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Policy Brief - GREECE

## CLANDESTINO PROJECT OVERVIEW

### *The project aims*

The CLANDESTINO research project was designed to support policy makers in developing and implementing appropriate policies regarding undocumented migration. **The project aims** were to (a) provide an inventory of data and estimates on undocumented migration (stocks and flows) in selected EU countries, (b) analyse these data comparatively, (c) discuss the ethical and methodological issues involved in the collection of data, the elaboration of estimates and their use, (d) propose a new method for evaluating and classifying data/ estimates on undocumented migration in the EU.

### *The countries studied*

**The project covered twelve EU countries** (Greece, Italy, France and Spain in southern Europe; Netherlands, UK, Germany and Austria in Western and Central Europe; Poland, Hungary, Slovakia and the Czech Republic in Central Eastern Europe) **and three non EU transit migration countries** (Turkey, Ukraine and Morocco) have been under study in this project.

### *Methods, Data and Period of Reference*

**Country reports.** Individual country reports review all relevant data sources on irregular migration, assess the validity of the different estimates given and where appropriate produce a new estimate for the country studied. The country reports cover the period between 2000 and 2007. This quantitative analysis is complemented by a critical review of qualitative studies and by interviews with key informants with a view to exploring the pathways into and out of undocumented status in each country. It is noted that the non-registered nature of irregular migration makes any quantification difficult and always produces estimates rather than hard data.

### *Classification of data & estimates*

The main output of the project is a **database** (<http://irregular-migration.hwwi.net/>) which presents and classifies (as low, medium or high quality) estimates and data on irregular migration in the European Union and in selected member states. The presentation is innovative in its consistent structuring and its carefully developed quality classification, which indicates whether estimates are more or less trustworthy. Quantitative information is accompanied by substantial background materials, both on issues of general concern and on the situation in individual countries. In addition, the database provides aggregate EU level estimates for the years 2002, 2005 and 2008.

### *Terminology*

The terms irregular (with no regular/legal status), undocumented (without the appropriate papers) and unauthorized (without legal permission for entry, stay or work) migration denote different facets of the wider phenomenon of irregular migration. These terms are accepted and used by the Clandestino consortium as synonyms. The term illegal is accepted by the consortium when referring to a condition (e.g. illegal work or illegal entry) but not in relation to a person (illegal migrant).

### *Definitions*

For this project, **irregular or undocumented residents** are defined as residents without any legal resident status in the country they are residing in, and those whose presence in the territory – if detected – may be subject to termination through an order to leave and/or an expulsion order because of their status. **Irregular entrants** are persons who cross an international border without the required valid documents, either un-inspected over land or sea, or over ports of entry. For more information see: <http://clandestino.eliamep.gr/category/irregular-migration-ethics-in-research/>

### *Trafficking & Asylum Seeking*

The Clandestino project is not concerned with Trafficking in Human Beings because it considers this as a separate even if related phenomenon. But in some countries it touches upon asylum seeking and asylum processing issues as they are related to irregular migration issues.

## IRREGULAR MIGRATION IN GREECE

### Background of migration situation in Greece

Greece is a country on the southeast border of the EU. In a population of 11,192,849 people in 2007 according to the National Statistical Service of Greece (ESYE) (the most recent estimate of population in Greece by ESYE is for 2007), there were 678,268 migrants with stay permits in 2008 (of those approximately 363,700 still had a valid stay permit in March 2009 and another 314,568 were in the process of renewing their permits—the respective numbers in 2007 were 433,751 and 250,000). We have estimated that there were 280,000 irregular migrants present in the Greek territory at the end of 2007 (see table 1 below). The irregular migration estimate refers to 2007 because it was only for that year that we could get all the data necessary to produce the estimate.

**Table 1:** Estimate of irregular migrant stock in 2007

Adjusted number of TCNs in 2001 Census	589,935-55,000=534,935
+ estimate of non-applicants to the census	153,311
+ births/deaths residual 2002-2007	64,881
+ Apprehensions 2005, 2006, 2007	66,351+95,239 + 112,364
- asylum seekers	59,712
- Deported & refoiled persons 2005-2007	7,890+554
- valid TCNs (excl. EU27,US et al developed countries) permits October 2007	433,751
- regular minors not included in 2007 resident permits data	24,728
- permit applications in process (estimate)	250,000
+ pre-2005 border apprehensions non-applicants to last regularization	30,000
<b>Estimate of irregular migrant stock in 2007</b>	<b>280,446</b>

Source: CLANDESTINO Country Report: Greece, available at <http://clandestino.eliamep.gr>

### Data sources used for estimating size & features of irregular migration

There are various **data sources** that were combined so as to estimate the number of irregular migrants in Greece: the latest Census (2001), the periodic Labour Force Survey (LFS), expert surveys, current stay permit data, apprehension data and school data. All are problematic for different reasons. The Census is an outdated source, the sampling methods of LFS are not appropriate for investigating an unregistered population, the expert surveys so far have a limited geographical, ethnic and at times labour market scope, the stay permit database is incomplete since it does not include the number of applications in process, and last but not least the apprehensions data may count twice the same person (caught twice for irregular stay or unlawful entry to the country). Besides, a higher number of apprehensions may result from stricter enforcement rather than from higher migration pressures. School data catch a limited segment of recently arrived irregular migrants.

### Social and demographic features of irregular migration

Early (ir)regular immigration to Greece originated by and large from its neighbouring countries in the Balkans, Central Eastern Europe and the former USSR. Large scale arrivals of migrants from Albania throughout the 1990s in particular have turned the Albanian community into the largest migrant group in Greece, followed by Bulgarians, Ukrainians, Georgians and Romanians. Notwithstanding the Albanian presence which remains prominent to this day, the composition of the migrant population in Greece is diverse. The size of the Bulgarian, Romanian, Georgian and Ukrainian communities has grown during the last decade. Small Asian and African populations like the Filipino, Vietnamese, Sudanese and Egyptian have been in Greece from the 1980s onwards. More recent arrivals include Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Iraqi and Afghani citizens and sub Saharan Africans. The main points of irregular entry to Greece are the land and sea borders with Turkey and the Greek-Albanian land border. The borders with FYROM and Bulgaria involve smaller numbers. Another avenue is the southern sea border with Egypt (see Table 2 & Picture 1).

Considering the sheer **size** of the Albanian population in Greece, it is not surprising that Albanians constitute the largest proportion of the irregular migrants (34%). Reliable estimates on the share of the irregular migrants originating from African, Middle Eastern, and Asian countries do not exist. Evidence from a few qualitative surveys indicate that these groups are composed mostly of irregular migrants (see also Table 3). Regarding **age**, the majority of irregular migrants belong to the younger age groups. Women are under-represented among the irregular migrant population. The gender composition however may vary in relation to specific ethnic groups: men are over-represented among Asians; Eastern European migration is mainly composed of women.

**Table 2: Apprehensions by point of entry (source: Ministry of Interior, Dec. 2008)**

Apprehensions	Year 2006	Year 2007	Year 2008
Greek-Albanian border	33,618	42,897	39,267
Greek-FYROM border	3,541	2,887	3,459
Greek-Bulgarian	1,132	966	1,795
Greek-Turkish land border	15,265	16,789	14,461
Greek-Turkish sea border	6,886	9,240	30,149
Crete	2,163	3,101	2,961
Apprehensions in the mainland	32,634	39,595	54,245
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>95,239</b>	<b>112,364</b>	<b>146,337</b>

**Table 3: Apprehensions by country of origin**

Main countries of origin	2007	2008
Albania	66,818	72,454
Georgia	1,441	-
Pakistan	2,834	5,512
Egypt	598	-
India	532	-
Bangladesh	721	1,655
China	471	-
Iraq	12,549	15,940
Iran	515	-
Afghanistan	11,611	25,577
Somalia	3,656	6,713
Palestine	5,135	4,593

Source: Ministry of Interior, Dec. 2008.

**Picture 1: Migration flows to Greece**



Source: Ministry of Mercantile Marine, Dec.2008.

### Main Pathways into and out of Irregular Status

- The main pathway for irregular migrants in Greece is to enter the country legally, with a temporary visa for tourism, and then overstay their visa and work in the informal labour market.
- Another pathway into irregular status in Greece regards legal migrants that fail to renew their stay permits because they cannot prove they are employed as they work in the shadow economy. Indeed, informal work arrangements prevail in the niches of the Greek economy where migrants are employed notably, the construction industry, tourism, agriculture and the domestic work sector.
- Irregular entry constitutes the pathway into irregular status that gets most media attention in Greece despite the lower numbers that it involves. The avenues of irregular entry and short-term regular entry with the purpose of tourism that migrants use are a result of **three factors**: (a) the fact that practically there is no option to prospective migrants for a long-term regular entry with the purpose of work (the system of inviting a foreign worker (*metaklisi*) does not work in practice since between inviting a foreign worker and him/her effectively getting a permit and starting to work, a period of 12 to 18 months is needed for the paper work), (b) the fact that the channel of family reunification has unrealistic requirements (the applicant has to prove through their tax declaration that they earn the minimum annual wage for an unskilled worker increased by 20% for the spouse and 15% for each child. It is common practice for employers that they officially pay a migrant worker the minimum wage and any extra pay for over time or weekends is given cash-in-hand), (c) the development of smuggling networks that are the underground market response to the demand of humans for fleeing poverty, authoritarian regimes and environmental disasters.
- Regularization programs are the main means for an irregular migrant to get out of irregular status in Greece.
- Another pathway for irregular migrants to provisionally 'legalize' their stay in Greece is to apply for asylum. The processing of applications for asylum usually lasts a few years and the rate of acceptance is 0.05% at first instance and was 2% after an appeal in 2006 and 2007 rising to 10% in 2008. A presidential decree issued in June 2009 however, has abolished the appeal procedure. In practice most rejected asylum seekers stay in the country as irregular migrants.
- The two successive EU enlargements to the East have regularized automatically the stay of citizens from the new member states who were previously non EU irregular migrants in the country. Greece has applied a two-year transition period for citizens of A8 and for Bulgarian and Romania. As of 1 January 2009 all citizens of 'young' member states can work legally in Greece.

**Key  
Messages  
for Policy  
Makers**

**Combating and Preventing Irregular Migration Flows**

- Deportations are not a viable policy. The cost of deporting migrants today (estimated on the basis of Spanish police similar data, at 4,000 Euro per person for migrants deported to Southeast Asia) is prohibitive.
- Moreover, given the problems with the asylum seeking applications processing in Greece (long delays, superficial interviews, red tape) there is a risk that people in need of protection are deported. In other words, such a practice risks violating the 1951 Geneva Convention relating on refugees and its 1967 Protocol that are signed and ratified by Greece.
- The Readmission Agreement with Turkey should be re-negotiated in exchange of development assistance with a view to making it work.
- Diplomatic efforts should increase with a view to signing readmission and cooperation agreements with not only Turkey but also other major source and transit countries in Asia and Africa.
- Legal channels for labour migration should be made functional. There is a pressing need to cut red tape, simplify and shorten procedures to invite foreign workers.
- One-year stay permits for 'searching for employment' could be introduced. TCNs would be able to come to Greece legally (provided they have health insurance and a 'sponsor': a legal migrant or Greek citizen who would guarantee accommodation and who pay a 'guarantee' sum for the issuing of this permit). Migrants would thus be able to look for a job legally and then convert their stay permit into a stay permit for work purposes. This would provide for an efficient mechanism for making legal what happens now illegally (namely that interested foreigners arrive illegally, are hosted by relatives of friends, find a job, settle down and then wait for the next regularization to legalise their status).
- Lower the income requested for allowing family reunification.

**Addressing Irregular Migration and Informal Work**

- Set up an independent Asylum Authority to examine asylum seeking cases instead of the Greek Police.
- For migrants that have been living in Greece legally for 5 years or longer, disconnect the renewal of their stay permits from proof of employment through welfare stamps. Thus reduce the risk that long term legal migrants lapse into illegality because at times of economic crisis they are unable to find work with a proper contract and full welfare contributions.
- Confront informal economy: a) through increased controls of the labour market sectors where informal economic arrangements are common (constructions sector, agriculture, tourist industry, other services), and mainly b) through an increase of formal jobs in the Greek economy. The latter should be pursued through:
  - reforms on the social security system directed to deal with the inflexibility of the Greek labour market as regards certain niches of permanent employment. Until now the higher than average benefits, social security contributions, compensations and the legal access barriers characterizing various niches render hiring and firing a costly business decision.
  - reforms intended to liberalize processes and scrap legal obstacles framing the access to and exit from the overgrown and permanent state sector jobs. Exposing state sector jobs to labour market competition would decrease the overgrown number of jobs distributed on political criteria and increase the overall job supply of the private sector.
  - creating and securing a safety net of working and social rights for the types of work (subcontracting, part-time, temporary, seasonal) and workers (immigrants) that are usually exposed to exploitative and informal work arrangements as a result of the above inflexibilities of the formal economy. Promoting sustainable new forms of work is crucial in order to tackle unemployment in contemporary post-industrial economies.
- Open reception centres and/or restore already used spaces with health and sanitation facilities and provide Greek/English language courses for homeless asylum seekers and undocumented migrants rather than creating detention centres. Detention centres cost a lot of money and do not provide for any avenues for getting out of irregularity. Open reception centres could be an investment in labour force supply. Use, and therefore fund, local NGOs that have better access to migrants than State services towards this end.

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All Project Reports and Policy Briefs as well as the Database are available through the project's web site <http://clandestino.eliamep.gr> For more information on the case of Greece, please contact, the authors of this Policy Brief, Prof. Anna Triandafyllidou, Senior Research Fellow, and Dr. Thanos Maroukis, Research Fellow, ELIAMEP, at [thmaroukis@eliamep.gr](mailto:thmaroukis@eliamep.gr).



**CLANDESTINO**

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You may also visit the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Programme of the European Commission: <http://ec.europa.eu/research/social-sciences/>

[index\\_en.html](http://clandestino.eliamep.gr/index_en.html)