

Progetto INTERPRES **BEST PRACTICES ON CULTURAL MEDIATION IN GREECE**

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1. History of the migration process in Greece

Countries around the globe have communities that bear witness to the waves of outward migration that once characterized Greece. Over the past 15 years, however, Greece has become a receiver of migrants and a permanent immigrant destination. Most of these new immigrants hail from Central and Eastern Europe, and despite two regularization programs, a good number of them still reside in Greece without authorization. People from Asia (particularly Iraq, Pakistan, and India) have recently been rapidly increasing their share of the total number of immigrants arriving illegally.

As in the past, a complex set of forces are pushing and pulling migration to and from Greece. Today, the government is poised to implement an integration action plan aimed at harnessing these forces to the country's advantage. That process, however, has yet to begin, and considerable public anxiety and political friction is expected to precede the harvest of hoped-for economic, cultural, and political benefits.

Greek History: Waves of Emigration

Two important waves of mass emigration took place after the formation of the modern Greek state in the early 1830s, one from the late 19th to the early 20th century, and another following World War II.

The first wave of emigration was spurred by the economic crisis of 1893 that followed the rapid fall in the price of currants - the major export product of the country - in the international markets. In the period 1890-1914, almost a sixth of the population of Greece emigrated, mostly to the United States and Egypt. This emigration was, in a sense, encouraged by Greek authorities, who saw remittances as helping to improve the balance of payments of the Greek economy. The lasting effect on Greece's national consciousness was the expansion of the notion of "Hellenism" and "Hellenic diaspora" to the "New World."

Following World War II, the countries of Southern Europe, Greece among them, were the main contributors to migration to the industrialized nations of Northern Europe. However, the oil crises of 1973 and 1980 caused economic uncertainty and a sharp fall in the demand for labour, which in turn led northern states to introduce restrictive immigration policies. As these countries became less welcoming to their former invitees and, at the same time the Greek economy became more solid, return migration to Greece soon followed.

More than one million Greeks migrated in this second wave, which mainly fell between 1950 and 1974. Most emigrated to Western Europe, the US, Canada, and Australia. Economic and political reasons often motivated their move, both connected with the consequences of a 1946-1949 civil war and the 1967-1974 period of military junta rule that followed. Official statistics show that in the period 1955-1973 Germany absorbed 603,300 Greek migrants, Australia 170,700, the US 124,000, and Canada 80,200. The majority of these emigrants came from rural areas, and they supplied both the national and international labour markets.

Following the oil crisis of 1973 and the adoption of restrictive immigration policies by the European countries, these immigration flows were severely reduced and return migration increased. Other factors contributing to these changes included integration difficulties in the receiving countries, the restoration of democracy in Greece in 1974, and the new economic prospects developed following the 1981 entry of the country into the European Economic Community (EEC). Between 1974 and 1985, almost half of the emigrants of the post-war period had returned to Greece.

Trading Places: Immigration Replaces Emigration

Declining emigration and return migration created a positive migration balance in the 1970s. Immigration grew at the beginning of the 1980s when a small number of Asians, Africans, and Poles arrived and found work in construction, agriculture, and domestic services. Nevertheless, immigration was still limited in size. In 1986, legal and unauthorized immigrants totalled approximately 90,000. One third of them were from European Union countries. The 1991 Census registered 167,000 "foreigners" in a total population of 10,259,900.

The collapse of the Central and Eastern European regimes in 1989 transformed immigration to Greece into a massive, uncontrollable phenomenon. As a result, although Greece was at that time still one of the less-developed EU states, in the 1990s it received the highest percentage of immigrants in relation to its labour force.

Many factors explain the transformation of Greece into a receiving country. These include the geographic location, which positions Greece as the eastern "gate" of the EU, with extensive coastlines and easily crossed borders. Though the situation at the country's northern borders has greatly improved since the formation of a special border control guard in 1998, geographic access remains a central factor in patterns of migration to Greece.

Also key role have played the rapid economic changes that narrowed the economic and social distance from the Northern European countries following the integration of Greece into the EU in 1981. In step with economic development, the improved living standards and higher levels of education attained by young people have led most Greeks to reject low-status and low-income jobs. Meanwhile, both the large size of the informal, family-based economy, and the seasonal nature of industries like tourism, agriculture, and construction, have created demand for a flexible labour pool, independent of trade union practices and legislation.

Greece's Migrants in Context

According to the latest census, the population of Greece increased from 10,259,900 in 1991 to 10,964,020 in 2001. This increase can be almost exclusively attributed to immigration in the past decade. The census showed that the "foreign population" living in Greece in 2001 was 762,191 (47,000 of them EU citizens), making up approximately seven percent of the total population. Of these migrants, 2,927 were registered as refugees.

It is estimated that the real number of immigrants is higher; many analysts believe that migrants make up as much as 10 percent of the population. They cite, among other factors, the fact that the 2001 Census was carried out before the implementation of Act 2910/2001, otherwise referred to as Greece's second regularization program. This legislation dealt with "the admission and residence of foreigners in Greece and the acquisition of Greek nationality through naturalization." Because of their illegal status, a good number of immigrants escaped census registration, while still others entered the country specifically to take advantage of regularization.

Immigration is the cause of population increase and demographic renewal in Greece in the period between the 1991 and 2001 censuses. The average number of children per woman in Greece has fallen to 1.3, against a European average of 1.5, and well below the average of 2.1 required for the reproduction of a population. Of the immigrant population, on the other hand, 16.7 percent are in the 0-14 age bracket, 79.8 percent in the 15-64 age bracket, and only 3.5 percent in the over-65 age bracket. The respective percentages for the national population are 15.2 percent, 67.7 percent, and 17 percent, demonstrating the key role immigrants of child-bearing age play in the population as a whole. Albanians, who are mainly married couples raising families, are the youngest population overall. In contrast, immigrants from the United States, Canada, and Australia have the highest percentages of people in the over-65 age bracket, because they are mainly pensioner returnees of Greek origin.

Males and females make up 54.5 percent and 45.5 percent of the total, respectively. However, gender composition varies widely among the various nationalities. Albanians and Romanians show the most balanced picture, because the percentages of males fluctuate just above the average with 59 percent and 57 percent, respectively. Other nationalities show sharp asymmetries, where either males or females far outnumber the other gender. For example, females make up almost two thirds of the immigrants from the former Soviet Union and Bulgaria, as well as approximately four-fifths of the Filipinos. On the other end, immigrants from Pakistan and India are almost exclusively male.

Fifty-four percent of the immigrants enter the country for work. Family reunification (13 percent) and repatriation (7 percent) are other main reasons they give for their arrival. Albanians show the highest level of participation in family reunification and immigrants from United States, Canada, and Australia in repatriation—a confirmation of the Greek origin of these immigrants. An unspecified "other reason" concerns 21.5 percent of the total, while "asylum" and "refugee" status seekers account for 1.6 percent.

National Origins of Recent Migrants

In the 1990 to 2001 period of mass immigration to Greece, immigrants arrived in two waves. The first was that of the early 1990s, in which Albanians dominated. The second arrived after 1995, and involved much greater participation of immigrants from other Balkan states, the former Soviet Union, Pakistan, and India. The majority of Albanians arrived in the first wave; however, the collapse of enormous "pyramid schemes" in Albania's banking sector in 1996 also spurred significant migration.

According to the 2001 Census, the largest group of immigrants draws its origins from the Balkan countries of Albania, Bulgaria, and Romania. People from these countries make up almost two-thirds of the total "foreign population." Migrants from the former Soviet Union (Georgia, Russia, Ukraine, Moldova, etc.) comprise 10 percent of the total; the EU countries approximately six percent. A heterogeneous group of people from places such as the United States, Canada, and Australia (mostly first or second-generation Greek emigrants returning home), also account for around six percent. Finally, a residual group from a wide variety of countries makes up 13 percent. None of the individual countries included in this last group exceeds two percent of the total "foreign population."

Of the main countries of origin, Albania accounts for 57.5 percent of the total, with second-place Bulgaria far outdistanced with 4.6 percent. Common borders with both of these countries have facilitated crossing over to Greece, leading to a cyclical form of immigration.

About 65% of migrants live in Greece with their families, while 44% have children who live with them in Greece (81,5% of the Albanians have families and at the other end 70,3% of Asian origin migrants live lonely).

Education and Workforce Participation

Nearly one-half of the migrants have secondary education (including technical-skill schools) and one-third have either completed or acquired primary school education. Almost one-tenth have higher education. A qualitative analysis of the educational levels of the various nationalities shows that, comparatively speaking, Albanians have the lowest level of education and former Soviet citizens the highest. In terms of higher education, females have the largest share of the total, while males appear to predominate in all other educational categories.

Immigrants are almost exclusively (90 percent) engaged in wage work and, to a much lesser extent, are self-employed (6.5 percent). Most of the jobs are non-skilled, manual work well below the immigrants' level of education and qualifications.

According to the 2001 census data, the majority of immigrants (54 percent) enter Greece for work. Bulgarians and Romanians are the nationalities that most often cite employment as the most important reason for immigrating to Greece. Immigrants are mainly employed in construction (24.5 percent), "other services," meaning mostly domestic work (20.5 percent), agriculture (17.5 percent), and "commerce, hotels, and restaurants" (15.7 percent).

Because of the size of their presence in the total immigrant population, Albanians dominate in all sectors. Within the Albanian nationality, however, construction absorbs the highest percentage (32 percent), followed by agriculture (21 percent), and then "other services" (15 percent). In contrast, Bulgarians are mostly occupied in agriculture (33 percent) and "other services" (29 percent).

In the construction sector, immigrants currently provide a quarter of the wage labor, and in agriculture, a fifth of the total labor expended (almost 90 percent of the non-family wage labor). Immigrants play an important structural role in both sectors.

"Other services" —a sector identified with domestic services where female migrant labor predominates—mostly employs immigrants from the former Soviet Union (37 percent) and Bulgaria. At the same time, employment in domestic services allows larger numbers of Greek women to join the labour market.

Immigration Policy Developments

The Greek government has been unprepared to receive the large numbers of immigrants of the last decade, and has hesitated to introduce the necessary legal and institutional changes for the regularization and integration of this population.

The government, however, was forced to adopt a regularization procedure under often contradictory pressures. From one side, in an environment of growing xenophobia, the public demanded the registration of immigrants. From another, human rights and labour organizations sought more humanitarian and less exploitative treatment.

The first regularization program to handle recent illegal migration was introduced as late as 1997 with Presidential Decrees 358/1997 and 359/1997. These aimed at the implementation of Act 1975/1991 on the "entry-exit, residence, employment, expulsion of foreigners and procedure for the recognition of the status of refugee for foreigners."

The twin decrees gave unregistered immigrants the opportunity to acquire a "white card" temporary residence permit. This, in turn, gave them time to submit the complementary documents necessary to acquire a "green card" work and residence permit. To qualify for the "white card" they had to have lived in Greece for at least one year, and submit documents testifying to their good health, a clean court and police record, and proof of having paid national social insurance contributions for a total of 40 working days in 1998. A total of 150 days of social insurance contributions were required for the acquisition of the green card. No registration fees were charged at this stage.

By the end of the first regularization, 371,641 immigrants had been registered for the white card, but only 212,860 received a green card. It is estimated that less than half of the migrants living in the country were registered during this first regularization program.

In 2001, the government passed Act 2910/2001 on "the admission and residence of foreigners in Greece and the acquisition of Greek nationality through naturalization." This gave immigrants a second opportunity to legalize their status, provided they could show proof of residence for at least a year before the implementation of the law. Immigrants were given a six-month period to submit all the necessary documents to acquire the work permit, which became the precondition for obtaining a residence permit.

The two regularization methods differed, but the documents required for both were similar. The most important differences were that in 2001 the immigrant had to submit a copy of an official contract with his or her employer for a specific period of time, as well as confirmation that national social insurance contributions had been paid for at least 200 working days (which could also be paid for by the immigrants themselves). In addition, a payment of 147 euros per person over the age of 14 was required. All applicants to the 1997 regularization program whose permits had expired by 2001 were subject to the provisions of the new law.

The 2001 act also set preconditions for future legal migration into the country, giving the Organization of Employment and Labour (OAED) the responsibility to prepare an annual report that would specify labour requirements at the occupational and regional levels in order to define quotas for temporary work permits. These job vacancies would be advertised in the sending countries by Greek embassies, which would also be responsible for receiving the applications for those jobs. To date, however, the government has not begun this procedure.

When the official application deadline for this second regularization program expired in August 2001, it was reported that 351,110 migrants had submitted their documents for the acquisition of a work permit — a precondition for the provision of a residence permit. However, bureaucracy and the lack of the necessary infrastructure created tremendous problems and delays in the processing of the applications. This forced the government to give temporary residence to all applicants until the end of June 2003, extended to the end of October 2003. By then, the government expected to have all the applications processed. Once more, however, promises were not fulfilled and thousands of migrants remain "hostages" of a sluggish legal and institutional structure.

The enthusiasm shown by immigrants upon the announcement of the latest act has now vanished. This is as a result of, on the one hand, the weakness of public administration in supporting the implementation of the act and, on the other, the act's "philosophy" of continuous checks and controls that make it difficult to implement. These weaknesses have been identified and raised by many organizations and institutions directly or indirectly involved with the issue. The Greek ombudsman, in a report to the minister of interior, warned as early as 2001 of the implementation problems and asked for amendments that would make it work for the benefit of both immigrants and the Greek public administration.

However, amendments to the act introduced by the government in 2002 did not address the problems connected with the one-year duration of the work and residence permits, the yearly fee for the residence permit for the applicants, and the insurmountable bureaucratic problems. So, the government decided to extend the residence permit to two years starting from January 2004 (Act 3202/2003).

In the meantime, in order to overcome bureaucratic obstacles, many immigrants have had to either hire lawyers to handle their regularization procedure, or lose time and money standing in lines.

Integration

To date, the integration of migrants into Greek society appears to have resulted largely from laborious individual/family strategies of the migrants themselves, rather than from the provisions of an institutional framework. This may change as government efforts to systematize integration take hold.

Greece's integration policy was designed and announced by the government in 2002 in its "Action Plan for the Social Integration of Immigrants for the Period 2002-2005." The plan includes measures for the labour market integration and training of immigrants, improved access to the health system, emergency centres for immigrant support, and measures for the improvement of cultural exchanges among the various ethnic communities. However, the implementation of the plan is not still established in all its axes.

Two of the reasons for the delay of the implementation of the plan appear to include pressure on the state budget to complete the nation's preparations for the Olympic Games, as well as the long, politically sensitive period before the national elections of March 7, 2004.

According to a research lead by a big opinion polling companies in Greece, MRB, 92% of the migrants considered that they did well to come to Greece and 36% wish to stay here for ever. 26.7% have not decided what they would like to do, 15% wish to stay in Greece at least for 10 years, 13,6% at least 5 years and 8,7% more than 10 years.

62% of migrants asked have answered that they master Greek. This is all the more true for Albanians, Balkans and east Europeans. Knowledge of the language increases with the time they live in Greece. Nevertheless, 28% of migrants who live over 6 years in Greece do not speak well Greek. Their children, however over 70% speak perfectly or fluently Greek.

83% of migrants asked declares well adapted in Greece. This depends also on the level of knowledge of the Greek language, the years of residence in the country, age (over 45 years old) and family situation (children). Albanians, Balkans and East European seem better adapted than Arabs, Africans and Asians.

78% of migrants feel close to Greeks. East Europeans and Balkans feel closer (63% say they have several to many Greek friends) and less close Asians (45,7% state they have no Greek friends).

A percentage 78,1% declare they are more or less satisfied from their living in Greece. More satisfied are East Europeans, Balkans, more than 45 years old and those who live in Greece for more than 10 years. Less satisfied are Asians, Arabs and Africans, young migrants and those who live in Greece for less than 5 years.

Satisfied with their income are less than the half (44,2%) migrants. 53,4% are satisfied of health and medical care , 53,8% of social insurance and 635 of their relation with their employer. Only half migrants are satisfied with their social life

however at least 79% state they enjoy full religious freedom. 90% say they live better in Greece than in their own home country.

Looking Ahead

Immigrants have contributed significantly to the improved performance of the Greek economy over the past few years, and they have boosted Greece's successful participation in the EU's economic and monetary union. Their structural role in the workforce of the construction and agricultural sectors has been widely acknowledged. Despite a high level of unemployment, which is estimated at nine percent for the country as a whole, there appears to be no serious competition by native Greeks for the kinds of jobs secured by immigrants. On the contrary, immigrants have played a rather complementary economic role.

The current high growth rate of the Greek economy—four to five percent in the last 5 years—has persisted contrary to analysis, which expected to slow down after the completion of the facilities for the Olympic Games that have driven huge amounts of activity in construction and other sectors. In addition, the funds allocated to Greece under the European Union's new support framework are expected to shrink following the EU's enlargement in 2004 and 2007.

Recent Migration and Data Limitations

Historically, data on immigration to Greece has been inadequate and often unsatisfactorily recorded. This has only recently begun to change with census counts and other forms of data collection.

Greece's first national figures were calculated following a regularization program in 1997, based on information collected from 371,641 applicants for Greece's "white card" residence permit. Analysts believe that the applicants amounted to approximately half of the immigrants living in the country at that time.

The data indicate that, of those registered under the program, over 70 percent were unskilled males with higher than primary-school education. They were concentrated in the region of Athens, and more than two-thirds had Albanian nationality. These migrants were employed mostly in agriculture, construction, tourism, and domestic services—sectors that operate with ease in the informal economy, or extend there.

The only other satisfactory data on the immigrant population was collected by the National Statistical Service during the 2001 Census, in which immigrants were registered as a "foreign population in Greece." Despite their shortcomings, these census data on immigrants provide the most comprehensive, updated picture of the population. It is estimated that the number of migrants in Greece now is around 1,350,000 people. 85% of them work.

It is worth noting that "immigrants" of ethnic Greek origin—either returning emigrants or their descendents—were also registered by the 2001 Census. A report by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in 2003 indicated that over 150,000 immigrants of Greek origin had arrived in the country from the former Soviet Union since 1977; one-third of them had been naturalized.

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2. The migration Law in Greece

2.1. Greek law

- **CIRCULAR 38 OF THE HELLENIC MINISTRY OF INTERIOR, PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND DECENTRALISATION**
Enforcement of the law 3386/2005. (O.J. 212 A/23.08.2005)
- **CIRCULAR 31 OF THE HELLENIC MINISTRY OF INTERIOR, PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND DECENTRALISATION**
Enforcement of the law 3386/2005. (O.J. 212 A/23.08.2005)
- **CIRCULAR 30 OF THE HELLENIC MINISTRY OF INTERIOR, PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND DECENTRALISATION**
Enforcement of the law 3386/2005. (O.J. 212 A/23.08.2005)
- **CIRCULAR 26 OF THE HELLENIC MINISTRY OF INTERIOR, PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND DECENTRALISATION**
Enforcement of the law 3386/2005. (O.J. 212 A/23.08.2005)
- **LAW 3386/2005** Entry, residence and integration of third-country nationals in the Greek Territory. (O.J. 212/ 23.08.2005)
- **LAW 3304/2005** On the application of the principle of equal treatment irrespective of racial or ethnic origin, religious or other beliefs, disability, age or sexual orientation (O.J. 16/27.01.2005)
- **LAW 3284/2004** On the ratification of the Code of Greek Citizenship (O.J. A'217/10.11.2004)
- **DECISION FOR THE ABOLITION OF THE OBLIGATION OF SUBMITTING DOCUMENTS**
Abolition of the obligation of submitting documents for the renewal of the residence permit for dependent employment and the supply of independent services or work (O.J. 1550/B/15.10.04)
- **THE GREEK LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK - L. 2910/2001 - UNIFIED EDITION WITH THE RECENT AMENDMENTS**
Amendments of L. 2910/2001 (O.J. 91 A'/2.5.01)
- **LAW 2910/2001** Entry and stay of aliens in Greek Territory. Acquisition of greek citizenship by naturalisation and other provisions. (O.J. 91 A'/2.5.01)
- **CONSTITUTION IN GREECE**

2.2. European law

- **COMMISSION REGULATION (EC) No 1560/2003** of 2 September 2003 laying down detailed rules for the application of Council Regulation (EC) No 343 / 2003 establishing the criteria and mechanisms for determining the Member State responsible for examining an asylum application lodged in one of the Member States by a third-country national *Official Journal L 222, 05/09/2003 P. 0003 – 0023*
- **COUNCIL REGULATION (EC) No 343/2003** of 18 February 2003 establishing the criteria and mechanisms for determining the Member State responsible for examining an asylum application lodged in one of the Member States by a third-country national *Official Journal L 050, 25/02/2003 P. 0001 - 0010*
- **COUNCIL DIRECTIVE 2004/81/EC** of 29 April 2004 on the residence permit issued to third-country nationals who are victims of trafficking in human beings or who have been the subject of an action to facilitate illegal immigration, who cooperate with the competent authorities. *Official Journal L 261, 06/08/2004 P. 0019 - 0023*
- **DIRECTIVE 2004/38/EC OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL** of 29 April 2004 on the right of citizens of the Union and their family members to move and reside freely within the territory of the Member States amending Regulation (EEC) No 1612/68 and repealing Directives 64/221/EEC, 68/360/EEC, 72/194/EEC, 73/148/EEC, 75/34/EEC, 75/35/EEC, 90/364/EEC, 90/365/EEC AND 93/96/EEC *Official Journal L 016, 30/04/2004 P. 0077 – 0123*
- **COUNCIL DIRECTIVE 2003/109/EC** of 25 November 2003 concerning the status of third-country nationals who are long-term residents *Official Journal L 016, 23/01/2004 P. 0044 – 0053*
- **COUNCIL DIRECTIVE 2003/86/EC** of 22 September 2003 on the right to family reunification *Official Journal L 251, 03/10/2003 P. 0012 – 0018*
- **COUNCIL DIRECTIVE 2003/9/EC** of 27 January 2003 laying down minimum standards for the reception of asylum seekers *Official Journal L 031, 06/02/2003 P. 0018 – 0025*
- **COUNCIL DIRECTIVE 2000/78/EC** of 27 November 2000 establishing a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation *Official Journal L 303, 02/12/2000 P. 0016 – 0022*

- **COUNCIL DIRECTIVE 2000/43/EC**
of 29 June 2000 implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin *Official Journal L 180, 19/07/2000 P. 0022 – 0026*

2.3. International law

- **UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS**
- **INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION ON THE PROTECTION OF THE RIGHTS OF ALL MIGRANT WORKERS AND MEMBERS OF THEIR FAMILIES**

3. The cultural mediator in Greece

Cultural mediators in Greece are a rather new notion. As a matter of fact many persons, mainly public servants have played this role as it was imperative to give information to migrants about legal obligations and rights, about procedures, about health care, education etc. and interact with them. However, it took several years to reflect on these needs generated by the new situation of multicultural environment created in Greece and establish structures to serve them. It took years as well to train cultural mediators (predominantly Greeks though not exclusively) and to come up with tools and methodologies. Involvement of social partners and NGOs came rather at a late stage.

European Initiative EQUAL has played an important role in this respect and has allowed the piloting of very interesting initiatives.

In the following we are giving main web sites a migrant may enter to see his/her rights and learn some interesting information:

<http://www.kep.gov.gr/categories/allodapoi/index.asp>

This site gives information about administrative procedures on residence permits etc. for migrants

<http://www.ggae.gr/default.en.asp>

It is the site the General Secretariat for Greek Migrants gives information on legislation in different countries hosting Greeks and on greek legislation, procedures, institutions and their links.

<http://www.gcr.gr>

This is the site of the National Council for Refugees. It offers information on education and training as well as on programmes for ensuring the rights of refugees and sensitisation of the whole society on their problems.

<http://www.migrantsinGreece.org>

This site includes news, manifestations, studies, statistical data and legislation on migrants and refugees in Greece. It also includes description of the work of the "Forum for social cohesion" as well as the migrants' guide in English, Albanian, Russian and Turkish.

<http://www.gsae.edu.gr/English/Programms/PrImmigrnts.htm>

General Secretariat for Adult Education presents programmes that aim at social inclusion of migrants through actions of training in Greek, development of their social skills and activities and training.

http://www.sae.gr/gr/Diktia/Diktio_Neolaias.asp

The youth network invites young Greek migrants to share various activities

<http://www.migrant.gr>

Latest news on migrants communities in Greece including next activities and NGOs involved in this topic.

A cultural mediation case in Greek schools

Further training of 5 groups of school teachers of primary and secondary Education from Alexandroupolis, Xanthi and Thessaloniki.

Training lasted 48 hours distributed in 8 6hours meetings.

This programme met the need to re-establish the role of school and school teachers in the new multicultural society. Taking into consideration demographic data and new needs generated by them, the programme was designed and implemented in order to foster their multicultural information and empower them.

Starting point of the whole approach was that teachers have to be multiculturally sufficient in order to be able to meet the needs of a multicultural class. This means that the training programme has to allow them to examine their own beliefs and values concerning the cultural base, race and social class, to acquire knowledge on cultural differences and to understand how their knowledge, beliefs and values define their attitude towards their pupils coming from different cultural backgrounds. Using this new consciousness they will be able afterwards to re-define the ways they understand their culturally different pupils and to form new strategies for educating and managing their classes.

The training programme included three axes: thought, feelings and action and consisted of three units:

- Who am I?
- How do I see the others? Stereotypes and prejudices
- Who are the others? The reality of others

Training was based on action and experience learning and used experiences of participants. Aims were that:

- Participants get conscious of their own cultural heritage and its interrelations with other cultures, including respect of difference.
- To assess their own cultural tradition in a wider global concept in order to understand, adapt and finally accept different cultural and personal realities of their pupils who are migrants
- To acquire new skills, knowledge and comprehension.
- To work in order to develop new concepts of managing difference (not assimilation) and to develop techniques and methods taking into consideration variety in the classroom of the 21st century.

A cultural mediation case in the Greek labour market

Establishment of 7 bureaux for support of migrant and refugees in Athens, Piraeus, Thessaloniki, Patra and Volos, since May 2006. Operation of these bureaux is based on a single plan and is systematically supported by the Training Institute of the Greek Workers Confederation (INE GSEE) through continuous information, distance learning and assistance to counselling.

Actions of these bureaux included:

- Offering of information, consultation, empowerment etc. services concerning labour issues. Till June 2007 more than 1500 migrants made use of these services.
- Development and use of a tailor made software for documentation of services offered by the bureaux.
- Development of networking at local level with trade unions, migrant associations, public and non-public institutions and organisations that offer services to migrants.
- Publicity actions.

A cultural mediation case in Greek society

The Gender Equality Research Centre (KETHI) along with the bureaux for support of migrant and refugees that are presented above, organised 7 workshops in Athens, Piraeus, Thessaloniki, Patra and Volos. In the workshop participated public organisations, NGOs, social partners, migrants Associations etc. Aim of these workshops was planning and undertaking of common actions for facing problems of the migrants.

Furthermore, the Greek Council for Refugees has founded a Centre for multicultural education, which has hired 4 mediators. The Greek Council for Refugees and the Migrants' Forum organise there multicultural, information, educational and artistic activities.

4. Cultural mediator's training

In the following, we present the Training Programme for Cultural Mediators that was implemented in the framework of the E.I.Equal by the Greek Council for Refugees. The programme had 16 participants. It lasted from 10.1.07 till 16.2.07 and it had a duration of 100 hours.

Main units covered were:

Greek legislative and institutional framework.

Specifically, the unit examined Law 3386/2005 about “Entrance, residence and social inclusion of other countries nationals to the Greek territory”, the asylum procedure, personal and social rights of migrants and refugees. It also covered elements of the labour Law (rights and obligations of foreign workers, salary, working hours, social security) and special laws for the protection of vulnerable groups such as unescorted minors and victims of trafficking.

Types and forms of interpretation

The role of interpreter and the relation between the mediator, the interpreter and the migrant was examined. It was also examined the way one can interpret (consecutive, simultaneous, summary, word by word etc), rights and obligations of the interpreter. There was also practical guidance on the improvement of the quality of the work of the interpreter (enrichment of vocabulary, improvement of spelling, accent, body language).

Communication principles

Forms and characteristics of communication, communication systems. Basic principles of intrapersonal communication, communication in the workplace and peculiarity of work relation. Analysis of communication obstacles, role of sentimental intelligence and of body language. There was a discussion on the conflict management at personal and professional level and methods of problem solving.

Personal skills development.

There was a discussion on techniques of development of personal skills (increase of creativity, structure of ideas, management of movements), techniques of intrapersonal negotiation (preparation, requisition techniques, defence, negotiation end), techniques of stress management (forms of stress, symptoms, strategies to face stress), time management techniques and techniques for team animation.

Intercultural mediation

There was a debate on the role and profile of the cultural mediator, as well as the ways and aims of counselling. There was a presentation of the phases of adaptation of the migrant and of the refugee in the hosting country, with emphasis to the psycho-emotional fluctuations during this adaptation to the new reality and their consecutive need for support and empowerment. Modern theories about vocational guidance were presented as well. Following that it was examined how mediator can facilitate the selection of a career path, taking into consideration the difficulties that exist due to personal and social factors as well as the need for self-awareness, hierarchy of values and needs and information. Then the situation in Greece was presented, including the political responsibility of the state, the practices of companies/employers and the choices of migrants themselves. There was emphasis on the social dimension of work,

and its benefits. The types of distinctions and discriminations at the workplace and ways to face them were also examined.

As far as pedagogy is concerned, there were theoretical classroom work as well as experiential learning, action learning and role playing. There were also 3 study visits to museums and historic expositions with relative subjects.