
GRECIA

Foreign female immigrants in Greece

Rossetos Fakiolas

National Technical University
66 Heroon Polytechniou Str. Zografou. 15772 Athens (Greece)
fakiolas@netor.gr

Laura Maratou-Alipranti

National Centre for Social Research
14-18 Messoghion Ave. 11527 Athens (Greece)
lalipranti@ekke.gr

Abstract

Strong push, pull and network formation factors account for the over 600,000 foreign immigrants, mostly economic and with irregular status, who have been since the early 1990s in Greece, a traditionally emigration country. Over a quarter of them are females who have come alone, marking the new trend in female migration. And like their male counterparts, they find jobs due to their wage and job flexibility. The recent Greek policy to regularise irregular or undocumented immigrants (UI), that is, to issue work and, in most cases, residence permits to those foreigners who work and/or live in the country irregularly, will settle some political, moral and social issues and allow more households and large firms to employ in a variety of jobs more women with a legal immigrant status. From the research point of view it may also facilitate more research on immigrant female employment, social and family life, and adult and child prostitution. On the other hand, it will also increase the cost of immigrant labour, its flexibility is likely to decrease and the invited depended family members of the legalised immigrants may tax heavily the inadequate and subsidised social infrastructure. Given that many irregular migrants have not applied for regularisation and new ones enter the market, perhaps a new regularisation would be needed soon, raising the broader question about the proper economic and social policies on irregular immigration.

Key words: female migration, irregular or undocumented immigrants, regularisation (legalisation, amnesty policy) of irregular immigrants, Greek family, Greek women.

Resumen. *Inmigrantes extranjeras en Grecia*

Intensos factores de atracción y de expulsión además de la formación de redes migratorias explican la presencia de más de 600.000 inmigrantes extranjeros en Grecia. La mayoría son inmigrantes económicos y de estatus irregular, quienes han vivido en Grecia desde principios de los noventa, en un país tradicionalmente expulsor de emigrantes. Más de una cuarta parte de éstos son mujeres que han llegado de forma autónoma, mostrando las nuevas tendencias en las migraciones femeninas. Como ocurre con los varones, encuentran ocupaciones caracterizadas por una gran flexibilidad laboral. La reciente política de regularización de inmigrantes extranjeros destinada a ofrecer permisos de trabajo y de residencia a aquéllos que están en situación irregular abrirá nuevas cuestiones políticas, morales y sociales, permitirá que los hogares y las grandes empresas empleen a mujeres en una gran variedad de trabajos, y desde el punto de vista de la investigación social facilitará el avance sobre el estudio del empleo de las mujeres inmigrantes, su situación social y familiar,

así como el fenómeno de la prostitución de niños y adultos. Por otra parte, también aumentará el coste de la mano de obra inmigrante, probablemente debilitará su flexibilidad y provocará que los familiares que entren a través de la reunificación familiar aumenten los costes de la ya inadecuada infraestructura de subsidios sociales. Muchos inmigrantes irregulares no han solicitado la regularización, a los que se suman los recién llegados al mercado, en este sentido posiblemente se necesitará pronto un nuevo proceso de regularización, poniendo sobre el tapete la cuestión de las políticas económicas y sociales dirigidas a los inmigrantes irregulares.

Palabras clave: feminización de la migración, inmigrantes irregulares, regularización (legalización, amnistía) de los inmigrantes irregulares, mercado de trabajo, familia griega, mujeres griegas.

Summary

1. Introduction

Based on available statistical information and research conclusions many authors discuss the issue of the «feminisation» of migration. Some also try to answer various questions and to offer plausible explanations for the relevant phenomena: «could female migration be regarded as a positive, emancipatory development», or «do females outnumber males in the total numbers of a given migrant population or in specific migrant groups»? (see Castles and Miller, 1993; Collinson, 1994; Maratou-Alipranti, 1996; Morris, 1997; Bravo, 1997; Phizacklea, 1997; Lin Lean Lim, 1997). Only brief references to those issues will be made in this paper, the main purpose of which is to examine the recent developments and the current situation in some aspects of the female immigration in Greece. Unfortunately, there is no available information making possible an analytical examination of the female employment in manufacturing, the handicrafts and in various services; neither exist data adequate for estimating the social effects of the marriage, entertainment and sex industries which in the last few years have been a strong pull factor for female immigration in the country. A further constraint in analysing female migration which applies in almost all countries, but is more serious in Greece, has been the fact that much of the literature is «male dominated»; women follow men.

Nevertheless, some relevant Greek data is available, there are even time series in a couple of cases and more are «on the pipeline». No matter how inadequate and in some respects confusing is the official data about regular immigration, it has been collected and published regularly for about three decades. Up until a couple of years ago the reverse was the case with the UI. However, the recent policy initiative of the Greek government to regularise them has resulted, among

others, in the collection of precious data about the number of those who applied for obtaining a residence and work permit, the Green Card. In its turn, the demographic analysis of this data has allowed some «reasonable» estimates about the number of the UI who, for various reasons, have not applied for regularisation. By necessity, the male immigration is included in the examination, even if only passing references are made to some of its aspects.

Additional data and other information on which the analysis below is based have been obtained from the fieldwork done by various researchers in recent years and the conclusions drawn from the relevant studies. In the last three years, the authors of this paper have conducted numerous interviews and informal discussions with female and male immigrants, immigrant associations, employers of immigrants, executives of refugee organisations, as well as NGOs and various state controlled organisations and services charged with migration issues. Parts of that work have appeared in the publications shown below in the bibliography under the names of the authors.

2. Recent trends in female immigration

The «traditional» pattern of female migration was for males to move first and to establish themselves. And then to invite females under various capacities like wives, wives to be, young women for study or just relatives, compatriots and friends for which they had found a market job, or an occupation as domestic helpers in the families of their hosts. Female migration in all those cases was dependent on that of men, who went first or took the initiative to move. And on the basis of the rules and regulations concerning dependent family members they brought along or invited later on wives, etc. Refugees and asylum seekers were an exception. Some men migrated together with other family members, so that their movement had often a more balanced gender and age structure.

In the post World War II period, however, gradually more and more women migrated on their own initiative and alone, as a result, among other factors, of: *a)* the social developments and the expansion in the educational systems, *b)* the application of new technologies and the great changes in service economies and *c)* the overall economic developments in the less developed and ex-socialist countries. Those three cases are analysed briefly below:

- a) The increasing participation of women in the labour force goes parallel with the increase in female economic migration. In Greece, for example, the female participation in the labour force increased from 27% in 1981, to 32% in 1991 (NSSG, Statistical Yearbooks 1987 and 1997). The common determining factors include the rising educational standards of women and the social trend for reducing inequalities in the professional opportunities between genders. The former socialist countries, which have developed into major sending countries of females, are not an exception to this rule.

b) Modern telecommunications have made possible the direct exchange of information between interested people in the sending and receiving countries. Similar developments in transport have turned the tiring and often quite hazardous journeys of weeks or months of last century into quite comfortable, safe and not prohibitively expensive journeys of a couple of days or even hours. The favourable effects of those developments on female migration are obvious. An exception to the above are usually the cases of illegal entry to the country of destination, as shown by the examples of the boat people in VietNam, the similar cases of the Albanian migrants to Italy, and the dangerous journeys of the hundreds of thousands of migrants from the former socialist countries and the Third World into Greece. In those movements female participation is very low. In addition, changing wage differentials and technological developments cause transfers of jobs from the market to the households (helping pupils in their homework, «do it yourself» assembly, maintenance and repair jobs etc.), adding to the work performed at home. Those transfers more than balance the reverse flows, like the delivery of babies and part of cooking, cleaning and entertainment services which continue to move out from households into the market.

The application of new technologies in production and the concomitant rising incomes have changed the structure of most economies into «service economies». In them about two thirds of total employment is in various services; and practically all of them are traditionally very suitable for females, like those in education, health, social security, public and business administration, hotels, catering and recreation, transport and communications. The increasing employment opportunities for women in the economically more advanced countries are filled in by both locals and immigrant women. The latter tend, as a rule, to take the low status jobs, irrespective of their real professional qualifications, which are in many cases substantial. These jobs also include domestic help in homes with working mothers, etc.

The increasing female participation in overall employment both reduces the time available for housework and, as a rule, it increases the family income. Therefore, the household can afford paid domestic work to cover the increased needs. At the same time, the rising educational standards cause a reduction in the indigenous supply of labour for domestic work, as already mentioned. Migrants are prepared to undertake that work, whereby inducing more women from the less developed countries to move in. Increasing longevity and limited progress in social service programs in recent years increase the household needs for elderly, health and child care (Kotzamanis et al., 1995). The percentage of the 65 year-olds and over in the total population in Greece increased, from 3 in 1870, to 7 in 1951 (511,000 persons) and 14 in 1991 (1.4 m. persons; NSSG, 1997 Yearbook). Those developments are an important factor accounting for the large number of female economic immigrants in Greece, most of whom come from far away countries into all continents.

- c) Economic restructuring in both the less developed and the former socialist countries has done little to reduce structural poverty which is rooted in socioeconomic and political institutions and is often intergenerational. Those countries are also hit by transient poverty due to cyclical or temporary factors like cyclical unemployment, inflation, macroeconomic policy shifts, natural disasters, social and ethnic conflicts. Poverty has specific gender dimensions, including higher levels of female vis-à-vis male unemployment, informalisation of work often performed by women, and increased participation of women in the precarious informal sector.

3. Female immigration to Greece

On the one hand, the push factors for the large immigration in Greece include primarily the radical reforms of the late 1980s in the neighbouring former socialist countries, which have developed into major sending countries of both sexes to Greece. But they also include the persistent poverty in the Third World, and the political and social upheavals in many Near and Middle Eastern countries. On the other hand, the main pull factor consists of the strong demand for the wage and job flexible labour of the immigrants.

The employment opportunities for the female immigrants in Greece are due to many factors, which both increase the demand for their labour and simultaneously reduce the supply of labour for certain jobs mostly done by women. The rising educational standards of women as a result of the rapid expansion of the educational system and the increasing material prosperity in Greece tend to reduce the supply of Greek labour for «low status» jobs. Moreover, many factors and developments have combined to increase the household needs for domestic help in elderly, health and child care: increasing longevity already shown above, very limited expansion and in some cases even cuts in the social service programs in recent years, congested living conditions in the urban centres, disintegration of the traditionally large Greek family and the very slow adjustment of the Greek male mentality in the issue of sharing responsibilities in house chores (Maratou-Alipranti, 1995). Hospitals and clinics, as well as small informal firms supplying cleaning and related services to offices, catering and retail trade shops have also increased their demand for that labour. As in other countries, immigrant women are prepared to undertake that work, although those coming from the developed countries are employed mostly as foreign language teachers, tutors, translators, interpreters and employees in hotels and tourist agencies.

Finally, a large demand has also developed in the marriage, entertainment and sex industries, which are largely semi-illegal or even illegal, and partly of a «bondage» type. Female migrants work in them as «partners», self-employed and employees. Among others, researchers emphasise the willingness of many females from poor societies to undertake jobs they would find difficult to do near their home environment (see articles and research conclusions on this

issue in European Forum of Left Feminists 1995 and Centre of Research and Documentation 1997).

Equally important for the large female immigration to Greece are the social networks, which comprise personal networks (households, friends and communities) and intermediary networks (employment agencies, traffickers) (Petronoti, 1998). Both connect people across space and are crucial for an understanding of settlement patterns, employment and links with the homeland. Once migration begins they come to function as migration factors because of their lower the costs and risks of movement and increase the expected returns on migration. They constitute an important resource for migrants who use them to gain employment, housing, etc. They may, however, also transmit negative impressions about the host country or continue to transmit positive impressions for situations, which have long changed for the worse. As shown below, the network factors have played an important positive role in the new trend for females to migrate alone in search for better employment opportunities. An increasing number of them enter Greece legally as tourists or students but are employed without permits. Relatives, friends or compatriots who have been in the country offer precious help in securing accommodation and finding jobs.

3.1. Regular immigrants

According to data and estimates from the Greek Ministry of Public Order the number of foreigners with valid residence permits has decreased, from 110,000 annually on the average in 1987-1989, to 80,000 in 1996-1998. The number of people without or with no valid permits are estimated to have increased, from 168,000 to 254,000 annually in those years respectively (Petropoulos 1999).

The figures above include a large percentage of persons of Greek origin (ethnic Greeks, people of Greek ethnicity), as the permits issued indicate. Only 44,883 of the 70,419 new permits in 1996 were issued to non-ethnic Greek foreigners. The remaining were to ethnic Greeks. The corresponding figures for 1997 were 44,073 and 74,618. Over half of the permits were issued to citizens of the former socialist countries. No doubt a large number of those permits were for people of Greek origin or related to ethnic Greeks (spouses etc.). Russia was topping the list with 13,941 new permits in 1996 and 13,025 in 1997.

As far as the gender structure is concerned, in both years considerably more permits were issued to women than to men (39,919 of the total of 70,419 in 1996 and 43,475 of the total of 74,618 in 1997). More than half of the legal foreigners are concentrated in the Athens area and a quarter in Thessaloniki, in which, of course, more jobs for women are on offer.

The number of people with work permits has increased, from about 5,000 in the 1960's to about 20,000 in the 1970's. Since then it has fluctuated between 23,000 and 34,000. In 1996 and 1997 they were 24,968 and 23,551 respectively (Ministry of Labour). To those we would add between 3,000 and 5,000 refugees and asylum seekers who have been issued with work permits

(Presidential Decree 140/25.6.1998) or are allowed tacitly to work legally and even helped by various humanitarian organisations to find jobs. About half of the legally employed are ethnic Greeks and citizens of other EU member states. Therefore the number of permits to non-ethnic Greeks foreigners is about 15,000 or just over 1/3 of 1% of the registered labour force. It is the lowest number in EU.

Over one third of the foreign passport holders with work permits are females. Those from the more developed countries are employed mostly in tourism and in office work. The ones from the Philippines and other Asian countries, from African and from the former socialist countries are employed predominantly in households and as auxiliary personnel in medical centres. In 1996, 8,193 foreigners, overwhelmingly males, were also employed in the merchant navy under the Greek flag.

3.2. *Irregular immigrants*

Available statistics

Up to the year 1998, the only statistics concerning irregular immigrants had come from the Ministries of Public Order and Justice, and were about police arrests, the court decisions and the deportations and expulsions. Nearly 1.5 million persons, the overwhelming majority males, have been deported or expelled since the beginning of the 1990's, nearly 200,000 annually on the average. Over two thirds of them were Albanians who were sent back to their country.

On account of the regularisation procedures, statistics have been collected concerning the UI who applied for regularisation during the January-May 1998 period specified by the Presidential Decrees 358 and 359 of November 1997. About 372,000 persons applied and their structure by age, gender and nationality allows «reasonable» estimates for those who have not (Kavounidis and Hatzaki, 1999).

For the issue of the 1-5 year validity Green Cards whatever available travel documents and four additional ones issued by the Greek authorities had to be submitted by the immigrants. These include: 1) a health certificate issued by a Greek state or social security medical institution, 2) a certificate issued by the Greek Ministry of Public Order, 3) a hard-to-get-Type A criminal record from the Ministry of Justice (which may take about 18 months to be issued-see the daily *Athens News* 2/5/1999) and 4) a stamp booklet with at least 40 social security stamps issued by the IKA (Social Security Foundation) or any other social security fund, giving the name(s) and address(es) of the employer(s), as well as a written statement by him/them that the immigrant has actually worked for him/them (which may also take a long time to be acquired). The immigrants could apply on the basis of their travel documents or any identity card they possessed. But they had to supply the four certificates above within two months after the end of the registration period. Upon completion of those formalities each application would be examined by a local committee

of large representation in the area the application was made, for the issue of the Green Card.

Due to the delays in supplying the required certificates to the immigrants, who have asked for them, the authorities have repeatedly extended the deadline for their submission. As it stands now, the situation is as follows: Those who applied for regularisation in January-May 1998 and in addition made until April 30, 1999 a separate application for the issue of the Green Card have been supplied with certificates which allow them to stay legally in the country until the hard-to-get certificates are issued. They can also travel abroad and return legally to Greece. In addition the special committees mentioned above can examine their case without the submission of the Type A criminal record. The Green Card can then be issued on condition that the immigrant has no criminal record. In the reverse case it is invalidated.

On 4/30/99, last dead-line given by the authorities, about 220,000 immigrants had supplied to the examination committees all the required documents or certificates and had gone through all the required formalities. On 11/15/99, about 70,000 Green Cards had been issued and for another 5,000 a positive decision had been made. The authorities estimate that about 200,000 final applicants will eventually receive a Green Card. In case an application is rejected, the immigrant has the right to appeal (State Employment Agency, 1999).

Over 200,000 UI are estimated by the authors not to have applied for regularisation in January-May 1998 and include:

- a) Those who were not allowed by law to apply because they had entered and stayed legally in the country. They wanted however to register and acquire the Green Card which would enable them to work legally as well. The main group are the Poles, who for over two decades have entered Greece legally and their number is put second to that of the Albanians but constitute only 2.25% of the applicants (see below). Large is also the number of Polish women who engage in various kinds of service employment. Many of them come as chain migrants; i.e. they replace in «established» jobs female compatriots who return home. Another usual practice among the Polish immigrant community is to create jobs for themselves by using the paid services of their countrymen: child care, home hairdressing and the like offered by women; wall painting and maintenance and repair of furniture and domestic appliances offered by males (see Lazaridis and Romaniszyn 1998). Immigrants of other nationalities who have been in Greece legally as students, seamen or in various other capacities were also not allowed to register.
- b) Those who did not qualify because they had entered Greece after November 23, 1997, when the two Presidential Decrees about regularisation were issued.
- c) The foreign crews employed in ships under the Greek flag, many of which are employed without work permits. Censuses on them are conducted every two years and the figures made available from the last two show a number

of 9,183 people for 1994 and 8,193 for 1996 (NSSG, Census Results of Maritime Labour, 1998).

- d) The ones who have chosen the flexibility of the illegal labour market, considering that it would be easier to find jobs in it than in the legal one. Some also had feared that they could be «trapped» and would be at the mercy of the police by giving names, addresses, etc. The hypothesis therefore could be made that a considerable number of immigrants have been discouraged by their employers to apply and give out personal information to the authorities. This hypothesis is based on a number of interviews made—as mentioned in the Introduction above—by the authors with working immigrants, representatives of their associations and employers. In them this point was emphasised by many immigrants. Many employers as well admitted that they would not be prepared to increase the labour cost by adding to it the social security contributions of the regularised immigrants. Naturally, registered employment also entails tax paying and abiding by laws and regulations concerning health and safety at the work place, minimum wages, normal working hours and overtime, all of which add to the real labour costs.
- e) Those with criminal records, UI who have entered the country aiming to violate the law and females who seek employment in the illegal entertainment and the sex industry.

In conclusion, well over half a million UI seem to have resided in Greece in the last seven years or so, the overwhelming majority being economic immigrants (see below). Therefore, before the recent regularisation, the undocumented economic immigrants made up about 12% of the registered Greek labour force of 4,300,000 (Ministry of National Economy, 1999). More are likely to enter the labour market in the hope of a new regularisation. Registered unemployment in Greece (450,000 people in 1998) amounts to over 10% of the registered labour force. Obviously, unemployment is largely due not to the shortage of jobs but rather to the imbalances between supply of and demand for labour by geographic region and labour category (for detailed information, see Fakiolas, 1999a and 1999b).

Ethnic, demographic and labour market characteristics

Until May 1999 352,632 applications for regularisation had been examined (for 18,891 applications processing has been pending, possibly because they include inadequate personal data). Of them nearly three quarters (255,502) are from males and the rest (88,446) from females. Only 0.33% of both sexes are under 14 and over 65 years old, while about 9 out of 10 are between 20 and 64. This is an indication that the overwhelming majority of the female applicants have not been in the country as dependant family members (OAED, 1999). Moreover, empirical observations verify that virtually all female immigrants are employed or are looking for jobs (see Markova and Sarris, 1997; Lazaridis, 1997; Fakiolas, 1999a and 1999b).

Percentage-wise, about 65 of the applicants are Albanians (72.5 of all males and 43.64 of all females), 6.53 Bulgarians, 4.52 Rumanians, 3.17 far away Pakistanis, 2.25 Ukrainians and 1.67 Egyptians. Only 1.59 are Filipinos who, however, are predominately females. In sum, about 79% come from the former socialist countries, from where the main pressure for immigrant flows to Greece derives. The remaining 21% come from over one hundred countries, predominantly of the Third World.

Of all females, the Albanians also top the list (44%), followed by Bulgarians (15), Ukrainians (8.27), Rumanians (5.50), the Georgians (5.0), Filipinos (4.82) and Poles (3.88). There are also estimations (perhaps somewhat exaggerated) that there are many more immigrant women in Greece, for example about 1200 Ethiopians (Petronoti, 1998) and 40,000 Filipinos (Valencia, 1995).

The latest processing of data published in November 1999 includes 369,629 applicants out of a total of about 372,000; about 26% of them are females. There are however big differences among immigrants coming from different countries. For some countries females exceed by far the number of males, in which cases we could talk about «feminization» of migration. For other countries migration is an almost exclusively male phenomenon, as the following data indicate:

Albanians:	240,150	applicants, of whom	40,880	females
Bulgarians:	24,906		5,703	
Rumanians:	16,802		2,198	
Pakistanis:	10,866		48	
Ukrainians:	9,800		7,713	
Poles:	8,618		3,712	
Indians:	6,402		103	
Filipinos:	4,989		4,008	
Russians:	3,135		2,298	
Bangladeshians:	3,013		25	

The factor which account for those differences include religions creeds and social attitudes, as well as traditions which reflect in the creation of different types of network factors. They also include the structure of demand in Greece by labour categories.

About 56.2% of all female applicants were in Attica, where Athens is situated, and 11.4% in Central Macedonis, where Thessaloniki, the second large city is situated (Kavounidis and Hatzaki, 1999).

Immigration in Greece supports evidence from other countries that migrants are not the least educated and trained. Secondary education has 49% of the applicants and tertiary 9%, while only 1.8% is illiterate. More important is perhaps the fact that the percentage of the registered females with tertiary education is far above that of males (16 and 8.9 respectively).

Higher is also the percentage of females with secondary education. The reverse is the case with those who have primary education (42% of men and 24% of women). The percentage of the illiterates is very low for both genders (around 1.6).

Field research leads to about the same conclusions. On the basis of a sample of 100 Bulgarian immigrants (75 females and 25 males, only 3 with work permits, 26 with highly skilled jobs in Bulgaria, 64 with middle skills and 10 with low skilled jobs), Markova and Sarris (1997) found that «almost all of them came to Greece alone, not accompanied by any of their family members», «all came with the purpose of finding a job although they had entered as tourists», and «the bulk of those interviewed were employed and very few were involuntary unemployed in a process of searching for a job». They also found that most males were under 50 years old (the majority between 30 and 40) and self-employed as bricklayers, builders and house painters. The majority of the women were of a variety of age groups (12 were over 50). With the exception of 4 (an administrator, a cashier, a seller and an industrial worker), the rest were working in households, as auxiliary personnel in hotels and as self-employed cleaners. 38 were living in the employer's house. 52 declared that they make friends with the Greeks. Generally speaking, many Bulgarians find it difficult to integrate in the labour market. They face the competition from the Albanians who enter illegally and therefore without visas. As a rule they have low travelling costs and sleep in dilapidated huts, in summer even in the open air. Only 4 had medical insurance, while 60 gave the survival of their families as the reason of their migration, 25 the establishment of a business or to have a house built in Bulgaria and 17 to emigrate to another country (Markova and Sarris, 1997).

The descriptions of the immigrant female and children prostitution in Greece are shocking, resembling situations of slavery (see Psimenos, 1995; Lazaridis, 1997; Ruggiero, 1997, Lazaridis and Romanniszyn, 1998 and Papantoniou et al., 1996, 1998). The frequent police reports on those issues, and the large number of arrests and law court convictions leave no doubt that the problem is acute. The question is however what is the statistical significance of all those cases. In fact, all those tragic cases of female and child immigration constitute but a very small percentage of female immigrants. The overwhelming majority are economic immigrants who seek and find decent jobs from which they earn an income three to six times higher than what they could earn at home. They save and remit back home a large part of it. Immigrants interviewed by the authors have described the hardships of their jobs and the insecurity they feel for being illegal and at the mercy of their employers, of the Greek police and some of Greek and foreign criminal elements who try to take advantage of their weak situation. Moreover, most of the interviewees were quite happy that they had decent jobs which allowed them to carry out the aims of their migration, i.e. to accumulate some savings in order to cover acute family needs for survival, be able to send their children to school or set up a small family business.

Domestic work

In Greece employment for domestic work which, as in other countries, is done in irregular conditions, presents the following interesting characteristics:

- a) Having a foreign helper at home has become «fashionable» and quite prestigious with some families. Hence the belief of many people that this is the main if not the only contribution of domestic helpers to the society. But this is wrong. For over two decades the number of female students in tertiary education exceeds that of males; women have now a large share in practically all faculties in tertiary education and in jobs which had been traditionally «men's jobs»; the female participation in the labour force and in employment has rapidly increased and so have the dual-earner couples. Therefore domestic help has become indispensable for many homes.
- b) Apart from the more enhanced social and productive role of females in the post World War II period, and the fact that with rising incomes and educational standards many people are no longer happy to do a score of jobs which were much sought after only a couple of decades ago, the increasing female participation in overall employment has been accelerated by the fact that large sections of the population are being accustomed to continuously higher consumption patterns. Therefore a steadily increasing family income is necessary in order to provide goods which would guarantee the same degree of satisfaction of the increasing family needs.
- c) As a side effect, the developments above have had a diminishing influence on the birth rate, which has lagged behind mortality for many years during the current decade. In other words, the natural increase of the population is negative, while the small increase in total numbers has come for the immigration of ethnic Greeks (foreign passport holders of Greek ethnicity). The main effect of those developments, however, has been to create an urgent need for the adjustment of many women to play a double role: that of an employee who must leave home for many hours every working day and at the same time maintain almost full responsibility in house-keeping and child-raising. In many cases those responsibilities include the care for the elderly in the family. The problem becomes more acute by the fact that the adjustment of the social institutions to those developments and the creation of the relevant social infrastructure have been very slow. Equally slow have been the changes in the mentality of the male household members who are now called upon to contribute more in housekeeping. As in other Southern European countries, women's contribution to the household income gradually changed their attitudes towards strict gender roles. Nevertheless, corresponding changes in their husbands and in the broader social environment have not occurred. Women with a university level education are the ones who challenge their husbands regarding childcare, distributing of house chores and management (Maratou-Alipranti, 1995).
- d) There is still an inadequate number of state crèches and kindergartens, many schools function in two shifts which means that pupils either return

home at about 1p.m. or leave for school at that time, and most of them need tutoring in preparing their homework or for their examinations. In addition, there is a slow increase in the number of «descent» old age homes charging fees, which the low and middle-income groups can afford. Coupled with the rapidly rising longevity and the mentality of many households not to send away their aged members, the shortage of old age homes has further increased the household needs for domestic help among middle class households¹.

- e) As in many other countries, Filipino women have been the preferred nationality group for employment as maids in families. One of the reasons has certainly been their bilingual skills, which allow them both to answer the telephone and also to teach or otherwise help the family children in their English. Usually, those skills are taken for granted and there is no additional financial reward for the provision of this specialised skill. Not infrequently, however, it is taken into account by families because they entertain friends often and want their maids to be capable of communicating in the Greek environment, go shopping, take the children to school and visit friends etc. (see Lazaridis, 1997; Fakiolas, 1999a and 1999b).
- f) Although it has always been illegal for employers to hire undocumented workers, in practice the labour inspectors and the tax authorities have not been very active in controlling households. Therefore, it is easy for them to hide their part-time or full-time employees or declare that they are friends or guests. This is certainly an attractive situation for undocumented workers because they are less likely to come to the notice of the authorities if they are hidden in the privacy of the home. On the other hand, it increases their exploitation as workers if the threat of deportation hangs over their head.
- g) Many accounts for domestic work are very grim from both the physical and the emotional point of view. Among others, they reveal many abuses by employers in terms of long hours of tedious work, low pay and bad behaviour. It would be wrong, however, to paint a picture of the «migrant domestic victim». Despite those abuses for which the majority of the migrants know before they emigrate, new migrants flog into the country. Besides, the recent regularisation aims among others to give domestic helpers entering Greece and working irregularly an immigration status in their own right.
- h) Households who wanted to keep irregular immigrants and had to pay social insurance contributions (amounting to about half the nominal wage) have

1. As Phizacklea (1997:10) puts it for other countries, rather than couples questioning patriarchal household and work structures (such as the «man-made» day) and reorganising domestic labour and child-care on a shared basis, the preferred option has increasingly become one of buying in replacement labour for these chores. Women from poor countries through out the world are now allowing couples in affluent countries to pursue well paid careers without sacrificing children and all the comforts that the «housewife» would have provided.

repeatedly asked and finally persuaded the authorities to reduce those contributions to about one quarter of the nominal wage. This is an indication that irregular types of work in domestic employment is difficult to find out and prove and that domestics offer a useful service to many dual earner couples.

4. Concluding remarks

The overwhelming majority of the nearly 200,000 foreign women who have been in the country since the early 1990s are economic immigrants. A large part of them work without permits, another part undertakes jobs below their professional qualifications and still another part has migrated alone. In many cases all three types concentrate on the same person, in others only one or two. Immigrant women work mostly in services, few in office work and the remaining in auxiliary jobs in hotels, catering, medical institutions, and urban households and in the entertainment and the sex industries. Available statistical information does not allow more detailed analysis on those issues. Only the very small number of immigrants employed with work permits in the post World War II period (about 30,000 persons, half of them ethnic Greeks and nationals of other EU member states) are included in the statistics.

The legalisation policy applied in Greece for all irregular immigrants since January 1998 will improve both their professional and their social life in Greece. It will free them from the continuous threat of expulsion, and from the blackmail and abuses suffered by many of them by their employers. Women stand to gain more because, as a rule, they are employed in less organised workplaces than men. Rising female migration for domestic service involves migrants into individualised work situations where there is greater isolation and lower likelihood of establishing networks of information and social support, compared to male migrants who commonly work in groups in other sectors and productive branches. The new policy will also improve the family life of the immigrants through the invitation of dependent family members.

On a national scale, the regularisation will settle some of the moral, political and economic issues of keeping out about half a million economic irregular immigrants (about 12% of the registered labour force). It will also enable more households and large firms to employ in a variety of jobs more women immigrants with a regular status. Therefore, the legality of the state will be strengthened. It is also expected that the social security institutions will improve their financial position by increasing considerably their revenues from contributions. From the research point of view it may also help to delve into the complex issues of immigrant adult and child prostitution, on which little systematic research has been done so far. In conjunction with some liberalisation of regulations for the naturalisation of foreigners, which has already been put into a draft bill of the Greek Ministry of Interior, the regularisation may also improve the demographic situation in the country both through the invitation of dependent family members of the immigrants and through their new

offspring. Already the law 2503/30.5.1997 specifies that the applications for citizenship by foreigners who are married to Greek citizens can be examined immediately if they reside in Greece and have given birth to children, instead of satisfying a 10 year residence in the country or five year residence after they submit an application.

There are, however, some negative aspects of the regularisation for both Greeks as a whole and for the immigrants themselves. The cost of the regularised labour will rise through the payment of social insurance contributions and strengthen the tendency for unregistered employment. Despite regularisation, this employment remains high among the immigrants, as it does among the Greeks. The reactions of many urban households employing foreign females for domestic work have already caused a reduction of the social insurance contributions by 50% for this kind of work. In addition, the increase in the labour cost caused by the regularisation of irregular immigrants may cause dismissals and increase unemployment among them. It is because of that fear that many UI have not applied for legalisation. Unemployment is a principal cause for unlawful activities among male immigrants who have no families to support them. Moreover, it is also a principal cause for women immigrants for drifting unintentionally into the semi-illegal entertainment and the sex industries. Due to the weak internal and external controls in Greece, new UI enter continuously the market augmenting again the number of irregulars. This is also the experience of all other South European countries and raises the broader question about the proper economic and social policies on the illegal immigrant flows.

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