

## 5.1 Greek legalization policies

*Like Spain, Portugal and Italy, Greece has recurrently authorized large-scale legalizations. Should such policies be emulated elsewhere?*

Despite a restrictive immigration policy introduced in 1991, deeply entrenched corruption in Greek public administration has contributed significantly to the influx of immigrants (Fakiolas, 2002: 283). A principal mode of entry in 2001 and 2002 involved the use of illicit visas from the Greek consulate in Tirana (Baldwin-Edwards, 2004: 52). Greece welcomed the repatriation of Pontian Greeks, mainly from areas of the former Soviet Union, and some 150 000 entered between 1989 and 1999. Special measures and procedures also applied to ethnic Greeks from Albania. A number of ethnicity certificates issued legally by Greek consulates abroad were determined to be fraudulent (Fakiolas, 2002: 285-286).

Albanian Muslims, meanwhile, encountered harsher treatment. Some 2.4 million aliens were deported in the decade after 1990, 80 per cent of whom were Albanians (Fakiolas, 2002: 290). The unusually high incidence of expulsions and deportations reflected the weak capacity of the Greek state to regulate international migration through measures like enforcement of laws against the illegal employment of aliens, and the absence of legalization policy until 1998. Greek trade unions finally succeeded in achieving a legalization policy, but it was poorly administered (Papantoniou-Frangouli and Leventi, 2000). Some 370 000 aliens applied, but many others did not know about the procedure or declined to participate, mainly out of fear of expulsion. This held particularly true of Albanians. In addition, many found it difficult to find jobs covered by social security or employers willing to declare them to the social security administration and thereby be compelled to pay payroll taxes (Papantoniou-Frangouli and Leventi, 2002: 955). The legalization nevertheless increased the non-Greek, non-EU immigrant population by a factor of fourteen (Fakiolas, 2002: 292).

Another legalization begun in 2001, which resulted in 228 000 permits being granted. The denunciations of Greek legalization policies are well summarized in this

quote, “Criticisms of the Greek experience with regularization have been wide reaching. The consensus is that the programmes have been messy, with poor and contradicting data, incompetent government oversight and no clear overarching management strategy or policy for immigrant integration” (Levinson, 2005b: 4). Nevertheless, a new legalization was planned in 2006 (OECD, 2006).

Legalization procedures enabled millions of migrants to achieve legal status, but did not alter the underlying processes that foster illegal migration, hence the need for recurrent legalization policies. The Southern European variant of legalization has functioned more as a kind of *de facto* temporary foreign worker policy limiting the social and economic mobility of workers who legalized. As a result, many legalized aliens lapse into illegality. Nevertheless, some saw in Southern European legalization a model for emulation, inspiring advocacy of an earned legalization in the USA in 2006. If it had been adopted, the proposal would have kept applicants in temporary foreign worker status for a minimum of six years.

## References

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