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MIGRANT GROUPS IN A DEFICIENT SYSTEM
OF SOCIAL PROTECTION.
INFORMAL PRACTICES OF SOCIAL SERVICES
EMPLOYEES AS AN ELEMENT IN ACCESSIBILITY

ABSTRACT

The stance of welfare regimes vis à vis migratory currents is to treat them as yet another source of pressure tending further to destabilize the already unstable environment of deregulation. Lowering standards of social protection gives no guarantee that the needs of new participant groups in the system will be satisfied. More specifically, though, as confirmed by empirical research, migratory groups are subject to an ordering process by virtue of the informal practices of social services employees and suffer exclusion from the benefits of the system, resulting in undermining of its function as a mechanism of social incorporation and integration. Though state welfare employees put forward a common position in respect of unimpeded functioning of the system's mechanisms, here called the "line of defence", this is being dismantled and is collapsing under the pressure of the everyday practices in which they are implicated. These informal practices have a decisive effect on the character of social protection system, in practice shaping the terms of access to it.

1. INTRODUCTION

In Greece the welfare regime suffers from significant weaknesses which in the new conditions make it exceptionally vulnerable. Its already deficient functioning limits its potentialities and transforms the pressures with which it is confronted into factors that weaken and disorganize it. Members of migrant groups are, through their work, gradually acquiring equal rights of access to the

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system's benefits, without this entailing that their needs will be covered. This is occurring because the social policy regime is not succeeding in providing reliable solutions to new needs, and this evidently limits the potentialities for social integration of the new groupings of workers. In the case of members of migrant groups there are significant problems associated with allocation of the benefits and services to which they are entitled by virtue of their activity in the legal labour market. Employees regulating the mechanisms of social protection assign users to different categories and proceed to make evaluative assessments which set the pattern for their everyday practice. Making use of the powers of discretion available to them by virtue of the existing institutional framework they establish informal sub-categories of users to whom in practice correspondingly different degrees of access of the social policy system are accorded. This discrimination is based, as has been indicated by empirical research, on stereotyped conceptions on the part of employees and specifically on the part of those who come into immediate contact with the users (front line officers). Nevertheless, what is constructed in this way are conditions for restricting access for members of immigrant groups, gradually narrowing the range of social protection mechanisms available to them and lowering their quality and thus their effectiveness as instruments of social integration.

Women migrant domestic workers are a vulnerable group, given that they are working for a low salary in mostly low-status occupations and so run the risk of economic marginalization, clearly, but also of welfare marginalization. The environment that is generated by those running the social protection system is to a significant extent determined by the discretion conceded to them in choosing practices in the course of performing their duties and classifying service users on the basis of their own judgement, bringing into existence in the implementation phase informal groupings with differing rights of access.

With the above considerations as the point of departure, research was conducted into the views of employees working in state welfare services. The objective was to present and analyse the views of state operatives as regards satisfaction of the needs of the female migrant workforce and the methods of handling questions of social insurance, hospital care and pre-school education in public kindergartens.

2. THE BROADER CONTEXT

Significant pressures on welfare regimes are emerging in all of Europe. The European social model is becoming shaky under the weight of these pressures, some of which are long-standing while others have appeared as

new problems and threats. In post-Cold-War Europe large-scale streams of migration have been and continue to be a very visible new parameter bearing on social protection systems. Specifically, in the Greek case, the 90s were historically the first occasion when there was an influx of groupings of foreign migrants of similar or comparable volume. The already weak welfare regime was called upon to deal with new groups and new needs. The new requirements both in terms of the forms of social protection and the domains where there is a demand for it necessitate a reorientation of the system so that it becomes possible to integrate members of migrant groups and ultimately achieve the goal of social cohesion. The pressures that manifest themselves have to do with new services in the field of health, social insurance and policies for the second generation (Brucker, 2001: 71). At the same time a more general requirement emerges for acceptance of the new groups of service users and the fact of their difference, for the simple purpose of ensuring that needs will continue to be covered and social integration secured (Psimmenos and Skamnakis, 2008).

The presence of the migrants within the social protection system has resulted in formation of a new (informal) group characterized by reduced rights of access to benefits and services. The broader grouping of the migrant population as a whole is a highly visible segment of system users, as emerges from analysis of the empirical data from the study. It should in any case be emphasised at this point that the functioning of the mechanisms and regulations of social protection has already undergone polarisation (Ferrera, 2005), with the result that groupings now exist in which different rights of access and ultimately different standards of protection can be identified. These differences are not indeed defined in terms of the type of work performed by each individual employee but are organized on the basis of corporatist arrangements and clientelistic relations, producing a system with a hierarchy of different rights and groupings of privileged or on the contrary deprived sections of the population, exacerbating the already polarized functioning of the welfare regime.

Moreover, participation of the new groups in the social protection system could not occur without upheaval. In the broader context of deregulation of welfare regimes throughout Europe, migrant groups are gradually being added to the list of users of the services. This new reality has the potential to show up the weaknesses in the system and the ineptitude of individual instances of regulation (Morissense and Sansbury, 2005). Even robust systems linked traditionally to high-quality services and levels of protection are coming up against similar problems (Hjerm, 2005).

The criteria for acceptance into the framework of the welfare state highlight one further key point of the problematic concerning participation by new groups. At the level of institutional regulation, control and assessment of the terms of their participation is relatively clear. Analysis of the formal terms is a guide to the central orientations of the system for coverage of these groups. Nevertheless, a study of the methods through which the workers participate in the system, in the context of their everyday practices and the departures from institutionally prescribed procedures, indicate that they have a decisive influence on its character and in this connection on its ability to function as an effective mechanism of social integration.

This issue can be identified as a central characteristic of the Greek welfare regime, in which elements of “false universalism” can be detected in respect of benefits and services. The vagueness of the spectrum of available services, access to them and their quality, undermines the system’s effectiveness and cancels out its role in relationship to servicing of the objective of social cohesion. The element of vagueness encourages the elaboration of individual strategies for access by all users, feeding and reproducing the existing informal and clientelistic networks as well as the informal labelling of individuals and groups (Psimmenos and Skamnakis, 2007). It moreover highlights the wide range of practices that front line officers are in a position to utilize as they interpret their role and evaluate the rights of access to the system either group by group or on an individual case-by-case basis.

It clearly emerges that the polarized functioning of the system is exacerbated and accessibility for socially weaker groups made more problematic and, obviously, uncertain. Female migrant domestic workers, as emerges from the empirical research, come up against significant obstacles to access to welfare mechanisms. They encounter arbitrary discrimination and informal collective-labelling stances on the part of employees working in social protection services.

The Greek welfare regime has gradually assimilated a number of important institutional welfare innovations so as to be able to respond more effectively to the new pressures and serve the new categories of users (Alipranti and Gazon, 2005: 17-29). Nevertheless the system’s proper functioning and adaptation to new needs is not reducible to formal regulations. An important role in the form of service provided by the social protection system and in the quality of such service is played by the way policy is implemented and by employee practice. In the context of today’s dismantling of welfare systems, the pressure of new needs is not absorbed, which has consequences in the domain of implementation and of everyday practice of administrative staff

(Geddes, 2003). The way in which migrant groups are treated in the welfare services ultimately determines the way in which the mechanisms of the welfare state are conducive to integrating these groups or on the contrary marginalizing and excluding them (Kassimati and Psimmenos, 2004: 477; Psimmenos, 2003: 208; Psimmenos and Kassimati, 2003: 367).

The institutional adjustments and more generally the totality of formal prerequisites and rules regulating the functioning of the system are, for those working within it, a guarantee for the provision of reliable assistance to all those with entitlement, without differentiations or discrimination (Psimmenos and Skamnakis, 2008). But the institutional framework, however adapted, cannot of itself protect any person from evaluative judgements and corresponding classification by employees. A “line of defence” is constructed by employees, based on formal regulations and linked to defence of the effective functioning of the social protection mechanisms. But this line of defence proves exceptionally fragile and vulnerable to the practices of officials and lower-ranking employees. That this is so is due to their being influenced by powerful stereotyping prejudices which in turn entail discrimination and assignation of users to groups with (in practice) different degrees of access.

3. ELABORATION OF THE LINE OF DEFENCE

The institutional regulations of the social protection system are aimed at covering every working person and protecting him from collective labelling practices which do not emerge from differences in the work situation and vocational history of each individual. In this context, by virtue of the fact that they are living and working legally in Greece, members of migrant groups acquire rights of access to services and benefits. If they are covered by insurance, domestic workers enjoy entitlements equivalent to those of other workers in the cleaning sector. This at any rate is evidently the case as far as front line officers are concerned. Their conception of the system is that it does not make distinctions on the basis of profession, gender or origin. The only criterion employed, in accordance with this viewpoint, is that of formal job characteristics.

All of the system’s legitimate users are to be served without distinctions, classifications and collective lumping together. Differentiations are to be based on institutionalized regulations which seem, in principle anyway, not to admit of exceptions. Those with entitlement are to be served without discrimination:

“...No differentiation.... The same things... With permits, with medical treatment, with surgery....it makes no difference whether he or she is a Greek, an Albanian or a Pakistani”. (employee of IKA, the Social Insurance Foundation)

The employees appear to be defending the functioning of the system as a mechanism that operates smoothly, with them succeeding in providing service to all users without distinction. As evident from the above extract, the existing institutional regulations and practices prohibit labelling and categorizing and in this way ensure members of migrant groups the best possible conditions of access. Within the limits of the potentialities of an in any case weak welfare regime, both the institutional framework and employee practice provide all those with entitlement, without exception, with all services to which they have a right.

The above position amounts to a description of the way in which employees themselves outline the essentials of the reception accorded to the new groups that have emerged within the Greek system over the last fifteen years. Entrenched behind its institutional regulations, the system copes with the pressures without encountering any particular problems in terms of the process of allocation of its services. This is the basic fact underlying the “line of defence”, which – as will become evident in what follows – is more an imaginary characteristic of the system than a reality.

It is as the “line of defence” that one encounters the unobstructed functioning of all the formal regulations out of which emerges the exclusion of practices of collective labelling and classification of users on the basis of nationality, gender or profession. The central thread in the line of defence continues to be the humanitarian dimension of the welfare regime, as may be seen from the following extract:

“...patients are all treated the same.....Whether it is....that is to say whether the person who comes and registers as a Greek or whether he comes and writes ‘Kazakhstan’, all are treated the same in the hospital...Everyone will be served in the hospital, as I have told you . For me they are all patients! There is no question of “why are they not getting treatment”. Everyone is treated. And I think that now all are being provided with the cards they are given and they are also insured...”. (hospital worker)

Formally at any rate the universal character of medical treatment within the context of the National Health System (ESY: Ethniko Systema Ygeias)

reinforces the “line of defence”. This happens because the accessibility of the health system is based primarily on the value of protecting human life. That is confirmed by the position formulated in relation to the provision of medical services to those entitled to it through insurance, as well as to uninsured immigrants (or Greeks) facing health problems.

“...There are two categories. Those who are legal and those who are illegal. And in the case of those who are legal we will deal with whatever acute health problem they face and after that, when their condition has stabilized, they will have to pay 50% of the cost... Because they are uninsured... we had to act as doctors and as human beings. As a union we came out against them paying for medical treatment. We opposed that idea and asked our members to ignore the orders of the Ministry”. (representative of EINAP [Union of Hospital Doctors of Athens and Piraeus])

The above extract conveys the substantial ethical parameters of the social protection mechanisms, incorporating the “line of defence” that supports the function of social policy as a means of covering the requirements of those in need. The weaknesses of the system don’t motivate those working for it to introduce discrimination between different kinds of users. Those working in the welfare services take the position that, at least to the best of their ability, they should deal with every circumstance as it arises, without looking too closely at any other parameter other than genuine need.

At the same time the line of defence includes undeviating adherence to what is formally prescribed and in the opinion of the personnel secures the unimpeded functioning of the social protection mechanisms. As emphasized by the employees, the welfare that is included in the formal instructions is adequate for provision of treatment to all who have established rights of access and are protected from labelling and discrimination.

Employees working within the mechanisms of the system invoke the symbolic content of the line of defence with a view to defending the functioning of the system, and precluding instances of discrimination against users. The employees welcome members of migrant groupings as equal users without dividing them into groups with different rights. The line of defence thus entails exclusion of discriminatory practices while at the same time guaranteeing observance of the formal rules so as to ensure satisfaction of all needs foreseen by the welfare regime.

The level of tension in the line of defence differs between one section of the social protection section system and another. Nevertheless, the lowest

common denominators which emerges from empirical research data is defence of the procedures, the formal regulations and the practices employed by staff members which secure the unimpeded functioning of the system. But, as will be analysed below, during the state of implementation the staff members themselves deconstruct the “line of defence”, discovering practices and methods which come into conflict with its content.

4. DECONSTRUCTING THE LINE OF DEFENCE

As emerges from the empirical research data, employees working in the social protection structures being studied frequently resorted to collective labelling of groups and individuals seeking to take advantage of the mechanisms of social protection. Through their behaviour and attitudes they highlight the importance of informal practices in allocation of services and finally in the very character of the system. Noteworthy breaches in the “line of defence” become observable, given that arbitrary practices find ground for application in a context where lack of clarity is habitual at the institutional level. The dedication to rules and regulations pervading the entire spectrum of governmental services is being gradually deconstructed while and the same time discriminatory practices by groups and individuals are coming to light. This discrimination disrupts the proper functioning of the social protection mechanisms and annuls the potential of the welfare regime to underwrite the procedures of social integration, in this particular instance of female migrant domestic workers.

The groupings formed out of the everyday practice of social services employees take on the appearance of groupings with different rights, groups evidently the result of informal procedures that serve to underwrite differences in the levels of benefits and services that are dispensed to them by the official social protection organizations. The presence of the members of the migrant groups is commented on as a further burden to the system’s everyday functioning. Utilization of the services by foreigners with the relevant entitlement affects the manner of allotment of the benefits, as emphasised in the following extract:

“...Usually the foreigners are more argumentative in the sense that they think we regard them as a minority and come with their prejudices already aroused. They are more argumentative during our dealings with them. We try to be objective and treat them like anyone else. We say: this is the law. This is what applies for everyone and it is a fact that there

are no special provisions for you. Everyone is given a number and waits his or her turn, irrespective of whether they are foreigners or Greeks. We don't make distinctions because all are insured with the foundation". (IKA: the Social Insurance Foundation)

Coexisting in the above quotation are a comment on the presence of the foreigners as a source of problems for the smooth functioning of the service and on the other expression of the "line of defence", supporting the objective of operation free of hindrances. Despite the obvious devotion to the proper formalities, there is at the same time an assessment of the presence of the foreigners as operationally burdensome to the service because of their behaviour and the negative stance they have developed (unjustifiably, in the opinion of the social service employees).

Deconstruction of the "line of defence" is a gradual process, whose starting point is the formulation of evaluative judgements on the presence of members of the migrant groups in the totality of those entitled to benefits and services. In the view of the employees of the welfare regime, the members of the migrant grouping are assuming a distinctive stance which sets them apart from other users. These initial assessments are the basis for the construction of collectivities with different access rights, whether migrants, women or whatever group is singled out by social service employees.

The key boundaries between the central group and others are constructed around the dichotomy between Greeks and foreign (new) users. The latter are seen as a separate group of users who are extracting more benefits from the system than they are entitled to. The following extract reproduces precisely this viewpoint:

"...I can tell you that the foreigners, I don't know how, perhaps it's the association they have, are much better informed than the Greeks. Greeks don't know so much about the benefits...one of them came to me and asked how he could get the rent subsidy, which made an impression on me because I live in my own house and hadn't thought about it. But when I asked an acquaintance who pays rent if he received a rent subsidy he said: "I didn't know that I could get a rent subsidy." The foreigner knew about it. The Greek who has been renting his house for so many years didn't. So there you have it. But other times too they know about sickness benefits and all the papers you need. Yes, they know a lot. They really do...". (IKA employee)

It seems that of the two basic groups that are being distinguished in the above extract, it is the former, the foreigners, who are deriving the maximum benefit from the system, while the latter, the Greeks, don't know and/or don't care about some of the available benefits. The new groups manage to maximize their utilization of the rights recognized by the system itself. But this is also represented as a significant problem, which undermines prospects for benefits, their quality and the extent of their availability. The spectrum of services that is taken advantage of by the new groups enjoying entitlement to them is seen by employees in the social services system as being exceptionally generous. The attitude is characteristically expressed as follows:

"...Let me tell you that what seems most serious to me is that because of the migrants soon all these insurance funds won't be able to meet their obligations. That is what is most important..."

and continues:

"...they give a lot of benefits to them without taking from the contributions they should be taking". (IKA employee)

The presence of the new groups – again as seen by staff employees – constitutes a threat to the social protection system. Moreover this threat is heightened by regulations in favour of these new groups. It is evident that discrimination gradually acquires substance and content with the result that two large informal groups are constituted: Greeks on one side and foreigners on the other. The stance that is being protected by the "line of defence", as laid down by the employees themselves, is being deconstructed, given that the wider group of users no longer possesses elements of uniformity but on the contrary evaluative judgements are making their appearance vis à vis the sub-groups of users and the differing rights being accorded to them.

This description of the situation, in the given context of deregulation of the welfare regime, sheds light on another dimension of its operations. A significant part of the universally available benefits, such as the first-degree services of the National Health System, are evidently being downgraded and are starting to be addressed to the economically and socially weakest sectors of the population such as immigrant women domestic workers. The following reference is characteristic:

"...they share the same health system with our own (Greek) poor people, and are being treated the same way by the health system. I don't think that the health system is behaving in a racist way towards them..."
(hospital employee)

Extending the scope of the private sector into domains which have traditionally been covered by the public services downgrades their importance without this nevertheless being enough in itself to justify practices of labelling its users. Even the already socially weak groups who have recourse to its services suffer the consequences of the informal lumping together of people based on social and ethnic stereotypes and the associated prejudices. The universality of the system is drawn into question, with the more robust of those entitled to benefits abandoning it, evidently in response to the deficiencies of the services actually on offer. Despite this, the employees working in the services discriminate between different groups and label users, creating in practice groups enjoying different degrees of access and through actions weakening the line of defence which they themselves evoke as the system's basic principle of operation.

The arbitrary evaluations and labelling by social service employees is of particular interest for the way it manifests itself within a context that provides leeway for a variety of practices, always within the boundaries of legality. As confirmed by the findings of empirical research, employees in the services and particularly "front-line" staff have significant powers of discretion for handling the situations they face, correspondingly influencing the terms for allocation of services and benefits. In consequence of the lack of clarity in the allocation system, personal strategies develop both on the part of users and on the part of employees. This is illustrated in the following extract:

"...now lately they have been pressuring us not to sign and not to stamp anyone if they don't pay and are not legal, OK? For about a month now. Before that....well, there was a certain slackness. For example I might see some kid, let's say – this has happened to me – who comes in at night from a bar, on Saturday night, and he says to me: 'I haven't got any', and I say 'All right. It doesn't matter.' I sign him on and he goes away. And some of them that I see are old, and when we say that they are on a pension of 300 euros, won't you sign them on to be done with it? I did this kind of thing because I felt sorry for them. Now of course I can't do things like that. Now of course, to talk of what has happened to me, when a person comes who I feel really is in need and I say to him, 'make a payment' and he says 'can't I owe it to you?' and I say 'make a payment', I don't want to give the others the right to... if they hear me, do you understand? When he left I wrote off the debt immediately. I put in one number up... now of course I got into trouble, but I saw that the guy had problems...". (hospital employee)

Employees' freedom to exercise discretion can work in two directions. The first, as outlined in the extract above, has to do with provision of service to cases where the employees themselves judge that there should be flexibility in implementation of the regulations. The second concerns exhaustion of the formal potential of regulations selected, again, on the basis of personal judgements and assessments, as evidenced below:

"...I didn't allow them not to pay! Always, if I saw Albanians and the like, I didn't allow it. Even if I had the time...that they should not pay, no, never! I mean...the way things are... I don't know... why but I didn't like them! Maybe...we are too influenced by the television with what we hear...I don't know! But I, at any rate... No Albanian has ever done anything to me. And with what I hear outside...". (hospital employee)

Freedom of discretion undoubtedly shapes, or in any case contributes to, a climate of vagueness and uncertainty in relation to access procedures, the spectrum of services available and user rights generally.

The hazy and informal operational context of the social protection mechanisms can work to the disadvantage of the weakest social groups. It is to be expected that members of migrant groups, such as female domestic workers, will have difficulties finding the right strategic orientation in this environment of uncertainty. The welfare regime remains vulnerable to the assessments and interpretations of employees working in it when it comes to the rights of access to it by individuals and groups without succeeding in securing its protection from their informal practices.

Accessibility is determined by informal practices. Additional obstacles and difficulties can have the effect of creating privileged access for some and hindering access for others. The line of defence is breached, accessibility having become dependent on informal discriminatory practices. The extract below gives a precise picture of these informal classificatory practices in procedures for acceptance into pre-school education.

"...They exist (informal practices)... Such as reserving places...having some simulated enrolments usually they retain some of the pre-school names who have moved on to regular kindergarten and left ... Things like that...I have heard of registrations being said to be made when they haven't and then pupils are fobbed off in different directions (to neighbouring pre-schools, etc.)". (kindergarten employee)

Management of demand for pre-school education services as portrayed in the above extract is based on the moods and conceptions of those in

charge of each pre-school. Access to available services is not necessarily based on equal access for every child with entitlement. As for the services themselves:

“...I have heard of classes where there are ten, fifteen, or whatever, foreign children and another which has only Greek children (laugh). I imagine it can’t be by chance”. (kindergarten employee)

Quite clearly the opportunities for informal practices enjoyed by officials and employees in the social protection structures can have a significant influence on the form and character of the welfare regime, particularly in the case of new groups of users. The question of difference is handled administratively, with practices clearly incompatible with the prospect of social integration of second-generation migrants. The prejudiced assessments of pre-school employees can underwrite discrimination in allotment of services, creating conditions of exclusion or obstruction for some groups, and first and foremost migrants.

The arbitrary labelling contributes to a weakening of “the line of defence” and revealing the existence of groups for which there is in practice recognition of different rights of access to the system and its services. The evocation of formal regulations as a guarantee for unimpeded functioning of the social protection structures appears insufficient for securing it. On the contrary the welfare regime seems vulnerable to the everyday practice of officials and junior employees in the social services. Its character is not only a result of the institutional regulations it embodies but also of the methods implemented by staff.

Even the universal character of the services is subject to the influence of informal practices pursued by employees. The predictable result that decisive damage is sustained by the system’s institutional dimension, with strengthening of the characteristics of pseudo-universality over the whole spectrum of benefits. Although some enclaves – such as first-degree medical care facilities – remain where there are stable elements of universality, nevertheless, given the everyday informal practice of officials and lower-ranking employees, the line of defence is gradually being dismantled. On the basis of these practices groups are formed with different rights of access, determined by the evaluative judgements of “front-line” employees. The new user groups are in a position of disadvantage and experience informal discrimination. At the stage of allocation of services, groups are formed whose access to welfare state facilities encounters significant obstacles, which are conspicuous for their informal character. These groupings,

conflicting as they do with the logic of the “line of defence”, have as their basis the stereotyped conceptions of the employees who shape their judgements and their decisions in a manner that will become evident below.

5. STEREOTYPED VIEWS

The labelling that arises out of the informal practices of officials and “front-line” employees is grounded in rigid stereotyping conceptions. The basis on which the differentiation in rights of access to benefits and services is erected comprises positions which are for the most part arbitrary. The presence of new groups participating in welfare state structures is to be interpreted in conjunction with the more general environment of deregulation of the welfare machinery mechanisms and contraction of benefits. The new groups are perceived as an additional threat because they increase demands for benefits and services at a time of generalized suspicion concerning security of the right of access to the machinery of social protection. These views as put forward by employees working in the system provide the following explanation of the reasons for the breakdown of the line of defence.

“...I think that society has changed with the immigrants, because when I came, and was in school, in '77 I wasn't afraid of walking in the street. Now I am. I'm afraid that my bag will be snatched, that I will be pushed over, that I will be robbed. There were never these fears and we could walk about more easily. I personally could. Now I would never be so ready to let my child walk in the streets. This is our only difference. The migrants have come and at every moment you are afraid”. (hospital employee)

The presence of migrants in Greek society is interpreted as a central cause of the increase in criminality and more generally the reason for deterioration of the sense of security. Rigid stereotyped conception are transported via social service employees from the community as whole to the context of state welfare. These translations of social reality comprise the central instrument for translation of the functioning of the welfare regime. They fuel modes of behaviour and clearly influence the way in which employees choose their options in utilizing the discretion made available to them by the institutional framework and through practical exercise of their duties.

The presence of the migrants is assessed as being problematic for the functioning of the system as well as for the quality of the services provided. The following extract is similarly revealing:

“...things are bad for Greeks because they can’t get an appointment (with a doctor) since all the times have been taken by migrants. But I have respect for the Greek who works from the age of 13 and sticks the stamps and pays his contributions. Is it right that he should be served in this way when he is registered as being insured in IKA? Why should there be a payment for inoculations, apart from the cost of the visit to the doctor? .When there are a lot of people I just ignore it and I see the patient for a longer time. But not many Greeks come here now. What can we do about it now that we have so many people here and they can’t get served...”. (IKA employee)

Even when working migrants fulfil all the legal prerequisites they are described as part of an entity whose presence is a burden on the proper functioning of the social protection mechanisms. Greek users are being supplanted by migrants because it has become impossible or at least very difficult for all to be served. The deficiencies of the system are being aggravated as the ground is prepared for expansion of the private profit-oriented realm into the space being left uncovered by the welfare state. The pressures that are weakening the whole spectrum of IKA benefits, and more generally the deficiencies in the way the system operates are attributed not to the real causes but are confined to a rudimentary level of criticism of the new beneficiaries from the benefits and the rights of access they have to them.

In all the spectrum of services studied assessments were put forward in relation to the presence of migrants and the burden they bring to welfare state provisioning. The stereotyped viewpoints have an appearance of vehemence, attributing system inadequacies and malfunctions to the presence of the new groups. Its already deficient character in turn feeds the relevant interpretations that enforce stereotypes and prejudices. Incapacity to organize and implement specific policies of integration comes out more forcefully in the field of pre-school education:

“...standards have greatly fallen off in very many schools, i.e. where they (students from abroad) make up 70% of a class, the standards of the pupils has very much fallen. And of course Greek students can’t go into it because the level is low and these children – no., they’re not stupid but they don’t know the language. They are from a different culture. And these pupils can’t progress at the same rate as the Greek children. With the result that parents and schools want to change classes...”. (kindergarten employee)

The view is put forward that the presence of the second generation leads to downgrading of public education, reinforcing the division of system users into two large categories. On the one side are the Greeks, the traditional users of the services whose numbers fall off and whose rights are contracted. The new groups, on the other hand, occupy the space, displacing the traditional users and at the same time exacerbating the system's weaknesses. Stereotyped viewpoints lead to attribution of the weaknesses and shortcomings to increase in demand from the new groups and not to the system's inherent weaknesses.

The new users comprise a separate group in the system, as emerges from description by employees. Nevertheless at the level of investigation of the stereotypes that support the specific division another dividing line emerges to cut through the migrants. The intensity and frequency with which it appears testifies to its strength. As is characteristically stated:

"...I am not saying this of migrants generally. I am saying it of the Albanians. I make this differentiation. Most clearly. OK? With them you find a bad way of behaving, even to the point of criminality in here and certainly outside. It is this insolent style, this 'I'll give you a shove' attitude". (IKA employee)

This characteristic distinction is symptomatic of the classifications being applied to individual migrant group members within the sum total of social protection structures investigated. While the basic distinction between Greeks and migrants is predominant, at the same time discrimination develops at the individual level, supported by stereotyped viewpoints which are indeed similarly reproduced in the context of the welfare state.

Stereotyped viewpoints are indeed to be found in the whole spectrum of descriptions by officials and employees working within the structures of social protection. These stereotypes comprise the base upon which the practice is established of drawing distinctions between system users. With the point of departure the totality of specific stereotyped views challenging the logic of the "line of defence", boundary lines are drawn and informal practices develop which undermine the "line of defence" and arbitrarily organize groups with differentiated levels of access to benefits and services. The intensity of the predominant stereotypes exerts an influence on the boundaries of the informal labelling and in the final analysis also the characteristics of social policy delivery.

6. CONCLUSION

Analysis of the empirical data leads rather self-evidently to a number of conclusions about the structures of social protection and the welfare regime as a whole. The presence of new population groupings in the welfare-state context meant the creation of new pressures and generated a variety of responses. In the broader context of deregulation of the system of social protection migrant groups, as new users, were targeted as being primarily responsible for the contraction in benefits and services. The inadequacy of the Greek welfare regime was further heightened. Within the machinery of the welfare state conditions were thus created which favoured the development of prejudice against migrants. The system's function as a means of fostering social integration for these new groups weakened and its role downgraded. This took place because employees in the welfare services had the power to exert a decisive influence on the manner of practical implementation of state welfare measures, shaping its character.

Observance of institutional regulations and securing of free and equal access to the services and benefits to which domestic workers are entitled, which here has been called the "line of defence" recedes under the weight of information practices of labelling of users of the social protection system. As emerged from analysis of the empirical data, pronounced stereotyping conceptions are pervasive in accounts put forward by social services employees. These stereotypes are the basis for the development of informal practices of discrimination and collective labelling of system users. These informal but by now very visible groupings receive a different degree of access. Practices of establishing different classifications of users undermine the proper functioning of the welfare regime. They correspondingly weaken the presence of migrant groups and thus of women domestic workers in the section of the population that is covered by the full spectrum of welfare state benefits, further weakening their capacity for social integration in the host country.

The central dividing line for the totality of system users is drawn on the basis of nationality. On the one side are the Greek users and on the other the large grouping of migrants. As emerged from the empirical research, the migrant population is not something uniform and indivisible. Though less pronounced in terms of intensity or vehemence, the divide running through the migrant subgroup in the population distinguishes between the Albanians from the others. Leaving out of account the size factor in the case of the Albanian immigrant population, the divide also has its foundations in ethnic

stereotypes and prejudices. It also generates subgroups with different access rights to the welfare regime. In this context domestic workers are an even more powerless section of these she-groups (see the articles of the present volume) and are subjected to the differentiations and classifications that arise in the welfare-state context out of the informal practices of employees.

The welfare regime is not succeeding in functioning as an effective mechanism of social integration. On the contrary its operational deficiencies are growing more serious, particularly in relation to members of migrant groups. The weakness of the support it is providing for social integration ultimately reproduces their marginalization, most notably on the basis of the system's informal functioning.

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