

## **POSTCARE**

# **Posting of third country nationals in care services - the current state of play and scenarios for the future**

## **National Report of Greece**

### **Organisations: University of Thessaly, Center for Education and Innovation**

## Introduction

Greece is a country that always received high migration flows, due to its geographical position in Southeastern Europe, surrounded to the east by the Aegean Sea and to the south by the Cretan and the Libyan Seas. The entry to the country of Greece from third countries (and non-European countries) is easier comparing to other EU countries. This leads to a very large number of migrants illegally entering the country but also refugees, a minor percentage of which apply for asylum in the country while many of them intend to move to Northern European countries afterwards. The country has gone through many migration crises and immigration is described as an increasingly important political issue in Greece. Migrants in Greece are usually employed despite the high levels of unemployment of the country. This happens because of the nature of the economic activities and the existence of large informal economy. The agricultural sector, livestock, the large number of small- scale family businesses offer jobs to low skilled migrants, who need money and usually do not know Greek so that can work anywhere else.

In the project “Posting of third-country nationals in care services- the current state of play and scenarios for the future”, from now on “POSTCARE”, we are doing research about posting and employability of third-country nationals in the care sector of the country. The following report summarizes the findings from the research with questionnaires and the focus group research seminar that were conducted by the cooperation of University of Thessaly and Center for Education and Innovation.

The questionnaires distributed to third-country nationals aimed to collect information about their working and living conditions in Greece as well as their legal status of stay in the country. We have managed to collect 15 responses in total.

The focus group seminar of Greece was organized with the cooperation of the two Greek partners University of Thessaly and Center for Education and Innovation at 9/02/2022. Both partners have used their network of contacts, associated partners and stakeholders to raise awareness about the project POSTCARE and to engage the most suitable experts and participants to this event. Following the pandemic restrictions and given the fact that it would be hard to find a suitable venue for all our participant, as some of them were from different cities of Greece, we decided to host this event online. The event was hosted in the Zoom platform and we have recruited 18 participants that are experts in the fields that are examined by the project.

## Live-in care – description of actors.

It is very usual since the 1990 where the first large flow of migration came to Greece that migrants are working and living in the houses of local families or elderly people. This was usually a deal between the two sides as migrants needed accommodation and work and the families need their services at home. This type of work was



usually undeclared, and this happened also because the entrance and stay of the migrants in the country was unregistered. Requirement for working legally in Greece is to have legal residence in the country. In some cases, the family or the elderly developed bonds with the caregiver and his/her family and in those cases they try to help people make their stay and work legal, which is a very demanding procedure. The senior population in Greece is rapidly increasing and there is always need for caregivers that could provide services and live in the elderly's house. This happens because the mentality of Greek people is not very close to the types of community cohabitation, sharing homes or living in elderly centers. Elderly people especially when they own a house or property, insist on staying in that even when it is not in a proper condition (in rural, mountainous or marginalized areas, homes without proper heating or facilities, lift ect) or when themselves are facing difficulties to serve their needs. The general lifestyle does not favor intergenerational solidarity and families are trying to find alternative solutions to ensure well being of the senior members.

## Legal and institutional framework of the sending and the receiving Member State (Greece)

Requirement for working legally in Greece is to have legal residence in the country. The documents that evident the legal entry and stay in the country can justify any form of employment that is declared. In the answers retrieved from the questionnaires we have identified 3 categories of TCNs , the ones that have entered Greece with an analogue passport, the ones that have obtained a Schengen visa and the ones that entered with ID. Those documents were declared from the respondents as evident documents related to their stay and employment in the country and the Host household. Many of them mentioned that they do not have a written working contract. Schengen visa allows a person to travel to any members of the Schengen Area, per stays up to 90 days for tourism or business purposes. The same applies to the entrance in the country with ID as a tourist. This means that a TCN could have entered the country with those documents, employed with contract or not afterwards, but becomes illegal if after 90 days he/she does not apply for a Greek visa. From the responses obtained we have concluded that a lot of employers due to the status of the stay, provide a job to TNCs but remain on unregistered forms of work and in many cases TCNs are not fully aware of their rights and available options.

## Comparative analysis of employment conditions of EU-citizens and TCNs in live-in care services

In the majority of cases third country nationals in live-in care services are facing worst working conditions that EU citizens and difficulties that are hard to identify and map, due to the high percentage of undeclared work. In many cases TCN s as caregivers are expected to provide services all day long, they do not take their days off work or being asked to provide additional services in the host house as cleaning, cooking ect. This means that many of their rights are not considered by the employers and especially when there is not any working contract, this cannot be identified. Many of the respondents in the Questionnaire distributed in Greece, declared that they do not have a written working contact, which raises many issues for their general employment conditions but also the living conditions of them, or/and their families in Greece as a sequence to that. The most important thing to highlight is that posted workers have the same rights with EU citizens and unfortunately there is a huge "gap" in information, but also other barriers, that lead to exploitation of workers in the live in sector.



## Conclusions from the research phase

During our focus group research seminar we have discussed thoroughly about the grey zone in the topic of posting of third-country nationals in the care sector. Our invited experts, representatives from social organisations, public stakeholders, medical staff in public hospitals or facilities hosting immigrants and refugees had many stories to share about cases of unregistered work, in which there are limited measures that can be applied for the protection of both sides, TCNs and elderly that usually need their services. The requirements for working legally in Greece is for the TCNs to have legally entered the country and to be registered afterwards and during their stay to the country. Undeclared work is usually a consequence of unregistered stay. The cases of unregistered stay in Greece have been increasing during the last decade due to the rising migration flows in our country mainly because of its geographical position. Migrants in many cases enter Greece illegally or exceed the timeline of their VISA with the intention to move to other EU countries. In many cases this is impossible, so many of them are staying for a long time in Greece without being registered and are “leaded” to undeclared work in order to ensure proper living conditions. There is a high demand for care services in Greece and there are many factors contributing to that. Population aging, insufficiency and in some areas (rural, marginalized, islands) lack of suitable facilities to host elderly population, high cost of the private facilities, our country’s mentality about elderly care have led to a very high demand for live in caregivers. During the focus group research seminar, a doctor highlighted that taking care of an elderly is a very difficult and stressful job, especially when the caregiver has to live in the elderly’s household. She mentioned that there is currently an increasing demand for caregivers and usually Greek citizens are not willing to be hired as caregivers despite the very high rate of unemployment in the country.

## Problems and obstacles in posting of TCNs caregivers

There are many problems that were mentioned in the focus group research seminar regarding the posting of TCNs caregivers in Greece. The legal framework of posting is not very widely known and it is hard to distinguish those cases from immigrants, refugees and unregistered people that work in the live in sector. The activity of several organisations that illegally bring people to our country or provide them with forged documents is hard to be mapped and authorities are struggling to eliminate those phenomena. The undesired result is that TCNs in many cases do not receive the proper navigation, assistance, and social benefits to which they are entitled, and their integration is not successful. Our experts and participants mentioned that integration is a multifactorial issue but we need to define some major criteria in order to estimate the current status and the obstacles that need to be addressed. Many participants have mentioned that TCNs do not receive proper navigation on the documentation they need to have and they are not introduced by the relevant authorities to the EU framework, so as to be aware of their rights and obligations during their stay. Lack of effective and detailed information services, along with the language barriers that in many cases exist constitute an isolating environment for the TCNs. Some very important paradigms about the aforementioned challenges were mentioned from two participants representing the Labour institute and a public health facility. TCNs that have a registered stay in Greece, employed or not, have access to the public health services of the host area and should be treated until their health is out of danger. So, it is very usual that they visit the public hospitals whenever they face a health problem, it is very rare to have a private health insurance, and doctors should treat them equally as all other EU citizens. The main challenges mentioned apart from the very usual language barriers, were the lack of documentation and information about their medical health history and in the cases that those exist they are usually not in English. Doctors are called to deal with those problems while in some cases time is very limited and



the patient's life may be in danger. This situation is even worse since the outburst of the pandemic, after which the Greek public health system is overloaded.

## Best practices and policy recommendations.

At the end of the focus groups research seminar, we summarised the key points discussed and highlighted that the care sector in Greece has many needs at the moment, that are partly covered with third-country nationals. We have acknowledged that these needs will become imperative as the average population is getting older. In parallel, some experts in the field of migration, working in NGOs and public Authorities, assured us that the migration flows are remaining to very high levels in our country and even if people are intended to move to western Europe, the legal framework is restricting, and people are staying in Greece for a very long time.

Those acknowledgements have led the discussion to the need to come up with solutions and best practices for the safe and legal entrance, stay and also the integration of third-country nationals to our society, as equal members and valuable contributors to the wellbeing of our families and the vulnerable groups like senior population.

Regarding the topic of the entrance, on the occasion of the recent incidents in our borders, described as “pushbacks”, with many people being in danger, we have acknowledged that it is a hard political issue that has to be resolved in the EU level, for the sake of peoples' lives. Countries should cooperate more for the management of migration flows, to promote equal responsibility of the EU members to this issue, in order for the host countries to be protected and integration of people to become easier. Third country nationals that come to the country as caregivers should be aware that they do have the same rights as all other employers as EU citizens. It is very usual that people are not fully informed about their rights and options and are becoming victims of exploitation. So, the creation of awareness strategies, the support of TCNs and especially the vulnerable groups within them, is a high priority and duty we have as EU citizens.

Language barriers were also mentioned in many parts of the discussion, and we have concluded that language sessions and free lessons should be provided with the cooperation of responsible regional or local authorities and other organisations (NGOs) active in the field of migration. Language is a very important factor for the integration of those groups and in some cases TCNs are restricted from many activities due to that, especially when they do not speak English. Relative to that, some participants highlighted that language barriers often are a problem when TCNs are visiting a public Authority or for example a public hospital to receive medical services. It would be extremely efficient, during the current circumstances of the pandemic, if public hospitals could provide interpreters (based on population composition) that could facilitate communication between TCNs and medical staff, especially when there is time pressure. Some NGOs are already helping with this problem, providing escorts that are usually volunteers that can speak several languages, but this problem should be resolved with a more formal way.

In general, it was mentioned and agreed that provision is the most important factor to eliminate the problems that could arise after the congestion of several areas with migrant and TCNs population which are not able to be integrated smoothly to the local community. By provision we mean the exploitation of our former experience, the monitoring of the population composition and the prioritization of the supporting measures that are mostly needed at every stage.

