euro towards the integration of migrants.⁶⁶ As a result, earlier migrants feel neglected: “they have forgotten us!”.
- Regarding the school enrolment of migrant and refugee children, significant problems persist, exacerbated by the recent change in government that delayed the recruitment of qualified teachers and the process of transportation of children from the accommodation sites care of IOM⁶⁷. For this reason, according to an informed participant, around 5,000 school-age children

66. The AMIF’s mission is to support Greek national efforts to improve reception capacities, ensure that asylum procedures are in line with EU standards, integrate migrants at local and regional levels and increase the effectiveness of return programmes. See: https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/201902_managing-migration-eu-financial-support-to-greece_en.pdf

67. In 2018, IOM transferred 4,600 migrant and refugee children to their school;

of a refugee and migrant background were left out of school, at the time of the focus group discussion, putting “their school year at risk”, whilst secondary-school students might lose the year because of absences. School attendance is occasionally also disrupted in some areas by local residents who are hostile to the enrolment of migrant and refugee children in the same school as their own children.

- Unaccompanied children are left with no support and protection once they reach the age of 18. As a participant put it: “what happens to these young adults?”.
- As the accommodation scheme ESTIA is coming towards the end and the rent market in the large cities is very adverse, there will soon be thousands of homeless refugees, whose vulnerability might be exploited.
- Some beneficiaries of integration programmes do not want to stay in Greece and to integrate, owing to the uncertainty about the future. Many are not even aware of their rights and obligations as residents of Greece.

4.3.3. Suggestions for the improvement of the integration process

As all participants have a hands-on experience of the various aspects of the integration process in Greece, the loopholes and the contradictions, they put forward a number of recommendations to improve the process in most of the policy areas.

- As the participant with the migrant background suggested, the integration strategy requires a bottom-up approach from the migrant communities (who in the past were not at all involved), the local communities and the civil society organisations, to the local government, all the way up to the central administration
- Need for a National Master Plan covering reception, asylum and integration policies. Integration policies need to be re-de-

(September 2019). At the time of the focus group discussion (September 2019), it was reported that only 600 children attended school, transferred by their own means or courtesy of local governments.

signed to ensure stability, sustainability and a long-term time frame, and focus more on inclusion (the example of Germany was mentioned by one participant)

- Inter-ministerial coordination, institutionalised co-operation with all the stakeholders involved in the integration process, resolution of the implementation problems, simplification of procedures
- EU regulations must be adapted to the Greek reality
- A lighter system of management of funds
- Strengthening of the Migrants' Integration Councils (that are at a stalemate, according to a participant) with recruitment of additional staff. The recruitment process is already under way in 9 of the 13 Regions of the country and the cost of the personnel will be funded by the Regional Operational Programmes
- Participation of local governments in integration programmes
- Increase in the number of support programmes like ESTIA, HELIOS, cash assistance, etc.
- Issuing of a Health Card for all migrants and refugees
- Reception classes for school-age children and non-formal education for the adult population. An educational framework is required that will provide uniform study programmes and cover the loopholes. As a participant put it: "The best integration tool for parents is their children"
- Elimination of language barriers, through extensive classes in the Greek language
- Acquisition of the *European Qualification Passport* (European Skills Toolkit) and full mapping of the educational and skills profile of migrants and refugees
- Substantial increase in the number of cultural mediators and certification of their skills
- Toolkit for cultural mediators to assist in the diagnosis of mental health problems
- Early identification of vulnerable groups, through the use of an information system
- Development of a system (e.g. an application) that will provide holistic information to migrants and refugees, with re-

gard to their rights and obligations, so that they do not fall victim of the fake news spread around by people's smugglers. Cultural mediators can play a key role in this respect.

4.3.4. Concluding remarks

Despite the undeniable progress recorded in the process of integration over the years, and the channelling of considerable funds, there persist significant inconsistencies and set-backs. The most problematic policy areas relate to the absence of a coherent, long-term strategic plan for the integration of migrant and refugees, the lack of co-ordination between the various stakeholders, the huge delays in the legalisation and asylum procedures, and the limited administrative capacity.

A major shift has been recorded in recent years from integration policies to reception policies, as the vast majority of funds and policy initiatives is now directed towards addressing the problems of recent migrants and refugees arriving in Greece from war and violence-stricken zones, forcing the earlier cohorts of migrants to look after themselves, to 'self-integrate'. At the same time, the vulnerable population in Greece continues to grow, as new groups of materially deprived and socially excluded people fall into this category, whilst policy responses fall short of addressing their pressing needs.

4.4. Summary of main findings of the empirical research

1. The gradual improvements in the institutional framework on integration have contributed to the access of migrants and refugees to basic rights and services, but the implementation of a holistic and coherent integration policy still lags behind. Long-established migrants face serious problems with their legal status as there are long delays and discontinuities in the renewal of residence permits, and those who are in the process of authorisation cannot work, thus often falling victim of labour exploitation. Changes in the institutional framework regarding the integration of older cohorts of migrants are ur-

gently needed, so as to ensure that access to rights and benefits does not depend on nationality, but on the fact that these people are long-term migrants in Greece.

2. A major shift has been recorded in recent years from integration policies to reception policies. The vast majority of EU funds, as well as of policy measures, is now directed towards addressing the problems of recent migrants and refugees arriving in Greece from war and violence-stricken zones, thrashing aside the problems of the earlier cohorts of migrants and forcing them to look after themselves, to 'self-integrate'.
3. Although many of the basic needs of asylum-seekers are being covered, the degree of integration is minimal. The uncertainty about the future, the communication difficulties, the lack of employment opportunities, the contradictory information on their rights, poor healthcare and social services and security issues, add to the exasperation of asylum-seekers and compromise their integration prospects.
4. The most important factors that contribute to the integration process of migrants and refugees include their empowerment, the provision of clear information on the institutional framework, stability of interventions and security. Equally important is the support from the local community formal and informal networks and access to socio-psychological support services from the very first moment of the arrival of migrants and refugees. Special care should be given to the needs of children and adolescents, both accompanied by their families or unaccompanied.
5. An in-depth discussion as to the characteristics and the content of a national integration system is a matter of utmost priority, taking into consideration the threatening geopolitical context, the fragile state of the Greek economy, the demographic ageing of the indigenous population and the complexity of the mixed migratory flows.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. *Shortcomings and pitfalls*

The desk and the qualitative research have shed light on the main *shortcomings and pitfalls* in the Greek migration and reception policies that need to be addressed.

- The Greek legislative and institutional framework on the integration of migrants and refugees is ineffective because it provides for a system of legal migration which is hard to enforce and which leads to the abuse of migrants' rights. Greece's migration policy does not aim at and does not invest in the integration of migrants because it is ambiguous and contradictory.
- The active inclusion of the principles of integration into the administrative practices should be pursued, rather than an approach consisting of "inaction" or "omission" policies - as it has been repeatedly emphasized in EKKE's qualitative surveys. Only then will a coherent, integrated, multifunctional and mutually acceptable organisational concept of integration be formed, the convergence of policies goals and objectives with practices will be strengthened and a common organisational plan for the integration of third-country nationals into Greek society will be developed.
- The lack of strategic action plans, of sustainable measures and of prioritisation of policies lead to the overlapping and ineffectiveness of policies. The political agenda lacks realism in tackling the migration question. Moreover, the compartmentalisation of knowledge and policies prevails, as the design and implementation of the migration policy is fragmented in

a large number of public agencies, government departments, bureaus and organisations. Only one fifth of those agencies provide services exclusively to immigrants.

- The lack of cooperation and coordination of services across all administrative levels has greatly contributed to the adoption of conflicting practices by the administration. As EKKE research shows, civil servants often downplay the issue of coordination and other service-related problems, often attributing them to migrants' ignorance, their suspicion of public administration and the difficulty of communication.
- The combination of gaps and ambiguities in the legislative framework, a reluctant administration and the absence of strong political will to tackle the issue of migration create a dysfunctional framework for implementing migrant policy, which does not and cannot address the realities and the needs of a coherent society, the state and the migrants themselves.
- With regard to the integration of women migrants, existing legislation lacks a gender perspective; women do not constitute a distinct target group and their multiple roles are not highlighted.
- The legalisation process is flawed, mostly owing to the rigid legal requirements in order to be eligible for a residence permit in the country. As a result, the risk of de-legalisation of migrants is great and constant, and the opportunities to reinstate/return to legality few, mainly due to the impact of the financial crisis on employment and the direct link between legal residence and work permit.
- There is no comprehensive legal framework that ensures the basic rights to all migrants and refugees whose asylum application has not been definitively rejected, especially unaccompanied children and migrant children of undocumented migrants, the two most vulnerable groups.
- Another area in which integration problems appear to be acute is access to healthcare and welfare services, as it depends on the legal status of migrants, a formal legality which restricts the basic right of all people in need, to health and protection of life.

5.2. *Areas of improvement*

- Simplification of the procedures for legalising migrants who meet the requirements. Disconnection - subject to conditions – of the residence permit from the work permit. This change would make it easier for migrants to retain their legal status in times of recession. To this end, a permanent mechanism for restoring legitimacy must be created.
- Adoption of best practices successfully implemented in other EU countries, adjusted to the Greek conditions. EKKE has made proposals for the expansion and better organisation of “one stop shops”, the better use of cultural mediators and the implementation of ‘Back-End Offices’ for the networking and coordination of all communication and information channels.
- Empowerment of the public administration and front-line services who handle migration issues with trained and qualified staff, and expertise knowledge.
- Establishment of reception and information mechanisms for migrants and refugees, to address their lack of information on their rights and obligations, the competent authorities and the administrative procedures. Operation of one-stop services to support residence and integration of migrants, through simplified procedures and improved access to public goods and services.
- Improving access to the labour market through specific initiatives, such as: the establishment of a public labour mediation service between migrant workers and their employers; the establishment of an effective mechanism for ex-officio inspections of companies to check their compliance with labour legislation, without the need for prior reporting by the migrant; and the recognition of the educational and professional qualifications and skills of migrants.
- As far as migrant adult education is concerned, it presents more problems than school attendance for children, mainly because of its direct link to the legal status of potential beneficiaries and the temporary and pilot nature of most language learning programs.

- Female migrants suffer from profound and multiple forms of exclusion and discrimination, as compared to male migrants. However, gender, as a parameter of integration, and the barriers that women migrants face are not yet adequately addressed by the Greek state, which is the main agency responsible for the integration of migrants, both male and female.
- With respect to the management of the mixed migratory flows that continue to arrive at the door-step of Greece, a more efficient use of EU funds requires focusing on: (a) accelerating the asylum and relocation procedures, (b) moving the populations stranded in unacceptable conditions in the Aegean islands to more decent accommodation arrangements on the mainland, and (c) facilitating the full integration of those refugees who will be staying in Greece, especially their access to housing, employment and education.
- The right to have access to health care and welfare services must be disconnected from the legal status of migrants and refugees.
- A pressing issue that needs to be addressed is that of combating instances of racial discrimination in the Greek society and administration, in order to ensure equal access for migrants to basic goods and services. Research has revealed that, to some extent, xenophobic behaviour on the part of civil servants continues to exist. The host society is also called upon to change, accepting the cultural particularity of migrants and refugees, and to become more tolerant.

5.3. Concluding remarks

1. The absence of a clear and solid legal framework for migration and migrant integration creates a feeling of legal uncertainty for both migrants and public officials, thus burdening the relationship among them and with the Greek society as a whole. It has been argued that the gaps in migration policy are a political choice rather than a “technical” error or legislative failure. It is clear, however, that the legislative production of the

2000s, as well as the legalisation programs, have improved the situation, without fully responding to the challenges. A lot more remains to be done in order to address the complex migration phenomenon.

2. In the absence of formal and coherent integration policies, the early cohorts of migrants in the 1990s went through a process of self-integration, in terms of access to housing, employment, health and education for their children. Access to citizen's rights was granted belatedly and inconsistently, and still constitutes a serious problem. An automatic mechanism for the renewal of residence permits of settled migrants will address the serious gaps in their access to health, employment and social benefits.
3. The lack of coordination and synergies between the various stakeholders involved in the integration process leads to inconsistencies, loopholes and a waste of material and human resources.
4. The huge challenges associated with the management of the recent migration flows proved far beyond the material and administrative capacities of the Greek authorities, whether national, regional or local, increasingly so in the context of the concurrent economic and humanitarian crises that had deeply affected the country until recently.
5. The outburst of the refugee crisis, which culminated in 2015, marks a turning point in integration policies, as almost all of the available funding, the material resources and human capacity are now directed towards dealing with the pressing problems associated with the continuous flows of asylum-seekers by land and sea, thrashing aside the integration of earlier cohorts of migrants. The integration policies have become reception policies.
6. As migratory flows into Greece continue at an increasing pace⁶⁸, the administrative capacity remains over-burdened.

68. According to UNHCR, Greece has received 46,100 of the 81,300 people crossing the Mediterranean Sea during the first 9 months of 2019 – more than Spain, Italy, Malta and Cyprus combined. See: <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/72161>

The Asylum Service, the Greek Armed Forces, the Coast Guard, the National Health System cannot effectively cope *ad infinitum*, with their limited resources and capabilities, with an ever-increasing stock of migrants and refugees. The competent authorities need to be equipped with additional resources, managing skills and capabilities; above all, they need to cope with a manageable situation, rather than emergency conditions.

7. The significant EU funds disbursed to the Greek authorities and NGOs to deliver services to recently-arrived migrant and refugee families and to unaccompanied children had a decisive impact on addressing their most urgent needs and on facilitating their first steps towards their integration in the reception country. However, the EU-funded programmes and initiatives cover only a part of the displaced populations and they offer only short-term solutions to the beneficiaries. As a result, once a project is over, the problems re-emerge, and the risk of vulnerability increases.
8. The majority of migrants and refugees arriving in Greece still considers Greece “as a passage” or a transit country. Owing to the considerable delays in the processing of their asylum application, hundreds of thousands of women, men and children (accompanied or not), are living for years in a ‘limbo’ situation, stuck in a country they do not want to be in. The uncertainty about their future fuels their exasperation and compromises the integration process.
9. Unmet medical needs, including mental health issues, constitute a major issue for the displaced populations, as well as for the local communities, in terms of healthcare provision. Children, in particular, are at an increased risk of poor mental health. Early health and especially mental health screening are thus essential and should be a policy priority to the benefit of migrant and public health.
10. No integration process can take place, nor the access to basic rights can be guaranteed, as long as the Greek islands continue to receive scores of new migrants and refugees every day, that worsen the situation in already dangerously overcrowded fa-

cilities there. Urgent measures are needed that will ease the burden on the islands and improve the conditions in the reception facilities. Otherwise, despite the transfers to the mainland, as new arrivals drastically outnumber the transfers, the situation resembles a 'bottomless pit' that could easily become, once again, a hard to manage humanitarian crisis and a source of renewed social tensions.

11. At the EU-level, it is a matter of top priority to clarify the provisions of Dublin-II, reform the common European asylum system, and reinvigorate or re-adjust the controversial EU-Turkey agreement, that has largely degenerated into a mere 'fig-leaf'.
12. European and international authorities should not point a finger against Greece, or just "throw money on the problem". EU countries (especially those from the Visegrad Group) are called upon to show solidarity and take their fair share of migrants and refugees stranded in Greece. Eurostat figures have revealed a backlog of 878,600 requests at the end of 2018, with Germany having the largest share of pending requests (44%), ahead of Italy (12%). The figure comes despite the number of migrant arrivals in Europe practically halving in the last two years. Additionally, the rejection rate for asylum requests in Europe has almost doubled in three years, from 37% in 2016 to 64% in 2019. The German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) has in 2019 rejected three-quarters of family reunification requests from Greece.⁶⁹
13. The Greek economy, barely out of a prolonged economic crisis, cannot absorb so many waves of migrants and refugees. The Greek government must seek to internationalise the problem to the maximum degree, and convince the more powerful European countries (Germany, France) to negotiate with Turkey, in order to reach an understanding, so that migrants and refugees can no longer be used as an alibi to serve other obscure purposes.

69. See article in *The Guardian*: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/aug/25/asylum-seekers-limbo-eu-countries>

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Although a traditional migrant-sending country during most part of the 20th century, Greece became a destination country for hundreds of thousands of immigrants, especially from the Balkan countries, following the collapse of the former socialist regimes in Eastern Europe in the early 1990s. More recently, due to its geographical position as the first entry-point into the Schengen Area, Greece received over 1.25 million migrants and refugees from war and poverty-stricken zones in the Middle-East and Afghanistan, on their way to the more prosperous European North. The closure of the European borders in March 2016 (following the EU-Turkey agreement) that stranded tens of thousands of asylum-seekers in the Greek islands and the mainland and the continuous influx of migrants and refugees ever since, have put considerable pressure on the administrative capacity of the Greek authorities and the country's infrastructure, all the more so as the refugee/humanitarian crisis took the country by surprise and coincided with the prolonged economic crisis, drastic cuts in public spending and social unrest.

The present publication aims to provide an overview and assessment of migrant integration policies in Greece during the crisis period and beyond. In particular, the book investigates, through an extensive desk research and a qualitative analysis, not only the impact of policies and social practices on the social inclusion of migrant populations in Greece, but also how migration policies, smothered by the refugee crisis, have gradually drifted to reception policies for asylum-seekers.

The book also identifies the challenges that remain to be addressed, at the national and the EU level, in order to enhance the successful integration of migrants and refugees and to contribute to a better-informed public debate in Greece.



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