



Polish immigrants in Greece

Michaela A. Maroufouf

Michaelamaroufouf@gmail.com

Athens, July 2009

Paper prepared under the auspices of the IDEA Project

Table of Contents

1. Introduction

2. The phases of migration from Poland to Greece

3. Demographic Data

Chart 3.1: Estimate of the Polish Population based on the Census of 2001 and the data of the Labor Force Survey

Chart 3.2: Regular (or semi-regular) Polish population in Greece by gender and censuses data (1980-2006)

Chart 3.3: Age distribution of Polish citizens

Table 3.4: Reasons for settlement in Greece

4. Labor market

4.1 Educational level

Chart 4.1: Educational level (in percentages)

4.2 Employment fields

Table 4.2: Polish citizens insured by IKA (from 2004 to 2008)

4.3 Entrepreneurship

5. The Polish community

6. Poland's insertion in the European Union

7. Poles in Greece and the host society

8. Conclusion

Bibliography

1. Introduction

According to the international bibliography, Poland has been one of the Central and Eastern European areas with the largest migratory outflows for over a century. Of course Greece has never been one of the main destinations for Polish immigrants, however, Polish immigrants are among the ten largest immigrant groups, in terms of population size, residing in the country. In addition, the Polish community is one of the oldest and, according to many, one of the best organized¹ migratory groups in Greece. In fact, the Poles are the only migrant group from a former socialist country that had a pre 1989 presence in Greece, despite the geographical distance between Poland and Greece and the lack of prior historical, cultural, religious, economic ties, or ties of any other type between the two countries.

Moreover, despite the fact that employment of women in private households is quite widespread in Greece, Polish migration to Greece appears not to be 'gendered', or at least, appears not to be as 'gendered' as Polish migration to other countries such as Italy².

Furthermore, the motivation for migrating for the Polish economic migrants are more related to the desire for improving their living and working conditions and less to unemployment or high cost of living in relation to wages.

Finally, the case of Polish migrants to Greece becomes interesting for another reason; the fact that Poland is the first country that became a member of the European Union while already preserving a sizable immigrant population in Greece. In fact Polish immigrants can now work freely in the Country since the transient period, in which they sustained restrictions, has already expired.

In this chapter, a review of Polish immigration to Greece from the 1980s until today will be attempted, with the use of different sources, both quantitative, such as data from the National Statistical Service of Greece, the Ministry of Interior Affairs and the Social Insurance Institute, and qualitative, such as interviews with Polish immigrants, as well as representatives of associations or other organizations. Special attention will be given to the changes that occurred after (and because of) Poland's insertion to the European Union in 2004, not only on the legal sphere but also on the professional, the social and the economical one.

2. The phases of migration from Poland to Greece

Polish migration to Greece, and elsewhere, can be considered as typical post-communist migration, especially with regards to its motives; Polish emigrants left their country looking for higher wages, and later on, due to the high unemployment

¹ For instance, see Lazaridis & Romaniszyn 1998

² See Cyrus (2006: 41)

rates³, while discovering the world beyond their country's borders was also part of their motivation. With regards to the "pull factors" of migration from Poland to Greece, it was the demand for cheap labor in the informal labor market that played a key part given the restrictive migration policies throughout Western Europe. (see Romaniszyn, 1996: 321 & 1999: 123-125 and Castles, S. & Miller, 2003: 10)

What separates Polish migration to Greece from migrations from other post-socialist countries is that it started much earlier; due to a number of *structural*, *conjunctural* and *nation-specific* factors Poland was the first East European socialist country in which a mass labor movement, 'Solidarity', risen countered with the implementation of martial law in 1981 (Nørgaard & Sampson, 1984). The crises lead to a wave of refugees who were followed by economic migrants during the 1980's .

The phases of migration from Poland to Greece are related to factors linked to the circumstances in Poland and their impact on the migratory flows from Poland as well as Greece's migratory policies.

We could roughly characterize the 1980s as the first phase of migratory inflows from Poland to Greece. In particular, after the imposition of martial law in Poland, in December 1981, many Polish resorted to Greece, ether in order to seek asylum, or in order to request on interview in the United States embassy, in Athens, in order to apply for a visa given that the waiting period for this procedure was clearly shorter in Greece than in Poland (Interview 7)⁴. Between 1980 and 1990 almost 9.000 Polish citizens applied for asylum in Greece, with a pick during the years 1987 and 1988 (Migration Policy Institute)⁵.

The initial political refugees, in their greatest part, did not constitute a part of the permanent Polish migratory population in Greece, but they were followed by people who were not politically active but were tempted by the prospects of better financial opportunities and in that aspect they set the path for migration from Poland to Greece (Triandafyllidou & Gropas, 2006: 14-15 & Romaniszyn, 1996: 323). In addition, during the period of their stay in Greece, they managed to create the infrastructure for the economic migrants that followed.⁶ Therefore, generally speaking, the reasons that pushed a sizable number of Polish citizens to migrate to Greece, during that period, despite the restrictions of movement imposed by the Communist regime, where not only political but also economical ones (Triandafyllidou, 2006: 4).

One could wonder why a sizable number of Polish citizens decided to seek refuge in Greece, a country that is not close to Poland geographically and at the

³ See Okólski (1994:59) in Lazaridis & Romaniszyn (1998: 11)

⁴ See also Romaniszyn, 1996: 323

⁵ The data on asylum seekers are available from the Migration Policy institute website: <http://www.migrationinformation.org/datahub/countrydata/data.cfm> (last visited on 7/10/2008)

⁶ For instance, see Interview 7.

same time does not share any prior historical, cultural, religious, economic ties, or ties of any other type with. In other words, what is unclear is what do drew the first Polish immigrants to Greece? Who set the path for others to follow? Cyrus (2006: 35) suggested a simple answer:

*“Many Polish migrants who accidently stayed abroad until that time⁷ as **tourists** in Germany, Austria, Italy, Greece or France decided not to return. The decision to stay was facilitated by the generous immigration policies of the host countries which accepted the so-called solidarity refugees. As the Western countries followed the policy that no citizen from a socialist country will be expelled, Polish citizens were tolerated and allowed to claim social benefits.”* (Cyrus, 2006: 35)

The second phase begins with the collapse of the Communist regime in Poland, after which the Polish citizens were free to exit their country. The beginning of this period almost coincided to the first Greek migratory law that was voted in 1991 and is known for its harshness given that it focused mostly to stricter control both in the borders and within the country, while making legal entrance and settlement of foreigners with the purpose of working in Greece nearly impossible. For Greece, this period is characterized by irregular migration, simply due to the fact that legal labor migration was not an option; there was no legal framework to sustain it.

As it was put by Krystyna Romaniszyn (1996): *“In the 1980’s ...Polish emigration to Greece was illegal by Polish law, whereas the present economic migration is illegal by Greek law”*. Yet, even during that period, Polish immigrants in Greece appeared to be doing much better than immigrants of other nationalities; in their comparative analysis on Polish and Albanian undocumented workers in Greece in the 1990’s Gabriella Lazaridis and Krystyna Romaniszyn (1998) point out that Polish immigrants were in a better condition with regards to clothing and housing, most likely due to the fact that they earned higher wages as well as the fact that they send less remittances back to Poland. In addition, Poles seemed to have formed an *‘invisible community’* which entailed several institutions able to satisfy several needs (Lazaridis & Romaniszyn 1998: 6).

During the third phase, to some degree, the situation becomes better for the Poles of Greece. Since 1995 Polish citizens no longer needed a Visa in order to visit Greece for a period shorter than three months. The entrance to the country was greatly facilitated given that in several cases the waiting period for a tourist Visa could be very long.⁸ In addition, some Polish chose to travel to Poland every three months and in this way they avoided the danger of being arrested or deported: *“...we did like this with the people who worked inside, ones every three months we would travel Poland in order to have, let’s say, the trimester...”* (Interview 10). Nevertheless, we can easily assume that not all Polish workers had the economic capacity or the time

⁷ The imposition of martial law in 1981.

⁸ The waiting period could be up to one year (Interview 10).

to travel back and forth once every three months, which means that not everyone escaped the danger of being arrested and/or deported. In addition, even those who were able to do this continued to be employed in an irregular manner, without any insurance rights.

The fourth phase is connected to the regularization programs which, from 1998, when the first one took place, and onwards certainly improved the conditions for the Polish immigrants in Greece, as for any other ethnic group. However, the regularization programs didn't provide a substantial solution to the problems related to the residence permit. Nevertheless, more than 8.500 Poles acquired a residence permit through the first regularization program.

The last phase, from 2004 until today, is defined by Poland's insertion to the European Union. Practical matters concerning residence permits and the Poles' free access to the labor market are now solved, especially since the transient period, in which Poles sustained certain restrictions with regards to employment expired. Yet, a rather large percentage of Poles continues to be employed informally, judging by the relatively low rates of registration with the Greek authorities.

Polish immigrants, as other immigrant groups, used various tactics corresponding to the different phases of their migration to Greece in order to either legalize their status or avoid police restrictions. As described above, during the first phase the economic migrants who followed the Solidarity refugees came to Greece as false tourists, in order to be able to travel outside Poland and then stayed in the country as false refugees. During the second phase of migration from Poland to Greece, in the beginning of the 1990's, Greece's migration Policy was so restrictive that there were not any tactics to avoid police restrictions or to legalize their status but during the third phase one of the common practices was to return to Poland every three months just to have their passport stamped, which would allow them to pose as tourists and avoid police restrictions, assuming that they had the time and money necessary for such journeys.

With the introduction of regularization programs in 1998, those who could, made an effort to legalize their status, not only to avoid the threat of apprehension but also to be able to work legally. Finally, Poland's insertion to the EU may not have had yet the expected effect, given that the number of Poles that have registered with the Greek authorities is rather small and it is estimated that a considerable number of Poles continues to be employed in the informal labor market.

3. Demographic data

The demographic figures in this chapter are mostly based on data provided by the National Statistical Service of Greece and the statistics department of Greece's largest insurance organization, IKA.

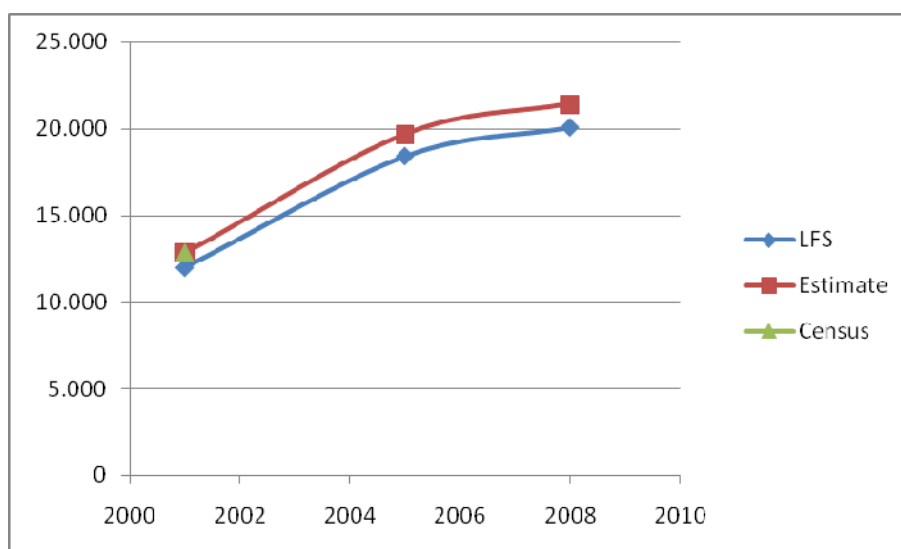
The data that are considered to be most valid are those of the population census but given that the last census took place in 2001 there was clearly a need for more recent data. The most recent data available are those of the Labour Force Survey (LFS). The LFS clearly has certain disadvantages and it usually tends to underestimate migratory populations⁹. Interestingly enough, the data of the LFS of the second quarter of 2001 almost agree with the data of the census of the same year. Most likely this is related to the fact that the living conditions of the Polish immigrants are relatively high.

According to data from the census of the National Statistical Service of Greece for 2001, almost 13,000 Polish citizens resided in Greece at the time and their vast majority (80%) concentrated in Attica. According to the same census, another area with a relatively high concentration of Poles is the Peloponnese (6.3%), followed by Central Macedonia (2.78%), Southern Aegean (2.73%) and Crete (2.07%). Yet, data provided to us by IKA show that in June 2008 the majority (60%) of Poles registered with the specific insurance organization resided in Attica, followed by 11% residing in Southern Aegean.

Immigrant inflow from Poland was at its peak in the early 1990's due to the rapid unemployment increase in Poland between 1990 and 1992 (Okolski, 1994: 59 in Lazaridis & Romaniszyn 1998: 11). Estimates on the number of Poles residing in Greece during that period range from 30,000 to 100,000 (Lazaridis & Romaniszyn 1998: 12). The Greek ambassador in Poland, in 2003, estimated that the number of Polish citizens residing in Greece at the time reached 40 to 50,000 persons (Triandafyllidou & Gropas, 2006: 15), however, based on the estimates of an active member of the Polish community of Greece, the number of Poles residing in the country is reduced year by year, from 60,000 persons in 1992 today it has dropped to 15,000 (Interview 9), this estimate, however, appears to be quite modest. Based on the data of the Labor Force Survey conducted by the Greek Statistical Service the number of Poles increased by 67% between 2001 and 2008 and we can therefore estimate that the current number of Poles residing in Greece is over 20,000. Yet, from 2005 to 2008 the number of Poles residing in Greece appears to be virtually stable, however, there appears to be a slight decrease in the active population (between 15 and 65 years of age) and a corresponding increase in children (under 14) and elderly persons (over 65).

⁹ This is most likely related to the living conditions of certain immigrant groups; given that the LFS's sample is not a number of people but a number of residences, people who reside in places that could not be described as residences are absent from the sample.

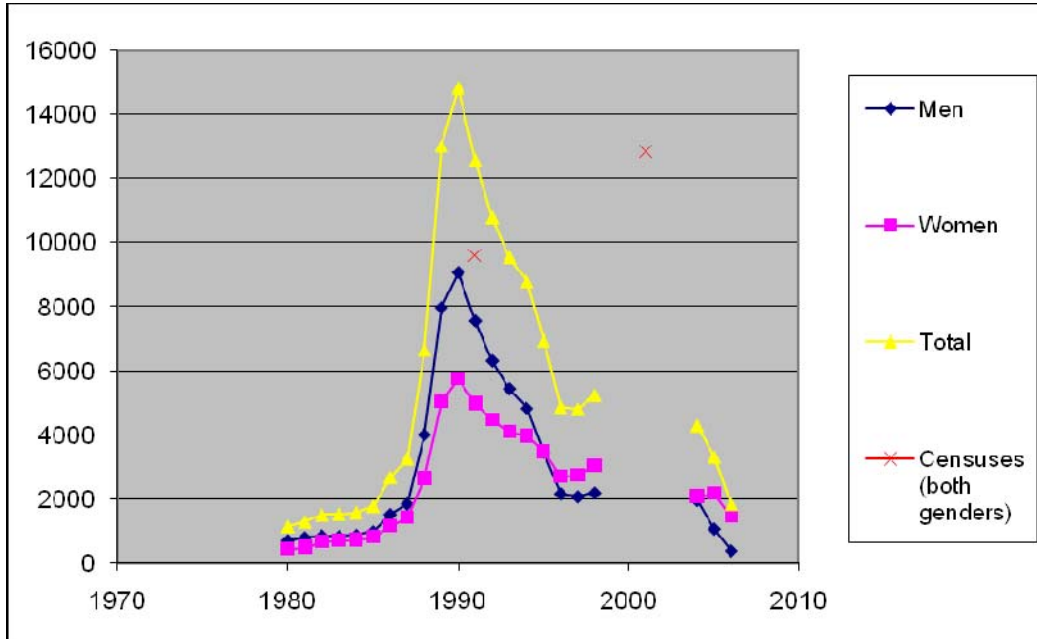
Chart 3.1: Estimate of the Polish Population based on the Census of 2001 and the data of the Labor Force Survey



Source: National Statistical Service of Greece: Census 2001 and Labor force Survey 2001, 2005 & 2008 (2nd Trimester)

The chart 3.1.2, does not contain valid numerical data with regards to the population of Poles in Greece, it contains data on the Polish population residing legally (or ‘semi-legally’⁹) in Greece and it can provide some interesting insights regarding the fluctuations of the Polish population and its legal status. So, according to these data between 1987 and 1989 the number of Poles who reside in Greece and did maintain some type of contact with the Greek civil services doubles (from 3,200 to 6,600) while, between 1988 and 1989 their number doubles again (from 6,600 to 13,000) and the pick year was 1990. Since 1991 the number of Poles residing in the country legally or had started some process that could lead them to legality started diminishing. This is obviously not related to a reduction of the actual Polish population of Greece, it is rather connected to Greece’s strict migration law, voted in 1991, that made legal residence in the country with the purpose of working nearly impossible, and of course the fact that Poles were no longer in position to seek asylum. Unfortunately, the gap that exist in the data, between January of 1998 and January 2004, does not allow us to see the effect of the regularization programs since the first regularization program took place after January of 1998 and in January 2004 Poland was a member of the European Union. Based on data provided by the Ministry of Interior Affairs, the Polish citizens who resided in Greece holding a valid residence permit in April 2008 were less than 8.000.

Chart 3.2: Regular (or semi-regular) ¹⁰ Polish population in Greece by gender and censuses data (1980-2006)



Source: National Statistical Service of Greece: Censuses for 1991 and 2001 and data collected from the Ministry of Interior Affairs and the Ministry of Public Order.¹¹

It doesn't come as a surprise that according to the data of the census of 2001 the majority of Poles in Greece belonged to the most productive age groups (20 to 50 years of age). According to the same census, the majority of Polish citizens in Greece at the time were women.¹² However, migration from Poland to Greece cannot be described as 'gendered'. Polish immigrants have responded to Greece's need for both domestic workers and construction workers. According to the data of the labor force survey of the National Statistical Service of Greece for the second trimester of 2008, 55% of the Poles residing in Greece at the time were men.

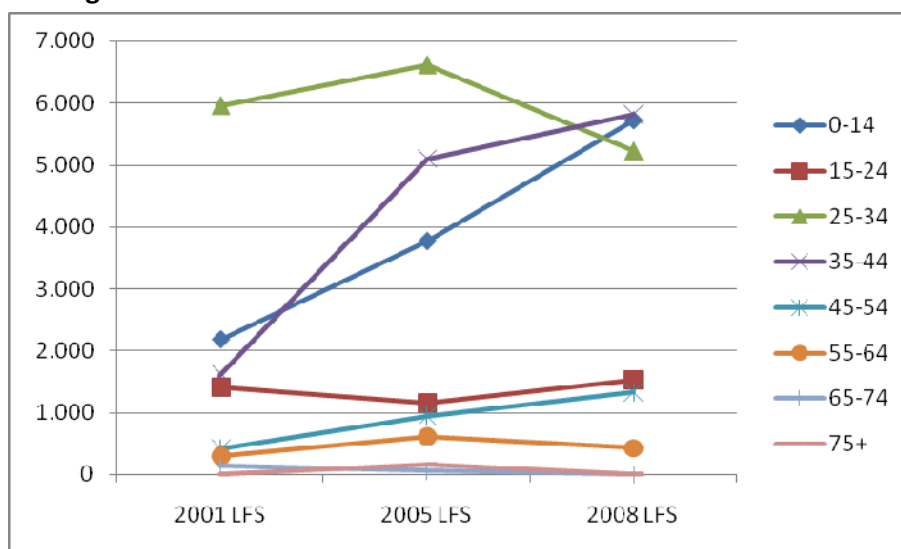
¹⁰ The Data of the Ministry of Public Order, from 1980 to 1997 included numbers of both regulars and irregular migrants by nationality and gender. After a telephone discussion with the National Statistical Service of Greece we found out that the number of irregular immigrants does not refer to the number of persons arrested, deported or found without documents during a random identity control but to the number of those who did maintain some type of contact with the Greek administration (for instance they applied for a residence permit and their application was rejected or they had not renewed their residence permit at the time but they still remained in the country).

¹¹ These are the data of the stay permits (or, as it was mentioned earlier, the data on the persons who did maintain some type of contact to the Greek administration) on the 1st of January of every year. From 1980 to 1998 the Ministry of Public Order had the responsibility to provide these data to the National Statistical Services. For the years after that the responsibility passed to the Ministry of Interior Affairs. As I understood by having telephone discussions with both ministries, the gap between 1999 and 2003 was due to the fact that for that period it was not clear which ministry was responsible for this task.

¹² The percentage of women was 54% and the one of men was 46%.

However, the data of the last census, conducted in 2001, show a higher percentage of women than that of men (54% to 46%).

Chart 3.3: Age distribution of Polish citizens



Source: National Statistical Service, Labor Force Survey 2001, 2005, 2008, trimester B'

Data of the National Statistical Service of Greece concerning births between 2004 and 2006 show that more than a thousand children who had at least one Polish parent were born in the country during that short period of time. These data also offer some interesting information on “mixed marriages”, which seem to be more frequent among Polish women than Polish men; the parents of 36% of the children were both Poles, 32% had Polish mothers and Greek fathers while only 7% of the children had a Polish father and a Greek mother.

Based on the age and gender distribution of the Polish population in Greece we can clearly see that Polish migration to Greece can easily be described as family migration. In fact the fertility rate of Greece’s Polish population appears to be much higher than that of the country’s total population given that almost 29% of the Poles residing in the country, based on the LFS of the 2nd quarter of 2008, were 14 years old or younger while the corresponding percentage for the country’s total population was about 14%.

Based on the data of the 2001 census, the main reason for Poles’ settlement in Greece was seeking employment, followed by asylum seeking and family reunification, as shown on Table 3.3. The last twenty asylum claims by Polish citizens in Greece were filed in 1990 (Migration Policy Institute)¹³.

¹³ The data on the asylum claims are available through the website of the Migration Policy Institute: <http://www.migrationinformation.org/datahub/countrydata/data.cfm> (last visited on 7/10/2008).

Table 3.4: Reasons for settlement in Greece

	Total	Work	Repatriation	Family reunification	Studies	Seeking Asylum	Refugee	Other
Total	12.831	7.937	251	1.304	125	1.776	129	1.309
Men	5.876	3.748	109	569	53	673	59	665
Women	6.955	4.189	142	735	72	1.103	70	644

Source: National Statistical Service of Greece, Census 2001

According to a recent study by KETHI (2007) on female migration in Greece, women from Poland, when asked about their reasons for migrating to Greece invoked in equal percentages (29,4)¹⁴ the low wages and the difficulty in finding employment in their home country, family reunification as well as personal or family reasons, while 35,3% answered that they wanted to experience something new.

All of the Poles that we have encountered during our fieldwork were either employed before migrating to Greece, or had just finished their studies and did not search for employment back in Poland. Some decided to migrate, urged and facilitated by friends or family members who came to Greece before them, in order to raise an amount of money that would allow them to ameliorate their living conditions, others came as tourists, visiting friends and decided to stay. None of our interviewees came to Greece in order to escape sheer poverty, they came pursuing either some new experience or an improvement of their living standards.

4. Labor market

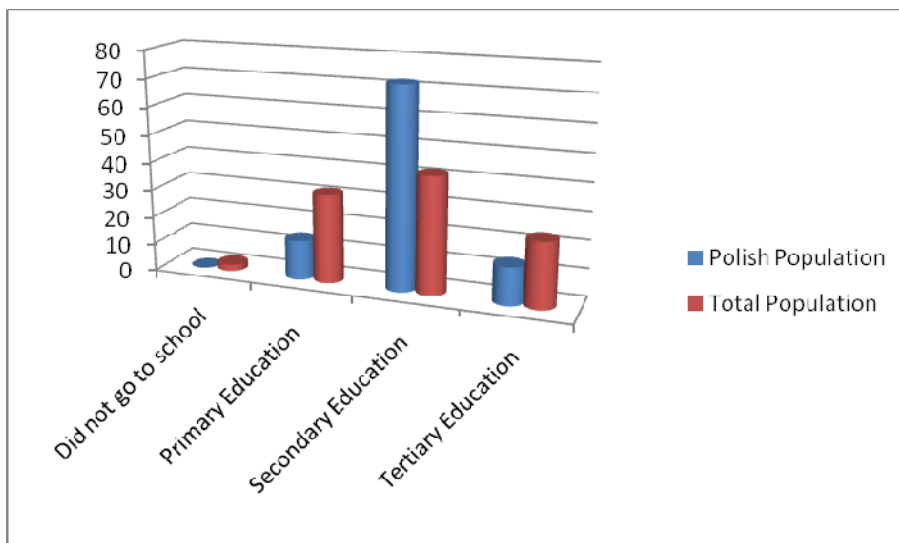
In most cases, Polish workers in Greece have a relatively high level of specialization and education and the fields in which they are occupied more often are two and correspond to the workers gender. Men are mostly occupied in constructions and women in domestic work (Lazaridis & Romaniszyn, 1998: 12). It is also important to note that, according to the LFS of the 2nd quarter of 2008, the Polish citizens in Greece over the age of 15 have a lower unemployment rate than the country's total population (2% and 4% correspondingly)

4.1 Educational level

According to the data of the Labor Force Survey for the 2nd quarter of 2008, the educational level of the Polish immigrants residing in Greece appears to be higher, not only than that of the country's total foreign population, but also than the country's general population. As it can be seen in the Chart 4.1, 86% of the Poles who reside in the country are graduates of secondary education, or higher while the corresponding percentage for the country's total population is 66%.

¹⁴ Multiple answers to the same question were acceptable.

Chart 4.1: Educational level (in percentages)



Source:

National Statistical Service of Greece, Labor Force Survey 2008, 2nd Trimester

4.2 Employment fields

According to the data of the 2001 census, almost 60% of the Poles who settled in Greece came with the purpose of seeking employment. The main fields in which the Poles are occupied are the constructions sector as well as the domestic sector.

In June 2008 about 5,000 Poles were insured by IKA, mostly as untrained workers (34.82%) and employed in services (33.78%), and their wages were lower than those of Greeks by 30% in common businesses.¹⁵

Table 4.2: Polish citizens insured by IKA (from 2004 to 2008)

Year	Insured in Common businesses				Insured in Constructions				Total Insured Population	
	Total	%	Men	Women	Total	%	Men	Women	Both Genders	%
April 2004	2,182	0.14	995	1,187	1,114	0.60	1,094	20	3,296	0.19
April 2005	2,943	0.18	2922	21	38	0.02	38	0	2,981	0.17
April 2006	2,134	0.13	924	1,210	1,483	0.81	1,463	20	3,617	0.20
April 2007	3,128	0.18	1,383	1,745	1,674	0.90	1,645	29	4,802	0.25
April 2008	3,569	0.20	1,558	2,011	1,440	0.90	1,418	22	5,009	0.25

Source: IKA (2005, 2006, 2007, 2008 & 2009)

¹⁵ Data provided to us by the organization

4.3 Entrepreneurship

Even with just a glance at the data of the Commercial Chamber of Athens, one can conclude that the entrepreneurial activity of Poles in Greece is worth mentioning given that Poles account for only 1.16% of the country's foreign population and yet they are the owners of 3.8% of the businesses owned by foreigners in Athens.

Most of the businesses owned by Poles are directly related to the fields of employment where they are occupied most often; construction works and cleaning, but there is also a significant number of catering businesses such as restaurants, cafés and bars and naturally grocery shops that import and sell Polish products.

5. The Polish community

The Polish population in Greece is mostly concentrated in Attica. In Michail Voda Street, in the center of Athens, where the Catholic Church of Christ Savior (Χριστού Σωτήρας) is located, one could easily speak of a 'Little Poland', due to the fact that many Polish shops, restaurants as well as associations are located there. The basis for the community's functions for the Polish migrants was set by the Solidarity refugees during the 1980's and they were further developed by the undocumented migrants that followed. The Catholic Church of Christ Savior played a significant role from the earliest years of Polish migration to Greece by offering a meeting place for the Poles of Athens where they could exchange information on employment opportunities but also by offering other services such as day care for the Polish children (Romaniszyn, 1996). It also acted as a 'mediator' between the Polish community of Greece and the Polish state in situations as the request for an official, state funded Polish school in Athens (Interview 5).

According to Michal P. Garapich, migration industry can be described as "*a sector of service markets that uses human mobility, adaptation in the host country and sustaining transnational social field as their main resource*". Some of its characteristics are that it encourages further migratory, it increases the possibilities of socioeconomic integration into the host society by facilitating employment and finally its '*inclusive character*' that penetrates ethnic boundaries (Garapich, 2008: 5). There is a variety of services that can be considered as part of the migration industry including travel agencies, employment agencies, advisors etc. There are such businesses in the Greek market, some, such as travel agencies offering cheap trips to Poland, target specifically Polish migrants as their prospective clients, other, such as several so-called "lawyers" who are offering their services to immigrants who require assistance with bureaucratic procedures, or money transfer services such as Moneygram or Western Union, that do not target any specific nationality.

With regards to seeking employment, interpersonal social networks play perhaps one of the most important parts in the Greek labor market (Baldwin-Edwards, 2006: 15). Judging by the interviews we have conducted, most Poles trust

informal social networks as well as family ties in order to find employment but also to seek the necessary support for their initial settlement to Greece. As one of our interview respondents very spontaneously answered:

“If you don’t have someone known it is not easy to find work. That is to say, if you don’t have a friend to tell you ‘A! I have someone who is looking’ it isn’t. To tell you, now that I am so many years here, if someone comes, I cannot imagine if he comes alone and does not have anyone and starts from zero, the steps that he must make, I have no idea what to do the person. That is to say, if I think of it, I am afraid already” (Interview 7).

In most cases it is those family members or friends who insisted on them coming to Greece in the first place and therefore facilitated both their arrival and their settlement. Of course this doesn’t mean that Poles do not also resort to private job finding offices. Judging by the commercials of these offices in Polish newspapers and the fact that some of the websites of these offices are also translated in Polish¹⁶ it is clear that these offices consider Poles their clients, or perspective clients. Some Polish organizations that operate on volunteer basis also have the ability and the opportunity to assist Poles in finding employment (Interview 6).

During our research on the Polish community we found evidence for the existence of about fifteen Polish organizations in Greece, but we have found it difficult to come to contact with representatives of most of them¹⁷, while in some cases, we did manage to contact members of these organization, but as they explained to us themselves as well as their organizations are no longer active. Our impression is that the ‘decay’ of these Polish organization is owed on the one hand to the decrease of the Polish population and on the other hand on the decrease of problems faced by the remaining Polish population due to Poland’s insertion to the European Union as well as their long-term presence in Greece.

The first Polish newspaper that was published and circulated in Greece is KURIER ATENSKI, which started being published in 1988, by political refugees, with the collaboration of Greek journalists and syndicalists. Those political refugees had already been active by printing and circulating proclamations with the purpose of informing their compatriots, and other texts of that sort.

The situation of the Poles in Greece changed during the ‘90s; most of them were employed and they seemed to have formed a stable community that intended to stay in the country, if not for ever, at least for a long period of time. The Polish press of Greece adjusted to that change. In 1996 the newspaper’s publisher at the

¹⁶ See for instance the websites of the Private Offices of Work Consultants ABC (<http://www.abcergasia.com>) and Ydrogeios (<http://www.global-work.gr>)

¹⁷ The phone numbers I found no longer corresponded to the specific associations.

time decided that it would be best if a Greek company was created in order to undertake the publication of the newspaper. Initially, the main themes covered by the newspaper were news from Poland and information on issues that concern immigrants, such as the regularization programs, but, in the course of time, the themes have started to change (Interview 4):

"...The newspapers had, when they started, one big part of their pages devoted to news from their countries. E! this slowly- slowly becomes limited for two reasons: one, because their interest for there diminishes, it is now a general interest, and second, because most have some 'dish', get satellite television, so they have a, like this, fresh update, daily, from these countries. The second was all these subjects that had to do with the immigrants and that, they also, in their way have become limited. That is to say, now many of the subjects that were clearly about the legalization have been replaced with other suggestions that concern now a person who has permanent residence in Greece and plans his life in a depth of 20-30 years..."
(Interview 4)

Of course KURIER ATENSKI is not the only Polish newspaper that is printed and circulates in Greece; indicatively I mention the newspapers 'Koppieri', 'Informator Polonijny' and 'Polonia'.

The Ministry of Education of Poland decided to found the Polish school of Athens in 1997, following the repeated demands of students, parents and teachers and with the mediation of the Polish Church, because the preexistent private Polish schools of Greece did not have the capacity to provide their students with a certificate accepted by the Polish authorities and consequently their students did not have access to the Polish post-secondary education.

According to the website of the Embassy of the Polish Democracy in Athens¹⁸, there are also departments of the Polish school in Thessalonica and in Fyra, the capital of Santorini.

The first building of the Polish school of Athens was located in Michail Voda street, but after a short period of time the school was transferred to another building in the city centre, specifically in Patision street, and finally after the earthquake of 1999, it was relocated in Cholargos. During the academic year 2007-8, the school had more than a thousand students, about a half of which followed regularly the weekly program, while the other half studied in Greek schools and were taking courses of Polish history and language during the weekends. (Interview 5)

An important problem faced by the Polish school of Athens is that it is difficult to calculate, or even estimate, the number of students who are to be registered in the school during the following academic year; *"this year we had*

¹⁸ <http://www.athens.polemb.net/index.php?document=104>

opened three classes first, the year before last year we had five classes all together, that is to say, those who come once per week and those who come every day, that is to say I consider that there are less children this year, but I have no certainty what will happen in September” (Interview 5).

An additional problem is related to the Greek language courses, given that the level of knowledge of the Greek language varies within the student population and is related to the time they have spent in the country. In the last academic year the school decided to separate the children into different classes based on their level, and this system seems to have worked:

‘...we had recently amazing success, one student from the Fifth grade has taken the first award in the contest in order to write a fairytale, she wrote it the fairytale in Greek, ye, “Kids’ Fun” had organized it, the magazine, tis contest and I am very proud that she had such success. [...] Because in whole Greece, that is to say, to succeed first means the teachers are doing work’ (Interview 5)

In addition, the Polish school organizes and participates in many extracurricular activities. To be more specific, I visited the school during the ‘week of the Polish language’ which included a wide range of activities, from spelling contests to theatrical performances based on books read by the children, the climax was a festival called ‘The Round of the World’ which included songs in different languages (Polish, Greek, English and Russian). The events in which the Polish school participates along with other schools appear to be frequent, as well. These activities seem to have brought the school very close to the other schools of the area, while, at the same time, giving the opportunity to its pupils to come to contact with children of the same age that study in other schools. As the director of the school points out the Polish school of Athens is now considered by the teachers and students of the area of Cholongos not as a foreign school but as another school of the area:

“...as I spoke with the teachers, and last year and this year, that they are used to us in Cholongos, that there is the Polish school, is the one subject and the other subject is that they have us between them as a school of Cholongos, it is not the, the foreigners, it is one school of the other...” (Interview 5)

6. Poland’s insertion in the European Union

For the Poles who live in Greece, Poland’s insertion to the European Union is considered to be very important, mostly for practical reasons as it put an end to the complicated procedures of issuing residence and work permits and of course the corresponding financial cost but also to fear of the police and the ‘threat’ of apprehension, as you can see in the following interview extracts:

'yes, of course, because, it was in the beginning very difficult to obtain the stay permit, teaching permit as teachers, and the children had various problems, now all right, we calmed down from the point of view that there is not that stress that every moment he has to have the papers with him and he is stressed if they will send them away from the country or not. This is another, another subject and this. I think very beautifully that it was surpassed.' (Interview 5)

'Of course, with the papers! It was chaos with the papers. Every year, so many papers, and much money to have a residence permit which functioned three months [...] We were afraid in the streets not to get caught by the police officers and now it changed [...] It was back then, it was very much difficult. Very, very much difficult, now all right, things changed. Fortunately we are in the European Union. It has changed 100%, for the Poles. You can open a business, you can do a thousand things.' (Interview 6)

Nevertheless, Poland's insertion to the European Union did not have a substantial impact on the Poles' employment status as it can be seen by the statistics of IKA as well as the Poles' registrations with the Greek authorities. Given that in April 2008 only 8,000 Poles were registered with the authorities we can assume that a significant number continues to work in the unofficial economy.

As European citizens, Poles who reside in Greece can now vote in the European Election as well as the municipal elections, however, their participation seems to be particularly low. Less than 450 Poles have registered to vote in Greece for the forthcoming European Elections (June 2009) according to data provided by the Ministry of Interior¹⁹. This might be related to a similar behavior of the Poles who remain in Poland; only 13% were planning to vote in the European Parliament elections according to the Eurobarometer²⁰, while their voting rates in the Polish Parliament and Presidential elections are also relatively low (Pszczolkowska, 2009).

7. Poles in Greece and the host society

*'...always you will feel in a foreign country a person of a **second category**, always. It is natural. It is natural. But of course us, I think, of the immigrants we are more organized and we are "**good immigrants**" in Greece.'* (Interview 6)

The above statement summarizes in the best possible way the relation between the Poles and the Greek society. As Koula Kasimati (2003) points out, negative stereotypes have been created in the Greek society for immigrants in general, but also for immigrants coming from specific countries, such as Albania, for instance.

¹⁹ The data are available from <http://diavotirio.net/diavat/news.php?extend.4075>

²⁰ That is the lowest in the EU and the average is 34%

Polish immigrants do feel that, as foreigners, they are subject to discriminatory behavior by the Greek society in general, as well as during their contact with the police and the civil services, but at the same time they feel that the Greek society has a much more positive image of them, in relation to other immigrant groups, which is reflected in a more positive behavior towards them. One of the reasons that could account for the positive image of Poles in the Greek society is the fact that there hasn't been any (alleged) association of them with criminal activities displayed by the Greek media, as it happened for other immigrant groups such as Albanians or Romanians. Another factor that most likely played a positive part is the fact that Polish immigrants kept higher standards with regards to housing and clothing, due to higher wages and lower remittances, in comparison to other immigrant groups (Lazaridis & Romaniszyn, 1998: 6).

7. Conclusion

The majority of Poles came to Greece seeking employment. The main fields in which the Poles are occupied are the constructions sector as well as the domestic sector. However, the motivation for migrating for the Polish economic migrants was more related to the desire for improving their living and working conditions and experiencing something different and new and less to actual poverty. Despite the fact that employment of women in privet households is quite widespread in Greece, Polish migration to Greece does not appear to be 'gendered'. On the contrary, Polish migration to Greece could better be characterized as family migration.

Poles mostly seek employment through informal social networks based on kinship and family ties but do turn to migration industry for other services. The number of Polish organization that have been active in Athens is relatively large but many of them are no longer active possibly due to the decrease of the Polish population and of course to the decrease of problems faced by the remaining Polish population as a result of Poland's insertion to the European Union as well as their long-term presence in Greece

In view of their relation to the host society, Polish immigrants do feel that they are subject to discriminatory behavior but at the same time they feel that the Greek society has a much more positive image of them, in relation to other immigrant groups, which is reflected in a more positive behavior towards them.

Migration from Poland to Greece can be separated into five phases based on factors linked to the circumstances in Poland and their impact on the migratory flows from Poland as well as Greece's migratory policies. The first phase starts with the imposition of martial law in Poland, in 1981 when many Poles resorted to Greece, ether in order to seek asylum, or to request on interview in the United States embassy, in Athens, so as to apply for a visa. The initial political refugees were followed by people who were not politically active but were tempted by the prospects of better financial opportunities and in that aspect they set the path for

migration from Poland to Greece. The second phase begins with the collapse of the Communist regime in Poland, after which the Polish citizens were free to exit their country. The beginning of this period almost coincided to the first Greek migratory law that was voted in 1991 and is known for its harshness given that it focused mostly to stricter control both in the borders and within the country, while making legal entrance and settlement of foreigners with the purpose of working in Greece nearly impossible. For Greece, this period is characterized by irregular migration, simply due to the fact that legal labor migration was not an option; there was no legal framework to sustain it. The third phase was defined by the fact that since 1995 Polish citizens no longer needed a visa in order to stay in Greece for a period up to three months. The fourth phase is connected to the regularization programs which, from 1998, when the first one took place, and onwards certainly improved the conditions for the Polish immigrants in Greece, as for any other ethnic group. The last phase, from 2004 until today, is marked by Poland's insertion to the European Union.

For the Poles who live in Greece, Poland's insertion to the European Union is considered to be very important, mostly for practical reasons as it put an end to the complicated procedures of issuing residence and work permits and of course the corresponding financial cost but also to fear of the police and the 'threat' of apprehension. However, Poland's accession to the EU does not appear to have changed significantly the Poles' labor market position; their wages continue to be lower than the Greeks' and many of them continue to work in the informal economy.

Bibliography:

- Baldwin-Edwards M.** (2006). "Implementing the EU anti-discrimination directives in Greece: Between marketization and social exclusion", MMO Working Paper No. 8, Jan. 2006
- Castles, S. & Miller, M.J.** (2003), "The Age of Migration", Palgrave Macmillan
- Cyrus, N.** (2006). 'Polish Emigration: Permanent and Temporary Patterns', in Triandafyllidou, A. (ed.) 'Contemporary Polish Migration in Europe; Complex Patterns of Movement and Settlement', The Edwin Mellen Press, 2006.
- Employment Institute** (Ινστιτούτο Εργασίας) ΓΣΕΕ/ΑΔΕΔΥ (2008), 'Η ελληνική οικονομία και η απασχόληση' (The Greek economy and employment) Yearly Report 2008, available from:
<http://www.inegsee.gr/ekthesi2008/ekthesi2008.htm> (last visited on: 7/10/2008)
- Garapich M.** (2008). "Migration industry and civil society. Polish immigrants in the United Kingdom before and after the EU enlargement", Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, Vol. 34, Issue 5, pp. 735 – 752.
- Iglicka, K.** (2005). 'EU Membership Highlights Poland's Migration Challenges', Migration Information Source, April 2005, available from:
<http://www.migrationinformation.org/feature/print.cfm?ID=302> (last visited on 2/10/2008)
- IKA/** General Direction of Financial and Technical Services, Direction of Actuarial Studies and Statistics (2005). Monthly Employment Data IKA-ETAM, April 2004, available from: http://www.ika.gr/gr/infopages/stats/stat_report.cfm (last visited on 10/6/2009)
- IKA/** General Direction of Financial and Technical Services, Direction of Actuarial Studies and Statistics (2006). Monthly Employment Data IKA-ETAM, April 2005 available from: http://www.ika.gr/gr/infopages/stats/stat_report.cfm (last visited on 10/6/2009)
- IKA/** General Direction of Financial and Technical Services, Direction of Actuarial Studies and Statistics (2007). Monthly Employment Data IKA-ETAM, April 2006, available from: http://www.ika.gr/gr/infopages/stats/stat_report.cfm (last visited on 10/6/2009)
- IKA/** General Direction of Financial and Technical Services, Direction of Actuarial Studies and Statistics (2008). Monthly Employment Data IKA-ETAM, April 2007, available from: http://www.ika.gr/gr/infopages/stats/stat_report.cfm (last visited on 10/6/2009)
- IKA/** General Direction of Financial and Technical Services, Direction of Actuarial Studies and Statistics (2009). Monthly Employment Data IKA-ETAM, April 2008, available from: http://www.ika.gr/gr/infopages/stats/stat_report.cfm (last visited on 10/6/2009)
- Kasimati, K.** (2003). 'Γυναικεία μετανάστευση από Αλβανία και Πολωνία' (Female migration from Albania and Poland), in Kasimati, K. (ed.) 'Πολιτικές μετανάστευσης και στρατηγικές ένταξης. Η περίπτωση των Αλβανών και Πολωνών μεταναστών' (Policies of migration and strategies of integration. The case of Albanian and Polish immigrants), Gutenberg, Athens, 2003.

- KETHI** (2007). 'Η Γυναικεία Μετανάστευση στην Ελλάδα: Τα Ευρήματα της Πανελληνίας Έρευνας του ΚΕΘΙ' (The female Migration in Greece: The Findings of the Pan-Hellenic Research of KETHI) , Athens, June 2007
- Lazaridis, G. & Romaniszyn, K.** (1998). 'Albanian and Polish undocumented workers in Greece: a comparative analysis', *Journal of European Social Policy*, 8, 1, 5-22
- Nørgaard, O. & Sampson, S.** (1984). 'Poland's crisis and East European Socialism', *Theory and Society*, Vol 13 (1984):773-801
- Psimmenos, I. & Kassimati, K.** (2006), 'Polish immigrants in Greece', in Triandafyllidou, A. (ed.) 'Contemporary Polish Migration in Europe; Complex Patterns of Movement and Settlement', The Edwin Mellen Press, 2006.
- Psimmenos, I.** (2003). 'Ερμηνείες μετανάστευσης, προσδοκίες και ταυτότητες των Αλβανών και Πολωνών μεταναστών' (Interpretations of migration, expectations and identities of Albanian and Polish immigrants), in Kassimati, K. (ed.) 'Πολιτικές μετανάστευσης και στρατηγικές ένταξης. Η περίπτωση των Αλβανών και Πολωνών μεταναστών' (Policies of migration and strategies of integration. The case of Albanian and Polish immigrants), Gutenberg, Athens, 2003.
- Pszczolkowska, D.** (2009). 'Why Poles hate voting in European Parliament elections', <http://blogs.euobserver.com/pszczolkowska/2009/04/14/why-poles-hate-voting-in-european-parliament-elections/> (last visited on 10/6/2009)
- Romaniszyn, K.** (1996). 'The invisible community: undocumented Polish workers in Athens', *New Community* 22 (2): 321-333, April 1996
- Romaniszyn, K.** (1999). 'The Presence of the Polish Undocumented in Greece in the Perspective of European Unification' in Anthias, F. & Lazaridis, G. (Eds) 'Into the Margins: Migration and Exclusion in Southern Europe', Ashgate, 1999
- Triandafyllidou, A. & Gropas, R.,** (2006). 'Immigration to Greece: The case of Poles', Hellenic Foundation for European & Foreign Policy (ELIAMEP), July 2006, available from: http://www.eliamep.gr/eliamep/files/MIGSYS_Greece_Poles_19_July_06893_8.pdf (last visited on 7/10/2008)
- Triandafyllidou, A.** (2006). 'Poles in Europe: Migration in the New Europe', σε Triandafyllidou, A. (ed.) 'Contemporary Polish Migration in Europe; Complex Patterns of Movement and Settlement', The Edwin Mellen Press, 2006.

Websites:

- ABC (Private Office of Work Consultants):** <http://www.abcergasia.com> (last visited on 1/11/2008)
- Diavatirio (Internet Magazine for Migrants – Greek-Albanian Union of Friendship Socrates):** <http://diavatirio.net> (last visited on 3/5/2009)
- Ydrogeios (Private Office of Work Consultants):** <http://www.global-work.gr> (last visited on 1/11/2008)
- Migration Policy Institute:** <http://www.migrationinformation.org> (last visited on 2/10/2008)
- Embassy of the Polish Democracy in Athens:** <http://www.athens.polemb.net> (last visited on 1/11/2008)

List of Interviews

Interview 1, Couple, man and woman, construction worker and domestic worker correspondingly, Anastasia Christou, Athens, July 2006

Interview 2, Man, doorman, Anastasia Christou, Athens, July 2006

Interview 3, Woman, employed by a printing company, Anastasia Christou, Athens, July 2006

Interview 4, Man, publisher, Michaela Marouf, Athens, March 2008

Interview 5, Woman, director of the Polish School of Athens, Michaela Marouf, Athens, May 2008

Interview 6, Woman, president of the 'Independent Movement of Polish Immigrant Women' and owner of a Polish restaurant, Michaela Marouf, Athens, July 2008

Interview 7, Man, employed by a publishing company, Michaela Marouf, October 2008