Communities in Greece

Studying the Aspects of Albanian Migration to Greece
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Introduction

The ‘Communities in Greece’ programme of the Center for Democracy and Reconciliation in Southeast Europe aims at contributing to the best possible understanding of the social integration of immigrant populations in Greece. Given the significant presence of the Albanian community in Greek society - the 2001 census revealed that the Albanian community made up 56% of the total immigrant population - and the lack of recent research on the progress of this community’s integration, the CDRSEE conducted a research project titled ‘Studying Aspects of Albanian Migration in Athens and Thessaloniki’.

The very first interviews with Albanian immigrants and with Greek citizens clearly showed the need to avoid limiting ourselves to the superficial recording of statistical data and numbers, and to delve deeper in order to study the true relationship between the two groups (Albanians and Greeks) and how they should be approached. Therefore, the research explored, inter alia, aspects such as immigrant access to health institutions, insurance and education. The research team interviewed representatives of immigrant associations and non-governmental organisations, as well as citizens, so as to acquire a more spherical view of the reality experienced by immigrants from 1990 onwards, when the first mass wave of immigrants arrived in Greece. In our effort to substantially and productively contribute to the debate on the integration of immigrants in Greek society, we have put forth proposals for the substantial improvement of immigration policies and the living conditions of immigrants at the local level.

We hope that this research will pave the way for further work aspiring to acquire a true understanding of the complex phenomenon of integration of immigrants in Greek society.

I would like to extend my warmest thanks to the members of our research team, Ioannis Manos, Dora Papadopoulou, Vasiliki Makrygianni and Konstantinos Kolovos.

Zvezdana Kovac
CDRSEE Executive Director
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Abstract

This text summarises the findings of the research programme titled ‘Communities in Greece’, which was funded by the Center for Democracy and Reconciliation in Southeast Europe (hereinafter referred to as CDRSEE), with the support of the Open Society Initiative in Europe. This is a research paper prepared by a group of four (4) researchers using data collection techniques based on qualitative social research methods.

The main research question was the issue of integration and inclusion of Albanian immigrants who have been living in Greece since the early 1990s. The research programme explored aspects of the immigration experience, as reflected in issues of identity and integration, education, employment, housing, health and social welfare, on participation in social and political life, acquisition of citizenship and the reporting and presentation of Albanian immigrants by the mass media.

The research is based on the recording and analysis of empirical data drawn from the narrations of immigrants themselves and of Greek citizens, and from interviews with individuals employed in public administration, state and local institutions and services (ministries and municipalities) and private agencies (NGOs, non-profit groups, cultural associations founded by Albanian immigrants), who handle issues of migration policy, integration and inclusion of immigrants, and organise relevant actions. The cities of Thessaloniki and Athens were set as the research sites.

The examination of the research material showed significant progress with regard to the inclusion and social integration of Albanian immigrants in Greek society, and highlighted issues that, if resolved, could improve both the lives of immigrants themselves and Greek society. Their stay for over two decades, particularly those who came to Greece as adults, their long-term professional activity, the regulation of the processes for certifying their legal presence (residence permit, work permit, acquisition of Greek citizenship), and the act of starting a family and having children who attend or have attended all levels of the Greek education system were defined by the immigrants themselves and the people working in the relevant institutions as examples of integration and inclusion. At the same time, our interlocutors also highlighted issues/problems that, if managed, could improve their presence and living conditions in Greece.
The Migration Phenomenon as an Object of Study - Studying the Aspects of Albanian Migration to Greece
1.1 Study aspects of the migration phenomenon

The study of the migration phenomenon during the 20th century, and especially from the second half of the century onwards, has occupied social scientists, both due to its cognitive importance and due to the significant effects it has on all aspects of the communities in which it is observed. Migrant communities are studied as special population categories, which often do not have citizen status in the countries in which they live and work, while most of the time they come from countries where the national/ethnic group to which they belong constitutes the majority.

In summary, the study of the migratory movement has focused on issues such as the experiences of subjects who experience movement (the bottom-up approach), the relations between the majority and minority (immigrants) in the host community, strategies for survival and maintaining the individual and collective identity of immigrants, their experiences from their contact with the state mechanism of the host society, the policies (at the economic, legal, labour, insurance and educational level) on dealing with and managing the migration phenomenon, which are applied both by the host countries and by international and supranational organisations (the top-down approach), the relationship between the community of origin of immigrants and the socio-cultural environment of the host country, as well as the political/economic, cultural agreements and relations between the communities of origin and the host communities (Arnold 2012, Brettell, Hollifield 2008, Iosifides 2011, King 2002, 2012, King, Skeldon 2010, Rath, Martiniello 2012, Triandafyllidou, Gropas, 2014).

The economic dimension to the field of the causes and effects of migration is what initially drew the interest of economic science. Economic approaches viewed immigration as the result of structural differences of the levels of economic growth, which were recorded between the countries of origin and host countries, and also in the resulting opportunities for economic development and prosperity offered by the latter (Emke-Pouloupolou 2007). Recent theoretical views, which have focused on the phenomenon of globalisation, have associated contemporary migration with the process of deregulation of capital, and the uncontrollable flow of human resources resulting therefrom (Zlotnik 1998).

Economic approaches created the framework for the sociological studies that followed, which included political, social, demographic and cultural aspects of the phenomenon among the issues under consideration. These studies focused on the broader socio-political environment and introduced the concepts of social and cultural capital (ties formed by family relationships, friendship, common descent among immigrants), and placed emphasis on the conditions responsible for the causes and requirements of migration. At the same time, they have underlined the importance of the global market, which outflanks national economies and creates labour markets at the supranational level (Castles, de Haas, Miller, 2013).
Some of the basic findings of the studies on migration, with regard to the living of immigrants in the host community, converge on the view that immigrants develop multiple identities in their efforts to adapt to new and different cultural codes and socioeconomic and political environments, combining—at the same time—the corresponding elements they have learned in the communities of origin. The outcome of the phenomenon is directly connected to the policies with which the nation-states define, organise and manage their relationship with the immigration communities in their territory. The economic growth of the host country is a decisive factor in the choice to stay and the decision to be integrated (Crul, Schneider, Lelie, 2012).

Furthermore, contemporary studies have shown that in order to penetrate deeper into the different expressions of the phenomenon and to observe the way in which it is impressed at the transgenerational level, one must include the historical and socio-cultural environment in the analysis, as well as the broader processes at the local, national and international levels. The first immigrant generation usually maintains its ties to the country of origin, while the next generation is integrated without any particular problems in the social environment of the host country, and the next immigrant generation is recorded as trying to redefine its relationship with the community from which its ancestors come (Portes, Roumbaut 2001, Simon 2003).

1.2 The concept of inclusion

The inclusion of migrant, national, ethnic, minority and other social groups in the national and global political, economic and cultural system, combined with the importance assigned—in recent years—by international and supranational organisations to respect and tolerance towards cultural difference, have promoted the issue of rights (of migrants, minorities, etc.) to an issue of primary importance in the relations between populations, government organisations and other political and bureaucratic agencies.

Emphasis on the efforts to safeguard these rights has assumed a central position in policy planning and in the discussions on the migration phenomenon. It is the aim of the policies planned and implemented by various nation-states, either at the national level or with the aid and/or encouragement of international organisations. These processes determine the framework in which relations of rights and obligations are built between the majority and the minority.

Often, the issue of rights—and in our case, immigrant rights—is approached scientifically as well as politically through the conceptual schema of a dipole, with the principles of universality at the one end (Taylor 1992), and the principles of relativism at the other (Dowrkin 1977). According to the former, migrant rights are a universal good that must be provided by every democratic community. According to the latter, migrant rights are connected to the distinct characteristics of nation-states and the ways in which they have shaped their sovereign discourse on similarity and difference. If,
indeed, emphasis on the idea of national homogeneity is of particular ideological and political importance, then the acceptance and emergence of the different cultural backgrounds of migrants becomes a complex and ‘problematic’ process, which affects both immigrants and the remaining members of the host community. An immigrant is perceived as the ‘Other’ and must become one with the many (Chryssochoou 2004, Papataxiarchis 2006).

The concepts of ‘assimilation’ and ‘inclusion’ sum up the ideological foundation of the policies being planned, which determine the relationships between the state, citizens and immigrant communities. The sociological background of these terms goes back to Emile Durkheim and summarises the fundamental issue of the social theory concerning the relationship between society and the individual. Assimilation refers to the ways in which societies make up a single whole, which constitutes a functional set of social institutions through which it maintains its balance and existence. Inclusion, on the other hand, refers to the interaction of the individual with society, and the ways in which individual subjects function as socially accepted members of the social whole. The concept of integration, which is often used interchangeably with the term inclusion, contains the element of socialisation of the subjects in ways that are legalised and approved of, by the social environment (Bagavos, Papadopoulou 2006, Schnapper 2008).

On a large scale, the process of assimilation may lead to the absorption of the immigrant community by the majority. Assimilation can be chosen and/or imposed (Brown, Bean 2006). In the post-war period (2nd half of the 20th century) assimilation - as a concept and political programme - was associated with the management of migrant flows from Europe to the USA. The adoption on the part of immigrants of elements of the host community was described, in addition to the term ‘assimilation’, by the term ‘acculturation’ (Schnapper 2006). The aim of these processes was for immigrants to acquire the cultural characteristics which - according to dominant discourse - were inherent in the host communities (Gans 2007). Two immigrant generations later, most immigrants learned to speak the language of the host community as native speakers, and had a certain symbolic or other sense of their community/country of origin.

The strategy of inclusion requires the legal residency of immigrants and aims at their participation in sectors of public life (e.g. labour) and, at the same time, the public expression of their cultural values and practices, with the objective of becoming equal members of the host country. It is understood as a process, the results of which gradually start to show over the course of more than one immigrant generation. The process of inclusion is the practice during which the host community ‘socialises’ the members of immigrant communities through their participation in common social institutions and political processes, while at the same time maintaining their collective-cultural identity and any unique cultural characteristics they may have (Castles, de Haas, Miller 2013, Psimmenos 2004).

Despite the different models of assimilation and inclusion processes recorded in the literature (assimilative, multicultural, cross-cultural), the main discovery is that there is no single
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dominant model for integration, but a combination of policies, which are adapted to the unique conditions and political, economic, social and cultural frameworks of each country (Heckmann, Schnapper, 2003). The public use of the term ‘inclusion’ assigns a specific content to the term by historical period and social context. Just like any other concept, which constitutes a conceptual tool of scientific discourse and is introduced for public debate, its meaning takes on a political dimension. It is transformed from an analytical term used to describe a series of social phenomena and processes to a political necessity and means to assert social demands, with its content being determined by specific historical and socio-political contexts.

The concept of inclusion is the central analytical concept and basic research objective of this research. The concept can be understood in the framework of the views of social theory connected to the ideas of process and action, in relation to which the individual and collective subjects involved utilise strategies, mechanisms and symbols as tools in a targeted manner. The concept of inclusion becomes understood as a means and framework in which the aforementioned social processes take place. Its study does not concern or exclusively focus on immigrant communities, but includes both immigrants and members of the host community.

This is a dynamic and constant process, which on a political level aims to turn immigrants into full members of the host community. In this sense, involves the way in which the individual and collective self are formed and represented. It has both a material and symbolic dimension, while at the same time being determined by a set of processes and parameters, thus determining the lives of people. It has a different effect on different subjects at different times and highlights the importance and role played by the innermost differences between host communities and immigrants.

The issue of power, political and other, which governs the relationship between citizens and state mechanisms of the host country and immigrants, is yet another crucial parameter for understanding the phenomenon of immigration and the aforementioned processes (Paoletti 2011). The majority has at its disposal the power and substantial economic, legal and political means, and imposes its dominant sovereign discourse. It is this majority that determines the framework within which the life of immigrant groups and the growth of their members are organised, a fact that gives it greater symbolic worth than that of immigrants (Bonifazi et. al. 2008). The study of the inclusion process in the context of immigration provides the ground for understanding similarity and otherness, multicultural coexistence, cross-cultural communication and social change.
1.3 Albanian immigrants in Greece – The contribution of this research

Greek society is trying to balance between adaptation to the new socioeconomic and political conditions which have been taking shape since the 1990s, and the understanding and inner exploration of the problems it is experiencing within this so-called economic crisis. When recording the existing socio-cultural and political framework, account must be taken of factors such as the current escalation of the refugee phenomenon and the broader geopolitical changes taking place in Europe and the neighbouring regions of North Africa and the Middle East.

Migration, as it is understood in the framework of modernity and nation-states, from and to the regions of the contemporary Greek state, has been recorded as a phenomenon as early as the first decades of its formation (Kasimis and Kassimi 2004). The presence of non-native populations and their movement, as well as the mobility of populations from rural areas inside and outside the Greek state were the subject of studies in the 19th century and, particularly, in the latter part of the century (Angelopoulos 2007:3).

In the first decades of the 20th century, the transfer of populations as a result of warfare and national integration processes in SE Europe formed the subject of a study, which examined the effects of immigrant population mobility, mainly after the Asia Minor Catastrophe (Angelopoulos 2007:3). At the level of political practice, the first law concerning the presence of immigrants in Greece (Law 3275 on the settlement and movement of third-country nationals in Greece) was passed in 1925 and was in force for two years (1927-1929). In 1929 it was replaced by Law 4310/1929 (on the settlement and movement of third-country nationals in Greece, police controls, passports, deportations and displacements), which applied up until the early 1990s (Kapsalis and Katsoridas 2004:10).

The study on the effects of the 1922 population exchange was carried out with the use of conceptual and methodological tools derived from the disciplines of history, geography and economics, and forms part of a general concern regarding the conditions and requirements for the modernisation of the Greek community, economy and political system (Angelopoulos 2007:3).

Migration also occupied the social sciences in the 1960s, resulting in the production of comprehensive literature by Greek researchers in the field of social and economic sciences (Angelopoulos 2007:3). These studies focused on migration from Greece to third countries, and also on domestic migration from the provinces and rural areas to the urban centres, and mainly Athens (Mousourou 1991).

During that same period, systematic studies were carried out on post-war migration from Greece to third countries and on the repatriation - after 1974 - of both economic migrants and political refugees. From the mid 1980s and given the first waves of incoming third-country nationals (e.g. immigrants from Asia and Africa), which then became noticeable in the Greek community, social sciences gradually focused on the study of the migration phenomenon (Angelopoulos 2003:1-4). From the mid
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According to Angelopoulos (2007), the most typical feature of the majority of studies on migration in Greece, which were produced up to around the first decade of the 21st century, mainly by sociologists and economists, is the focus on issues related to job seeking and the effects on the economic sector (income, contributions, labour conditions and relations). The new educational reality and the institution of cross-cultural schools, along with its effects on the educational process, as well as issues pertaining to safety, policing and violation of the law, racism and xenophobia are just a few more of the fields analysed in these studies.

The phenomenon of migration is perceived as a ‘problem’ to power structures, which are ideologically organised into dogmas of national homogeneity. The new reality after the arrival of immigrants is interpreted through the ‘benefits and losses for the nation and the national economy, the effects on national revenues, the threat to cultural homogeneity, the denial of integration and assimilation, and the coveting of the country’s national status’ (Angelopoulos 2007:5-6). As a result, this perception determines its research objectives through the study of ‘attitudes’ and ‘views’, and uses methodological and conceptual tools based on the aforementioned ideological patterns and ensuing theoretical assumptions (Papataxiarchis 2006:44-50, Triandafyllidou, Veikou 2002).

This research attempts to shed light on certain relatively unseen aspects of immigration, such as accounts of immigrants and the experience of the now adult second generation of immigrants, as well as the experience of the current economic situation in Greece. Our approach centres on the search for experiences and the subjects’ discourse with the aim of highlighting the ideological and political terms in the framework of which their presence is understood and the relevant policies are planned and implemented.

Drawing its findings from the research ‘fields’ of the urban spaces of Thessaloniki and Athens, and focusing on the discourse of the immigrants, it presents the issues from the point of view of the people themselves. The focus at the local level aims at the correlation of the immigration processes experienced by the subjects themselves with those recorded at the macro-level. The arrival of Albanian immigrants in Greece during the 1990s, especially in the early part of the decade, was characterised by the illegal entry and presence of a large number of Albanian citizens who stayed for a long period of time under an ‘illegal’ or ‘semi-illegal’ status, until the first organised efforts were made to register these individuals through the obtaining of a residence and work permit.
As demonstrated by our empirical material, the initial stage of welcoming immigrants and displaying sympathy was followed by a phase of xenophobia and racism, and through the policies of the Greek state and EU, the actions of civil society organisations and long-term coexistence, we have come to talk about a situation that has resulted from the combination of inclusion and integration processes. Our aim is to underline the complexity of the issue and the impasse to which simplified approaches lead us, both at the level of understanding and at the level of effectiveness.

The study aspires to contribute in a productive and qualitative manner a) to the understanding of the migration phenomenon and process of integration/inclusion, b) to the study of the effectiveness of policies that have been and are being implemented, c) to the study of the social change that has occurred in the communities of Albanian immigrants from their initial arrival to the present day, d) to the study of the effects of the current economic reality on immigrant communities at the social, economic, political and ideological level, and e) to the understanding of the way in which Greek society (state, institutions, citizens) perceives coexistence with populations seen as cultural ‘Others’.

The research aims to shift the discussion from the ‘problems’ considered to have been produced by immigration to the conditions producing them. The analysis of the phenomenon and its understanding in Greece will be inadequate if account is not taken of the effects of migration flows on collective and individual identities, and on the formation of a nation-state.
second chapter

Methodological Approach
2.1 The selection of methodology and research questions

The methodological approach that was selected and followed was based on the principles of qualitative social research (Berg 2001, Bernard 2006, Iosifides 2008, Robson 2007, Yin 2011). It was found suitable for the type of research questions posed, which focused on: a) the recording and understanding of the living conditions of Albanian immigrants in Greece, and of the process of their assimilation into Greek society, as well as b) the search for, improvement and implementation of policies for their further integration (Okely 2013).

This is both an epistemological and methodological approach, which is interested in social relations from the point of view of the subjects. The objective is to study the lived experiences and explore the ways in which the social subjects interpret the world in which they live, shape perceptions and behaviours related to integration and exclusion processes, and describe the social reality they are experiencing.

In this context, we focused on various social circumstances and the relationships that are formed between the individually and collectively active subjects. Our objective was to record the ways in which both circumstances and relationships determine the perceptions, choices and forms of action adopted by individuals and groups in the course of their social life and in the fulfilment of their social positions and roles.

Our priority was to highlight the different ways of viewing things through their perceptions, significations and representations, and to reveal the meanings, values, conventions and rules contained in their words and actions. We searched for the different interpretations of reality in different social and cultural contexts, the effects and consequences they have on social action, as well as the ways in which they are connected to broader social processes and structural factors (e.g. bureaucracy).

The epistemological assumptions that determined these choices are based on the view of a social reality in which: a) social phenomena arise from the acts, meanings and choices of individuals within the limits imposed by each social framework, b) this process is inter-subjective, and c) it is formed through social action and interaction (Hollis 2005). In order to find answers to our research questions, it was necessary to gain access to the lived experiences of the subjects. This type of research brings the researcher into direct contact with the people they are studying with the aim of understanding their way of life from their point of view and describing it.

The individuals and groups participating in the research process are treated as interlocutors with whom we attempted to form socio-cultural communication frameworks, placing emphasis on detail, multiple viewpoints and the multilevel approach. We searched for and recorded the views,
perceptions, ideas, convictions, experiences and emotions of the social subjects from within, without stripping the action of its social context (Quinn 2005). Having adopted this methodological approach, the measurable dimensions of social reality did not form part of our research objective.

2.2 Research sites, respondents, sampling

The cities of Thessaloniki and Athens were set as the research sites. The two large urban centres were considered suitable case studies based on the rationale that a large number of Albanian immigrants live in these cities, which also host several state, municipal and private agencies that apply integration and inclusion policies. The selection of respondents was determined by access to immigrant social networks, agencies involved in relevant issues and personal contacts. The interlocutors participating in the research were classified as suitable for the gathering of information on the basis of the subject areas we decided to examine. These included issues of identity and belonging, the way in which immigrants narrate the immigration experience, as well as issues of education, accommodation, labour, housing, health and social welfare, participation in public life, acquiring nationality and citizenship, and ways in which Albanian immigrants are represented in the media (Iosifides 2011).

With regard to the task of finding respondents, we applied the snowball sampling method (the research subjects themselves led us to other research participants through their social networks and relationships). We made efforts to include individuals of different gender, age, immigration experience and professional capacity. We complemented the method with the purposive sampling method, by selecting participants who were linked to specific research questions (Emmel 2013). Seeking to study the type and dynamic of institutional relationships developing when immigrants come into contact with the institutions and services of the Greek public administration (e.g. procedures involving the issuance of residence permits, work permits, naturalisation), we searched for representatives of these agencies, and also applied the focus group method in order to view this from the point of view of the immigrants.

The methodological approach followed and the type of questions used allowed us to make use of theoretical sampling. While conducting the research and processing the data, we were led to the selection of additional respondents in order to cover aspects of our research questions or to enrich our data and strengthen their interpretative capacity (Emmel 2013). As regards ethics and morality, in an effort to protect the confidentiality and anonymity of the respondents, we do not use names unless the subjects have stated that they would not mind their names being mentioned.
2.3 The stages of conducting the research

A) Literature search of published sources: the aim was to collect existing information on issues of immigration, with an emphasis on Albanian migratory mobility within Greece. A large volume of material was collected, which chronologically covers the period from the early 1990s up to and including the first decade of the 2000s. This material aimed to provide a picture of the issues forming the subject matter of the research on Albanian immigration in Greece. This phase lasted from April to June 2016.

B) Field research and collection of data: the object of the research was to record the experience of Albanian immigrants, Greek citizens and officials in the departments handling issues of immigration policy. At the same time, there was a search for quantitative data on the presence of immigrants in Greece, the relevant legal framework and the experience of its implementation, both by government employees and by the members of the Albanian community. The interview technique involving unstructured and semi-structured interviews, and the focus groups constituted the main tools for the collection of material. Use was also made of ethnographic notes and research was carried out on archives, the internet and relevant publications in the press. The following were prepared: a) a brief informative text for the information of all those participating in the research, b) an interview guide with topics for discussion and c) a consent form concerning ethical issues pertaining to the research and the use of personal data and information from the interviews. Interviews were held in Athens and in Thessaloniki. This phase lasted from July to October 2016.

C) Analysis and interpretation of data - Writing of the final study: the final phase of the research programme included the organisation, study and interpretation of data, and the preparation of the final report. The analysis was guided by the epistemological perception that the resulting interpretations must be as close as possible to the conceptual categories used by the actors for the social phenomena (Bernard 2006, Iosifides 2008). We therefore chose to place emphasis on the words of the subjects and to incorporate their ‘voices’ in the text so that all interested parties can understand the world through the eyes and perception of the respondents themselves, without imposing a priori judgements.

During this process we focused on the words and actions of the subjects and the ways in which they described their lived experience with the aim of making it understood within the social context from which it arises. Additionally, we incorporated quantitative and other information so that the reader can learn about the general social, economic, political, cultural and historical framework within which the views of the subjects are produced and our answers to the research questions are shaped (Silverman 2005).

Our aim was to achieve the most intensive and in-depth possible recording and exploration of the phenomena and ways of thinking and action of the subjects, during the research period of course. In this way we attempted to
give the most accurate possible representation of the views and positions of the respondents and to highlight the potential to apply the findings of the research to the interpretation and study of similar phenomena, both in the framework of Greek reality and in the study of similar issues in different fields. In this sense, the statistical generalisation of quantified data did not constitute a research objective.
third chapter

Demographic, Geographic and Social Characteristics of Albanian Immigrants in Greece
3.1 General characteristics

From the early 1990s, Greece gradually went from having an outflow of emigrants to having an inflow of immigrants. Based on the most recent census in 2011, Greek residents without Greek citizenship make up approximately 10% of the total population, which amounts to 10,858,018 individuals (renewed data from 2015); while in the 1981 census, foreign nationals made up less than 2% of the total population (180,000 individuals, of which 63% came from the most developed countries), and in 1991 the population of foreign nationals did not undergo any significant changes (although foreigners from the most developed countries now make up less than 50% of the whole).

However, in the 2001 census this number shot up, with recordings indicating 762,000 individuals with nationalities other than Greek (7% of the country’s population), while in the last census of 2011, the population of non-Greek citizens came to 912,000, an increase of 150,000 compared to 2001 (see Table 1). In fact, the increase in the country’s population between 1991 and 2011 is attributed, almost exclusively, to the increase in the number of foreign nationals. As pointed out by Kotzamanis and Karkouli (2016), the mass entry of mainly young individuals with the aim of seeking jobs contributed, inter alia, to the deceleration of population ageing in Greece, the increase in birth rates and the boosting of the country’s demographic capacity.

Based on the data from the last census in 2011, a total of 480,804 Albanian immigrants were registered in Greece. Over the last few decades, Albanians have consistently constituted the largest population group of immigrants in Greece. To date, the immigration of Albanians has presented two important peak periods, mainly as a result of the great political changes and/or intense socio-political and economic turmoil in the neighbouring country (Balabanidis, 2016). The first period of mass immigration was recorded after the fall of the communist regime in the early 1990s, when a large number of Albanians (corresponding to approximately 1/5 of the total population) emigrated to Greece, Italy, Germany and other European countries.

The second exodus from the country took place after the collapse of the economic pyramid schemes in 1997. In a similar way and in the context of these events, a large number of Albanians moved to different Balkan countries. At the same time there was an inflow of Greek repatriates from Albania, who were registered as ‘Northern Epirotes’. They are Albanian citizens, most of whom form part of the Greek ethnic minority of southern Albania and are considered to have Greek ethnicity and Albanian citizenship. On the part of the Greek State, they are recognised as repatriates and are issued a Special Repatriate Identity Card. It is estimated that they amount to approximately 189,000 individuals.
The Greek records do not have any data on the regions of origin of Albanian immigrants. However, the majority of Albanians living in Greece are economic immigrants. Nevertheless, based on research conducted by the Albanian Institute of Statistics (INSTAT), Albanian immigrants returning from Greece usually settle in their former places of residence, but also in large urban centres throughout the country, such as, mainly, Tirana, Vlorë, Elbasan, Fier and Korçë. Based on information resulting from research and a great number of studies, most Albanian immigrants chose...
to migrate to Greece due to its geographic proximity and the view that it is a developed EU member state.

with regard to the issue of gender, as will be presented further down (see Table 6), there is a balance in the numbers. Up until the outbreak of the social and economic crisis, they had not planned on moving to another EU country since - until the mid/late 2000s - the Greek economy presented high growth rates. Despite the drastic change in circumstances in the late 2000s, with Greece entering a phase of economic recession, unemployment rates skyrocketing, salaries dropping and the need for human resources diminishing, the inflow of immigrants continued. By way of example, up until 2011 the number of immigrants coming from Albania amounted to 50,000–70,000 per year (Balabanidis 2016).

At this point it should be underlined that in recent years a significant portion of the Albanian nationals registered in Greece travel (illegally) to European countries in search of work. This type of movement is not recorded and, consequently, the quantifiable extent cannot easily be measured due to the application of the Schengen Agreement and minimal controls at EU borders. Furthermore, field research shows that a large number of women are not registered since they enter the country without the necessary documents, following their spouses who are already legal residents.
3.2 Deportations of Albanian Immigrants

According to information from the Ministry of Interior, in the 2006-2015 decade, approximately 175,000 individuals were deported, most of whom had Albanian citizenship. Halfway through this, the distribution of incoming migrants changed considerably. Up until 2011, Albanians made up approximately 50% of irregular migrants, while from 2012 to 2015, the citizens of three countries (Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan) constituted about 80% of the whole. However, the Greek-Albanian borders continue to serve as an important gateway to the EU (see Table 3). Based on available information (see Table 4), in the midst of the migrant and refugee crisis, up until July 2016 the majority of deportations involved Albanians, while arrests for illegal entry into the country in the Greek-Albanian border area gradually decreased, only to increase along the western borders of the country. In particular, arrests along the Greek-Albanian border dropped from 42,897 in 2007, to 4,957 in 2014 (www.astynomia.gr). Furthermore, according to Hellenic Police records, there were 63,563 arrests of Albanians in 2009, and 9,485 in 2014.

3.3 Geographic Distribution of Albanian Immigrants

Albanian immigrants did not settle in all of the country’s regions. Based on information from the 2011 census, approximately half the migrant population is gathered in the Prefecture of Attica (193,521) (see Table 5). The majority of Albanians are gathered in urban regions and, mainly, in the two largest urban centres of the country, namely the regional unit of Athens (60,497 in the municipality of Athens) and the regional unit of Thessaloniki (12,893 in the municipality of Thessaloniki).

**TABLE 5.** Geographic distribution of Albanian immigrants throughout Greece based on the 2011 census. Source: ELSTAT 2016. Own processing.

**TABLE 6.** Population of Albanian immigrants having settled in the period of 2006-2011, distribution by age and gender. Source: ELSTAT. Own processing.
### TABLE 7. Geographic distribution of Albanian immigrants across Attica.

Source: 2011 census, ELSTAT, own processing.
Overall, the number of men and women in the Albanian immigrant population in the municipality of Athens is practically even. In the municipality of Athens, Albanians form the largest immigrant population, amounting to 51.12%, while the other population groups lag far behind (Balabanidis 2016). By way of example, by studying the ages and genders of those who settled in the country in the period of 2006-2011, one discovers that the majority are young people since the most populous age group is that between 20 and 29 years of age, while people over 60 years of age are a minority. Women appear to slightly outnumber men across the entire age spectrum (see Table 6). If one focuses on the urban centres, one will notice that in Attica, apart from the municipality of Athens, there is a larger concentration in the regional unit of Piraeus (Municipalities of Piraeus, Nikaia, Keratsini) and in the regional unit of West Athens (Municipalities of Peristeri, Agioi Anargyroi, Ilion).

TABLE 8. Geographic distribution of Albanian immigrants across Thessaloniki.
Source: 2011 census, ELSTAT, own processing.

Based on Table 8, the main centre of gravity of the distribution of Albanian immigrants across the urban environment of Thessaloniki is the Municipality of the same name, where approximately 1/3 of the Albanian population is gathered. This is followed by the Municipality of Neapoli-Sykies with a percentage of 10%. The remaining portion of the immigrant population mainly lives in the western districts (Municipalities of Evosmos-Kordelio, Pavlos Melas), where rent and the cost of living are lower. Overall, however, it is observed that the population is dispersed across most urban centres in the urban fabric, which indicates a high degree of integration of this particular immigrant group.
3.4 Return of Albanian immigrants to Albania as a result of the economic crisis

In recent years, in the midst of the ongoing social and economic crisis, it has been observed that there is a higher mobility of the Albanian population, with a large portion attempting to return to their country of origin. As indicated by research conducted by the Albanian Institute of Statistics (INSTAT), the number of Albanian citizens returning home has increased since 2009 as a result of the economic crisis. Overall, 133,544 Albanians were registered (98,414 men and 35,130 women) in the period of 2009 - 2013. Of these individuals, 61% were returning from Greece and 32.7% from Italy. The vast majority describes this return as voluntary.

As previously stated, most return to their initial place of residence, while those returning from Greece have a tendency towards domestic migration. However, according to INSTAT and Greek studies (Maroukis and Gemi 2013), as well as the field research we conducted, for many of these individuals this return is temporary. Therefore, these data can be described as more of a snapshot of a continuous circular migratory course than as an established condition.

It is clear that in the early 1990s the migration of Albanians to Greece was directly linked to economic growth. The field research showed that in recent years, due to the current economic situation, many have attempted to return to their country of origin. Others chose to eventually postpone their return due to their degree of integration in Greek society and the economic recession in Albania. The findings of our research highlight the need for further investigation into the demographic developments of Albanian immigrants and their course from and to their country of origin. In conclusion, it is important to underline that Albanian immigrants do not constitute a common and uniform migratory whole. On the contrary, they constitute a portion of the population with many and strong internal differences depending on the place of origin, gender, age, and the moment, method and reasons for entering and staying in Greece.
fourth chapter

Institutions, Bodies and Structures for the Exercise and Implementation of Immigration Policy in Greece
4.1 State institutions and exercise of immigration policy

Immigration policy in Greece is exercised by an administrative structure that expands to the European, national, regional and local level. The General Secretariat of Migration Policy comes under the Ministry of Interior and consists of the Directorate General of Citizenship and Migration Policy, which in turn is divided into the Directorate of Citizenship and the Directorate of Migration Policy, as is presented in the below chart.

Similarly, the Decentralised Administration is divided into the Directorates of Civil Status and Social Affairs, and the Directorates of Aliens and Migration by region. The Department of Social Affairs of the Directorate of Civil Status and Social Affairs of Central Macedonia coming under the Decentralised Administration of Macedonia - Thrace is, in accordance with Presidential Decree 142/2010, responsible for specifying and implementing programmes for the social integration of third-country nationals, refugees and persons under international protection, and for monitoring their implementation in collaboration with other departments sharing responsibility. Furthermore, based on document no. 974/2012 dated 12.1.2012 and issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the responsibilities of the Department include:

- The collection and processing of data/information on issues of social integration of vulnerable population groups with unique linguistic-cultural characteristics (immigrants, Roma, repatriates, minority populations of Thrace, etc.) coming within their jurisdiction.

- The recording of relevant needs and mapping of existing structures and actions.

- The preparation of Regional Action Plans (RAP) for the integration of refugees by Single Decentralised Administration.

- The specification and implementation of programmes for the social integration of refugees.
The monitoring of all actions for the integration of refugees, which are implemented within their jurisdiction, and the preparation of a good performance report.

Cooperation with the Migrant Integration Councils (MICs) in their jurisdiction, monitoring and support of the project, and promotion of their networking.

The below chart represents part of the administrative structure of the Decentralised Administration of Macedonia-Thrace, which is divided into the Directorates of Thessaloniki, Central Macedonia and Eastern Macedonia-Thrace. There are also the Directorates of Aliens and Migration of Central Macedonia and Eastern Macedonia-Thrace.
4.2 Migrant Integration Councils

In accordance with the provisions of Article 78 of Law 3852/2010, Migrant Integration Councils (MICs) have been formed to serve as advisory bodies to the municipalities in order to enhance the integration of immigrants in the local community. MICs consist of five to eleven members, which are appointed by the local municipal council. Members include municipal councillors, representatives of immigrant organisations and representatives of social organisations who develop actions related to the problems faced by immigrants within the administrative region of the municipality. The participation of all members is honorary and unpaid. The work of MICs includes:

- The recording and investigation of problems concerning permanent immigrants residing in the municipality with regard to: a) their integration into the local community, and b) their contact with public or municipal authorities.

- The submission of proposals to the Municipal Council on: a) the development of local actions that promote the smooth social integration of immigrants, b) the organisation, in collaboration with the municipality, of events to raise awareness and strengthen the social cohesion of the local population and c) the organisation of consulting services on the part of municipal departments (Linardis, 2011).

The first Migrant Council to operate in Greece was established in the Municipality of Sykies under decision number 323/2006 of the Municipal Council. It is noteworthy that its establishment and operation was identical to that described in Article 78 of Law 3852/2010, which was passed four years after the commencement of operation of the MIC of Sykies. The new MIC was established in June 2011 in the Municipality of Neapoli-Sykies. As regards the Municipality of Athens, the Migrant Integration Council was approved by the Municipal Council and was formed on 18 April 2011.

However, the development and implementation of actions for the social integration of foreign residents by the municipalities in which they permanently reside, relies on the occasional sensitisation and activation of the individual Municipal Units. Consulting services have been established in some municipalities, which involve the provision of psychosocial support, career orientation and Greek language lessons to foreign nationals and permanent residents of the respective municipalities. By way of example, the following good practices have been developed in certain municipalities:


- ‘Service Centre for Foreign Nationals’, ‘Mommy is Learning Greek’ and ‘Participation in Networks’ in the Municipality of Athens.

- ‘The Creation of an Immigrant Register’ in the Municipality of Korydallos.
4.3 European Fund for the Integration of Third-Country Nationals

The European Fund for the Integration of Third-Country Nationals was established in the period of 2007-2013, and is co-financed by the European Union at a rate of 75% and by national resources at a rate of 25%. The Responsible Authority for the European Fund for the Integration of Third-Country Nationals in Greece is the Department of Social Integration coming under the Directorate of Migration Policy of the Ministry of Interior. The projects aim at strengthening policies for the integration of third-country nationals into the Greek community and at improving access to public and private goods and services. The fund promotes the following priorities and relevant actions:

- Intercultural dialogue
- Actions leading to the exchange of good practices between member states
- Actions to enhance the intercultural skills of immigrants (e.g. language and history lessons)
- Actions to raise the awareness of the community and especially of persons coming into direct contact with the immigrant population (e.g. information campaigns, seminars) (Linardis, 2011).

By way of example, in the framework of project 1.3.c/13 of the 2013 Annual Programme of the European Integration Fund, the following was completed: ‘the writing of a book and creation of an electronic educational application with the aim of preparing third-country nationals applying for Greek citizenship through naturalisation’. Proposals for these projects can be submitted by all bodies that are potential participants in the integration process, such as: non-profit organisations, international organisations, educational or research institutions, training organisations, social partners, departments and agencies of Greek administration (e.g. Ministries, Decentralised Administrations, first- and second-tier Local Government Organisations), other legal entities governed by public or private law, as well as joint ventures and associations.
4.4 Obtaining Greek citizenship through the naturalisation of third-country nationals

Obtaining Greek citizenship through the naturalisation of third-country nationals with long-term residence status applies to third-country nationals who have a five-year residence permit in accordance with the provisions of Presidential Decree 150/2006. The procedure for the naturalisation of a foreign national begins with the submission of a naturalisation statement to the Municipality of permanent residence, and is followed by the filing of a naturalisation application with the decentralised administration. If the formal requirements are met, then the file of the foreign national is forwarded to the naturalisation committee, which examines the essential requirements and calls the applicant for an interview within six months. The files of repatriates who do not hold a Special Repatriate Identity Card are forwarded to the Ministry of Interior, provided they meet the formal requirements. If the naturalisation committee makes a positive recommendation, then a Ministerial Decision is issued and published in the Government Gazette. This is followed by an announcement of the decision to the Decentralised Administration and the issuance of an order for the swearing in of the foreign national.

The acquisition of citizenship is completed through the swearing in of the foreign national within a year from the publication of the decision in the Government Gazette. If the formal requirements are not met, then the Secretary General of the Decentralised Administration issues a decision rejecting the application, while reserving the right to invite the foreign national to an interview if there are doubts as to whether the formal requirements are met.

4.5 Naturalisation of repatriates holding Special Repatriate Identity Cards

Any foreign national holding a Special Repatriate Identity Card, who wishes to be naturalised as a Greek citizen, must submit a naturalisation application to the local decentralised administration, which must be addressed to the Secretary General of the Decentralised Administration along with the supporting documents required by law. Following the standard check as to whether the file is complete and the formal requirements for naturalisation apply, the department proceeds with the issuance of the decision of the Secretary General of the Decentralised Administration and with the publication of the decision in the Government Gazette. The acquisition of Greek citizenship is completed with the swearing in of the foreign national within a year from the publication of the decision in the Government Gazette. If the formal requirements are not met, then the Secretary General of the Decentralised Administration issues a decision rejecting the application, while reserving the right to invite the foreign national to an interview if there are doubts as to whether the formal requirements are met.
4.6 Immigration and Social Integration Code

Under the new Immigration and Social Integration Code (Law 4251/2014), efforts are being made to deal with the negative consequences of the socioeconomic crisis and the increase in problems related to access to the labour market. Regulations are being included, which mainly aim at restricting the loss of legal residency of third-country nationals who are long-term legal residents of the country. The main regulations include the reduction of the income criterion applying to family members, which is a necessary requirement for the renewal of residence permits, the reduction in the amount of required fees and fines (Article 132 and Article 23 of Law 4251/2014), as well as the renewal of residence permits for three (3) years, however on condition that a validated health booklet be submitted (Chacharidakis).

4.6 ‘Second Generation’ Law

Pursuant to Law 4332/2015, a child of foreign nationals who is born in Greece establishes the right to acquire Greek citizenship by way of a statement and application, due to birth and attendance of school in Greece. The draft law introduces the right of children of foreign nationals who were born in Greece to acquire Greek citizenship, on condition that they enrol in the first year of primary school and continue to attend school at the time of submission of the statement, combined with the requirement that at least one of the child’s parents continually and legally resided in Greece for five years prior to the child’s birth. It also contains provisions concerning the acquisition of citizenship, not only by children of immigrants who were born here, but also by children who have graduated from a Greek lyceum (senior high school), technological educational institute or university, as well as by children who have attended a Greek school for nine years. The application, as well as the relevant supporting documents, are submitted by the foreign national him/herself to the competent department of the Decentralised Administration which has jurisdiction over the municipality in which the applicants reside.
fifth chapter

Issues of Identity and Integration
5.1 The concept of ‘identity’

The concept of identity refers to the ways in which individuals and groups are differentiated from other individuals and groups in the flow of social life and the organisation of social relations. The term is linked to those social circumstances in which relationships of similarity and difference between individuals, groups, and between individuals and groups are documented and given meaning. Both the individual and group construct their identity through the relationship of the ‘self’ with the ‘other’. In the contemporary study of identities, the concept of identity is a necessary dimension of every form of social action.

The concept of identity is studied as a way of understanding individual and collective action, the relations of power that shape it and the institutional framework within which it develops. At the same time, it helps us understand the relationship between the individual and the whole, and the role of similarity and difference. Various scholars perceive it, not as a closed, defined and fixed formation, but as an open process that is constantly being shaped, where relationships and characteristics based on race, nationality, class, age and many other elements shape it through social policies and economic frameworks.

Taylor talks about a dialogical character through which people can understand themselves and, consequently, define their identity. Following the same line of thought, Gefou-Madianou argues that it is important to view identity as a historical construct through constant interaction with the ‘Other’. In every grouping, identity can have positive or negative aspects and, in fact, there can be multiple perceptions and definitions as to what constitutes the identity of a social group (Gefou-Madianou 1999). In other words, identities are not considered stable and unchanging, but multifaceted, alternating and composed of different purposes, practices and social positions. They always depend on historical circumstances and are permanently in the process of constant change.

In the framework of the study and understanding of the social group of Albanian immigrants in Greece, it is important to study the ways, circumstances, and social and cultural characteristics that form the basis of the content of the ‘Albanian immigrant’s’ identity. In this way we can gain a better understanding of the relationship between the immigrant population and the prevalent ideology on the existence of ‘Others’, the immigrants in this instance, and recognise the limits and possibilities of their inclusion in the Greek community.

According to these theoretical observations, but also based on the data resulting from the empirical research, the identity of the ‘Albanian’ immigrant is shaped through a relational process in the framework of the actions of the subjects, in which the broader institutional framework and prevailing ideas about otherness and the cultural ‘Other’ play a decisive role. From this perspective, it is not strange for one to identify both with Greece and Albania, or to believe they ‘have two
homelands’, or to feel ‘like a foreigner in both Greece and Albania’. In the current circumstances, the social and economic crisis faced by Greece in recent years, as well as the arrival of a large number of refugees and new immigrants who have changed the overall immigration scene in the country, should also be added as decisive factors.

5.2 Cross-generational views and identification experiences

The process of putting together the identity of Albanians changes based on their experiences and ages. The on-site research shows that second and now also third generation Albanians are in an in-between state. As stated by Mr Doris Kyriazis:

“The second and third generations continue to be Albanians, so to speak; they are beginning to incorporate elements of Greekness, combining different elements; they are somewhere in the middle; I believe they probably love Greece more as the country in which they grew up and live, but they also have a sort of relationship, which is once again a spiritual one, with the other country, Albania, born from the stories they hear, the contact they have made and the trips they take. Research must be conducted to verify this category of people with two identities, and if I may say, two homelands”.

Another respondent focuses on the confusion often caused to small children, which is strongly conveyed to their parents, since the acceptance or rejection of their children determines how they perceive themselves. A respondent states the following in this respect:

“My child says to me “dad, when I come to Albania with you they call me the little Greek. When I am in Greece at school they call me the little Albanian”. Then my child asks me “dad, what am I?” As a father, I do not know how to respond. Would you know how to answer that question?”

The problem of clarifying where one belongs as regards national identity is also faced by individuals of older ages, where the ‘confusion’ is similar. As stated by a post-teenage respondent:

“I think this is the curse of the immigrant, you do not have your own homeland; when you go back they call you a Greek; when you are here you are an Albanian; it is a rather laughable situation”.

In early childhood, both language learning and school life play a decisive role in the construction of identity. As highlighted in the next chapter, Albanian immigrants did not consider the learning of their native language (Albanian) by their children a priority. This contributed to a process of de-familiarisation with the (usually cultural) characteristics which, according to dominant discours-
es, form the elements of national identity. Not knowing the Albanian language results in the distancing of individuals from the corresponding national-cultural identity. This has become clear in the last few years in the cases of immigrants returning to Albania due to the recent economic crisis. In such cases, where children do not speak Albanian well, they face tremendous difficulties in integrating in the Albanian community. Such difficulties are frequently observed and result in many families returning to Greece (INSTAT 2013).

Even on shorter visits to their country of origin, which are not related to any type of permanent settlement, the children who have grown up in Greece do not seem to find any common ground. One of our respondents stated:

“Even when our children visit their grandparents, they go there for two-three days a year, and this when they are little. As they grow older they do not go at all. Most grandparents have passed away and their relationship with the country is practically non-existent, which is why I believe that this generation has been fully integrated into the Greek community and Albania is just a memory to them”.

The empirical research shows that there is a difference between the first and next generations in terms of their connection to a national identity. While the first generation created clubs and cultural organisations, the second generation does not have an organic relationship with these processes for constructing a collective identity. In fact, a large part of this generation seems to want to cut all ties with this community and its cultural characteristics.

The creation of clubs is one thing that does not concern young people, as they see it as an act of coming together in a national identity that they have never known or wish to forget.

As expressed by a respondent during our research:

“The second generation, my daughter, does not even want to hear about these clubs. The children could not have any direct contact with all their fellow pupils from the start, it was very difficult, but things changed and with the status they gained, they did not want to hear about relations with Albania, clubs and all the other things. I would tell them to go once a week to learn the language and they would say no, with the excuse that they did not have the time, but I knew that they just did not want to. They preferred to be included in this community over maintaining ties with another community that they did not even know”.

In the older age groups, namely immigrants making up the first generation, the ‘Albanian identity’ is more defined, however we are not in a position to refer to the display of strong national identities in public space. This generation has formed certain cultural clubs in an effort to maintain and reproduce cultural characteristics from their country of origin (language learning, traditional dancing, etc.). Based on our empirical material, the participation of Albanians in general is rather low, while the participation of Albanians of younger ages (second and third generation) is practically nonexistent.

Finally, individuals of older ages, which form the minority of the Albanian population, appear
to have a lower degree of integration. Many come from Albania to help raise their grandchildren, however a large number of them (as shown by the statistics of the 2011 national census) do not stay for long. A respondent stated the following:

“We had our grandparents here with us until the second year of gymnasium [junior high school]. They had come here for a few years because my father’s sister also had children... He had brought them over to have a better quality of life... After a while, however, they could not take it anymore and they returned. There was nothing for them to do here but sit and go for walks around the house”. Another respondent stated that: “Fortunately my parents can come to me, but they are 73 years old and they get upset when they see the situation here... We see that he struggles from morning to night and is having a hard time... My father wants to be with his friends, but cannot do that here; he does not know anything, he does not know the language...”

5.3 The gender aspect of constructing an identity

The gender factor is of particular importance in the construction of the identity of subjects. Perceptions about gender travel with people, are incorporated into institutions and are affected by the economic conditions of every place. Vaiou argues that gender is not only constructed and under constant negotiation in the immigration process, but constitutes a decisive factor in the creation of migration plans, individual and/or collective family routes and settlement choices (Vaiou 2009). In the case of Albanian immigrants, there seem to be differences in their participation in public life, their daily lives, labour conditions as well as residence status in the country.

As pointed out by several respondents, the Albanian community has strong characteristics of the patriarchal convention (in particular, respondents describe it as ‘backward’) compared to the Greek community. These characteristics go with the subjects when they migrate to other countries. As stated by a respondent when asked about the participation of women in public life and particularly in Albanian immigrant clubs:

“In the beginning there were more men because, you know, women are somewhat reserved, perhaps due to their fear of being in a foreign country... Women who were a little more open-minded, who were not married... In the beginning... Look, to be honest, this is the Balkans, and even though society has advanced a great deal, women in the Balkans continue to be more reserved; that is the truth; it shouldn’t be so but it is today’s reality... Many women, when single, do what they want and what they think is right, but when they marry they draw in their horns somewhat. This applies to us too...”.

However, following from the on-site research and other data on employment (as mentioned in the next chapter), it appears that with the passing of time, the structured gender identities that wish
to keep women in the domestic sphere are becoming destabilised. This shift is becoming more intense in the period of the crisis, when the woman emerges as the support of the family from a financial perspective in addition to her role as the main social support. As many have stated, women came to the forefront due to their greater participation in the household economy.

“The position of women, for example, I’m not sure if it is because of the economic crisis, advanced a great deal; she became the protagonist in families, Albanian families, because Albanian men worked in construction and were left without work, while women came to the forefront because they worked and were the breadwinners of the house. The roles had switched; the woman became the breadwinner and the man stayed home and cooked...”.

5.4 Language, identity and integration

The degree of integration in the local community is connected to the learning of language. For this reason, and because the parents’ desire to become integrated was so great, the children often did not learn their native language but focused on learning Greek. According to many respondents, even their names became a strong subject of negotiation. Many gave their children Greek names, while others changed their Albanian names to Greek names in an effort to integrate themselves into society. A respondent explained that:

“if we met and I told you my name is Dimitris, you would not think that I was Albanian. You would have to hear something or ask me, so it provided some form of security. Not that you couldn’t tell, but I would not have to tell you that I am an Albanian Dimitris... the name Ledi brings with it various inevitable thoughts. As much as you may have struggled within you not to be racist, as soon as you hear the word ‘Albanian’, something will immediately build up inside of you; it is the first image; the first impression. You can avoid this by changing your name, for example. This is why many people have changed their names...”.

Doris Kyriazis states that:

“we have reached a point where the parents themselves of pupils of Albanian descent do not want their children to learn the Albanian language because that would be a side/aspect of their personality which would later cause problems in their integration in the Greek community... They would be labelled... It is best for them to forget this language because, from a practical point of view, they have no use for his language as they will stay in Greece—regardless of what eventually occurred—so let them rather learn Greek well and set aside those things that will serve to offer them nothing but problems...”.

On the part of Greeks, too, acceptance is often associated with making names more Greek. A respondent stated the following:

“I have never managed to believe; I have never felt the need to be baptised, but I was under tremendous pressure... I was under tremendous pressure [here in Greece] from
my co-workers at craft industries, from neighbours (Greeks) who kept saying “we should baptise you, why are you not baptised?”, and that obsession with changing my name. They would ask me “what is your name?”, “Valbona, Valbona? No, we will call you Voula”. They would call me Voula, just like that, without any shame, and would ask “can’t you hear [us calling]?” to which I replied “but my name is not Voula, it is Valbona”. I was also under great pressure from my neighbours to baptise my daughter”.

Another informant mentioned that although his parents gave him an Albanian name, his co-workers changed his name in the workplace.

“Yes, that is not my parents’ doing... They called me Lambros at the restaurant where I worked... I wondered who Lambros was; the food would be ready and I wouldn’t take it out. I, too, was looking for Lambros”. Another respondent stated: “I am Arjan, that is my real name; I do not have a Christian name but they call me Yiannis because the pronunciation of my name sounds like Yiannis - Arjan - Yiannis, but it is under no circumstances a Christian name because I have not been raised... I believe in God but I do not distinguish; I do not believe in any religion; I am irreligious but not atheist...”.

5.5 Identities and geographies of migration

The spatial distribution of Albanian immigrants across the urban fabric and their access to property ownership is a parameter that helps us perceive issues of integration in the local community. Based on the accounts of all interviewees and on the demographic data (as presented in chapter 3), Albanian immigrants do not present any spatial concentration in specific parts of cities:

“...they are scattered, they do not exist; what we mean by integration is that you cannot distinguish them; in every neighbourhood, in every building, you will find a family... maybe more, because if you go to the school where my child goes, there are classes where half the children are of Albanian descent. I do not know where they live though; they may be scattered everywhere”.

Based on the words of the respondent and the findings of our research, the larger concentration observed in city centres and in the more downgraded districts is due to financial reasons. Driven by their desire to assimilate, they do not wish or seek to live near their compatriots. When asked about her parents’ choice of neighbourhood for renting a house, a respondent replied that:

“There weren’t many Albanians; I think that is the reason. I believe my father’s choice was based on this criterion; he did not want to move to a place that had many immigrants”.
At the same time, it has been observed that access to property ownership is yet another criterion for integration into Greek society. Since Greek society is defined by a high rate of home ownership (which appears to be changing over the last years of the crisis), the aspiration to acquire a privately-owned home is associated with integration into the social whole. The following has been stated:

“I would like to buy my child a room at least, so that he can feel that this is truly his second homeland. Being his father, I want him to feel proud to be a child who has a homeland. I do not want him to feel like I do, not having a homeland and not knowing where I belong”.

Furthermore, the country’s geographic proximity to Albania seems to aid the rapid appropriation of the space where they live their everyday lives, as well as the integration of individuals in local communities. As stated by an interviewee:

“The climate is the same and it never snows in my city. Durrës is warmer than Thessaloniki; it has more or less the same climate as Larissa, Lamia, that area... But what I like here is that the climate is the same; that it is not very different to that of Albania”.

5.6 Policies and representations of Albanian immigrants in dominant discourse

The representation of Albanians in the Greek mass media (see more in the relevant chapter) played a decisive role in shaping the identity of the Albanian immigrant. The identification of Albanians with crime and delinquency in the 1990s turned the word ‘Albanian’ into a synonym for dangerous criminal. Gefou-Madianou claims that stereotypical representations of a group by a ruling elite can be used as a basis for constant and further marginalisation of subordinates. As stated by journalist Alex Markou:

“Greek news reporting did not have a single bad image of Albanians in the beginning... we are talking about 1990-1991. However, immediately thereafter, when information came in from the world of crime, the scene changed in the Greek media and especially in the private media channels that started to operate in Greece at the time, ANTV, MEGA, etc., and as a result Greek viewers saw a criminal in every Albanian”.

Even though this image has changed in the media over the last decade, the mark of the ‘hoodlum’ is still evident. Although this representation has changed significantly, the memories of the representation of this identity by Greek opinion, which was expressed through the mass media, are still alive, and it seems that there is still an open wound related to that powerful image even today, 25 years after the first mass wave of Albanian migrants arrived in Greece.
In combination with these representations in public discourse, state policies did not help much with the integration of immigrants into local communities. As observed by Triantafyllidou, the unwillingness of the Greek state to manage immigration as a long-term phenomenon at first, as well as the lack of a framework for inclusion policies as late as ten years after the first big wave, indicate that there is a relationship between this unwillingness and the national-cultural definition of Greek identity and citizenship.

Immigrants themselves, when referring to the inadequate—in their opinion—integration framework, consider themselves inferior citizens. Many point out that although they have the same financial obligations (taxes, municipal fees, etc.) as Greek citizens, and they also pay for their residence permit, they do not have access to state benefits (subsidies, NSRF, etc.), which makes them second-class citizens.

5.7 Hetero-determination of identity: Racism and nationalism

Instances of racist behaviour towards Albanians have decreased but have not ceased. Especially in the case of children belonging to the second and third generation, there are many instances of bullying based on their different descent. The on-site research recorded numerous such recent instances.

“In the third year of gymnasium, I experienced a great deal of racism; that year I happened to experience it in abundance... It just happened that year, not that I had experienced it before, but that year in the third year of gymnasium and in gymnasium in general, I happened to be in a school where many children were racist... It went on and on and escalated, and in the third year it just peaked...”

“Once in primary school I asked a friend of mine if she wanted to play and she said she wouldn’t play with me because I am from Albania”.

“It is continuing, it will always be like this, always. They used to hit me a lot. I had surgery and they would come and hit me there where I had surgery; they knew where I had been operated and they would come and hit me right there and throw me down the stairs. Very bad things... I was shocked the other day when my aunt told me that my seven-year-old cousin invited her friends over and only two of her three friends came. She called her one friend and asked “why didn’t you come?” and she said “my mother does not allow me to go to Albanian houses”. The sweetheart cried and said, “what do they think we Albanians are? Are we wolves? Do they think we will eat them?”

“When I lived in Livadi and my son was younger, six years old, two brothers put him in the storeroom of their house, tied him to a chair and said “we will burn the damn Albanian”
fifth chapter
Issues of Identity and Integration

(...) My child was lucky that a neighbour, an old lady, heard my child crying and came out and knocked on the door, because there was the hazard of gasoline and various other things that could harm the child.

Of course, racist behaviours are not limited to Greek society since, according to informants, children face similar treatment upon their return to Albania.

“As if that is not enough, there was also a reaction from the other side along the lines of... calling then damn foreigners... When they came to Greece they called them damn Albanians, and when they returned their fellow pupils, the neighbourhood children, called them damn Greeks... Just imagine a small child coming to Greece and hearing someone naming him a damn Albanian, and when he returns, he hears such things from the people in his first homeland, which is supposed to be his true homeland, his real homeland...”.

At the same time, non-acceptance by the local community and racist violence, both verbal and physical, in some cases results in taking shelter behind the Albanian national identity. In reference to school bullying, an informant stated:

“I remember that at that time, the years following the second year of lyceum [senior high school], I loved Albania more... This is what it brought out in me; it caused a reaction in me, a renewal of my love of Albania, because when they label you with this identity, you end up searching for the elements of this identity... this attitude towards me in gymnasium made me revive the feeling of being Albanian, songs, stories, this and that, the struggles of Albania, do you understand? Not only did I not... but there are people who are led to fanaticism... The racism they are subjected to can often turn them into fanatic nationalists...”.

At the same time, while there has been an intensification of nationalist and racist discourse in the public sphere in the recent years of the crisis, which has resulted from the rise of the Golden Dawn political party and its election to parliament, violence against Albanians continues to exist. A respondent stated the following when describing an argument she had with a Greek neighbour in 2012:

“And in the end, the most tragic of all was that she sent five members of Golden Dawn to us and they approached me in the street. I did not stop. She said to them “she is the one, catch her”. They screamed and shouted in the neighbourhood, “you will leave this house, we will burn you alive”, in broad daylight in Raidestos. It was even on television, but they did not mention names because I was afraid. The Association of Parents and Guardians helped me a lot. Many people helped us but the situation remains... I was afraid; I am still afraid now... These people are... I was even afraid today... I recognised one of them... Of course, he had a record and they were given a three-year sentence... That is when Golden Dawn started to hit people”.

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5.8 Integration and inclusion of immigrants

Overall, the evaluation of the degree of integration takes into account governance policies, public opinion, acceptance by civil society and social networks between members of the immigrant community (Portes 1995). When writing about the Albanian population of Thessaloniki, Chatziprokopiou observes that immigrants have become an organic element of the local community and their integration results from the same processes that determine the lives of the locals. Since Albanian immigrants have to a large extent been integrated into local communities, it would perhaps be inopportune to talk about an Albanian community in Greece, since most individuals appear to be scattered across the urban and peri-urban fabric, without there being any specific active social networks between them.

They do not highlight their national identity, as already mentioned, which does not appear to serve as a strong bond that draws them together in their everyday lives. The large majority of Albanians adapt, have decided to live here, learn the language and become integrated:

“I no longer consider Greece to be my second homeland; this is how I feel personally and I believe the same applies to all Albanians... Because I have been away from my country for 20 years and I go once a year, if I go... It has been two years since I last went and the only things that tie me to the country are my childhood memories and my parents who still live there, but to me, Greece is no longer my second homeland, but my first; I would even say it is more than a homeland”.

When asked if she intends to leave Greece due to the crisis, a respondent replied:

“We take 100 steps forward and 200 steps back. We take 100 steps forward to leave and another 200 steps back with our thoughts. We so badly want to leave, but we just as badly want to stay here. We are foreigners there now. We are foreigners here, but even more so there. In Albania we are even more foreign. We have a life here. Ok, I am talking about my case in particular. My husband would work in the village for four months and we lived on that money, you see. There is so much to tell about the life we have lived here and what we have experienced; there is not enough time to cover it all. I have received so much love from Greeks, and at the same time so much racism”.
School and Learning
the Greek Language as
Frameworks and Means
of Integration

sixth chapter
Education is one of the most important institutions in any state. Through education, the language skills of citizens are developed, collective cultural values are cultivated and the national-cultural identity of pupils is constructed. School is the institution through which the above policies are implemented. It is the key mechanism for socialisation of children, as well as the framework within which they and their families come into contact with the broader society (Fragoudaki 1985, Georgiou 2000, Germanos 2002).

6.1 Education and Immigration:
Albanian immigrants and Greek schools

The right to compulsory, fundamental and free education is a given for all human beings (Tsitselikis). The new social reality that took shape in Greece after 1990 radically transformed the school environment and restructured the make-up of the pupil population, bestowing the characteristics of multicultural coexistence upon the school environment (Paleologou and Evangelou 2013). According to recent data, it is estimated that the percentage of pupils of Albanian descent/nationality enrolled in Greek schools comes to 71.5% of the total population of alien pupils (Pavlopoulos 2009:403). According to the Greek Forum of Migrants, 100,000 Albanian immigrants have completed secondary education, 20,000 have graduated from higher education and several of them have either learned the Greek language experientially or attended Greek language courses (Thakas).

6.2 Integration in the classroom:
Experiences from the school process

More specifically, with regard to pupils of Albanian descent/nationality, the first who arrived in Greece were enrolled in grades lower than those appropriate for their age, as they did not speak the Greek language at all. As a result, they experienced a dual form of exclusion: on the one hand, linguistic exclusion and, on the other, social isolation, as the age difference hindered the cultivation of friendships with their classmates and increased their social marginalisation (Gogonas and Michail 2014). Additionally, according to our respondents, the fact that they spoke no Greek was a tremendous obstacle to learning syntax and spelling. Many claimed that, even though they are graduates of tertiary education, they continue to face problems with expression and syntax. The first generation of Albanian pupils had low grades, troubled behaviour and problems adapting to the school environment, as opposed to second generation pupils, who achieved excellent grades, complete assimilation and integration in school (Pavlopoulos 2009:417, Paleologou and Evangelou 2013). According to one respondent:
“...in order to understand the meaning of what I was reading, I faced great difficulty in expressing myself; at a certain point, it became embarrassing, because even though I understood things perfectly well and knew what I wanted to write, let’s say a sentence, my spelling was terrible. Because I didn’t know how to spell”.

With regard to the treatment of Albanian pupils by their teachers and classmates, our respondents communicated various experiences. Some believe that their teachers did not have the necessary qualifications and training to aid their integration and support them in their learning. However, Albanian pupils mainly experienced racism, xenophobia and exclusion from their classmates. These were cases where a behaviour was reproduced on the basis of a stereotypical view of the concept of ‘an Albanian’. This led to the use of names with negative connotations, such as ‘foreigners’ or ‘Albanians’ and the marginalisation of such pupils. There were very few reports of racist behaviour on the part of teachers.

As reported by our respondents, this led most Albanian pupils to react and have a negative attitude as regards their participation in Greek schools and the learning process, experiencing feelings of fear and reacting through different forms of socialisation that included groups of friends consisting almost exclusively of other Albanian pupils and, quite frequently, pupils belonging to different immigrant populations, as well as repatriated Greeks. This intermingling was born out of necessity, because, as some stated, “either because I felt we had common origins, or because I could speak the same language with someone”. The following excerpts eloquently express the experiences of our respondents during their school years:

Positive feelings from the attitudes shown by teachers towards Albanian pupils:

“The teachers accepted us or, at the very least, some may have been like all the rest, they treated us like everyone else, which is obviously positive, and some where a bit warmer than others. In other words, the teachers who taught our tutoring classes did have such a character.

We attended lessons after the regular programme, sure, this part was very positive, as we had just arrived, the attitude at school, on the part of teachers, was very warm. On the part of our peers, well, OK, when you’re a child, it stands to reason that you do not comprehend the extent, shall we say, of diversity”.

“Yes, there was understanding, there was support. After all, things are very different in university. At school, I didn’t experience any racism from teachers, to be honest. At least I didn’t.

I’m sure there must have been isolated incidents, but I think that a person who is a teacher and is ignorant will treat foreign kids the same way he or she might treat a child that cannot read or faces learning difficulties...

At university, things were completely different. At university, they see whether or not you are willing to work hard. What your attitude is. And I think I received a lot of help from my professors”.

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Negative comments regarding the conditions and training of teachers:

“This is because the teachers themselves, some of them, didn’t particularly care, but these were isolated incidents, it’s the same at every workplace, they were incompetent not because they didn’t have knowledge or had insufficient qualifications, but because they couldn’t handle what happened after 1993, they weren’t prepared for it...

So, in addition to the fact that no teacher could speak Albanian or understand it, they couldn’t explain things either. They were inadequate, so all they could do was let you draw. The fact is that those of us who came here are very good at maths, because we know maths and perhaps the education system there was perhaps a bit more advanced; our Greek was poor”.

Experiences of racist behaviour on the part of teachers.

“Generally speaking, I have never experienced any example of racism in my life, only 2 times and, I’m sad to say, it had to do with teachers. Once with a teacher... my mistake, 3 times. Once with a teacher in gymnasium [junior high school], once in lyceum [senior high school] and once at university, not directly involving me, but I happened to be present when a university professor told Greek students “go study because Albanians have come here and they’re better than you, aren’t you ashamed?” and stuff like that”.

“To me, this individual was expressing racist speech, that’s where I think racism hides, because this individual is an educator and is slowly affecting people. So, this individual had gone on his official website and written that we won’t have this place turned into Islamabad, where Albanians steal from little old ladies and others steal from him.

Generally speaking, this was pure horror and we used our actual names to write on his website and say that what he is doing is inexcusable, that you cannot talk like that, you are a university professor and you have to accept responsibility; in other words, when you are conversing with someone, you can’t speak off the top of your head. At some point, he deleted us and he targeted me in a very cowardly way”.

Experiences of racist behaviour on the part of other children.

“Well, the problem I faced had to do with kids themselves. With regard to our relationships with the rest of the kids. From grade school until upper secondary school, I hung out with a few Greeks and mostly with Albanians, whom I considered my friends. Often they would hide where they were from. I mean, we often hid where we were from. It wasn’t easy to say...

The teachers knew. During recess, they’d come up to me and ask me where I’m from. I’d say from Albania. Then I faced a racist situation, not just me but other children too. I’m serious, up until gymnasium, we were afraid to say where we were from. Perhaps it’s because school is like a lobby. I mean, you go from primary school to gymnasium, from gymnasium to lyceum, and friendships and relationships have already been formed along the way. This also plays
a role. It’s crazy. Then again, I didn’t have to deal with it in lyceum.

But it was intense in primary school and gymnasium, because you can’t process it as a child, and the others can’t process it either; there was a very, shall we say, violent relationship, I mean we used to beat each other up after school, or they’d chase us. Of course, this didn’t have to do just with the children themselves. It had to do with a culture and ideology that had taken shape around that time.

The teachers were unable to handle this situation. That’s the truth. Some were even indifferent. They’d just move on. They didn’t want to become involved. They’d say, oh it is just a fight between children. It wasn’t, though. It was very intense. Particularly in gymnasium, it was very intense”.

“...probably the fact that I was treated differently than kids my age. If you were to ask me now, I’d say no, I’m not treated differently, because they were the same kind of jokes or teasing that you see in those ages. Without being at the centre of it because of your origin, for example”.

“... So, in first grade, we went into the classroom and I introduced myself to the other children - my passport stated the Albanian version of my name - and the teacher called me by that name. Because I knew it, I raised my arm. The children looked at me oddly and began laughing, and I had no idea why. After recess, they realised I was from Albania and their attitude towards me became colder, to the point that I became aggressive.

One day, I was sitting in the classroom, I was ill and didn’t want to go out. The teacher - and we also had hall monitors who sat in the classroom - said “it’s OK, sit inside”. However, the other kids wanted to sit there alone and they’d say “go out, Albanian” so I reached the point where I threw a chair at someone’s head to stop him from calling me that, for no reason, since I had no problem with him.

I had reached the point where no one wanted to hang out with me because I would hit everyone. The teachers couldn’t do anything. I mean, the teachers didn’t do anything. They didn’t say “stop” or tell me anything else or say “are you serious, what do you think you’re doing?”. There were other such incidents too. There was a hill with trees nearby and a drop beyond it. I had thrown a child off there because he started throwing stones at me, he climbed the hill to hit me and called me the same names, “we don’t want you here, Albanian” and things like that. He cracked his head open when I threw him off the drop. I’m talking about really violent behaviour”.

“The children have been integrated, they’ve formed groups of friends, there are cases where children who are reserved by nature are excluded and called names like ‘the dirty Albanian’. There were cases of bullying, so why didn’t some teachers see it? Why didn’t they do anything? They didn’t care, though, so they let it slide. There was indifference on the part of the teachers”.
6.3 Beliefs regarding success at school

The reality of school is complex, and the success of pupils in school depends on various factors that concern both the school and education system as well as the broader context of school (Frangoudaki 1985, Banks 1987). In this sense, the definition of the concepts of success and failure at school is a complex phenomenon and when considering its occurrence, one must take into account the personal history of each pupil, their family history, their attitude towards learning and education, in general, and the meanings ascribed in relation to the self and their social position (Charlot 1999). However, the crucial factor for success at school is not social origin and the descent of pupils, but their family environment (Pyrgiotakis 1998) and the school environment as regards the shaping of pupils’ relationship with knowledge, through their values and expectations (Charlot 1992).

Success at school seems to have significant value in Albanian families and is understood as a means of inclusion, integration and upward social mobility (Paleologou and Evangelou 2013, Zachariadou 2014). Research showed that beliefs concerning success at school include characteristics such as children’s fulfilment of school requirements, the achievement of the goals set by the education process, the ability to set themselves apart through their eagerness to attain knowledge and actively participate in the learning process. Success at school is also combined with developed social skills as regards the cultivation of relationships with peers and acceptance by the school as a collective entity. Parents urge their children to learn Greek and graduate from tertiary education with a degree and, in several cases, discourage them from using the Albanian language.

“Albanians were already discriminated against and there was an interpretable but problematic situation, because we had reached a point where the parents of pupils of Albanian descent did not want their children to learn the Albanian language, as this would be an aspect of their personality that would hinder their integration into Greek society... They would be branded”.

“On the part of the parents, yes, it is part of Albanian culture for parents to want to give their children something better, a tool in this jungle we live in, despite the economic crisis we are experiencing; everyone, both Greek and Albanian, wants to see their children prosper”.

“It’s similar to the ‘American dream’, we want you to go to university and there is this rationale where everything can change merely on the basis of personal... it’s big, obviously personal effort is important, but solely and exclusively on the basis of personal effort”.

“I was obsessed with my degree, I desperately wanted to get that piece of paper”.

“Yes, because I wasn’t just a student, I also had a scholarship... and there were classes I really wanted to pass, as I saw the so-called ‘eternal students’ at University and this scared me for a couple of reasons. Firstly, because I thought that if I delayed getting my degree, this would delay
the plans and dreams I had for my life and, secondly, as I would never cease to be an immigrant, I was afraid that the borders might close for whatever reason, immigrants might be forced to leave and I would have a problem if I dropped my studies halfway. So I made every effort to graduate in 4 years”.

6.4 Learning the Greek language

Our respondents view learning the Greek language as an imperative need, a crucial asset for finding a job and becoming integrated into Greek society, as it involves an everyday need for communication (Chatzidaki and Maligkoudi 2012, Vlachava and Kaltsou 2014). Thanks to initiatives by public and private agencies, venues and programmes have been created where immigrants can improve their Greek.

These include municipalities and civil society organisations that operate, being aware of the importance of learning the language to immigrants, both as a practical means of survival and as a mechanism for increasing social interaction and integration. According to our interviewees:

“So, when we arrived here, it was very difficult for me to learn Greek. For us, this was a matter of survival. It wasn’t just something that we had in us. We had to learn Greek because we had to survive”.

“There should have been, shall we say, reception centres. There should have been some form of organisation. To help us learn the language. That’s the first thing you see when you go to Italy. Everyone I know, my cousins, everyone, all my wife’s relatives, they all went to such a school run by, what do you call them, nuns. The nuns. Everyone went there, because they learned the language and they learned a skill. It was kind of like a vocational school. They’d learn the language and how to do a job”.

The agencies and individuals who organise these courses also put forth a number of issues:

“There was a programme for a while, which was named ‘Odysseus’, run by the Ministry of Education, the General Secretariat of Lifelong Learning, but it was intended for a very small number of immigrants; its implementation was very fragmented and since most immigrants came to us after learning about it by word of mouth, it had not been widely disseminated. Additionally, many of the immigrants who came to us had no papers, or had just a few; it was an odd situation because we don’t check anyone’s legal status; all anyone who came here to learn a language had to do was give us their particulars and that was enough for us. So, as you might well understand, there are people who, particularly in recent years with the crisis, have (...) No, we received nothing from state programmes”.

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“Our students are adults. Very few attended the courses after being pupils at a public school, but what you are saying happens indirectly, because—particularly in recent years—we see parents of pupils who are currently in primary school or gymnasium and who come either from Albania or from countries of the former Soviet Union, and they ask us to help them improve their Greek so that they can help their children with their homework... yes, we have observed that in recent years, I mean if you consider that some people came to Greece and never went to school, were never able to, and have families, their children are now at those ages”.

“So, basically, these are first generation immigrants who never went to school in Greece and they ask you for help with learning Greek... Well... Yes... because when it comes to second generation immigrants, the state is obligated to enrol them in school, so they are already pupils”.

“The goal was for them to be able... OK, at first, they could barely speak a word, this was back in 1997, 98, 99, 2000, people were still arriving in the country. Back then, they wanted to be able to speak to each other, to other immigrants, to Greeks and particularly to representatives of services and employers, I mean they wanted to avoid being exploited simply because they didn’t speak the language. This is very important.

Subsequently, the goal was for them to speak on their own, either verbally or in writing, and to understand the society in which they live, to develop critical thinking... Many efforts were made to use methods that were pioneering at the time, because teaching Greek as a second language was still developing up until the 1990s, when the first efforts were made, and mainly after 2000, when theoretical analysis began... and people who were post-graduate students or PhD candidates at the School of Education... They tried to adapt the course to the needs and interests of the students, without necessarily using a textbook”.

Furthermore, good knowledge of the Greek language and elements of Greek culture and Greek history are necessary qualifications for acquiring Greek citizenship.

“So, if there’s a child that was born in Greece, it’s not enough if he or she was born to parents who were legal for a certain number of years - he or she must have been enrolled in first grade. The other case concerns children that completed 6 years of secondary education or a total of 9 years of primary and secondary education. All these cases require the legal stay of the parents in the country, with a few variations as regards the period before and after.

The third case requires one to have graduated from a Greek university, whether an AEI (Higher Educational Institution) or a TEI (Technological Educational Institute), after having graduated from a Greek lyceum. In other words, someone who graduated from high school in Albania and passed the Greek university entrance examinations cannot obtain citizenship under this provision”.
6.5 Learning the Albanian language

In recent years, there has been a strong tendency on the part of second generation Albanian immigrants to learn their mother tongue (Gogonas 2009, 2010). Public use of Albanian is no longer considered a frowned-upon or stigmatised practice. On the contrary, it is an additional language asset, a language to be added to one’s CV, and speaking the language improves one’s skills and adds to one’s professional profile, potentially leading to various job opportunities. This trend stands in contrast to the attitude of immigrant parents and children themselves during the first years of residing in Greece (Efthimiadou 2014, Koiliari 2014).

Based on their descriptions, parents wanted their children to become integrated in the host country and its language codes in every possible way. For this reason, they discouraged them from speaking Albanian. On the other hand, children who came to Greece at a young age or who were not born in Greece did not want to be distinguished from their peers. In this context, pupils of Albanian descent/nationality viewed the use of Albanian as a reason for marginalisation and a potential cause for experiencing racist behaviour.

An indication of the improvement and changes that have taken place with regard to speaking and using the Albanian language is the fact that various agencies, NGOs and cultural associations, such as ‘Mother Theresa’ (Histouna 2012), ‘Diapolis’, ‘Polydromon’ and the ‘Forum of Migrants’ have been holding Albanian language courses for many years (Androulakis, Mitakidou, Tsokalidou 2012). The courses are usually held on weekends in halls made available by Aristotle University of Thessaloniki or certain municipalities. The pupils are children who speak almost no Albanian. As those in charge of the ‘Mother Theresa’ association informed us:

“We are a cultural association... we have the right to teach our mother tongue, Albanian, to our children... we only focus on cultural events... our association has nothing to do with other activities... this was the main reason it was founded and the main reason we still exist as an association”.

Albanian immigrants/parents of pupils view the process in the following ways:

“Let me tell you, in a lot of cases, children could not speak a word of Albanian. And there are individuals who learned Albanian thanks to the association. And the best part is that, thanks to the Albanian they learned at the association, not that we held classes, but they came into contact and... maybe they could speak it before, but now they had a place where they could converse. There are children who, thanks to this effort, are currently employed by companies, working in Greece and Albania, where speaking the Albanian language is necessary. We are quite proud of everything they have learned, at least in this sense”. 
“...from children who are clearly second generation, who came here when they were one or two years old or who were born in Greece. They no longer have any contact with Albania and they are all university students or post-graduate students now, and I believe that due to their age and education, they will give a different kind of push, new ideas about what an association such as this can offer to Albanian students”.

For certain students of Albanian descent, improving their knowledge of Albanian had a reciprocal value as regards the progress of their studies:

“I could not read or write Albanian, I could only speak the language. Once I passed the university entrance exams, I realised that the more languages you speak, the better”.

“I wanted to take advantage of Albanian. Historical - Balkan Linguistics. I went to Kosovo and the papers I now work on have to do with the relationship between Greek and Albanian”.

“Most have graduated from school here, hang out with Greeks, go out and have fun at the same places. Many can barely speak Albanian, I mean they visit their grandmothers in Albania and cannot speak a word... Their mother tongue is Greek. If they come here a few months or one year old, their mother tongue is Greek and when they go back to Albania they cannot communicate with anyone”.

“For example, when I first started Albanian language classes, I used to tell myself I didn’t need it as a language. I began attending classes at the same time as Russian language classes. Then I began thinking more globally, thinking that this is one more language, one more country. Greece is just another country like Albania. Twenty years ago, perhaps Greece was at the same level as Albania. It developed differently, but that’s another story. That’s how I think of it now and I think it’s more reasonable than what I used to think, when everyone thought that being from Albania was bad and so did I. But you have to want it too, you have to want to learn. I mean, it no longer bothered me when I was in lyceum and after that”.

6.6 The institution of cross-cultural schools and NGOs

The idea of introducing the institution of cross-cultural schools in Greece is part of the multicultural policies adopted by Greece and supported by the EU in an effort to creatively manage the coexistence of pupils with different cultural backgrounds and ethnic origins. Regardless of the inherent weaknesses of the concept of multiculturalism as a political imperative, this process was integrated in the context of a society characterised by cultural diversity and linguistic pluralism. This effort made a significant contribution to the introduction of an educational process that distanced itself from the one-dimensional mono-cultural model of education and the inclusion of cultural heterogeneity (Govaris 2011).
In Greece, Law 2413/1996 on cross-cultural education provides for the creation of cross-cultural schools and the possibility of teaching additional language classes in the mother tongues of immigrants. Nevertheless, the law is vague with regard to the objectives of such schools. Thakas reports that while non-Greek pupils account for 10% of the total population of pupils, barely 0.71% are enrolled in cross-cultural schools. The role of cross-cultural schools in Greece does not focus on the linguistic and cultural differences of pupils, but on their inadequate knowledge of the Greek language.

As noted above, the majority of immigrants in Greece are Albanian and after their long-term presence in the country, they are trying to achieve the introduction of Albanian as an optional subject at schools with a large concentration of Albanian-speaking pupils (Tsitselikis:7). It is noteworthy that although Greece and Albania concluded a transnational cooperation agreement in 1998 for the purpose of strengthening the use of languages in both countries, the creation of material adapted to the linguistic needs of pupils and the introduction of the Greek language at the Universities of Tirana and Gjirokastër and of the Albanian language at the University of Athens, neither the Greek nor the Albanian side have taken the discussion of the matter any further.

“developing Albanian courses as a bilingual course, as a course that will help our pupils become better people, that will strengthen their identity, that will preserve the best elements of the Albanian community, if not the Albanian nation”

“We will make every effort, we have already made isolated efforts to open several schools, well they’re not schools, they’re essentially tutoring classes for Albanian as a second language, held on weekends, but this is not enough. We want something much more organised. For example, in countries where there are Greeks, Greece has achieved the creation of Greek schools. Let me give you an example. Albania is accused of being a backward country, etc. However, this is wrong.

I could give you examples where Albania is, in certain respects, far ahead of Greece. In Albania, there are 40 Greek schools. Let me repeat that, 40 Greek schools. Greek nationals living in Albania have always had at least one minister. Dozens of principals, secretaries-general, rectors, etc. Always. No one ever spoke about this. We don’t have a single school here. Children learn the language and no one issues them a certificate. The University of Athens should establish an Albanology department. This would serve as recognition and it would be healthy for the state”.

“The Greek side doesn’t want this and by Greek side I don’t just mean the government. The Albanian community itself may consider this and say, no, we’d be inviting trouble. This also has to do with the children that were enrolled in school, but under Greek names at the time. And, quite frequently, because the teachers had good intentions and had not been trained in the matter”.
“Unfortunately, in Greece, there is no tradition of Albanian studies, only in recent years and this has become a matter of orthodoxy, in my view; if you take a look at, for example, a neighbouring country, perhaps FYROM, or even Bulgaria, Serbia or Albania, you will see that universities offer Greek studies, there are seats for Greek studies, Greek language and literature, Greek language and culture, and I would ask - is there something similar at Greek universities? Of course, there is the Department of Balkan Studies at the University of Macedonia, but emphasis is placed on economy there; students do take language and literature courses, but they learn the language in order to have better access to the labour markets in the corresponding countries and take advantage of the fact... But there are no actual classes teaching the language and literature for the corresponding countries and one might wonder why that is... Because we do have schools of Spanish language and literature, German language and literature, English language and literature, French language and literature”.

“Not being taught their own language is a tremendous shortcoming. Another problem is the fact that their own culture is not taken at all into account. I mean, students who could bring in their own experience, their own country and their own culture are never asked, it is as if the school does not care about this matter at all”.
seventh chapter

The Immigration Experience in the World of Labour
7.1 Albanian immigrants in the Greek labour market

During the decade of 1998-2008, which was marked by the increase and legalisation of the immigrant population in Greece, there was an increase in jobs by 541,000, of which 322,000 concerned women. During the same period (1998-2008), the annual GDP growth rate was 3.5%, while the unemployment rate dropped from 11.4% to 7.9%. The contribution of the immigrant population to the growth of GDP, the drop in unemployment and the improvement of the scale of the Greek economy has been recorded as being indisputable (Lambrianidis 2001, Papastergiou and Takou, 2013).

7.2 Impact of the economic crisis on Albanian immigrants

The outbreak of the crisis in 2008 changed the conditions formulated during the 1998-2008 period. Extended austerity and the resulting recession led to the unemployment rate shooting up from 7.5% to 27.9%. In 2008 there were 300,000 unemployed persons, while today there are 1,400,000, without there having been any increase in the number of foreign nationals (Papastergiou and Takou, 2013). Unemployment affects immigrants more than the host population, since the economic crisis results in the phenomenon of precarious and underpaid employment (Papastergiou and Takou 2013).

Unemployment Rates 2004 – 2013

The graph depicts the course of the unemployment rate during the 2004-2013 decade, where the unemployment rate of Albanian immigrants exceeds the corresponding unemployment rate of Greek nationals from 2009 onwards. Thus, the overall unemployment rate for the year 2013, which amounted to 28% on average, is divided into 24% for Greeks and 40.3% for foreign nationals, disproportionately affecting Albanian immigrants (Hatziprokopiou, 2015; Papastergiou and Takou, 2013).

The economic crisis and the increase in unemployment has resulted in a reduction in the number of individuals insured under the social insurance system. According to IKA (the state Social Insurance Institution) data, the number of insured persons (employed in ordinary undertakings, with the exclusion of construction-technical works) has been steadily decreasing since 2008 (base month: June). During the 2008-2013 period, this reduction came to 13.6% for Greek citizens and over 43% for Albanians (Hatziprokopiou, 2015).

7.3 Socioeconomic characteristics of Albanian labour

Albanian immigrants work as contracted, salaried and private employees. Many split their time by working as wage-earning workers in the morning and self-employed in the evening. A certain number of these workers, who mainly belong to the first generation of immigrants, are self-employed. The difference between Albanians and other immigrant groups lies in the significant presence of pupils, highlighting the existence of a large second generation population that is participating in the labour market on different terms than the first generation.

Employment in 2011
(Hatziprokopiou, 2015)
The high percentage in the ‘housework’ category relates to the employment of Albanian women as domestic workers (Anthias and Lazaridis, 2000; Cavounidis 2003; Hatziproko-piou, 2003; Lazaridis, 2000; Psimmenos and Kassimati, 2004). Women’s work has become synonymous with domestic work. When asked whether his mother worked, one respondent characteristically stated: “She cleaned houses. As destined”. Women’s work is also related to service provision, what they themselves call ‘service’, at cafés, BBQ restaurants, butcheries and, generally speaking, in the field of tourism and catering.

Our discussions with respondents often bring up the professions with which the Albanian community has become associated in the Greek labour market. The triptych of agriculture-construction-tourism not only describes the main fields of employment of Albanian immigrants, but also recounts the stages of their vocational development and socio-economic evolution during the course of their immigration and long-term living in Greece. The research found that they themselves consider the transition from manual labour to jobs that involve service provision and, consequently, social, communication and personal interaction skills, to be progress and, by extension, an indication of integration.

Employees by employment field in 2011
(Hatziprokipiou, 2015)
It is interesting to observe the distribution of employment among Albanian immigrants in each professional sector in terms of their geographical distribution between urban centres (Athens, Thessaloniki, Heraklion, Patras), rural regions and the islands. According to unofficial estimates by the mass media, as communicated to us by respondents employed in the news sector, 33% of Albanians living in Greece are employed in agricultural work in rural regions. A similar percentage (if not higher) works in tourism undertakings, particularly on large islands such as Zante, Corfu, Crete, Rhodes and Santorini.

According to mass media estimates, the largest outflow of Albanian immigrants—due to the economic crisis—occurred in the urban centres, where those who have remained mainly exercise technical professions, e.g. plumbers, painters, electricians. It should be noted that the economic crisis and the ensuing crisis in the construction sector led many Albanians to migrate internally from urban centres to rural regions and, more specifically, to islands, where they either engaged in tourism activities or exercised professions that helped keep tourism at a high level, such as preservation of traditional residences on Santorini and Mykonos, renovation and maintenance of hotels, contractor services, etc. Women’s work has also been associated with professions in the sector of tourism services, such as cleaning in hotels and rented rooms, services at restaurants, cafés, etc.
Another characteristic of the labour of Albanian immigrants is de-specialisation and the resulting unskilled labour. Let us observe the following extract from the narration of a respondent who combines characteristics of both seasonal and casual employment, i.e. employment in any sector where there was demand.

“What job did my father do, what did Albanians generally do in Lefkimmi?! Jobs like... first of all, everyone did everything. Because there was no job where one could work all year, a factory or a small industry or anything else. I remember this very clearly with everybody, including my father; they’d ask him “can you do this or that?” and he’d always say ‘yes’, there was no other choice, really. In other words, he painted, he solved plumbing problems, he could work as an electrician, he’d clean farms or maintain olive groves. So, he’d work both in construction and in the broader agricultural economy.”

The respondent and his siblings often helped their father with his work in the construction and agricultural sector, realising that, in order to cope with the economic conditions of their immigration experience, they would have to develop numerous labour skills and, above all else, learn to adapt. In fact, in recent years, it is commonplace for fathers to have lost their jobs, particularly if they worked in the construction industry, and for entire families to live off the mother’s job.

With regard to the increase in the importance of women’s employment, the research did result in findings and indications of the negative impact on families, the relationships between couples and the likelihood of divorce due to unemployment and women’s lack of a work permit. Many female immigrants work and bring an income into the household without this being secured by a work permit and insurance. This phenomenon has caused a shift in the roles of family members and, at the same time, changes in existing practices and the duties of the man/father and the woman/mother.

7.4 Experiences of Albanian immigrants in the Greek labour market

The 1990s, when the first wave of immigrants from Albania arrived and until the first legalisation process that took place in 1998, were defined by informal, unregistered, so-called ‘black work’ and the labour exploitation of Albanian immigrants by Greek employers. The narratives of our respondents are rich in incidents of irregularity, exploitation, even extortion and violence against Albanian immigrants.

“In 1991-1992, obviously unofficially, with no papers, no residence permit, nothing, no other documents, I stayed in Omonoias Square for quite a while... we tried to support each other there, help as much as we could... we had no work and waited in Omonoias Square, hoping a contractor would come by, pick us up and give us some wages. That is when a private citizen passed by, took me and 2 other lads from Albania with him, we moved in with him and worked throughout the summer. However, he did not pay us, he owed us a lot of money, wages for many months, and all he
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"We worked because we were illegal aliens and had no papers, the season was almost over and the employer would say "there are some Albanians here and they've come into my house". The police would arrive and pick us up, filling entire prison vans, beat us up and send us back. These were very rough times and I've lived through all of them. This is where the need to react was born - because you cannot have me working from day to night and, once the work is over, call me a 'dirty Albanian' and a 'dog'.

The procedure for the legalisation of foreign nationals established this forced sense that the legality and permanence of immigrants is proven by labour and social insurance and, more specifically, the number of ‘ensima’, i.e. social insurance stamps. Albanian immigrants faced obstacles and adverse conditions in the pursuit of their labour rights. For Albanian immigrants, there seems to be an inverse relationship between the existence of insurance and the ability to find daily work (Athanassopoulou, 2006). The deprivation of labour rights entailed very low hourly wages, no medical coverage, no insurance stamps, no Christmas bonuses and no holidays.

The lack of legality often meant that not only could they not claim their accrued wages, but they could also not prove they had accumulated the required number of insurance stamps to renew their residence permit, as the following excerpt from the narrative of a female Albanian immigrant vividly demonstrates:

"The road was very rough, it was a very hard journey... The first years were incredibly difficult. The biggest problem was the labour issue, the legal issue... I remember that when I enrolled in university, during exam period, my employer informed me that he couldn't give me insurance stamps for 4 days. In other words, because I wanted to take some time off to study for my exams, he told me "no insurance stamps at all for you". It’s unbelievable! And because I couldn’t find a job at the time, unfortunately I had to accept to work without insurance. I lost the right to renew my permit and then completely lost my legal status and had to go to Albania and request a student visa ... you cannot imagine the hassle. And all this in 2003".

"How many years in Greece after that? Seven. I had to come, I didn't even have a Greek identity card. And in order to avoid dealing with such issues, I remember I was forced to leave and stay (in Albania) for a month and a half in order to get my papers sorted from scratch so that I could come here and since I was a university student, I couldn’t receive insurance stamps, i.e. I couldn’t be employed under an employment relationship because my legal status would not permit it. If I could turn back time, I would never have come to this country. And I don’t say this emotionally, but consciously, because that journey cost be a great deal, a tremendous deal".
The problem of legalisation, which is also related to statelessness and lawful labour, was greatly exacerbated during the years of economic crisis, when many Albanian immigrants were in dire financial straits and could not collect - or, more correctly, ‘purchase’ - the required number of insurance stamps to secure a lawful residence permit in Greece.

“Legalisation accurately presents the view that the state has of immigrants: essentially, you are in the country solely to the extent that you are a worker. If you are unable to work, you will have to leave. The most typical example is the crisis and the huge unemployment rate that came with it, meaning that the State’s official position became this: we don’t care if you’ve been in this country for 25 years, if you’ve started a family, if you’ve assimilated; what we care about is whether you’re working, and if you’re not working, I challenge you to leave”.

The very low number of pensioners found in the financial data of the list of workers also indicates the infringement of labour rights and the exploitation of the unregistered - and often unpaid - work of Albanian immigrants. Securing a pension is a burning issue for the Albanian community, particularly the first generation of immigrants who arrived in Greece in the 1990s. Due to the lack of a transnational agreement between Greece and Albania on the recognition of the number of years of pensionable service for Albanians who worked in Albania prior to migrating to Greece, and due to unregistered labour, the aggregation of years of pensionable service is not justified on the basis of the current legal system.

“Labour rights were very limited and this can be seen now, as we do not have sufficient insurance stamps for pensions”.

Of course, there are also testimonies of positive experiences with Greek employers, mainly deriving from experiences of women in domestic service. Furthermore, Albanian immigrants of both sexes who acquired dual citizenship or a long-term residence permit either by proving their Greek descent due to minority status or by marrying a Greek citizen were integrated into the Greek labour market far more easily.

Finally, another important issue facing the Albanian community, particularly the second generation of immigrants, concerns the deprivation of the right to exercise a profession due to the lack of Greek citizenship.

“They tell me, ‘first become a Greek and then you’ll have the right to exercise the profession’. But how can I become a Greek if I am not given the right to do so?”

Not having Greek citizenship excludes Albanians from competitive positions in the labour market. The same issue also concerns the exclusion of Albanians from participating in subsidised community programmes intended for citizens of EU Member States. According to the research data, any programmes that were implemented with EU funding were insufficient in terms of the needs of the Albanian immigrant community. The following excerpt is from the testimony of an Albanian woman who benefited from the OAED (the Greek state department for employment) employment programme for female Albanian immigrants.
“After 4 years of working here and there, I joined a programme funded by OAED that was solely intended for female Albanian immigrants and it was very good, it was excellent. It gave me a lot of self-confidence; the KEK [Vocational Training Centre] instructors helped me get back on my feet, they truly helped me. It was an amazing opportunity, where I began to understand my value once more, as I had forgotten my value. I thought I was worthless, that I have no value, that any knowledge I had was useless here, and afterwards, thanks to the seminar, I received aid for another 2 or 3 years, allowing me to work at a small factory while receiving an OAED subsidy. The boss had to keep me because he received the subsidy from me, so I worked at small factories for 3-4 years”.

The positive experience of this female Albanian immigrant who, thanks to her participation in a subsidised OAED programme, not only secured the necessary insurance stamps, residence permit and revenue, but - more importantly - also regained her faith in her self-worth, is an encouraging and positive example for Greek society. She strove to improve her skills and her personal and professional growth and, as a result, has become one of the most recognised and successful women in the Albanian community. This also underlines the need to enhance the entrepreneurship and professional skills of the Albanian immigrant population in Greece through the implementation of programmes and the utilisation of state and Community resources.

7.5 Where do Albanian immigrants turn with regard to labour issues?

The research did not find any official state agencies that provide consulting on labour issues. Albanian immigrants primarily turn to the Greek state department for employment (OAED). A few consulting stations for labour issues are run by municipalities, such as the Municipality of Neapoli-Sykies in Thessaloniki. Albanian immigrants are described as well-informed and cognizant of community programmes, the public services they must turn to, while in order to find work, as the field research showed, they mainly resort to informal social networks.
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eighth chapter

Finding a Home: Strategies, Symbolism and the Sense of Permanence
To immigrants, the concepts of ‘home’ and ‘house’ hold within them feelings of security and permanence. However, they also symbolise and are perceived as a way of assimilating into Greek society. Nevertheless, finding a home is one of the biggest problems they face in the host country. According to Maloutas, the lack of residential care for immigrants was one of the main reasons that led them to privately rented residences (Maloutas, 2008:52). However, they had to overcome several problems, such as the dreadful condition of the residences, as well as acceptance by their owners. One positive aspect was the existence of networks of (mainly) relatives, who helped them adapt to Greek reality much faster.

8.1 Selecting a residence

With regard to the place of residence, our experiential material indicates a repetitive pattern of choice in Athens and Thessaloniki. Immigrants mainly settle in the centre of Athens and Thessaloniki. More specifically, the number of immigrants residing in the districts around the centre of Athens was estimated at 2.5 times higher than the average of those residing in Attica (Svoronos 2013:35).

“I live in Saranda Ekklisies [in Thessaloniki]. There are other lads living elsewhere, in Toumba, in Stavroupoli, it’s just that the centre is the centre, where everyone can come together and group up. Whether in terms of work or distance, the centre is equal for everyone. No, I went to Stavroupoli, to Agiou Dimitriou Street, to Anagenniseos Street, then near Makedonia Palace hotel, and then to Saranda Ekklisies”.

“All those districts I mentioned. I think there are a few in Vyronas, Pagrati, Neos Kosmos, I’m not sure beyond that but, on this basis, there should be several in, say, Patissia or Petralona, those districts. Yes, yes. A large percentage of our guys live in the broader Municipality of Athens. Patissia, Kypseli, Neos Kosmos, the broader Municipality of Athens, where most can be found”.

The selection of this urban area is not random. The arrival of immigrants coincided with the downgrading of these districts and the movement of middle and upper classes to the north-eastern and south-eastern suburbs.

“Furthermore, the people left in Patissia were old, they were pensioners and they were the ones who had something... so these districts became downgraded... they would lease their houses, move to Patissia and Chalandri, so the rent was their income... in other words, what I’m trying to say is that the residents themselves left their neighbourhood to chance. OK, though... there were other, more serious reasons, too”.

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“Generally speaking, not to state the obvious, but most live in the western districts and, obviously, most that live in the centre districts live in the so-called degraded areas of Kassandrou Street, Agiou Dimitriou Street, further to the west, as well as some, but fewer, in the east”.

The lack of financial resources and high rents contributed to the exclusion of Albanian immigrants from certain districts of the two cities, thus creating a spatial separation between locals and immigrants.

“...Well, OK, let’s say an Albanian ... one Albanian ... an immigrant can go there ... but only one. They can’t go in numbers. Not even to Maroussi ... it’s a matter of space, and that’s all there is to say about it. For example, in the centre, where rent is up to 350 euros at most for a family, in a house with almost three bedrooms, I think the amount is manageable. If the rent is 600 euros, you can’t cope”.

“There were also districts that did not welcome immigrants. They were the ‘black sheep’ of the neighbourhood. In other words, there were districts that did not have a single foreigner up until 2000. There was a ghettoisation of rent ... it was prohibited, well not prohibited by law, you just couldn’t get a place”.

“But this occurred because rent also played an important role, of course; we could talk about districts like Exarchia, which is more outlandish and anarchic ... and more left and liberal, but in the case of Exarchia, when my mother found a house in 1998 and didn’t move in, I asked her why we didn’t move in ... but you shouldn’t think that Exarchia is welcoming, even today they won’t let Albanians move in”.

Additionally, networks of relatives play a noteworthy role in the selection of the place of residence of Albanian immigrants. At first, most of these immigrants were taken in by friends and relatives for long periods of time. Subsequently, the homes they chose were at a short distance from these individuals.

“For example, in Pagrati, where we had moved, it’s one of the main ... well, not preferences, because I don’t think that all the Albanians meet up and decide to move to Pagrati. It’s not that, but I also don’t think it’s by accident. The main thing is, where can you go? To be near the centre... the district you want may have low rent for this or that reason, rent reduced for reasons that are obviously connected to what we talked about before ... You may also have relatives, like we did in Pagrati at the time, but the question is why did my relative go to Pagrati in the first place”.

“When I was young, I remember a large percentage of Albanians moved to the districts of Kypseli and the centre. This happened simply because the first ones moved there, so just like with my family, which had moved here from the beginning because it had 2 acquaintances who lived in Kypseli, I also had no choice but to move to Kypseli first. When we became more open,
after 6 months, after we had integrated and become independent, we did not need help as a family, so we found a house in Votanikos”.

Thus, the neighbourhood functioned as a ‘magnet’ with two poles. On the one hand, it was a space of mutual aid, emotional security and companionship (Svoronos 2013:56) and, on the other, the concentration of immigrants in one area resulted in racist behaviour.

"At the neighbourhood level. Well, look: people were scared, not that this exempts them from responsibility. And one’s responsibility, above all else, is to act like a human being... So when they hear on TV every night that Albanians will come to rob you, to ruin you, a climate of fear starts growing in every apartment building. They accepted us because my mother, who was Greek, spoke with them, took us to the house.

Before that, it was hard to find a house to rent, it was a problem; it’s just that my mother, who was Greek and could speak Greek, would always speak with them first, and this made things easier, allowed us this small win: to rent a house. They’d see three kids and say, okay, they’re a family. If you tried to rent a house on your own, no, there’s no way you’d be able to rent, no way at all, plus you’d have a problem with the neighbourhood, they’d stare at you constantly, just like they do today with every immigrant or foreigner: if someone’s from Pakistan, they look him up and down”.

"The problem was that whenever there were arguments, just like there can be in any family, any kind of incident, when this happened in a neighbourhood where there were a lot of Albanians, it was Albanians that had the problem. People would say "why did you come here, you’re uncivilised, you’re animals”. That’s the pot calling the kettle black. There were these problems in every neighbourhood, there was also indifference, the neighbourhood would often be like "why bother;" when kids would meet up in an empty lot to play, they’d say "you Albanians make a lot of noise”.

It should be stressed that, although it is common for immigrants to gather in areas depending on their ethnic identity and create ghettoised areas of poverty, delinquency and social ills (Balabanidis 2001:1, Vaïou & Stratigaki 2008:2575), this was not the case with Albanian immigrants in Greece; on the contrary, they have settled in numerous and diverse areas.

"I don’t think there’s any place in Greece where there are no Albanians. I’ve been to the most mind-boggling places, villages on faraway islands, even in Central Greece, even with a population of 200, I’d still find Albanians, they’re everywhere! Albanians have no community. When they’re in a space, they won’t form a group, it’s difficult. Maybe in villages they do, but it’s difficult in a large place!”.

"There are Albanians everywhere, there’s no neighbourhood without any Albanians - and here are many of them indeed”.

"Look, there was never any form of ghettoisation, but there was a kind of... for example, my mother chose Patissia because a few of her girlfriends lived there, like the brother-in-law of a brother-in-law."
And they’d tell her off about it. I tell her off about it. I tell her, why did you take us to Patissia, for example, instead of Pagrati. I’ve been living in Pagrati for the last 3 years and it is a completely different kind of neighbourhood. For example, some of her girlfriends lived in Vyronas, which, again, is a completely different kind of neighbourhood. So, it was like this, the fact that most Albanians chose Patissia, or Kypseli, or Agios Panteleimonas in Attica had a lot to do, in my opinion, with ... But, no, I wouldn’t use the word ghettoisation”.

“Of course, if you painted a map of Attica with a different colour for each citizenship, you’d see that most Albanians, for example, lived... then again, Albanians also lived in Korydallos, in Piraeus... in Chatzikyriakia... so yes. They’d usually pick one and settle. For instance, there is a difference between the Grava I used to go to and Grava 7 years later, you’d hear Albanian being spoken. So, in 2001, around 2000-2001, you’d go to Grava and only hear Albanian, not Greek. What I’m trying to say is that in seven years, Patissia almost became a semi-Albanian neighbourhood”.

8.2 Renting a house and problems

Although networks of relatives and friends provided great help to Albanian immigrants during their first months in Greece, this does not mean that they helped solve their accommodation problem. As seen in their accounts, most of them faced great difficulty in finding a suitable and habitable house. The houses available to them were old, in disrepair due to their owners’ indifference, and were usually small apartments on the lower levels of buildings in densely populated districts in the centre.

“As for the house... as for houses, there were basements and flats in poor condition, but even in those cases, when they heard you were from Albania, it was likely that within the hour they’d tell you ‘oh I’m sorry but my husband has rented it to someone from Syria, someone from...’ in the beginning, a very hostile environment had been created for Albanians. Personally, after this, I began working in houses”.

“In the past, I’m sure they faced problems with finding a place, or they’d find a house in worse condition, or move into places that weren’t rented to Greeks, places that Greeks didn’t prefer”.

“In Livadi, in a ramshackle house, because there were no houses to rent, we couldn’t find anywhere to stay in that village, so we lived in a really, really old house, and I felt terrible for a whole week... In Livadi, I wouldn’t eat at that house, I’d only cook for my husband. I felt disgusted. The house was very old, meant for mice, you could see the woodwork inside the walls, it was decrepit.

A family took us in and we moved to another house – and that house was the kitchen of their café. We turned it into a house where we could live; the Greek girl accommodated us – bless her – in that kitchen; we struggled to convert it into a house; you can imagine what state the abandoned shop was in. I lived there for a year, that’s where I had my child”. 
Additionally, they faced numerous problems with the owners of the houses they lived in.

"It was difficult to find a place to rent, but we persisted. We stuck to it until someone would rent us a house for all these years. We had a lot of problems; they’d check on us all the time in the beginning... who came and who went... until we finally convinced them that we were suitable tenants".

"In other words, no matter how liberal they say they are, owners wouldn’t rent to Albanians and I say that with every... how should I say this... I mean, I’m certain of it. In my microcosm of 100 people, I couldn’t give you statistics, I wouldn’t bet on it, but it is certain".

Frequently, as rent was high compared to an immigrant’s finances, they’d have to find flatmates for a certain period of time.

"My cousins had rented a house, so we all moved in there together. 14 people! I remember there was a bedroom, a small kitchen and a bathroom. 14 people in one apartment for 7 months, well no, we were 14 for one month, then there were 7 or 9 of us. 9! Because my cousin also had two young children".

"And did you share the rent? ...Well yeah, and after 7 months we rented a flat, me, my husband and my 2 cousins. It was 4 people in a three-bedroom house in Neapoli, a semi-basement flat if you’ll believe it! And after 4 years, we rented our current flat, a two-bedroom apartment on the fourth floor. In an old apartment building. We still live there".

"Yes, it was us two brothers. It was me, my wife and my brother. My wife left because of the problem we were facing and it was just us two brothers. He, my younger brother, got engaged and eventually got married. He brought his wife here when he got married, then a year later my wife came too... in the beginning we were together, there was no other solution".

"We found a large flat, but no matter how you look at it, I have a child, my brother’s wife got pregnant, then there would be two couples with two kids. I said to my brother, I’ll move out. You stay here. I looked for a house, I went to Neapoli. I looked at many places. I didn’t like them. Then I visited a real estate agent in Neapoli and they showed me this place. I saw it and liked it. As the apartment building was relatively new, it had good windows such as these, with aluminium door frames. But still, it’s not that nice".

### 8.3 Buying a house in Greece and Albania

As the immigrants themselves stated, having been integrated into Greek society to a great extent and having secured a satisfactory job, education and better quality of life, one of their main goals was to buy a house. To them, buying a house, whether in Greece or Albania, is synonymous with success; it is a status symbol to show off to other Albanians, as well as an asset that their children can inherit.

"I would like to buy my child a room at least, so that he can feel that this is truly his
second homeland. Being his father, I want him to feel proud to be a child who has a homeland. I do not want him to feel like I do, not having a homeland and not knowing where I belong”.

“...especially now with the crisis. Because here’s what happened: real estate prices dropped significantly, especially for old apartments... Albanians repair them, and a flat that cost 50,000 in the past now costs 30,000... and they fix them up on their own, so... A lot of them bought a place, I’d say it’s a mass phenomenon in the housing market during this crisis, because many are afraid of losing their money, so they decide to buy a place”.

“For example, your dad, who was from there would say, you’ll build a three-story detached house, because my brother’s son who works in Italy or in Athens has built a two-story detached house, so you’ll build a three-story one. So they’d build detached houses like that and no one would live there; and even those who have returned due to the crisis cannot heat these houses... Three stories, all these rooms, and they huddle together in two rooms on the ground floor to keep warm and survive”.

“What would you do with all these houses? And those who built houses in villages have regretted it even more, because it was the wrong move to make. It would have been better to buy two apartments, one to live in and stay in the city and one to rent out, either here or in Tirana, in Thessaloniki or elsewhere. It was the wrong move”.

However, many were unable to buy a house of their own, as bureaucracy caused many hold-ups. Thus, buying a house remained an unfulfilled dream for many.

“But my dad, he definitely wanted to buy a house seven years ago, but couldn’t... So he was forced... Because he had to transfer it to someone. You can’t transfer such a large property to someone else, no matter how much you trust them, or become a co-beneficiary, because if the other person appeals to the Courts, that’s that”.

“He’ll take the house away from you. So we never bought a house and we’ve been renting, meaning you can’t have something stable. Because, imagine if my parents had bought a house; things would be hard now. They bought a house in Albania and want to leave. If they had bought a house in Greece, they’d have adapted to life here and things wouldn’t be the same. In other words, they definitely would have stayed here”.
9.1 Albanians’ access to the National Health System

The Greek health system is defined as a mixed one and is based on the National Health System (NHS), the Social Insurance Funds and, to a smaller degree, private insurance and the private health service provision sector. The NHS provides medical coverage to the entire population residing lawfully in the country, while the Social Insurance Funds provide health services, mainly primary in nature, to beneficiaries. Private clinics, hospitals and maternity wards also cover a significant portion of demand.

It should be noted that insurance is compulsory in Greece and covers workers, pensioners and their dependants. For foreign nationals from EU countries, there are regulations ensuring their coverage in cooperation with the insurance funds of their countries of origin. As a rule, primary health services are provided free of charge at rural clinics, municipal multi-clinics, multi-clinics operated by NGOs, regional health centres, as well as the outpatient departments and emergency departments of hospitals.

With regard to secondary health care and pharmaceutical coverage, the cost is covered either in whole or in part by the insurance funds for insured persons or the poverty fund for uninsured Greeks with low income. The NHS is funded by the state (the central budget) and the contributions of insured persons and employers to the social insurance funds. Nevertheless, private funding sources account for over 50% of the total expenditure for health (Kotsioni, 2009).

Immigrants’ access to the NHS is a key parameter for their integration into Greek society, the safeguarding of public health and respect towards the human right to dignity and life (Kotsioni, 2009). The issue of immigrants’ health was introduced to the political agenda after the year 2000. Formal access to free NHS services was conditional upon registered employment and legal status, neither of which applied for the majority of immigrants in Greece during the 1990s, prior to the two legalisation processes. In July 2000, the Ministry of Health and Welfare published a circular on ‘medical care and hospitalisation’ for non-EU citizens, whereby legal immigrants could enjoy free access to the NHS, provided they had health booklets issued by their insurance funds.

The immigration law of 2001 (Law 2910/2001) officially granted foreign citizens lawfully residing in Greece equal rights to those enjoyed by Greek citizens, as regards national insurance and social protection. The insurance organisation that covers most immigrants ‘with papers’ is IKA (the state Social Insurance Institution). The benefits to which insured persons and their dependant family members are entitled are identical to those enjoyed by insured Greeks: medical-pharmaceutical care, hospitalisation, allowances for illness, accidents or maternity, pension and other benefits.

Nevertheless, taking account of the large extent of informal work, many immigrants lawfully residing in Greece lack social insurance and, therefore, free access to public health services. Moreover, access to the health system is hindered by the long delays (often for many months) in the renewal of residence permits. Additionally, immigrants do not enjoy social welfare benefits, such
Communities in Greece

as the healthcare booklet for the uninsured, which provides for the coverage of hospital expenses and certain welfare benefits (disability allowance, etc.). Immigrants of Greek origin (‘omogeneis’ - repatriates) can benefit from public health services after submitting the necessary documents. In any case, a member of a household who is insured or receives a welfare allowance also covers the other (dependant) family members.

As published in the report on ‘Immigration and health - welfare’ (Maratou-Alipranti, 2005:35-37), “during inspections conducted in the year 2000 regarding the observance of instituted procedures for the provision of medical-pharmaceutical and hospital care to foreign nationals, the Ministry of Health and Social Solidarity discovered various illegal and irregular processes at NHS Hospitals due to non-observance of transnational agreements”. More specifically, it was found that illegal networks had been created and care was provided by NHS hospitals to alien patients who did not come from EU and EEA countries, did not have the necessary legalisation documents and were not covered by the relevant transnational agreements for the provision of hospital care.

Based on the findings of inspections conducted by the Ministry of Health and Social Solidarity, many immigrants who had entered Greece on a tourist visa or who were illegally residing in the country were admitted as emergency patients in order to receive free care at hospitals, even though their conditions were not life-threatening. Furthermore, through this process, a large number of alien women used the maternity wards of hospitals to give birth. Additionally, counterfeit poverty booklets and insurance booklets that provided free medical-pharmaceutical and hospital care by NHS hospitals were discovered.

In order to eliminate all these phenomena of illegal provision of free medical-pharmaceutical and hospital care to patients not entitled to receive it, the Ministry of Health issued a circular (No Y4a/ oik.8992/13-7-2000) with instructions on the provision of hospital care to each immigrant category.

The provisions of this circular could be summarised as follows:

- For the admission of aliens from non-EU member states for hospitalisation in NHS Hospitals in Greece, in cases where a transnational agreement has been concluded with their country of origin, the issuance of an approval decision by the Minister of Health is required.

- Free medical-pharmaceutical and hospital care is provided to repatriates and to citizens of countries under the European Social Charter, who have been issued a poverty booklet. It is noted that no provisions have been made for the issuance of this booklet to other categories of aliens and if produced, it shall be considered counterfeit or illegally issued. These benefits are provided free of charge to recognised political refugees.

- Aliens who are in the country temporarily (tourists) are not entitled to free healthcare, even in cases of emergencies, unless they come from countries under the European Social Charter.
The circular expressly states that pharmaceutical care is granted **solely to holders of booklets issued by insurance organisations, recognised political refugees and holders of poverty booklets**.

Aliens residing illegally in the country are provided the necessary services ‘**exclusively in cases of emergency and until their health condition has stabilised**’.

The rights of immigrants ‘without the necessary documents’ are indeed very limited in Greece in comparison to many other EU countries as regards their access to the health system (Kotsioni, 2009). Furthermore, individuals suffering from chronic conditions or who require surgery or expensive treatment also face problems, given their adverse (as a rule) financial situation. It should also be noted that Article 85(4) of Law 3386/2005 stipulates that: “Employees of the above-mentioned services and agencies who breach [these] provisions will be subject to disciplinary action and will be penalised for breach of duty under the provisions of the Penal Code”.

In reality, the 2005 Law upholds the strict provisions of Law 2910/2001, which greatly limit the access of ‘irregular’ immigrants to health services. It only repeals the provision of Article 54, which provided for ‘the obligation of the directors of clinics to notify the police authorities of the arrival of aliens at such clinics’.

Law 4368/2016 was the first item of legislation enacting the right of free access to all public health services for the provision of hospital and medical-pharmaceutical care to uninsured persons, uninsured persons and former holders of Individual Poverty Booklets or Healthcare Booklets for the Uninsured to access to the public health system. The health coverage guaranteed by the new framework is comprehensive and includes hospitalisation, diagnostic and pharmaceutical coverage.

### 9.2 The health status of Albanian immigrants

Our knowledge of the health status of the Albanian immigrant population in Greece is very limited. Very few studies have been conducted in relation to the health problems faced by Albanian immigrants and epidemiological data is scarce, while data on their habits and mental health status are virtually non-existent. The change in environment for Albanian immigrants residing in Greece, compared to their fellow nationals residing in Albania, is linked to major changes in their quality of life, including their health behaviours and attitudes, as well as dietary habits (Bucaj, 2011).

A comparative study on the adaptation of immigrants and repatriates in Greece showed that Albanian immigrants experience greater insecurity and suffer intense anxiety (with sleep disorders) more frequently than Greeks and Pontic Greeks (Dalla et al., 2004). According to available epidemiological data, the prevalence of hepatitis B is high on immigrant populations from Albania and Asia residing in Attica (Roussos et al., 2001).
9.3 Experiences of Albanians with the National Health and Social Welfare System

The experiences of our Albanian respondents within the context of our research converge on the axis of positive experiences. Their comments on Greek physicians in the National Health System are full of praise. The Albanians’ lack of medical insurance was offset by the contribution of physicians themselves at public hospitals. There was irregular access to public hospitals, particularly in emergency cases, but it varied in terms of quality and breadth of access.

“I believe this was the best part. I mean, speaking about the 1990s or later, I don’t think anyone was excluded... quite the contrary. Doctors helped you, they really helped. An order and a circular had been issued, ordering doctors to give up illegal immigrants, and they rose up and no doctor, regardless of the political faction to which they belonged, ever did anything of the sort”.

“Greek doctors stand out. At least from my experiences and from other people’s stories, they are - to a large extent - gods. I mean it. I mean, they knew you were Albanian, they’d admit you, they’d serve you, they’d cure you and then they’d say “you have to leave now, if you stay you will have to pay”. Of course, you could argue that they were robbing the state this way. Sure, but that’s how life goes”.

The acceptance of Albanian immigrants by public officials involved in healthcare at public hospitals offset the obstacles and difficulties they faced with regard to their integration into Greek society and particularly in terms of legalisation processes concerning their residence status, labour and insurance rights.

Many Greek physicians and Greek citizens helped Albanians facing health problems, in contrast to other parts of public life, where there was manifest racism and discrimination against Albanians. There is consensus among research respondents as regards the fact that Greek physicians at public hospitals showed a ‘human face’.

“I believe they cared for her... they’d see me care for her every day and night, I wouldn’t leave her bedside... and they helped us... I especially remember a doctor telling me “your mother has to undergo a difficult examination and the necessary machine is not available at public hospitals, or at least we do not have access to it directly, so you will be forced to have it done yourselves; it’s for her health...” and the lady sitting by the bed next to us, a lady whose mother was being hospitalised, came over to us and gave us 60,000 drachmas, so we could go and have the examination performed”.
Health and Social Welfare Issues

The weakness of the Greek health system obviously affected Albanian immigrants, while the lack of organisation in the public health sector allowed for the exploitation of the insurance and poverty support system. According to research respondents, many Albanians were able to 'exploit' the social welfare system using counterfeit papers and claiming to be members of the Greek minority of Albania.

"At some point people from the hospital administration came and said "your mother doesn’t have a booklet"...But, after great effort, I gathered some documents and managed to get a poverty/health booklet. And, to be honest, I managed to get it by using a counterfeit document, which said that my mother belonged to the minority population. This truly helped me, as they didn't ask me for any other documents at the hospital".

"We had no problems with access, nor with treatment by the doctors. I think it is very important to be careful when characterising something as discrimination or racism solely on the basis of the fact that someone mentions descent. Even if it appears, on the surface, that descent is the main factor, deep down I believe it has to do more with the financial circumstances of people. In other words, my sister essentially did not bribe the doctor, who had a problem with the poor patient, who also happened to be Albanian. Were not Albanian, he would just be poor, and this would not change anything as regards treatment, but yes, these are the weaknesses of Greek society".

The recent 2016 law mentioned above essentially solved the problem of access to public, free healthcare for all.

"I think the issue has been largely solved. The Greek government took a big step, which was a huge help. It is definitely positive that you can now receive free medical-pharmaceutical care just with your AMKA [Social Security Number]".

With regard to mental health issues, research data are very limited, as our respondents did not mention mental health issues at all. One anonymous juvenile probation officer reported his experience involving certain instances of juvenile delinquency that are related to mental health issues.

"There were certain incidents where juvenile delinquents also faced mental health issues. But not that many. Around the same percentage as the broader population. [These were dealt with] always by referring them to mental health agencies on the basis of sectionalisation, depending on their place of residence, the type and age and the type of problem. (Juvenile Probation Officer)".

"They have not been found to be suffering from mental health problems, at least not to a greater extent than the rest of the population we serve. The problem that the Albanian population does seem to be facing is hepatitis. Albanian immigrants at least over the age of 30 still face problems with hepatitis B and hepatitis C. I do not know why. (Juvenile Probation Officer)".
This information is confirmed by the relevant literature on the physical and mental health of immigrants. According to Prapas and Mavreas (2015), Albanian immigrants exhibit similar levels of physical and mental health as Greeks of the same age, while research by Roussos et al. (2001) has shown high percentages of hepatitis in the Albanian immigrant population.

9.4 Where do Albanian immigrants turn for advice, information and support concerning health issues?

Until October 2009, when the issuance of a Social Security Number (AMKA) by law granted uninsured aliens access to the public health system, there was no provision for the medical coverage of uninsured aliens. According to the legislation in force, only poor Greek citizens could be insured under welfare provisions. Uninsured Albanians turned to non-governmental organisations such as Praxis, Médecins du Monde and ARSIS Association for the Social Support of Youth, which provided medical assistance, as well as specialised foundations, such as the foundation for the disabled, which also provided some small (and thus insufficient) financial aid. At present, provided they have an AMKA number, they can visit public hospitals, just like all uninsured Greeks and aliens.
tenth chapter

Citizenship and Naturalisation: Participation in Decision-Making Bodies and Forms of Collective Organisation
10.1 Participation of Albanians in ‘public life’, politics and decision-making centres

The main goal of Albanian immigrants in Greece, as recorded by our research and expressed by our respondents, who are already living through their third decade in Greece, is still legalisation, obtaining Greek citizenship for the first and, especially, for the second generation of immigrants, and claiming social and welfare rights.

According to the statistical data of the General Secretariat of Migration Policy, during the 2011-2014 period, 5,964 foreign nationals were naturalised. The number of naturalised foreign nationals, regardless of nationality, is an infinitesimal percentage compared to the largest population group of immigrants in Greece, namely the 480,804 Albanians who were recorded in the latest 2011 census.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Obtainment of Greek Citizenship by category</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2014</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Naturalisation of Repatriates</td>
<td>12,616</td>
<td>13,495</td>
<td>22,574</td>
<td>15,791</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naturalisation of Foreign Nationals</td>
<td>930</td>
<td>1,149</td>
<td>1,866</td>
<td>2,019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persons born/educated in Greece (Article 1A Law 3838/10)</td>
<td>3,103</td>
<td>5,543</td>
<td>529</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other provisions of the Greek Citizenship Code (due to birth/recognition, etc.)</td>
<td>946</td>
<td>928</td>
<td>1,917</td>
<td>2,029</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Underage children of naturalised individuals (Article 11 of the Greek Citizenship Code)</td>
<td>1,627</td>
<td>622</td>
<td>3,337</td>
<td>1,990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>19,222</td>
<td>21,737</td>
<td>30,223</td>
<td>21,829</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Processing: Stavros Piotopoulos – Citizenship Directorate, Ministry of the Interior 20/3/2015

Our respondents agree that integration policies have always been few and far between, medium-term and static in nature, while they were characterised by a lack of research and long-term planning.

"Integration is when you give me the right to vote. Integration is when someone has the right to feel they are from the same place as you and a citizen with full rights in the country".

"In the case of the Albanians, there was practically no integration process, because there was no integration policy. It is obvious that there was no political will at that time to implement organised integration. What happened, happened because of the pressure exerted by the situation. And the fact that there was no political will is also clear from the way in which society was allowed to treat the community".
The provisions of Law 3830/2010, which for the first time granted the right to vote and stand in local elections (article 14) to immigrants legally residing in Greece and repatriates, were found unconstitutional by the Council of State.

“Talking about representation [of Albanian immigrants] in Greece is an arbitrary venture, because seeing as they do not have Greek citizenship, they have no political say; they cannot affect decision making. Secondly, immigrants, mainly Albanians, were used as tools in the name of representation”.

“The Council of State has made a series of decisions that indicate a specific direction. Conservatism”.

10.2 Participation and representation of Albanians in Migrant Integration Councils

Migrant Integration Councils were formed in 2011 based on the Kallikratis Law. The formation of Migrant Integration Councils was part of a broader immigration integration policy. However, seeing as the provisions on the right to vote in local elections were found to be unconstitutional, the Migrant Integration Council remained as an advisory, non-binding municipal body. When the policy on participation in municipal elections was cancelled, “all that was left as their collective representation in public life were their migrant councils in each municipality”. The Council offered a platform for local communities to be heard by local government and to convey immigrant problems to the central administration of the municipalities and competent public services. According to the Chairman of the Athens MIC:

“In a sense the Council was left behind [by the Kallikratis law]. And that is both its success and failure. That is to say, it has the opportunity to work on many different things, and, in essence, on nothing at all”.

The selection of the members of the MIC resulted from participation in municipality actions after an open invitation, in contrast to the MIC of the Municipality of Athens, where the Albanian community is represented by the President of the Federation of Albanian Associations. The MIC has no executive character, only an advisory character. Immigrant communities meet once a month or based on an agenda if there is an emergency. They discuss current issues or issues that are important for each community. They then address the competent authorities or any competent department to take those issues into account and resolve them.
According to a spokesperson of the Municipality of Neapoli - Sykies, “representatives of immigrant communities do not undertake many initiatives in general”. Issues that have been of concern to the Albanian community are social security, pensions, store licenses, proceedings subject to the control mechanism, etc. Furthermore, they can call on the Secretary General of the Ministry of Interior to provide explanations or even issue a public resolution. According to the President of the Federation of Albanian Associations:

“One of the proposals of the Federation was that MICs become an institution. They are mandatory based on the Kallikratis law, but it is up to each Municipality to decide whether it wants to establish them or not. If MICs were mandatory, it would greatly facilitate Greece’s immigration policy. The MICs could then establish a national migration committee. And that institution could come into direct contact with the General Secretariat of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Secretariat of Migration Policy”.

10.3 Experiences of Albanians in relation to the acquisition of Greek citizenship

The accounts of Albanian immigrants on their personal experiences in relation to acquiring Greek citizenship are condemning. The application and submission process of the necessary legal documents is described as a degrading process that is insulting to human dignity, demanding ‘a great amount of effort, time and money’. In relation to the framework of legalisation, the Greek state was completely unprepared and the appropriate structures were not in place to deal with the volume of the population as regards the provision of documents, while civil servants—against whom there are complaints for having inhuman and racist views—displayed threatening and hostile behaviour. Albanian immigrants have complained about encountering the same hostile environment at the Albanian embassy, caused by the conduct of embassy staff.

“Excessive waiting times, queues, lines, no organisation whatsoever”.

“I completed the process to receive an identity card and said to myself, after all these years, I will never set foot in that hell hole again”.

“I wouldn’t call it a time-consuming process exactly, it was more of a torturous process”.

The Albanian immigrant community was being ‘held hostage by the documents’. Many wives of Albanian immigrants and repatriates who base their residency in Greece on their husbands, who have a residence permit, find themselves in a ‘unique hostage situation’. Albanian women who are either not working or working unofficially, without receiving insurance stamps, and are ‘legalised’ through their husbands, may find themselves in a situation where they need to obtain a residence permit for work-related reasons if they divorce, as they will fall into a status of illegality. The following excerpt from the interview of a female Albanian immigrant who had suffered domestic abuse by her alcoholic husband until she could obtain a residence permit, is a typical
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example of this unique hostage situation faced by wives.

"Three years later; we applied in 1997 and received in 1999. It was a living hell. A living hell, literally. Fees, insurance stamps, income... which are not a given; it was not easy for one to have all this and I had the extra obstacle of being a single-parent family and they demanded I have an income, in order to be able to cover my daughter; they demanded I have the same income as a family in which both spouses contribute. I had a great many difficulties, but I got my residence permit and decided to get a divorce, because I was facing many family problems... domestic violence... my ex-husband was an alcoholic and the situation was extreme".

Another ‘unique hostage situation’ is that experienced by, mainly young, second generation individuals, who are excluded from mobility programmes and other subsidised European Union programmes. The social exclusion of Albanian immigrants also extends to labour benefits, subsidies and OAED (Greek state department for employment) training and specialisation programmes, programmes held by municipalities and regional units, professional licences, pension rights. The Albanian immigrant community is experiencing the consequences of the social-economic crisis and exclusion from the labour market, through the inability to renew residence permits and the loss of legal status.

The website of the Ministry of Interior provides a short information guide which serves as a reference point for the citizenship committee during the relevant interview. It is a file that contains a very brief reference to information relating to history, geography, Greek culture and basic information about the Greek flag, the national anthem, etc. The first stage of the interview involves questions such as ‘when did you arrive’, ‘why did you come’, ‘do you have a family’, ‘do you go to Albania often’, ‘do you have relatives there’, ‘do you miss it’, etc., and is used to form a general image of the foreign national. Also, this whole interview process has helped evaluate how well the individual knows the language, as, until recently, there was no written test.

In the second stage of the interview there are questions on history and geography and some questions of a more local interest. Thereafter, there may be an examination of the foreign national’s general knowledge, with questions such as “who wrote the national anthem”, or “name two important poets”. This is followed by a third interview stage which has to do with political participation, which evaluates the degree to which the individual is capable of participating in public life, seeing as success in the citizenship committee’s examination will result in receiving Greek citizenship and the right to vote.

Some typical questions at this stage are, “name Greece’s system of government”, “who is the Prime Minister”, “who is the President of the Republic”, “name 3 Ministers”, “what parties are represented in Parliament”, and also, “name the mayor of your area”. According to a member of the citizenship com-
Citizenship and Naturalisation: Participation in Decision-Making Bodies and Forms of Collective Organisation

In the regional unit of Central Macedonia, “the questions [regarding the system of government] are not difficult, but very few people get them right”. However, according to respondents’ accounts, the Greek state places unnecessary hurdles, excuses and delays in the implementation of laws on citizenship.

“The questions are unacceptable to say the least. They are questions that you could ask a Greek person and they would not be able to answer; we are well aware of this from the questions the TV channels ask on 25 March and 28 October and the answers they receive”.

“I was asked the following question by the committee: ‘Seeing as we have given you a residence permit and your husband is a Greek citizen, why do you want Greek citizenship?’ After 20 years of legally residing in Greece, with strong ties to the country, having married, having had a child, why do you want this, seeing as we have provided you with all the rights... wait a minute guys, has it occurred to you that I may want to have the right to vote after having lived here for 20 years and having reached the age of 40’.

“Once I apply for naturalisation I have to wait 3 to 4 years to meet with a committee, and then only if the examiner likes the cut of my jib - and most examiners have proven to be racists and fascists - I will pass, otherwise I won’t pass and I will have to wait at least 3 more years; just imagine that they are currently considering files from 2013. I am starting over again, with 700 euros in fees, etc., because that will elevate me in the eyes of the examiner”.

According to information from an employee from the Decentralised Administration of Macedonia-Thrace, the average waiting period for a decision to be issued by the citizenship committee in the Prefecture of Thessaloniki is around 3 years, while for the rest of Central Macedonia it is approximately 20-22 months. In Athens the wait is even longer, while in rural areas it is shorter, however these waiting periods are indicative of the waiting periods and delays in the naturalisation process.

10.4 Participation of Albanians in associations and political parties

The concept of individuality characterises Albanians, especially during the early stage of their immigration experience. Many respondents agree that the concept of community does not express Albanian immigrants, while they do not identify with some collective identity, which could function as a unifying element of the Albanian community. However, common immigration experiences, and the deprivation of political and social rights have led to the shaping of a political conscience and forms of collectiveness that aim at claiming political rights and representation.

Collective activities and representation of Albanian immigrants is related to the defence and promotion of issues that concern their residence and legal status in Greece. These issues are the main area in which Albanian associations are active. According to Etmond Guri, President of the Federation of Albanian Associations, the first collective groups were
formed separately, unofficially and informally during the period from 1996-2000. In the 1990s some associations faced problems in relation to their establishment, because there was a request to dispute the right of foreign nationals to establish associations.

That had been overcome by the mid 1990s, and in the 2000s Albanian Associations started being established in the specific form they have at present. However, many Albanian immigrants choose to avoid connections with associations, because they believe that many personal associations had been formed, which did not serve collective interests and ‘came under Albanian political parties’, while there is no cooperation between Albanian associations in order to promote common interests. This holds true for many young individuals, the so-called ‘second generation’, who do not want to have any connection with Albanian associations.

Early informal associations in the 1990s were incorporated in the Left and autonomous anti-authoritarian side of the political spectrum, where a theoretical framework of political action took shape regarding the laws on immigration and racism, as did a framework of networking and solidarity amongst Albanian immigrants, while there was intensification of the assertion of political rights through political actions and the putting up of posters in public spaces. The politicisation of Albanian immigrants, most of whom did not have legal residence permits, held the inherent risk of deportation, as they could be considered ‘a danger to national security and undesirable to public order’.

"From a social rights and activism point of view, being able to put up posters, at a time when Golden Dawn had started rising and had added second generation Albanians to its ranks, children of my generation... being able to print a poster in Albanian and to tell them that you won’t forget where you’re from, that your parents lived in these streets, these squares, these underground apartments, that you, too, are the bottom of the barrel, that you too have no rights here, that your father may never have received what he deserved here, and that he was chased and you will never forget it... Being able to put up a poster is the least you can do, but when you start such a process you write down your views and put it up on a wall, you start putting up posters and you come into contact with people in squares, in neighbourhoods, you have discussions with them and that results in fusion".

After 1997 a network of Albanians had started taking shape, which included young people, aged 25-40, and through this process the Forum of Albanian Immigrants was established, in the legal form of an association. For about 10-12 years the activities of the Forum forged a basic political path on the Left anti-authoritarian side of the political spectrum. This Left side supported immigration and anti-racist political action. The main issues, as set out in its articles of association, concerned social integration, issues of racism and discrimination against Albanian immigrants, and addressing problems in sectors such as those of health and education. The issues of racism, xenophobia and discrimination, whether they spring from society or the state’s mechanisms, and the issues of social integration were of primary importance in the Forum’s actions.
Representatives of the Forum of Albanian Immigrants had a radio show on ERA 5, Radio Filia (Friendship), which “they transformed into a means for assisting immigrants in relation to various issues they faced on a daily basis”. On a theoretical and practical level, a variety of issues arose within the Forum, with some members trying to keep its action limited to communication through the mass media or interpersonal contact with political decision-makers, and other members wanting to develop activist political action as a response to police violence towards Albanian immigrants.

In 2008 there was an informal participation in the protests that erupted in December, where many young teenagers ‘took to the streets’ and subsequently formed small political movements in universities. Young people today have developed a different type of organisation, in neighbourhood groups, in schools, in hip hop groups. The second generation of Albanians mainly joins sports clubs, associations, scout groups and other social groups, even if their social circle is mainly Albanian-speaking. Very few Albanian immigrants who have Greek citizenship participate in political parties; however participation in political parties is expected to increase over the next five years, when the naturalisation process of younger individuals of the second immigrant generation becomes normalised.

A major change on the Greek immigration map is the increase of Muslim immigrants and, especially, the ‘refugee crisis’. The strong ‘anti-Albanian’ climate and racism against Albanians started to decrease and was replaced by racism towards Muslim immigrant and refugee populations, which marked an even greater level of social integration of Albanian immigrants. This change on the immigration map of Greece caused a change in the collective political conscience, the belief being that political action should deviate from the national element and that collective immigration bodies should be formed with other refugee or immigration groups, which will have an anti-racist direction.

10.5 Albanian Associations

During our field research, we met the chairmen and members of the ‘Federation of Albanian Associations’, of the ‘Mother Teresa Association’, of the ‘Albanian immigrant writers, poets and artists club of Thessaloniki’, of the ‘Association of Albanian University Students’, and of the ‘Proodos Greek-Albanian Association of Workers and Friends of Thessaloniki’, who spoke to us about the establishment and history, the roles and goals of the associations, and of the problems they face in Greek reality.

10.5.1 Federation of Albanian Associations

The Federation of Albanian Associations is a second-tier union that consists of approximately 25 independent, mainly cultural, associations. The Federation has an advisory character. Its role is to collect issues, highlight them and communicate them to the competent authorities. The seat of the Federation is in Athens, and its members include associations with nationwide representation spanning from Crete, Patras, Corinth, Kavala and Volos to Thessaloniki, while associations are currently being established in Kozani, Ioannina and Rhodes. The vision of the President of the Federation of Albanian Associations, Edmond...
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Guri, and a significant goal of his political strategy, is to establish contact with associations of Greeks living abroad, Albanian citizens of Greek descent, and to unify the two generations, ‘the older generation and the ‘second generation’ of young people’.

10.5.2 The ‘Mother Teresa’ Association

The ‘Mother Teresa’ Association is a cultural association that was established in 2004 by a group of 50 people in Thessaloniki. The name of the association, ‘Mother Teresa’, symbolises the concept of kindness, and is derived from the work of the ‘universal mother’ who was of Albanian descent. According to the Chairman of the Cultural Association, Arjan Cara, the goal of founding the group was to defend the Albanian community in the face of racism and negative social representation, and to try and change this negative image by promoting Albanian culture, principles and values, which are based on family and work, and to support the learning of the Albanian language and Albanian history by children belonging to the second immigrant generation in Greece.

The ‘Mother Teresa’ Association is a very active association with approximately 250 full members. It actively participates in local cultural events, such as the Festival of Multilingualism of the Municipality of Thessaloniki and the ‘Balkan Square’ of the Municipality of Neapoli-Sykies. The association organises events for ‘Teachers’ Day’ on 7 March and ‘International Women’s Day’ on 8 March, which involves a cultural programme and traditional food at the Faculty of Education of Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. There are four Albanian language classes, which are attended by 60–70 students. The classes are voluntary and the association’s funding is dependent on the monthly subscription of the members, donations and private sponsorship.

10.5.3 Albanian immigrant writers, poets and artists club

The Albanian immigrant writers, poets and artists club has been operating in Thessaloniki for the last 8 years. Some poets knew each other from Albania, while others met through publications in Albanian newspapers in Thessaloniki and Athens. They communicated and got to know each other through their writing. A café near the ancient market hosted and embraced them, and so they began to meet there almost every Sunday, to read poetry and present their books, to have readings of their novels, even to present awards. The Club consists of approximately thirty individuals aged 17 to 75, and it is always welcoming new members. Ten years ago they published a bilingual anthology titled ‘Storks of the Balkans’ [Pelargi ton Valkanion], which involved the participation of ten poets from Albania and, respectively, ten poets from Thessaloniki.

10.5.4 Association of Albanian University Students

The Association of Albanian University Students was formed approximately seven (7) years ago, in 2009–2010, by 10–30 Albanian university students. The association’s goals are to preserve the Albanian language, help Albanian university students socialise based on common experiences,
focusing on their immigration stories, and, mainly, to defend the identity of Albanians or individuals of Albanian descent, by ‘resisting’ the establishment of stereotypes in the mass media. The association has made efforts to achieve its goals through intercultural activities, e.g. the organisation of Albanian dance nights, screening of Albanian cinema, participation in anti-racist festivals, voluntary environmental and communication actions, and taking up political positions on current affairs.

One of the founding members with whom we spoke expressed their personal objections as to the formation of an association based on common citizenship or national descent, and believes that the inability to create collective groups based on national descent has been confirmed by the disputes, splits and conflicts within the association. There were disputes with regard to the goals and actions of the association, and the degree to which the association should limit itself only to cultural activities or whether it should highlight specific problems faced by this social group.

10.6 Who do Albanian immigrants turn to regarding citizenship issues?

The group of lawyers specialising in refugee and immigrant rights, which was founded in 2004, provided voluntary legal aid to Albanian immigrants, Greeks from Albania or Albanians married to Greek citizens, mainly regarding issues of administrative law. Foreign nationals, in general, had limited access to the legal aid programme, because gaining access to the legal aid programme was conditional upon them having citizenship, and therefore individuals with no residence permit or financial means turned to the volunteer group of lawyers.

Legal practice has changed. Before 2001, when Albanian immigrants were ‘legally invisible’, it involved criminal offences, while from 2001 onwards, when the legal framework on immigration was passed, legal practice involved legalisation, renewal of residence permits and the acquisition of Greek citizenship. Albanian immigrants consulted paid lawyers mainly with regard to criminal cases and issues of legalisation. Many fell victim to extreme exploitation and many others became trapped in illegal legalisation networks, either holding fake documents or fake social insurance stamps, especially those trying to obtain insurance stamps through OGA (Agricultural Insurance Organisation).
eleventh chapter

Mass Media and Representation of Albanian Immigrants
11.1 Mass media and Albanian immigrants

According to our respondents, coverage of immigration issues in the mass media is almost non-existent. The general view is that this occurs because for an immigration story to stand out it must be of interest to the broader public and must be an attractive issue. Nevertheless, even in such a case, they believe that any representation is completely superficial, does not focus on the problems of immigrants and is not accompanied by thorough research due to the lack of time and improper training of journalists.

They also believe that the mass media has a tendency to present immigrants in a stereotypical fashion, in a way that can be summarised as follows: ‘We’, the host country, and the ‘Others’, the immigrants. The image of the ‘Others’ is highlighted in such a way that, usually, positive elements are absent and the image is created of a foreigner who is a threat to safety. Immigrants have been identified with lawlessness, delinquency and crime. The views and opinions of our Albanian respondents presented above are most eloquently expressed in the following quotes:

"It should not shock you to think that in 1994 a very negative climate had been created with regard to Albanians. Obviously through the private television channels. Certain things may have happened, but their reproduction by the mass media made them... people stared at us, I remember begging for a house with a child in my arms and they would not let us have one".

"That is to say the media created and continue to create – regardless of whether they are Albanians or not nowadays – the image of the barbarian Albanian immigrant, dirty, unfaithful, untrustworthy, etc., etc. They created a stereotype, and pay attention because this is important, on a daily basis each Greek person needed an Albanian. That is to say, the old lady in the neighbourhood would say: Albanians are scum. The one I have here, with his wife, he is wonderful (...) But we had many issues with the media".

"On the other hand, it was because news reports promoted all this. They would talk about Albanians killing, about bad Albanians, in 1993-1994 this atmosphere was very intense. This is where our identity gradually started to become distorted. We would not say where we were from, we did not introduce ourselves with our real name".

"Even to this day you rarely see... It’s that thing that always goes around with us, that there is only news if something bad has happened. When something good happens there is no news. And, of course, there are news reports about this Albanian being caught or that criminal being caught, but we don’t see any stories about an Albanian starting his own business, trying hard, or about his daughter managing to score 19,500 points on her university examinations and being admitted to medical school, and there are many immigrant children who have excelled,"
and I know this first hand, but the last one I remember is Odysseas Tsenai, who turned from hero and star to enemy, because he went to America, and there he was [supposedly] going to create an Albanian political party that would come to Greece and organise the Albanians, show them how to create their own political party in Greece and he would... He is still there and has no thoughts of returning and starting a political party..."

"However, back then there was a lot of disparagement of Albanians. Everything that happened in Greece was on the News, especially the 8 o’clock news, which at that time would start at 19:30 and end at 21:30. Misinformation, everyone was watching television at that time of day, and there was such misinformation that anything bad that happened in Greece was committed by Albanians, and that was one of the reasons that forced us, we would discuss it and say, ‘this can’t go on’... Anything that happened in Greece was blamed on Albanians, while the opposite was happening, we worked with Greeks every day, we had many Greek friends, we lived with Greeks every day, we were in the same neighbourhood, the same building, the best things, and when you switched on the television it said the opposite and our Greek friends, our neighbour said, what is going on...?"

"Imagine a Greek person enters a house to rob it, they will say a thief went into this lady’s house and stole these luxury items and such. In a different case where the culprit is Albanian, his descent will be stressed by the media, for example, the Albanian thief did this. You can see this to a large degree".

"That the Albanian community is not what it has been made out to be, that was the main reason, Albanians are workers, family people, people with culture; they may speak a different language, but they are the same and they have nothing against the Greeks; they are civilised people who respect their neighbours, the authorities and everything. Nowadays I can proudly say that we have succeeded in presenting a different image, one which reflects reality. That in reality Albanians were not as the media presented them to be; that Albanians are simple people, like you and me, working and trying to do the best for their families".

For several years three Albanian newspapers were published, but they were hard to come by as you could only find them in one kiosk in Omonoa square and one in Thessaloniki. This resulted in Albanians in most cities in Greece not being able to read the Albanian news. It is also noteworthy that (according to our respondents) the majority of Albanian immigrants, especially in the early years, were exclusively informed by Greek television.

This occurred because they wanted to be integrated into Greek society quickly, because there were no Albanian channels on Greek television (if someone wanted to watch Albanian TV they would have to get a satellite antenna), there were no Albanian newspapers and internet access was not yet available. Despite that, over the years a television show was created on ERT 3 in Albanian,
which stopped after a very short period of time. Through the following interviews, let us look at the way in which Albanians perceived and experienced the role played by the mass media in constructing their image and in issues of representation of otherness, and in following the news in their own language:

“The problem was that there wasn’t so much, recently it has sort of taken shape, but there was not much contact with the Albanian media or newspapers. There was a newspaper I think or two main ones, that you had to go to Omonoia square to buy, but even so, not many adopted this culture, of reading their own newspaper... Now there was the Press, of course, ok, there must have been just one newspaper here, in the early years, somewhere in Omonoia square, and then there was the Albanian immigrants’ forum which had radio shows. But it wasn’t that well known, I mean my father did not know about it until I told him. They were a little more distanced, they watched more Greek television, more there and also there were no Albanian channels here, unless you got a satellite antenna. There was no Albanian channel to watch so they had more or less given in to what Greek television had to show and would rarely buy a newspaper; only, let’s say, when they went downtown, because neighbourhood kiosks did not carry Albanian newspapers; they brought them much later, now you can find Albanian newspapers in kiosks, but only in the central ones, even to this day.

Every time I see one, I get it, I am glad; it is because I will get to read Albanian again, let’s say. But it wasn’t so clearly formed and so open and the Albanians themselves didn’t really ask for it in a way. I mean that most of them wanted to become integrated in any way possible, even by watching Greek television. Television was the only medium where they could see things”.

“That is why we, as far as social integration issues are concerned, when we were given the opportunity to hold a radio show, we turned that radio show into a medium, it was on ERT, ERA 5 Radio Filia (friendship), we turned it into a means for assisting immigrants in relation to various issues they faced on a daily basis”.

“I speak Albanian and became involved after ’90... I worked for a period as a journalist and was then assigned a show in Albanian by ERT. It was from 1998 to 2000, and there was a twenty-minute show in Albanian and another one in Russian...”

“It was an effort to come closer to the immigrant communities in their own languages, and because the Albanians were the largest community, ERT 3 decided I should do a show and through that show - because we had to do some reports on immigrants - we would convey some messages etc., their problems... I had some closer contact with this community”.

“Unfortunately it lasted for a short period, although it could have lasted a long time. I especially remember interviewing a professor from the Faculty of Education here, and he said it was one of the best interviews, not because I was producing the show, but as a concept, as a target. Let us say it was one of the most successful shows on ERT 3; at last they decided to
have a show especially for immigrants which would also address them in their own language.

Of course there was an objection that was heard at the time, people asking ‘why do you say the immigrants need the show; considering that they are learning Greek, and the Albanians learn Greek in no time at all, they become Greek speakers...’ this is true, they have a tendency, a talent for learning languages in general, but it does not mean that an uneducated person, a person who works on a construction site is in the position to understand, for example, without missing something, a political discussion that is taking place on television, or even something else, a weather forecast, so by addressing this community in their language you are helping them understand reality better, understand what their problems are, what is happening with their situation, etc.... It was an effort that should not have ended and which could have continued... you know, sometimes it is a question of money etc.... And apart from that it was a show on ERT 3, which as a regional channel does not get high ratings... It was one of the shows, let’s say, that had high ratings because it truly concerned the specific community... Moving on from there, their main problem... I won’t deal with integration, with when they got their papers, the government was a partner, it could have...”

Some attempts were made by the immigrants themselves to publish an Albanian newspaper, but they failed as the newspaper lost its journalistic character.

“In 2006 I received a proposal from a Greek publisher who was thinking of opening a major newspaper. It was Albania Press and it was the first time an advertisement was being shown on television in Albanian. Many of my compatriots found out and I was assigned an important role there because I always wrote about social issues and legalisation. About every new law, annex, circular that could be issued by the Greek state, from the Ministry of Interior, Labour... Yes, that was our goal exactly. Sometimes it was a little... we were surprised and it was a little tiring, but nobody called us and suddenly the newspaper became like a citizen service centre or a foreign national service centre to put it differently, or like a directorate for foreign nationals, as we called it, where we provided information free of charge on unemployment benefits, social insurance stamps, residence permits, family reunification and all the other issues of immediate concern... At the same time I came into contact with other newspapers in Albania with which I could cooperate as a correspondent on various issues that concerned both countries"
eleventh chapter
Mass Media and Representation of Albanian Immigrants

11.2 Social media networks and immigration

New technological changes and the internet seem to have altered the way in which Albanian immigrants are informed. They no longer depend on local mass media to promote their issues because they have the opportunity to present their problems and receive immediate information on current affairs taking place in their country.

"Albania.gr is active in 5 sectors more or less. The first sector is information. The second sector is immigration, the immigration issue. What do we do? We help by providing specialised information and we also do... we offer specific services like cooperation with a lawyer... The third sector that we deal with, as I told you earlier, is entertainment, fun, the fourth sector is travel, a project that started in 2014 and has developed quite successfully, where we offer the lowest rates on the market, but only for Albanians. That is the deal we have.

It’s not that we are racist, that we won’t let Greeks join in, we just aren’t allowed to advertise to Greeks. And a third sector, a part that we provide that is not exclusive to Albanians, has to do with... it is providing internet services. Specifically, designing and organising advertising campaigns, managing panels, videos, posters, writing articles, etc., etc.".

"Now we have closed all of this down due to the crisis, the internet has destroyed them... Every Albanian has a Facebook account and all that... they are very organised and that is why the newspapers stopped coming out, and television and satellite channels or subscription channels, they do the greatest damage. I don’t think there is an Albanian family now that does not have a satellite antenna for Albania... And they get the satellite antenna to watch football, the men, not so much to see Albania".
Concluding Remarks - Findings - Proposals

twelfth chapter
12.1 Research findings - Summary and observations

Since the early 1990s, Greece has been facing a tremendous challenge: to live peacefully and democratically with individuals and groups that are perceived as being culturally ‘Other’. This reality has raised pressing questions to Greek society concerning the management of a socially and politically enormous ‘burden’ of otherness. The current circumstances with the arrival of refugees and immigrants in Greece from countries and regions that are at war in the Middle East has strengthened this need, once again bringing to the forefront issues of understanding, coexistence and acceptance of the new forms of cultural diversity.

Drawing on global discourses on the importance of cultural diversity, combined with discussions (in an EU context) on the acceptance and highlighting of the cultural ‘Other’, Greece adopted and implemented policies on managing and respecting otherness, which come under the concept of multicultural coexistence. These processes led to what has been called institutional Europeanisation and were accompanied by the enactment of laws to address the issues caused by migration and, more broadly, the movement and settlement of populations from other countries.

The arrival of Albanian immigrants in Greece during the 1990s, especially in the early part of the decade, was characterised by the illegal entry and presence of a large number of Albanian citizens who stayed for a long period of time under an ‘illegal’ or ‘semi-illegal’ status, until the first organised efforts were made to register these individuals through the obtainment of a residence and work permit. The procedure for acquiring Greek citizenship soon followed.

At present, Albanian immigrants constitute the largest immigrant community in Greece. The vast majority of Albanians reside in urban centres, mainly in Athens and Thessaloniki. Due to economic conditions, a certain percentage of Albanians travel to EU countries in search of work. In recent years, a number of Albanian immigrants have decided to return to their country of origin in search of safer work and economic living conditions. In several cases, this return is temporary and seems more like a pattern of repetitive mobility between the two countries than a decision to return and permanently settle.

The process of integration and inclusion is carried out on different levels of social action by different institutions, agencies and mechanisms. Immigration policy is applied on multiple levels in Greece, the competent bodies being the Ministry of Interior and the General Secretariat of Migration Policy. There is a similar organisational structure at the regional levels, with relevant Departments and Directorates within the structures of Decentralised Administration. At the level of municipal authorities, the Migrant Integration Councils function as integration support mechanisms, but have an advisory role and their activation depends on the priorities set by each municipal authority.
At the same time, the Social Integration Department of the Directorate of Migration Policy of the Ministry of Interior cooperates with the above, representing the European Fund for the Integration of Third-Country Nationals, a mechanism primarily funded by the EU. The basic processes that ensure the lawful presence of immigrants in Greece include the residence permit, the work permit and the acquisition of Greek citizenship through the naturalisation process. The relevant legislation set out in the Immigration and Social Integration Code also deals with and regulates the processes for legal residency and issues concerning the acquisition of citizenship for children of immigrants who were born in Greece or arrived in the country at a young age.

The concept of the ‘Albanian immigrant’ constitutes an identity category, the content of which is shaped through a relational process in the framework of the actions of the subjects, in which the broader institutional framework and prevailing ideas about otherness and the cultural ‘Other’ play a decisive role. From this perspective, it is not strange for one to identify both with Greece and Albania, or to believe they ‘have two homelands’. In the current circumstances, the social and economic crisis faced by Greece in recent years, as well as the arrival of a large number of refugees and new immigrants who have changed the overall immigration scene in the country, should also be included among the decisive factors that determine the way in which the above identity is experienced. The identification process varies from generation to generation and depends on factors such as age, personal experiences, social gender, as well as the place and social environment within which they reside. It has generally been found that both the ‘first’ and (more so) ‘second’ immigrant generation enjoy increasingly strong ties with Greek society where, as they say, they have spent most of their lives, or they recognise Greece as their country of birth.

The agencies of the Greek educational system make a decisive contribution and play a major role in this process through the participation of the children of Albanian immigrants in primary, secondary and tertiary education. Learning the Greek language and participating in Greek education, particularly for the second generation of immigrants, constitute one of the most important mechanisms for integration. The institution of cross-cultural schools is the most important contribution at the level of state policy. The accounts of the subjects include negative experiences of racist behaviour against them, taking place at a young age and at various levels of education. However, the immigrant experience as regards issues of education is defined by emphasis on success at school. This process contributes to the better integration of the first immigrant generation, which comes into contact with the education mechanism and its staff, and develops broader social relationships.

Children’s knowledge of the Greek language helps improve the parent’s knowledge of Greek. Especially with regard to learning the Greek language, initiatives by municipal authorities and private agencies, such as NGOs, make a substantial and active contribution towards providing suitable knowledge through linguistic and other cultural actions (organisation of theatrical performances, etc.). Learning the Albanian language on the part of the second and third immigrant generation is viewed as necessary for securing their ties to their society of origin and as a means of
communicating with their relatives in Albania. Informally, but with the support of the University (in Thessaloniki), initiatives have been implemented for many years by associations and NGOs founded by both Albanians and Greek citizens, holding weekly language lessons.

With regard to labour, one key finding is that one’s professional path is considered to be an element of integration and inclusion. The vast majority of Albanian immigrants are employed in the private sector. Many of them had or still have two jobs. The first generation of immigrants could be included in the self-employed sector. The second generation is far better trained and participates in the labour market on different terms. However, the legislation in force does not permit their inclusion in or absorption by the public sector, as the process for the acquisition of Greek citizenship must be completed.

The current economic conditions in Greece have greatly affected Albanian immigrants. Unemployment, drop in demand in the labour market, reduced and poor pay are some of the main consequences recorded in the narratives recounted by immigrants and in the quantitative data. This fact also impacts matters of insurance and insurance contributions, which are important for both the state and immigrants.

Albanian immigrants consider renting and purchasing a house to be a sign of professional and social success, as well as an element of inclusion and high standard of living. Despite bureaucratic problems, particularly in the past, and the racist and demeaning behaviour of owners, the immigrants themselves generally find that the issues concerning their accommodation have become normalised. At the same time, negative stereotypical impressions have been reduced through their presence in the regions of Thessaloniki and Athens.

With regard to issues of health and welfare, the study showed that those who legally reside in the country are insured, as are their family members, and they enjoy the same rights as Greek citizens in terms of insurance coverage and the benefits afforded to insured Greeks. However, the large extent of unregistered labour, particularly at present, has resulted in many legally residing immigrants lacking social insurance and, therefore, free access to public health services. Moreover, access to the health system is hindered by the long delays (often for many months) in the renewal of residence permits. Additionally, immigrants do not enjoy social welfare benefits, such as the healthcare booklet for the uninsured, which provides for the coverage of hospital expenses and certain welfare benefits. The experiences of Albanians with the National Health System and their comments regarding Greek physicians and health professionals, as recorded during the research, were positive.

The basic issues of Albanian immigrants in Greece, as identified during the research and expressed by our respondents, who are in their third decade of living in the country, remain the following: legalisation, acquisition of Greek citizenship by the first and especially the second generation of immigrants, and the assertion of social and welfare rights. The experiences of Albanian immigrants concerning the acquisition of Greek citizenship are negative. The process of applying and submitting the necessary legalisation documents is described in negative terms.
The collective activity and representation of Albanian immigrants is associated with defending and promoting issues regarding their stay and legal status in Greece. These issues constitute the main scope of activity of municipal and state institutions, as well as Albanian associations.

At the local level, action has been taken by municipalities whose population includes third-country nationals, and agencies and mechanisms have been created to support their presence at the level of counselling, job seeking, Greek language learning and cultural actions. In a similar manner, NGOs and cultural associations founded by Greek citizens or Albanian immigrants work in specific fields (educational, legal, cultural) with the aim of resolving issues that concern both Albanian immigrants and members of other migrant groups.

One typical example is the Municipality of Neapoli-Sykies in Thessaloniki, which has established counselling stations that provide information on jobs and print out employment cards. At the same time, structures such as the Greek language School have been organised and leaflets in many languages have been printed. These actions have contributed to the building of relationships of trust between the municipality and third-country nationals residing therein.

According to our respondents, coverage of immigrant issues in the media is virtually non-existent. Any presentation of issues concerning immigrants is deemed to be superficial, to not focus on the problems faced by immigrants and to be lacking thorough research. Moreover, they believe that the mass media tends to depict migrants stereotypically, portraying no positive elements and, thus, creating the image of a foreigner who is a threat to the public’s safety.

A general finding that is crucial to policy-making concerns the very concept of the Albanian community. The facts do not show that the term ‘Albanian community’ expresses the reality experienced by immigrants, as the characteristics of an organised form of action at the educational, social, economic and cultural level are absent. The term encompasses the element of hetero-determination more than it does the element of self-determination.

The organisation of a type of collective identity is fulfilled and carried out through the actions recorded during the research, combined with the broader socio-economic and political reality of the economic crisis and refugee issue. This research finding is also supported by the fact that there was no recording of any systematic presence of Albanian diplomatic authorities to contribute to the creation of a collective group with the characteristics of a community.

These individuals do not perceive themselves as a culturally uniform national community, since there are no mechanisms for experiencing the situation in this manner. According to respondents views, the absence of religious and other cultural restrictions has facilitated the integration of first-generation Albanian immigrants into Greek society. As regards the second generation, school appears to serve as one of the pillars of inclusion, functioning as a space of intense commingling and coexistence of cultural diversity.
12.2 Findings - Proposals

According to this study, the main characteristic of the new (post-1990) reality is the intense need to continue the process of redefining the categories that comprise what is understood as the ‘Self’ and what is perceived as the ‘Other’. The research findings confirm the situation recorded in other social frameworks and societies of the modern world, i.e. that the intense social, economic and political problems are primarily related to the dominant discourses, ideologies and perceptions that form the concepts of similarity and otherness.

Cultural proximity is a classification mechanism for every newly-arriving person living in present-day Greece and determines the positive or negative consequences of this cohabitation. This process has both legal and social extensions and parameters. As regards its legal dimension, it is linked to the application of laws and officially instituted ways of regulating order, security and social peace.

With regard to the social aspects, it contains all those non-instituted and informal practices that govern interpersonal, individual and collective relationships where the exercise of power and coercion or respect and acceptance are directly related to issues of ideology and education. Greek society and the policies of the Greek state have been organised around the long-standing view, according to which Greece identifies ‘itself’ as a homogeneous nation, i.e. a collective body founded on the common cultural characteristics of its members.

The more the concept of a national identity is organised on the basis of cultural characteristics, the more otherness is perceived as a problem and an anomaly. In this case, cultural similarity acquires high reciprocal value in issues of everyday political practice and action. The more emphasis and care is placed on the creation of models of coexistence based on social relations, the more cultural diversity and social ties highlight community, osmosis, understanding and coexistence.

These findings reflect the prevailing logic behind the perception of the culturally different, which reacts to differentiation, hinders inclusion and promotes assimilation. In this sense, our research findings pose questions regarding the margins of identification, highlighting and promotion of cultural difference and the social inclusion of those who do not identify with the dominant ‘national’ standards, but want to form part of collective life without their otherness being considered a threat to society.

Our research proposes that studying the example of the way Albanian immigrants live and become integrated in Greece can be seen as an opportunity to explore the model of Greekness in a manner that can encompass the culturally different, offering options to individual and collective subjects, and contributing to the prevention of discrimination. The issue of taking advantage of the immigrant phenomenon in order to modernise Greek society is similar (despite structural differences and different historical contexts) to the processes for the integration of refugees during the interwar period, and the creative and productive role they played in the growth of Greek society.
At the scientific/research level, what is of primary importance is the in-depth understanding of the discourses formulated in relation to otherness, their roots in everyday life, their interaction with other forms of discourse and the promotion of their socio-political support structures. At the ideological level, it is important to discuss the promotion of a culturally broader model of society and an even more dialectical relationship between citizen and state. The process of reviewing the terms of participation in the nation and enlarging the concept of Greekness has begun and is clear on all levels of social life. The emphasis placed on inclusive similarity and not on exclusive difference can serve as the basis for further change and improvement.

At the level of planning and implementation of any integration policies, the continuation and improvement of an immigrant policy that aims at the economic and social inclusion of legal immigrants includes efforts with a high cost in terms of finances and resources, and it is therefore useful to base it on continuous dialogue between the stakeholders, the competent state services, local agencies and the immigrants themselves. Under the current conditions of high unemployment and widespread crisis, this process can function as a means of monitoring and evaluating developments at large.

Such ongoing deliberations must not be limited to findings on the impact of the current situation on issues such as naturalisation, labour relations, social insurance, health, education, etc. There must be political will to plan a more cohesive and comprehensive policy that will aim at improving the institutional framework for the naturalisation of immigrants and, at the same time, aim at utilising and highlighting their contribution to the developmental prospects of the country.

The research found that the issues concerning the processes of naturalisation and issuance of residence and work permits constitute a crucial field that requires improvement. A key finding and issue of the research was the request to reduce processing times and further simplify the process, and also to make provision for second-generation immigrants who have, essentially, been raised in Greece and have attended the Greek education system.

With regard to issues of participation in public life, firstly, the right to vote in municipal elections for immigrants legally residing in municipalities would further contribute to their integration. The ability to vote is of concern to Albanian immigrants, as they consider their substantial and active ability to participate and intervene to be vital for their living conditions. Such interventions are being carried out at the local level through initiatives that begin with local municipal authorities through the invitation to participate in Migrant Integration Councils, which, however, are informal bodies with an advisory role. The utilisation of the institution of MICs and the assignment of capabilities beyond an advisory role could provide greater prospects for expected changes.

The efforts made at present by individual municipal agencies towards providing more effective services to migrants and affording them greater access to social services could become more
effective through the creation of immigrant information and service departments, which would function under the guidance of local government. In this context, there is a need to train civil servants, instructors and others working with migrants as part of these actions. The education and training of employees dealing with third-country nationals in cross-cultural communication, and the organisation of actions concerning occupational information and promotion in the labour market, as well as the provision of legal support to immigrants, would make a positive contribution.

Education for immigrants in order to learn the Greek language, and more organised and continued training in issues concerning language, cross-cultural education and bilingualism would enrich the educational process in a productive manner and contribute towards highlighting issues of shared cultural heritage and historical background. Organised measures for learning the Albanian language would have a similar effect.

According to the situation recorded, shortcomings were found in relation to legal, occupational and educational issues, for which no provisions have been made at the transnational level. There is a need to update the agreements concluded between Greece and Albania, and to create new agreements that include provisions regarding the determination of years of pensionable service in Albania and in Greece for immigrants returning to Albania. These regulations would permit immigrants to return to their homeland, if they so wish, after they have retired. At the same time, the recognition of diplomas issued by Albanian educational institutions is very important for immigrants working unofficially at jobs related to their studies. Provisions on such issues and labour legalisation will benefit both migrants and the Greek state.

With regard to the press, the importance of an organised way of utilising the different means of information was stressed. Apart from the internet and various means of social networking, which serve as channels of information, our respondents stressed the need for radio and television broadcasts in the Albanian language. They also request organised care and cooperation with municipal agencies with the aim of organising events and highlighting coexistence and cultural characteristics.

The perception and implementation of immigration policy as a social policy is considered, due to current circumstances, to be an imperative necessity. The inclusion and acceptance of the culturally ‘Other’ can serve as a component for social cohesion and prevention of the reproduction of social, cultural and symbolic dividing lines.
Communities in Greece

annex one

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