

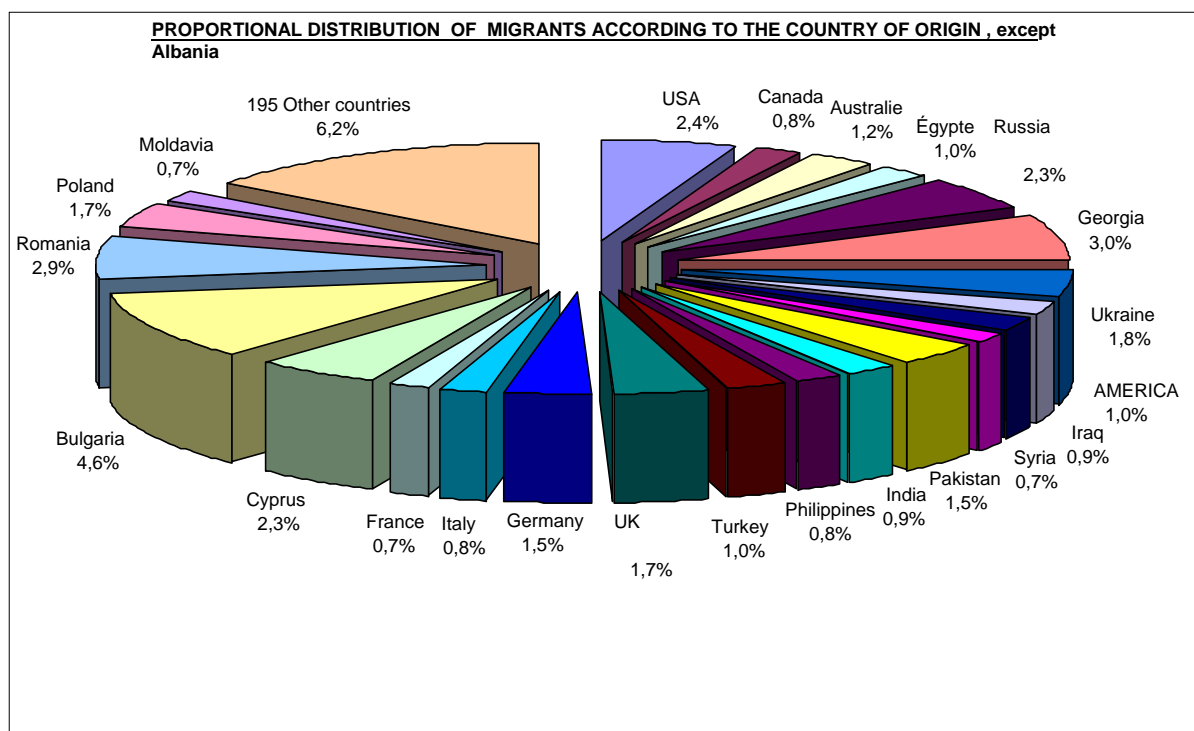
## **2. Immigration policies**

### **- What is the situation of immigrant workers in your country and in your region?**

Immigration is a great challenge for receiving countries. Immigration creates possibilities which could be for the benefit of the economy, but at the same time could cause social exclusion and deterioration of social cohesion. Greece from a country of immigrants in the past has been transformed into a receiving country, as during the last years immigration flows have abruptly and rapidly increased. According to the census of 2001, there are 762.191 immigrants, 415.552 men and 346.639 women respectively. The number of immigrants corresponds to 7,0% of the country's population, whereas the ratio between men and women is 7,7% against 6,3%. The greatest percentage of immigrants originates from Albania 57,5% (438.036 persons), while 20 out of 24 main countries of origin are European, 10 are Asian, 2 Northern American, one Australian and one Africa. So, the  $\frac{3}{4}$  of immigrants are Europeans, 14, 0% from Asia, USA and Canada, 3,2%, from Australia 1,2%, from Africa 1,0% and 6,2% from other countries (table 1).

Regarding the reasons of settlement, as the immigrants declare in various surveys, more than one half declared that came to Greece for work (54,2%), more than  $\frac{1}{5}$  of them declares another reason. 13% declares another reason of settlement, such as family reunification, repatriation approximately 7%, seeking political asylum or as refugees the 1,3% and 0,3% respectively, for studies 2,7% of them.

**Diagram 1**



Source: National Statistic Service, 2001 Population census. Proportion of immigrants according to the country of origin

### **Employment of immigrants in Greece**

In Greece approximately 391.700 immigrants work, whereas the unemployed are approximately 40.000. It is worth noting that the immigrants' average unemployment rate is smaller than the country's average, 9,2% against 11,0%. The percentage of men's unemployment is smaller than that of women, related to the average rate of immigrants unemployment being respectively 8,0% and 11,9%. According to the aforementioned data, the number of immigrants who are employed is approximately 392.000. 271.000 are men and 121.000 women. Immigrants mainly receive wages (approx. 90%), 6,5% declares that is self-employed, 2,8% out of them are employers and 1,7% belongs to assistants and non-paid members (of family). The great majority of immigrants works in manual jobs, especially in construction and other similar jobs, a big percentage works as technicians, machine operators, as paid apprentice farmers or cattle-breeders, etc. The majority of immigrant women, more than a half, is concentrated in jobs such as personal services, cleaning, unskilled manual work, while their presence in commerce, shops and open-air markets is significant. Very low percentage of immigrants works in scientific and technological professions despite the fact that many of them have such qualifications.

- **What are the initiatives of your organization for the protection of immigrant workers in times of crisis?**

Since the end of the 90's trade unions activity focuses on two aspects: "understanding of the migration phenomenon, protection of migrants' rights", while there is a continuous concern to this issue. That is since 1992 the Institute of Labor is dealing with the qualitative and quantitative registration of migrant workers, in 1993 a evidence based survey was presented by the trade unions, in 1994, a seminar was organized on ethnic minorities, equal opportunities and foreign workers, where all aspects of migration phenomenon were analyzed. At the same time, a public opinion poll was carried out in the wider Athens area on the side-effects of migration to the labor market, as well as on the general threat of the public on migrant workers. Other similar initiatives followed, while in 2004 in the framework of EQUAL initiative new scientific studies were carried out and specific actions were undertaken. In 2004, EKA has participated in the 1<sup>st</sup> Trade Unions Congress of the South Europe and North African capitals with the title: The North African migrant flows towards South Europe. In 2005, Greek trade unions have supported migrants' forum in its claims related to work problems. The following example confirms a permanent and decisive support given by the trade unions towards migrants workers. In the year 2000 the Ministry of Health issued a circular assigning public hospitals' personnel with control duties ordering them to report to the police any contact with illegal migrants. The reaction of the Union of doctors of Athens-Piraeus was immediate. Doctors refused to apply the circular and warned their members not to apply the order. So, the circular was not applied in practice.

### **Immigrants' Support Office**

EKA has undertaken many initiatives related to immigrant workers. Since 1990, when the first wave of immigrants occurred was developed many activities in supporting immigrants, such as: cooperation and support of the immigrants' communities, creation of a special office helping them, organization of various events involving immigrants. In 2006 EKA participated as a partner in the EU initiative Equal under the title: "Observatory and network for the strengthening of the economic immigrants and refugees in the labor market", having as coordinator the Institute of Labor. In this framework a specialized office was created. This office is still working.

The office started operating in the framework of the program Equal in May 2006, and has supported by two consultants. The aim of the program is the integration of migrants in the Greek labor market. During the first months of its operation, the office had as main aim the creation of a network of actors who were involved in the immigration process, and were able to support the migrants' and refugees' demands. The office has contacted labor unions' members of EKA, having immigrant workers as members, in order to establish communication and cooperation with them.

The office has also encouraged labor unions to address foreign workers in order to attract them to affiliate to the unions. Special relationship has been developed with the union of workers in household services, cleaning, (where the majority of immigrant workers is involved), food supplies, tourist services, construction, nurses, drivers, textiles and leather. Contacts have been also established with public authorities dealing with immigrant issues such as the City Hall, at the Region of Athens, National Social Security, the Ministry of Domestic Affairs, the Labor Inspectorate etc. Finally, the office has contacted all immigrants' communities supporting them to more collective forms of their rights. A very good cooperation is also developed with the NGO's.

- **What demanding proposals have you done to unite all workers against exploitation and decent work?**

The trade unions in Greece play an active role so that the basic aspects of immigration policy to consider migrants as equal citizens and to aim to:

- α) family reunification,
- β) political refugees,
- γ) legalization and socio-economic integration of migrants in a framework of social cohesion,
- δ) organization and operation of educational institutions and
- ε) cooperation with countries of origin of migrants, in order to protect both Greek and foreign workers and citizens.

The trade unions movement in Greece from the very beginning expressed its support towards migrants for a fair and equal treatment of the foreign colleagues.

- **What initiatives should be undertaken by the trade unions of the European Capitals in order to be involved in the migration policies?**

The fact that European countries are gradually transformed into receiving countries the EU common policy on immigration is a necessary prerequisite. The main guidelines of this policy must be based on fundamental principles and main axes such as:

- Borders security is a basic ax of immigration policy and should follow and not to precede the preservation of the social cohesion and solidarity.

- Elaboration of national immigration policy for the integration of the existing legal immigrants.
- Creation of a European framework of immigration policy specialized at regional and local level.
- Take advantage of the experience of the countries receivers of migrants.

EU should develop a new framework of immigration policy:

- Integrated management of migrant flows which will balance the entries for humanitarian and economic reasons, fighting off illegal entries especially the entry through illegal networks.
- Fair treatment of the citizens of third who live and work in EU countries.
- Cooperation with countries of origin for the regulation of migration flows.
- Long-term aim for a common EU policy on political asylum issues.

A European immigration policy should regard at least the following aspects of immigration phenomenon such as:

- Socio-economic integration of migrants which needs policies of employment, educational training, social protection, migrants education, which regard migrants as well receiving countries.
- Organization and operation of educational institutions as main factors of socialization.
- Cooperation and support towards countries of origin in order to eliminate the reasons leading to immigration, as well as control of illegal immigration.