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Laura Maratou-Alipranti, Rossetos Fakiolas

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*Laura Maratou-Alipranti\*, Rossetos Fakiolas\*\**

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## THE LONELY PATH OF MIGRANT WOMEN IN GREECE

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### ABSTRACT

*About 330,000 foreign immigrant women, out of a total foreign immigrant population close to one million persons, have resided in Greece since the mid-1990s. These women are characterized by diverse patterns of motivation for entering Greece, legal status, ethnicity, migration type (i.e., independent versus associational, transient versus permanent), kinds of employment and living conditions. The overwhelming majority are economic migrants who entered the country illegally or legally but work without permits. After the two legalisations in 1998 and 2001 most of them have acquired a legal status. They show however a high propensity to lapse again into illegality by not renewing their permits, while new illegal arrivals pour in. About two thirds of the women, the same as the male migrants come from Albania and a further 6% from Bulgaria, both bordering Greece. A total of about 86% of female migrants come from the former socialist countries of Eastern Europe, including those of the former Soviet Union. The remaining come from dozens of other source countries in all continents. They represent every religion, with Christians of various denominations and Moslems topping the list. Their motivations range from supporting financially their families at home or in Greece (the considerable number of migrant pupils has been on the increase), to advancing their careers, acquiring more work experience, and combining tourism with employment. Hardly any are illiterate and about one in six or seven have tertiary education. A considerable proportion migrate alone as independent migrants, following a lonely path by striving on their own to settle and make a living in a foreign country. Although there are indications that an increasing number intend to remain in Greece for many years, the majority appear to be transient migrants, not intending permanent settlement. Their living conditions are highly diverse.*

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\* Senior Researcher and Head of Publications and Scientific Information Department at the National Centre for Social Research (EKKE), Athens.

\*\* Professor at the National Technical University of Athens.

## INTRODUCTION

Being traditionally an emigration area, Southern Europe has turned in recent years into a region that receives large numbers of economic migrants, refugees and highly qualified foreign experts, as a result of its geographical location and economic and social development (King and Black, 1997). An additional important feature of the new migrations to Southern Europe is the large proportion of women who migrate alone in search of employment and do not follow the traditional pattern of accompanying male family members. This is perhaps another expression of women's emancipation. More importantly, however, it is the outcome of economic and social factors such as the tertiarization of the economy, a large informal sector and a concomitant need for labour flexibility. Increasing mechanization of the production process, application of new technologies and rising incomes have created new employment opportunities for women. Tertiarization, increasing mechanization of production and introduction of new technologies have also changed the nature of the Greek economy into a service economy, with about two thirds of total employment in various services, such as education, health, social security, public and business administration, hotels, catering and recreation, transport and communications, banking, insurance and body care.

Furthermore, the new economic and social conditions have resulted in increasing employment opportunities for Greek women, who acquire greater education and demand equal treatment with men in employment. Women participate now, on almost equal terms, in education and undertake practically all kinds of employment, fulfilling aspirations for professional distinction. In the Mediterranean economies that are characterised by a large number of small family firms, large underground economic activities (IMF, 1999) and inadequate labour inspection controls, there is also a case to be made for employers who actively seek cheap, informal, and flexible non-unionised labour, especially in the service sectors (Fakiolas, 1999; King, 2000).

Rising educational standards among Greek women and changing attitudes toward gainful employment of women create a suitable supply for meeting, for the most part, the increased demand for female labour (Symeonidou, 2002a). For the remaining part, consisting mainly of low-skilled labour demand for domestic and other services, increasing shortages are mostly met by migrant women. Thus, the increased labour demand is met both by local and migrant women. The latter tend, as a rule, to take the low status jobs, irrespective of their real professional qualifications which are, in many cases, considerable.

Women have been particularly affected by transnational global processes and are an increasingly important component of the new migrations to Southern Europe. Spain, Italy, Portugal and Greece have in the last two decades been transformed from traditional countries of emigration to recipients of migrants and refugees from both European and non-European countries. A significant proportion of such migration movements consists of women, and, in some cases, women constitute up to 50 per cent of all migrants (King and Black, 1997; Anthias and Lazaridis, 2000).

A basic distinction should be made between sex, a biological difference between women and men; and gender, a socio-economic and cultural construct for differentiating between socially produced roles, responsibilities, constraints, opportunities and specific needs of women and men in a given context. Gender is a relational concept as well as a central organizing principle of social relations. Thus, gendering migration is not just a question of recognizing the rates of female migrants in various economic and social roles. It is equally important to consider the role of gender processes, discourses and identities in the migration and settlement process. This requires to examine in depth the new processes that contribute to the feminization of migration as well as the particular forms of female insertion in the labour market that such a trend involves (Anthias, 2000). Furthermore, citizenship has an important gender dimension because it determines the legal, economic, social and political rights of the individuals, and expresses their overall relationship to the state. Migrant women's participation in the various national organizations and social processes of their local communities is of special importance in assessing their social situation in a given country (Kontou, 1999).

The purpose of this paper is three-fold: a) To examine the rates, structural characteristics (such as age, marital status and level of education) and the legal status of the female migrants in Greece. Although some reference is made to the large number of ethnic Greek women from the former socialist societies of Eastern Europe who have settled in Greece and have similar demographic and labour market characteristics with the foreign ones, the emphasis is on foreign (i.e., non-ethnic Greek) female immigration in the country. Given however that, as economic migrants, women have about the same motivations to migrate as men, references to both genders' migration to Greece are frequently made. b) To examine the factors affecting settlement and living conditions of immigrant women in Greece. c) To assess the effects of their immigration in Greece.

## THE SIZE OF THE FEMALE IMMIGRATION

### **The Number of Female Immigrants**

Large scale migration to Greece started in the late 80s and gained momentum in the early 90s. Before the 1998 legalization, detailed data about foreign passport holders in Greece were available from the population censuses and those of the number of the residence and work permits issued by the Ministry of Labour to foreign passport holders. The latter show that until the mid 90s the number of legal migrants was very small. It increased from 5,000 in the 1960s to 20,000 in the 1970s and to about 30,000 in the 1990s. In 1996, only 24,413 foreign nationals had valid work permits. About half of them were ethnic Greeks and other European Union nationals (Maratou-Alipranti, 1996). The proportion of the ethnic Greeks was reduced from about half of the total during the 1980s to less than 10% after 1990. At the same time the proportion of the EU nationals increased. As a rule the permit was for a maximum of one year and was issued at the request of the prospective employer through a complicated process. The proportion of women increased constantly from 26% in the 1970s to 45% in the 1990s (Table 1).

Unpublished data from the Labor Force Surveys of the NSSG on the structure of the population by ethnicity and gender show that the number of foreigners increased constantly during the 90s. Albanian migrants form the majority among all migrants, and among them men predominate in relation to women. The reverse however is the case with the migrants from Russia, Poland and other countries (Table 2).

### FEMALE APPLICANTS FOR THE 1998 AND 2001 LEGALIZATIONS

Following other Southern EU countries Greece implemented two regularisation programs in 1998 and 2001, after failing to restrict undocumented migration through expulsions and the bilateral agreements for the exchange of seasonal labour with Bulgaria in 1996 and Albania in 1997. Meanwhile, large sections of the economy were partly dependent on immigrant labour.

Taking place much later than in the three other Southern EU countries, the first legalisation increased the number of the legal foreigners about five times and that of the economic migrants (excluding EU nationals and ethnic Greeks) ten times. Greece however proceeded in a short time to the second legalisation that also elicited a large number of applicants.

**TABLE 1**  
*Foreigners with work permit by continent of origin, Greece 1973–96 (%)*

Year	Europe	Africa	America	Asia	Australia	Unspecified Greeks*	EU	Ethnic	Total (N)	Women %
1973	62,1	6,1	10,9	13,4	4,0	3,5	-	26,4	18,609	27,0
1974	63,8	4,1	10,2	14,9	3,8	3,2	-	29,0	22,906	23,1
1975	55,4	4,7	6,9	24,2	2,4	6,4	-	34,7	25,462	24,3
1976	42,5	4,6	10,2	29,6	3,3	9,8	-	31,1	26,032	24,6
1977	43,0	5,2	10,5	27,9	3,3	10,1	-	22,6	27,501	25,0
1978	45,2	3,2	10,9	26,8	4,1	9,8	26,2	39,9	29,706	24,4
1979	48,9	3,4	11,8	26,3	4,4	5,2	19,9	43,1	29,838	24,4
1980	49,7	4,1	11,9	27,7	4,7	1,9	20,4	45,3	28,628	25,8
1981	48,0	5,0	11,3	29,7	4,3	1,7	17,5	48,5	30,016	26,7
1982	48,8	5,2	10,4	30,2	4,5	0,9	19,7	47,3	29,766	24,4
1983	49,8	5,8	9,3	30,1	4,3	0,7	21,1	46,8	28,736	26,8
1984	48,9	7,2	9,7	29,3	4,2	0,7	24,0	39,9	26,864	27,4
1985	49,6	7,8	9,1	28,9	3,9	0,7	25,2	35,1	28,156	29,5
1986	48,1	6,4	8,8	32,4	3,7	0,7	25,6	32,9	28,000	32,5
1987	45,0	7,9	8,6	34,6	3,2	0,7	23,8	30,4	28,854	35,5
1988	46,8	8,0	8,8	32,5	3,2	0,7	25,4	28,4	26,331	36,7
1989	56,5	6,7	7,5	25,9	2,9	0,5	35,1	25,4	24,662	35,1
1990	54,8	9,3	7,2	25,7	2,3	0,7	38,2	17,8	27,022	35,5
1991	61,7	5,6	5,6	24,7	2,1	0,3	45,8	14,0	29,439	42,1
1992	67,9	4,9	4,7	20,5	1,7	0,3	52,9	10,9	33,912	45,3
1993	80,6	2,8	2,5	12,9	1,1	0,1	55,6	9,4	29,948	46,2
1996	57,5	-	-	27,8	-	-	36,9	20,6	24,413	-

\*Greeks from Turkey, Albania, and Cyprus.

Source: Ministry of Labour; NSSG, unpublished data.

**TABLE 2**  
*Population of private households by sex and nationality,  
 Greece 1991–2002*

Year	Total	Nationality					
		Greek or Greek and other	Foreign nationality	EU countries	Albanian	Russian	Polish
1991	9,919,044	9,839,762	79,282	13,217	6,390	4,881	4,165
1995	10,292,497	9,997,540	294,957	16,658	165,926	18,708	8,580
1997	10,297,912	10,009,155	288,757	18,396	165,578	20,713	6,911
1998*	10,289,358	9,999,143	290,215	15,608	167,323	19,027	7,367
1999*	10,307,534	10,007,568	299,966	18,622	176,505	14,136	10,573
2000*	10,321,202	10,028,018	293,184	18,133	173,335	12,279	12,931
2001*	10,353,506	10,023,987	329,519	19,089	196,522	14,278	12,011
2002*	10,370,841	9,976,818	394,023	12,884	240,870	17,368	13,602

## A. MEN

Year	Total	Greek or Greek and other	Foreign nationality	EU countries	Albanian	Russian	Polish
1991	4,823,977	4,786,857	37,120	4,677	3,734	2,443	2,298
1995	4,932,135	4,872,156	59,979	5,139	20,019	8,663	4,615
1997	4,931,757	4,849,648	82,289	6,277	40,403	7,692	4,372
1998*	5,013,904	4,867,352	146,552	5,527	89,740	7,813	3,462
1999*	4,992,523	4,850,047	142,476	8,291	83,338	6,214	5,481
2000*	4,997,357	4,854,983	142,374	5,968	90,398	4,926	6,623
2001*	4,991,972	4,825,180	166,792	7,871	103,450	5,658	6,645
2002*	5,020,417	4,821,680	198,737	4,616	124,726	6,316	6,016

## B. WOMEN

Year	Total	Greek or Greek and other	Foreign nationality	EU countries	Albanian	Russian	Polish
1991	5,095,067	5,052,905	42,162	8,540	2,656	2,438	1,867
1995	5,305,892	5,235,381	70,511	12,743	18,004	10,891	4,393
1997	5,333,881	5,247,640	86,241	11,029	36,419	10,425	5,398
1998*	5,275,454	5,131,791	143,663	10,081	77,583	11,214	3,905
1999*	5,315,011	5,157,521	157,490	10,331	93,167	7,922	5,092
2000*	5,329,703	5,184,261	145,442	11,041	82,526	7,558	5,586
2001*	5,361,334	5,198,807	162,727	11,218	93,072	8,620	5,366
2002*	5,340,424	5,155,138	195,286	8,268	116,144	11,052	7,586

Source: NSSG, Labour Force Survey (unpublished data)

\* 2nd quarter. From 1998 the survey is repeated every quarter.

Given that the main figures about the legal status and the structure of the females used in this article come from the number of applications for the first legalisation, a short description of the two legalisations will follow. Table 3 indicates their main features.

With the extensions given, the validity of the white cards in 1998 lasted for about 14 months. During that time the migrants had to present 40 social security stamps and other required documents in order to be issued an annual, as a rule, and renewable green card. That card, whose renewal requires 150 social security stamps, grants the migrants full civil rights and the same rights as Greeks in the labour market (excluding tenured positions in the public sector). It also allows them, as a rule, to receive a Schengen

**TABLE 3**  
*Main features of the two legalisation*

Main features	1998	2001
Preparation procedures	Over two years	Over 18 months
Registration Period	January-May 1998	July 2001
Prerequisites June	Illegal residence in Greece before 23/11/1997	Illegal residence in Greece before 2 2000 or purchase of 250 Social Insurance (147 euros)
Certificates granted	White and Green Card	Six month permit and Green Card
Applications	373,000	367,860
Responsible	Ministry of Labour	Ministry of Interior

*Sources:* For 1998 Presidential Decrees 358,359/1997 and National Employment Observatory. For 2001 Law 2910/2001 and Amendment 2002, Ministry of Interior.

visa but it grants no voting rights.<sup>1</sup> An almost similar purpose was served by the 6 month permit in the 2001 legalisation, the validity of which, as mentioned, was extended first until 31/12/2002 and on the eve of 2003 for an additional six months.

Although the 1998 and 2001 legalisations elicited large numbers of applicants, it is estimated that about 300,000 and 200,000 irregular migrants respectively did not apply for various reasons. The reasons include lack of knowledge about the program; lack of qualifications like in the case of those who had penal records or the Poles who had residence permits but worked without work permits; inability to prove that they resided illegally in Greece before 23/11/1997; fear to give the police name and address, being dissuaded by their employers who employed them uninsured, or simply preference for the flexibility of the informal labour market, given that re-entering Greece after an expulsion was not too difficult (Sarris and Markova, 2001).

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

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1. Greece is one of seven EU countries (including Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Italy and Luxemburg), where non-EU migrants do not have the right to vote and stand in local government, while only some groups of them enjoy such rights in Spain, Portugal and the UK. In Denmark, Finland, Ireland, Sweden and the Netherlands migrants have those rights after six months to five years of legal residence (Athens News, 20/9/2002, A12).



Migrants to Greece come from a wide variety of countries in all continents but most come from the former socialist countries. Women occupy an important position among them, mainly as “independent” economic migrants. Of the 373,000 applicants for the 1998 legalisation 269,075 were men (75% of the total) and 93,831 women (26%), while 8,735 did not declare their gender (Cavounidis, 2002b, p. 113). Assuming that the gender proportions are about the same among the applicants for the 2001 legalisation and among legal migrants not related to the legalizations, we conclude that the legal female migrants in the country until 30/6/2003 (i.e., the last extension given for the validity of all cards) are about 230,000. If we add an estimated number of around 70,000-80,000 undocumented female migrants, the total of all migrant women in the country comes up to about 300,000 persons. Unless otherwise stated, the tables presented below and the references made to the structure of migrants in Greece will be based on the figures for the applications to the 1998 legalisation, the most important source for the study of the expansion and the socio-economic characteristics of foreign-born migrants in Greece.

Almost two thirds of the migrants come from neighbouring Albania (65%); other large groups include Bulgarians (6.8%), Romanians (4.6%), Poles (2.3%), Ukrainians (2.6%), Georgians (2.0%), and Filipinos (1.4%). The same as the men, the bulk of the female migrants (86%) come from the former socialist countries, eight of which (Poland, Tzechia, Slovakia, Hungary, Slovenia and the three Baltic countries) have now joined the EU. Except for the Philippines (4.6%), the number of the female immigrants in Greece from Asia and Africa is insignificant (Table 4).

Although in the total of registered foreigners only 25% were women, in many specific ethnic groups women outnumber men. For example they make up 78.6% of the Ukrainian immigrants, 61.7% of the Georgians, 73.3% of the Russians and 81% of the Filipinos. The intense gender disproportion among other nationalities (India, Pakistan, Egypt, Syria) may be due to the different patterns of settlement and stay in Greece. For example, the percentage of women applicants from Moslem countries, where females rarely work outside the home is insignificant. This indicates also that the overwhelming majority of the foreign women in Greece are economic migrants.

According to various estimates (perhaps somewhat exaggerated), there are many more migrant women in Greece; for example, about 1,200 Ethiopian (Petroniti, 1998) and 65,000 Filipino (Valencia, 1997; Canete, 2001; see also Fakiolas and Alipranti-Maratou, 2000: 102). About 75% of Filipinos are women, 85% of whom are to be found in domestic employment,

**TABLE 4**  
*Applicants for the White Card by country of origin and gender, 1998*

Countries	Total (N)	% in total of foreigners	Women	% in total women	% women in total applicants
Albania	241,561	65.0	41,025	43.7	17.0
Bulgaria	25,168	6.8	14,108	15.0	56.0
Romania	16,954	4.6	5,137	5.5	30.3
Ukraine	9,821	2.6	7,721	8.2	78.6
Georgia	7,548	2.0	4,655	5.0	61.7
Russia	3,139	0.8	2,301	2.5	73.3
Poland	8,631	2.3	3,718	4.0	43.1
Pakistan	10,933	2.9	51	0.1	0.5
India	6,405	1.7	103	0.1	1.6
Egypt	6,225	1.7	347	0.4	5.5
Philippines	5,383	1.4	4,361	4.6	81.0
Moldavia	4,396	1.2	3,160	3.4	71.9
Syria	3,434	0.9	158	0.2	4.6
Other countries	24,190	6.1	6,986	-	28.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>371,641</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>93,831</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

Source: Cavounidis, 2002c, p. 107-114.

while the rest are employed in hospitals, factories and office work (Canete, 2001, p. 283).

As we saw, immigrant women in Greece are about a quarter of total immigrants and come from a wide variety of countries in all continents both as «dependent» (family members) and very often as «independent» economic immigrants. The fact that the majority of immigrants from the East European countries are women, is mainly due to the socio-economic changes that took place in those countries in the late 80s and the socio-economic problems they have been facing since then.

Another characteristic which derives from the registration data is a polarization with regard to the distribution of migrants by sex and ethnicity. That is, there are foreign communities that can be considered male while others are, undoubtedly, female.

#### SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS OF FEMALE MIGRANTS

The analysis of the data of the first legalisation indicates that almost all applicants were of working age: 90.9% of the total were 15-44 years of age and only 9% were 45-64 years of age, providing more evidence that the bulk

of immigrants came in the country for employment purposes. On the average, women were slightly older than men: about 84% were 15-44 years of age. For men the respective proportion was 93.2% (Table 5).

**TABLE 5**  
*Structure of immigrants by age, 1998*

Age	Total		Male		Female	
	Total Foreigner	%	N=	%	N=	%
15-19	23,753	6.5	20,051	7.5	3,299	3.5
20-24	79,738	21.9	62,959	23.8	15,367	16.6
25-29	85,091	23.3	65,075	24.6	18,284	19.8
30-44	142,821	39.2	98,967	37.3	40,733	44.1
45-64	32,921	9.0	17,653	6.7	14,566	15.8
65+	528	0.1	314	0.1	193	0.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>364,852</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>265,019</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>92,442</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Cavounidis, 2002c, p. 293.

Nearly one half of all immigrants were single and divorced, with considerable differences between the genders (Table 5). Women were more often married than men (60.8% and 49.2% respectively). An additional characteristic of the femaleimmigration was the large proportion of the widows among them (3.4% of women, while 84% of all widowed are women).

**TABLE 6**  
*Immigrants by marital status and sex (%), 1998*

Marital Status	Percentage distribution			% of women in total applicants
	Total	Male	Female	
Married	52.4	49.3	61.0	29.6
Unmarried	44.0	49.7	27.9	16.1
Divorced	2.6	0.8	7.7	74.3
Widow	1.0	0.2	3.4	84.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>25.4</b>

Source: Cavounidis, 2002c, p. 312.

### LEVEL OF EDUCATION

As in other South European countries, recent immigrants in Greece are educated and very different from the post-World War II peasant and mostly illiterate migrants from Southern European countries to North America. This is because great numbers come from the former socialist countries that have had long-established practices of nine-year compulsory school education and extended technical training. And most of the remaining come from developing countries, many of which tend to keep their youngsters longer at school in order to curb unemployment, while educated persons take usually the initiative to search for a better life abroad.

The educational level of foreigners is lower than that of the Greek labour force, especially the proportion of the college educated. It is also characteristic that foreign women have higher levels of education compared to those of men. About 16.6% of women and only 6.6% of men are included in the category of higher education (Table 7).

**TABLE 7**  
*Structure of immigrants by level of schooling and sex, 1998*

Level	Total	Male	Female
Illiterate	1.9	2.0	1.3
Primary	38.0	42.6	25.2
Secondary	51.0	48.8	57.1
Tertiary	9.1	6.6	16.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

*Source:* Cavounidis, 2002c, p. 315.

### REGIONAL SETTLEMENT

As it is easier to find a job in services and also to escape police controls in a city, 56.2% of all women and 39.8% of men are concentrated in the Greater Athens conurbation while a smaller percentage in the Thessaloniki and Central Macedonia area. A further analysis of the data shows that 44.3% of all registered migrants have settled in the Attica area, 15% in Central Macedonia, 6.7% in the Peloponnese, 6.5% in Sterea Hellada, 6.1% in Thessalia, 5.7% in Crete, and 5% in Western Greece (Cavounidis, 2002).

Unlike migrant men, hardly any women are employed in agriculture and construction. The real concentration however is probably considerably less

intense because, according to various estimates, most of those who had not registered were males from rural areas. In addition, during the summer months, many more migrants of both sexes work in tourism all over the country.

### THE DEMOGRAPHIC DEFICIT

Greece, Italy and Germany are now the three EU countries with a negative population movement, i.e. fertility is below mortality, despite the already considerable and still increasing number of children born to foreign parents in these countries. In Greece, there were 100,894 live births and 102,668 deaths in 1998 (against 150,000-157,000 births and under 100,000 deaths annually during the 1950s). The proportion of the 65- year olds and over in the total population increased to 18.5% in 2001 (2.03 million persons), from 7% in 1951 and 13.7% (1.4 million persons) in 1991 (NSSG Statistical Yearbooks 1997 and 2001). With about zero natural population growth, the increase in total numbers by 687,025 persons between the 1991 (10,252,580) and 2001 (10,939,605) censuses was due: a) to the ethnic Greeks who had settled in Greece from Albania and the countries of the former Soviet Union, and b) to the counting of five times more foreign passport holders, between the 1991 and the 2001 (797,093 persons) censuses (National Statistical Service of Greece).

During the last 20 years fertility in Greece declined by 40.9%, the third highest decline world-wide, while births by foreign mothers in the public maternity homes increased by 64.3% between 1995 and 1998 (Drettakis, 2002, pp. 75-77 and 97-99; Simeonidou, 2001). Research conducted by Maratou-Alipranti et al. shows the gradual decline of the school population, especially in the primary schools (Maratou-Alipranti et al., 2002; Drettakis, 2002). The number of school age children by native-born parents enrolled in the primary and secondary schools declines, whereas the corresponding number of the ethnic Greek and migrant children of foreign-born parents increases fast (Table 8).

In 1999/2000 86,238 pupils from immigrant parents enrolled in primary and secondary schools are almost twice as many as in 1995 (47,666). Immigrant children made up 5% of the total school population in 1995 but over 6.3% in 2000.

Data from the Ministry of Education shows that the number of pupils born in Greece of immigrant parents increased from 1,458 in 1996/96 to 2,680 in 1998/99. Most likely, however, the increase was larger because

**TABLE 8**  
*Immigrant children registered in primary and secondary schools*

School years	Pupils with parents		
	Migrants	Indigenous	Total
1995/96	47,666	1,484,277	1,531,943
1996/97	54,943	1,450,351	1,505,294
1997/98	67,210	1,404,050	1,471,881
1998/99	79,737	1,352,144	1,431,881
1999/00	86,238	1,271,377	1,357,615

*Sources:* NSSG, Ministry of Education Data and Drettakis, *Eleftherotypia*, 31/7/2001.

many pupils born to naturalised ethnic Greek parents are registered as native-born. The distinction between native-born and recently naturalised Greeks is still made in the schools because pupils who do not speak Greek in their families are, as a rule, lagging behind the others, causing problems to teachers and resulting in racist anti-migrant and xenophobic reactions. The 26 multicultural schools that help them with the Greek language seem not to be adequate (Greek-Dutch Seminar, 2001: 37-38 and 125). Displaying however the well known urge of the migrants to try hard, more and more are doing well and a fair number are the best in class, challenging native-born classmates and their parents (Labrianidis and Lymberaki, 2000).

In hundreds of primary schools foreign-born children (whose expulsion is forbidden and who, since 1997, have been able to enrol irrespective of the legal status of their parents) amount now to over 10% of all pupils and in some to over 30%. In areas of high migrant concentration (Attica, Elefsis, Thesprotia, Islands of Myconos and Paros), the foreigners have populated many declining inner-city and suburban areas and their children have re-populated many schools, forming the majority of the pupils in some classes.

## THE EMPLOYMENT OF IMMIGRANT WOMEN

### **Participation Rates and Unemployment Among Immigrants**

The data on the employment and unemployment of immigrants come from the Labour Force Surveys of the NSSG and are the only available with respect to their position in the labour market. Table 9 shows that participation rates among immigrants are about 14% above those for the

native-born. The difference exists for both genders. Among males however, the difference is mainly due to the 15-24 year olds, whereas among women the difference is due to the higher participation rates of those 45 years of age and over. Unemployment on the other hand is only slightly higher among the foreign-born, in comparison to that of the native-born and is mainly due to the higher rates among the 45 year olds and over.

**TABLE 9**

*Employment and unemployment rates by gender, age and nationality, 1999-2001 (%)*

Ages	Employment				Unemployment			
	Men		Women		Men		Women	
	Greeks	Foreigners	Greeks	Foreigners	Greeks	Foreigners	Greeks	Foreigners
15-24	39.2	64.3	35.6	34.8	22.7	14.6	38.4	36.0
25-49	95.8	97.1	67.9	64.2	7.0	5.7	16.3	18.0
55-64	74.8	84.0	36.6	54.0	3.7	9.9	7.6	7.9
15-64	76.3	87.3	49.1	55.6	7.3	7.9	16.9	18.5

Source: Bagavos, Papadopoulos, 2002, p. 159.

Socio-economic developments in the countries of the EU have enhanced the social and productive role of women through rising educational standards and increasing their labour force participation. Consequently women undertake now practically all kinds of employment, an increasing number on about equal terms with men, fulfilling in this way their professional aspirations ( Maratou-Alipranti et al., 2002).

Although the activity rate of the native-born population in Greece is still below the EU level (48,9%), the female participation has increased from 27% in 1981 to 32% in 1991, 36.2% in 1997 and 41,9% in 2001 (NSSG, Statistical Yearbooks 1997, 2000-01, Quarterly Labour Force Surveys). The explanatory factors for women's lower economic activity rates, comparing with the EU, point to the limited industrial development in the country; high emigration during the period 1953-72, high internal migration to urban centres, especially in the period 1961-81, relatively low educational levels of older women resulting in high unemployment rates, and labour market rigidities (Symeonidou, 2002b ).

The recent increase in the employment rates can be attributed to the fact that many new employment opportunities are now open to women, societal attitudes towards gender roles have changed, and employment among

younger women (20-39 years old) with children (consistent with developments in other EU countries) has increased (Eurostat, 2001). The high rate of unemployment however (10,9% of the total labour force in 2001, down from 12% in 2000) is about twice as high for women as for men (16,3% compared with a 9,9% average in the EU ), showing that there is still much more to be done in both gender participation rates and employment opportunities.

Another characteristic of the Greek labour market is the low proportion of part-time work for both genders. In the EU it covers about 16% of total employment and it is nearly four times over that in Greece.

#### EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES OF IMMIGRANT WOMEN: DOMESTIC WORK, LOW-STATUS SERVICE EMPLOYMENT, AND SELF-EMPLOYMENT

Immigrants in Greece are mainly employed in unskilled and semi-skilled jobs in the traditional sectors of the Greek economy (agriculture, catering, tourism, manufacturing industry, merchant navy), while domestic service is a major employment sector for migrant women (Bagavos and Papadopoulou, 2002). A large number of small family businesses in the country, a large underground economy and inadequate labour market inspections create an environment conducive to the development of a cheap labour supply, according to gender, age and ethnicity. In these conditions many of the female migrants face temporary employment and experience job insecurity.

Nevertheless, a large proportion of the female immigrants have high professional qualifications, enabling them to undertake jobs requiring specific expertise and responsible work attitudes, like the linguistic expertise or special training utilised in tourism and economic relations of Greece with other Balkan countries. Others, the majority, are prepared to undertake the «low status» jobs that the Greek women avoid because of their rising educational standards and overall prosperity of the country.

In addition, demographic and social developments within the Greek society increase the household needs for child and old-age care. Increasing longevity, inadequate expansion in the social service programs, congested living conditions in the urban centres, disintegration of the traditionally large Greek family, slow adjustment of the Greek male mentality with regard to sharing responsibilities at home, more educated, single and married women choosing to seek paid employment, are all factors resulting in increasing



demand for paid domestic work (Maratou-Alipranti, 1999; Carlos and Maratou-Alipranti, 2001; Symeonidou, 2002a ).

At the same time, the indigenous supply of unskilled women with low educational attainments for live-in domestic work has almost completely dried up. Up until 2001, immigrant women were vulnerable as domestic helpers because their migration status was inseparable from the work entitlement on entry as domestic servants. If they left their employer, they would be deported (Anthias and Lazaridis, 2000, 21). The new aliens law 2910/2001 allows immigrants to change employment without losing their rights for residence and work. Being however mostly temporary immigrants, those working as live-in domestic helpers have no home of their own and organise their social life by visiting compatriots or through the activities of their church and their ethnic associations. Social relations with Greeks or among other immigrants of different ethnicities are not common.

The domestic jobs undertaken by female immigrants are mostly regular and the employers benefit by inviting them legally from abroad, due to lower pay and reduced social security contributions. The reduction of the social security contributions for domestic helpers to one half of the usual rate induces employers to keep their employees insured. Being rarely involved in any other illegal activity, those undocumented female immigrants hardly give causes for police intervention and therefore they are less vulnerable than men in the anti-migrant and racist manifestations of a section of the Greek population. With the exception of those working in the sex industry, very few women are among the about 230,000 migrants expelled annually since the early 90s.

As in other host countries (OECD, 2001b: 174, 178), an increasing number of the legalised foreigners in Greece become self-employed or establish small businesses of their own or in partnership with Greeks. In both cases a large proportion of the clientele comes from other migrants. Based on the ability to communicate in Greek, these forms of employment help migrants to avoid discrimination and other employment complications and facilitate their social integration. At the same time they benefit the local society by breaking the barriers of ignorance and indifference about life and work in other countries (Lazaridis and Romaniszyn, 1998: 6).

Female immigrants working in Greece come from both developed and developing countries and are at various stages of professional achievement. Among the invited workers before the two legalisations there were many semi-skilled ones who were mainly employed as low nursing personnel in

medical centres and as domestic helpers. The majority originated from the Philippines, and because of their honesty and their ability to communicate in English they had fairly well-paid jobs. Some of them had tertiary education. After the two legalisations many more immigrant women, especially those coming from the former socialist countries of Eastern Europe, have tertiary education but work mostly in semi-skilled jobs. The Polish immigrants try to create jobs for themselves: child care, home hairdressing and the like are performed by Polish women, wall painting, maintenance and repair of furniture and domestic appliances are undertaken by men (Lazaridis and Romaniszyn, 1998). Many Polish women come as chain migrants, replacing in «established» jobs female compatriots who return home.

As their male counterparts, most women undertake jobs below their formal qualifications. Of all immigrants, those who declared their kind of employment (only 41.7%), 58.8% worked in unskilled and 26.5% in semi-skilled jobs, and only 2.9% in jobs requiring tertiary education. The migration of educated persons from less developed countries means a temporary downward social mobility with regard to legal status. And for those who accept jobs below their formal training and actual qualifications it also means a downward mobility with regard to employment (Romaniszyn, 2000, 142). Furthermore, migration under these conditions causes extensive de-skilling and skill depreciation, leading to a skill and brain waste (Fakiolas, 1995). Markova and Sarris argue that «education among the Bulgarian migrants does not seem to be a factor determining their earnings» (Markova and Sarris, 2002).

### SEX AND THE LEISURE INDUSTRY

Women in the broader entertainment industry (undertaking jobs that Greek women would find difficult to do in their own social environment) are usually exploited by Greek and foreign traffickers and some are involved in illegal activities. Their proportion in the Greek prisons is larger than that of the general population but considerably lower than that of male migrants.

A large demand for female migrants has come from the marriage, entertainment and sex industries that are largely semi-illegal or even illegal and partly of a «bondage» type. Female immigrants work in them as «partners», self-employed and employees. Researchers emphasise the willingness of many women in poor and suppressed societies to undertake jobs they would find difficult to do near their home environment.

The frequent police reports and the large number of arrests and court convictions for migrant female and child prostitution in Greece leave no doubt that the problem is acute (Psimmenos, 1997; Lazaridis, 1997; Lazaridis and Romaniszyn, 1998; Lazos, 2002). All those tragic cases however pertain to a very small number of female immigrants. The overwhelming majority seek and find decent jobs from which they earn an income three to six times higher than what they could earn at home, and many save and remit back home a large part of it. Dozens of immigrants interviewed by the authors have described the hardships of their jobs and the insecurity they feel for being illegal and at the mercy of their employers and of the Greek police. Some are also at the mercy of Greek and foreign criminals who try to take advantage of their vulnerability. On the other hand, most of the interviewees were quite happy that they had decent jobs which allowed them to carry out the aims of their migration, i.e. to accumulate some savings in order to cover acute family needs for survival, support their children's education, or set up a small family business. However, the number of women in prostitution shows a sharp increase since 1990 (Table 10).

**TABLE 10**  
*Willing and unwilling female prostitutes, Greece 1990-2000*

<b>Year</b>	<b>Prostituted women in Bar (Non forcibly)</b>	<b>Prostituted women in Bar (Non forcibly) (%)</b>	<b>Forcibly Prostituted Women in Bar</b>	<b>Forcibly Women in Bar (%)</b>
1990	2,415	44	1,655	30
1991	2,980	48	2,325	37
1992	4,210	55	3,610	47
1993	6,830	59	6,275	54
1994	9,105	62	8,520	58
1995	12,545	64	11,910	60
1996	15,160	65	14,515	62
1997	15,200	61	14,480	58
1998	13,925	60	13,235	57
1999	14,025	59	13,305	56
2000	13,510	58	12,755	55

*Source:* Lazos, 2002, p. 260-261

The expulsion of an illegal immigrant is annulled if s/he helps the police to uncover practices of promoting prostitution (Greek-Dutch Seminar, 2001: 43-44).

## CONCLUSIONS

Many of the findings of this paper, which is based on available statistical information and research conclusions have been consistent with those of similar studies in other countries. A large proportion of women travel alone in search of better employment opportunities, facing both job insecurity and exploitation by their employers; a high proportion of the female employment is in domestic work that is now typical in many South European EU host countries; a large proportion of the female immigrants work in unskilled jobs below their formal qualifications. In Greece most of them have entered the country illegally or legally as tourists, overstaying their visas and working without permits. The overwhelming majority come from East European countries, whereas from the remaining source countries only the Philippines remains a significant source of female migration to Greece. Through the 1998 and 2001 legalisations most of female migrants have acquired a legal status. Yet, they bear directly the consequences of inadequate and loose internal controls and labour market inspections in the Greek society. An important one among them is the reluctance of their employers to insure them, so that they can meet the legal prerequisites for issuing and/or renewing their residence and work permits. In addition, a high proportion of women enter the country through networks of organised traffickers and, in many cases, they are pushed into the sex industry and in prostitution. Under these conditions, their social life is severely restricted and social integration is impeded. It is only through their active participation in the broader economic and social activities in the host society that they could promote their professional and vocational interests and improve their economic and social position. Despite the difficulties they face, an increasing number of the legal female immigrants are attaining economic and social integration. They manage to earn a regular income and try, alone or with other members of their families to have a normal life. This is also indicated by the increasing number of births by foreign-born women in the state maternity homes and by the children of foreign-born parents who enrol in the Greek schools. The 2001 aliens' law facilitates the invitation of dependent family members, encouraging family re-union and permanent settlement, while the fertility of immigrant women appears to be higher than that of the fertility of the Greek women which is on a continuing sharp decline.

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