

## 1. THE CURRENT SITUATION OF ETHNIC MINORITIES IN GREECE

During the last decades, and especially following 1990, Greek society has experienced its radical transformation from an emigrant country to an immigrant one. It is characteristic that in 1991 legal immigrants numbered around 170 thousand and during the last census in 2001 they surpassed 750 thousand, reaching 7% of the total population. There are only indications on the numbers of illegal immigration although its existence is undeniable. So, for various reasons relating mostly to the existing legalisation framework for those entering the country, the total number of immigrants in Greece can only be estimated. Various approaches (see related Hellenic Migration Policy Institute - Urban Environment and Human Resources IMEPO -UEHR 2004) converge toward the estimation that the total number ranges around 900,000 persons (IMEPO-UEHR 2004, p.5), i.e. approximately 8.5% of the country's total population, up to at least 1 million persons as other sources, mostly academia and non-governmental ones, argue. All available data agree though that the increase of the immigrant population is very rapid: according to the national census, foreign residents were 2,5% in 1990 and 7% in 2001, while other estimations raise the numbers to 10%. It must also be noted that all sources agree that the legalization processes, especially regarding residence and work permits, are slow and often ineffective. Thus a number of immigrants, estimated as large, remains still today undeclared, their status considered illegal.

The majority of immigrants settle in urban areas with the highest concentration found in the Attica Prefecture (IMEPO-UEHR 2004, Chart 1, 2 and 3), where according to the 2001 Census 10% (369,973 persons) out of the total population of 3,894,573 residents are non-Greeks (Research Centre for Gender Equality-KETHI 2008). According to other calculations, approximately 50% of immigrants who enter the country reside in Attica (Operational Programme Employment and Development of Human Resources-EHRDOP 2007-2013, p. 30 based on 2005 report by Institute of Labour - Greek General Confederation of Labour - INE GSEE). According to the data derived from the 2001 Census, the largest concentration of immigrants in Attica is observed in certain suburbs, though mainly in the Municipality of Athens where it is estimated that 17% of the total population (IMEPO-UEHR 2004, p. 8) are immigrant.

Regarding the ethnic origin, it seems that the largest proportions of immigrants who reside in Attica are from Albania: 54.7% of the immigrants, as well as 5.5% of the population of Attica (KETHI 2008). It is impressive that according to estimations people from 235 different countries reside in Attica (KETHI 2008), a factor that is linked to the metropolitan character of the Attica

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region. It is further acknowledged that “in the Attica Region, all the determinant problems of labour market and employment are reproduced with varying intensity in its various local communities” (National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF) 2007-2013, p. 76 - The spatial unit of Attica), while there are also visible inter-regional inequalities (NSRF 2007-2013 p. 76 - The spatial unit of Attica) related to aspects of social exclusion, such as the gender inequalities in the labour market (EHRDOP 2007-2013, p. 29) and the existence of impoverished areas where big numbers of socially vulnerable groups reside, as is the case in Western Attica (EHRDOP 2007-2013, p. 29).