

The Greek Review of Social Research

Vol 124 (2007)

Special Issue 124, C: Gender and Migration: Aspects of social integration and social policy. Editors: Koula Kassimati, Loukia M. Mousourou, Ioannis Sakellis



Foreword

K. Kassimati, L. M. Moussourou, I. Sakellis

doi: [10.12681/grsr.111](https://doi.org/10.12681/grsr.111)

Copyright © 2007, K. Kassimati, L. M. Moussourou, I. Sakellis



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/).

To cite this article:

Kassimati, K., Mousourou, L. M., & Sakellis, I. (2007). Foreword. *The Greek Review of Social Research*, 124, 3–8.
<https://doi.org/10.12681/grsr.111>

FOREWORD

As a host country for migrants, particularly from the Balkan countries and the countries of the former Soviet Union in recent years, Greece is receiving significant flows of immigrants. Consequently, Greece is a country that presents a rich field of research on the phenomenon of both legal and illegal immigration.

Interest to date has focused on:

- the morphology of population shifts
- the factors that engender them
- the consequences of migration in both sending and receiving countries
- the profile of specific national groups of migrants (Albanians, Poles, Ukrainians Filipinos, Ethiopians, etc.)
- the social stratification in host countries
- the role of employment in social integration
- the formal and informal immigration policies and integration strategies
- the components of the migrants' new identities.

Nevertheless, for a number of subjects affecting migrants' economic and social life, available information is scarce. The subject of Gender and Migration, on which focuses the Pythagoras I Research Project "Gender and Migrant Populations: aspects of social integration and social policy", belongs to this category.

The abovementioned project has been implemented by the Centre of Social Morphology and Social Policy (KEKMOKOP) of the Panteion University, 2004-2007 period, funded by the Ministry of National Education, under the supervision of Professors K. Kassimati and L.M. Moussourou.

The research focuses on migrant women from Albania and Ukraine who have settled in the vicinity of the Greek capital and are employed as domestic workers, engaged in housekeeping and care of old and sick people as well as children.

The selection of these two population groups was based on two characteristics: (i) Regarding the Albanians, they are the largest group of immigrants in Greece – and this fact makes research extremely important. Moreover, Albanians have emigrated as families. (ii) Migrants from Ukraine have a higher level of education and emigrate as individuals. Thus, have a different group profile as compared to the Albanian women. Nevertheless, migrant women from these two countries have shared the experience of socialization in political systems where statism was the predominant characteristic. Social values and practices, being different from those of the Western societies, have shaped individuals with different attitudes and viewpoints towards dealing with everyday life, gendered roles in family and employment and women's position in society. The transition from a Communist to a post-Communist regime was difficult and involved numerous dangers. These women's decision to emigrate, in families or individually, was significant not only for their lives in Greece, but also for their integration into Greek society. The consequences of migration, both for individuals and society, have already become visible in both societies in a short and long term perspective.

Four field studies provided data for a similar number of research surveys, namely:

- (i) Gender relations and everyday life (under the supervision of Assistant Professor Maria Stratigaki in collaboration with Dr. Eleni Kambouri).
- (ii) The gender dimension in employment (under the supervision of Professor Ioannis Sakellis).
- (iii) Organizations providing services to health, social security and education, under the supervision of associate Professor Iordanis Psimmenos and the lecturer Christoforos Skamnakis.
- (iv) Intergenerational and Gender Relations (under the supervision of Dr. Maria Thanopoulou).

This special issue of *The Greek Review of Social Research* contents eight articles based on the data from the four abovementioned surveys. They all touch upon certain preliminary aspects of domestic workers' emigration, their role in Greek society and its stance and attitude towards them.

The authors of the eight articles, included in this special issue, have chosen their subject and formulated their contribution with the least interference possible from the editors. The latter have solely insisted on the following three points:

- The article's title should correspond to the text,
- The "technical" characteristics (length, references, layout) should be similar, and
- The rich material of the research should be made evident.

We are convinced that the eight articles that follow constitute an integrated entity, although each one consists of an important, autonomous contribution doing justice to the research findings and giving a fairly good idea of the variety both of issues involved, as well as the approaches to these issues.

In the first article, «**Work culture and migrant women's welfare marginalization**», Iordanis Psimmenos deals with the difficulty of relating domestic work to official policies. The fluidity and particular work conditions of this economic activity as well as the lack of resources of immigrant women and the discrimination against them render welfare provisions ineffectual. Psimmenos concentrates on the reaction of Albanian and Ukrainian domestic workers to welfare marginalization, on their efforts to overcome the existing barriers to welfare institutions and services – barriers, which largely depend on the micro-environment of work and the relations and values emerging in it.

Helen Kambouri, in the article «**Gender, migration and domestic work: space and time in the discourse of Albanian domestic workers in Athens**», deals with the relationship between gender and migration from the perspective of everyday life, analyzing the ways in which Albanian domestic workers perceive space and time. These women experience the fact that their everyday life has been taken over by the space and time of domestic work. This, according to Kambouri, has the effect of isolating the immigrants as well as of opening to them the possibility to compare gender stereotypes in the country of origin and the host country. This comparison leads to the challenging of stereo-typed dichotomies such as paid-unpaid work, private-public sphere, male-female space and time.

In the third article, «**Intergenerational and gender relations in Albanian migrant families. The example of household labour division**», Maria Thanopoulou describes the division of housework by generation: grandparents in Albania, parents and children having migrated to Greece. This description leads to the analysis of trends of changes between generations as to gender and intergenerational relations – an analysis based on the comparison of attitudes and practices of the three generations involved.

Ioannis Sakellis and Natalia Spyropoulou are the authors of the fourth article: «**Employing immigrant women from Albania and Ukraine in domestic services in Greece**». The article focuses on the understanding of the immigrant women's employment in the context of hierarchy and relations of exploitation prevailing in the labour market. After a brief description of the structure of the Greek labour market, as well as a perspective of imminent developments, above all in gender discrimination, the authors proceed to the presentation of research findings to conclude that, in spite of the serious problems they face, immigrant women deal with the requirements of their job and new life with dignity and successfully manage to ensure a better life for their children and themselves.

The fifth article deals not with immigrant women but with their Greek employers. In «**Employers of migrant women domestic workers from Albania and Ukraine**», Koula Kassimati describes the positive attitudes of the (mostly) university educated, middle class and economically active women employers towards their immigrant domestic help. The relations between employer and employee largely depend on whether the latter is living in or not –and, as most Ukrainians are living in while (most) Albanians are not, relations tend to be differentiated in accordance with the immigrant woman's nationality. The evaluation of employers for the presence of migrants on the Greek labour market is positive. This is a strong indication for social integration of migrants into the Greek society.

In the sixth article, «**Migrant groups in a deficient system of social protection. Informal practices of social services employees as an element in accessibility**», Christoforos Skamnakis describes how the Greek social security system fails in functioning as a mechanism for social integration. He analyzes how the ineffectiveness of this system is greater in relation to members of immigrant groups, maintaining that informal practices characteristic of social services and servants contribute to the immigrant's marginalization and the reproduction of it.

In «**Migrant mother's everyday practices in nurseries and kindergartens as a strategy for social integration**», Maria Stratigaki and Dina Vaiou discuss formal and informal practices for access to nurseries and schools as well as migrant mother's reactions to the attitudes and behaviours of administrators, teachers and other children. The access to childcare and school determines the possibility of the mother's finding paid work, which lengthens their stay while the child's school achievements are an important factor in the family's decision to stay. The authors argue that the migrant working mother's endeavor to ensure childcare and the best possible school

conditions may reflect traditional gender roles but it also strengthens the mother's role in the household.

Finally, in the eighth article, «**The role of women in the integration of immigrants**», Loukia M. Moussourou maintains that the integration of women immigrants and their role in the integration process depends mainly on factors such as their 'will-ingness' to migrate, whether they have emigrated with their children and the age of these, the ambition to give a good education to their children, their intention to stay temporarily or indefinitely and their relationship with relatives and friends back home.

The articles cover, as indicated, a broad spectrum of issues pertaining to the domestic-type employment of migrant women, without exhausting the related research topic. They are a useful source of information on a significant professional and demographic category of people who play a distinctive role in our country, with positive benefits for society as a whole. Domestic workers cover important needs at the family level and specifically make it possible for care to remain within the families and not resort to the collective forms of elder care and care for the disabled.

We believe that this special issue provides a point of departure both for dialogue and policy recommendations of the appropriate social policy for migration, oriented towards the specific areas that are under investigation through this project.

We would like to thank the National Centre for Social Research for making the publication of this Special Issue possible.

K. Kassimati

L. M. Moussourou

I. Sakellis