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SOCIOECONOMIC INTEGRATION OF ALBANIAN IMMIGRANTS IN GREECE

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Référence à la session / reference to the session

B5 - Migration

Résumé / Summary

Immigration is a socioeconomic phenomenon that started in antiquity, is present today and will not cease to exist in the future. Several researchers, academics, institutions and states have been concerned with this particular issue. There are different types of immigration:

external and internal, involuntary and voluntary, primary and secondary, incomplete and complete, innovative and conservative and finally short-term and long-term. While analysing migration flows, the ethnologist Robert Gordon Latham, made a distinction between two types of migration: primary and secondary. Mayo-Smith distinguished between external and internal migration. Sounders made a further distinction, that of continental and intercontinental migration, considering either the desire or the intention of the immigrant as the cause of movement (Psaraki, Hadjidaki, 2014). J. Isaac includes involuntary migration in the broader term of 'migration', thus differentiating voluntary from involuntary migration. Finally, W. Peterson argues for two types of migration, namely innovative and conservative, and holds the view that these types of migration are related to the impact of migration on the receiving county (Psaraki, Hadjidaki, 2014).

The integration of immigrants in the receiving society is an issue of concern for several academics and researchers (Katarachia, Pitoska, 2014). The immigrant's attempt to be integrated in the receiving society can be divided in some stages (Papaioannou, 2003:1982).

In the first stage, the immigrant arrives in the receiving country and tries to face the first, new and difficult circumstances. During this stage, the degree of integration is rather limited and the immigrant is under the impression that her/his stay in the receiving country will be short-term.

In the second stage, the immigrant reconsiders her/his plans for returning to the country of origin, faces difficulties more actively and, depending on the employment status, she/he defines her/his social status.

In the third stage, the conflict between the problems faced by the immigrant and her/his plans to return to the country of origin subsides. During this stage, the immigrant starts changing her/his way of life.

In the fourth stage, the immigrant has lived in the receiving country for at least 20 years and it is the stage during which the immigrant struggles to achieve the best possible circumstances and opportunities for her/his children and for her/his future pension.

The School of Chicago has called this settlement procedure 'race relations cycle'. The cycle consists of four stages: a) competition, b) conflict, c) accommodation and d) assimilation, during which national differences disappear (Martikainen, 2005).

The approaches discussed above are inextricably linked to the causes of the immigration phenomenon. Economic growth is the main, motivating and driving factor. Integration is divided in a) economic integration (access to employment, economic independence, etc.), b) social integration (access to social insurance, public goods, etc.) and c) civil integration (active participation in politics). Along with the aforementioned distinctions, there is also the dimension of interculturalism, which corresponds to cultural integration (Kontis, 2001).

Immigration has always been an ongoing process in Greece, either as a country of origin or as a receiving country. During the 90s until today, Greece has received a considerable number of immigrants from the neighbouring country of Albania.

The subject of the present paper is to estimate the degree of integration of Albanian immigrants in the Greek community and economy, the impact of the economic crisis on the immigrants' lives and their future expectations. The subject has been explored through a relevant literature review and a field research. The field research was carried out during the first trimester of 2016, by the means of questionnaires administered to Albanian immigrants living and working in Greece, and more particularly in the Prefecture of Larisa. 100 questionnaires were completed via personal interviews. The statistical processing of the research's results, concludes that Albanian immigrants have been considerably integrated in both the Greek society and economy. The research also provides insights regarding the immigrants' degree of appreciation of services, their expectations, as well as the difficulties that the economic crisis has brought about in several aspects of their lives.

Keywords: Border economy, Albanian immigrants, socioeconomic integration, expectations, economic crisis

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