

## NEW TRENDS-TYPES OF MIGRANTS TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE CITIES

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### **Abstract**

*This specific study focuses on the evolution of the migration-refugee phenomenon in the light of the crisis that Europe has faced from 2020 to the present, with an emphasis on the situation in Greece. In particular, special categories of refugees and migrants were investigated, such as the case of unaccompanied minors, new forms and trends-types of migration such as environmental migrants and digital nomads. Regarding the methodology, the method followed included the critical analysis of international and Greek bibliography and articles and the utilization of all available information from studies by research organizations, EU statistics and reports by international organizations and publications in scientific journals. The survey conducted among Greek citizens aims to review their opinions and perceptions regarding the evolution of the phenomenon towards sustainable cities.*

**Key-words:** *Migration-Refugee Issue, Unaccompanied Minors, Environmental Migrants, Digital Nomads, Sustainable Cities*

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Population movement is a timeless phenomenon, multidimensional and multilevel. In ancient times, people moved mainly for reasons of survival. They chose areas with a warmer climate, richer in food and more security against enemies. In today's era, in addition to the search for security due to increasing armed conflicts, there are other reasons for movement, such as the reunification of minors with their families and the assurance of better living conditions, the climate crisis and new flexible forms of work (Guillot, 2024). Our era is characterized by the transformation of the international system from unipolar to multipolar, as the omnipotence of the USA decreases and new other superpowers emerge. In this context, a systemic competition between them is observed to acquire more power (Waltz, 2011). As a result, we are experiencing a period of intense instability and conflict worldwide, where many people, adults and children, choose to flee to safer countries (Red Cross, 2019). At the same time, the climate crisis facing the planet demonstrates that in the near future an increasing number of people are expected to move as extreme weather events will affect their living conditions (European Commission, 2022:1). At the same time, the rapid development of technology is also bringing changes to traditional forms of work, creating a new category of migrants, digital nomads who constantly move from country to country, as they can work from anywhere, combining flexibility in work and their desire to travel (Aroles et al, 2020). These new conditions create an additional challenge for modern societies that are called upon, in

addition to traditional forms of migration, to manage new types of refugees - migrants (World Migration Report, 2024). A survey is being conducted to investigate the knowledge and opinions of participating public servants on new types of refugees - migrants towards new sustainable cities and the analysis of the data. Finally, the conclusions arising from the analysis and the relevant proposals with which the study is completed are presented.

## **2. MIGRATION – REFUGEE CRISIS**

The refugee issue came to the forefront of Greek and European attention in 2015 with the hundreds of thousands of third-country nationals from Asia and Africa flocking to the EU periphery, with the aim of moving to the countries of northern and central Europe. It was the largest and most pressing refugee exodus to European territory since World War II. Furthermore, as refugee flows mixed with migratory flows, they created a complex problem. The graph below shows the huge increase in the number of illegal crossings that Europe had to deal with during the crisis (FRONTEX, 2016). The main reasons that contributed to the flight of hundreds of thousands of citizens from their homes were the war in Syria, the near-civil war in Afghanistan, the attacks by extremist Islamists in Somalia, the authoritarian regime in Eritrea, the precarious situation in Iraq due to the armed conflicts within it between the various militias, military organizations and terrorist groups, and the adverse socio-economic conditions in Pakistan and Bangladesh (FRONTEX, 2016). In addition to the circumstances prevailing in the countries of origin, the main cause of the refugee crisis was the adverse economic and social conditions encountered by refugees in the first host countries, such as Lebanon, Turkey, Egypt and Jordan, where the respective states, either by choice or due to the prevailing economic conditions, did not allow for their smooth social life and economic survival. As a result, the refugee crisis was transferred to the EU countries, as people who left their countries of origin were not satisfied with the conditions they encountered in the first host countries and decided to follow the path to Europe for a better future (UNHCR, 2023). Greece, which has long been the main gateway to Europe due to its geographical proximity to areas of instability, received the largest number of arrivals. During the two years 2015-2016, it is estimated that 1,200,000 people arrived on the islands and approximately 7,000 in the Evros region via the land border with Turkey. In particular, refugees and migrants entered either by sea from the coast of Turkey to the nearest Greek islands such as Lesbos, Chios, Samos, Kos and Leros, or by land from Edirne via Evros. The majority of those entering came from Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq (Special Secretariat for Communication Planning on Migration and Refugee Policy, 2017). The massive flow of mixed flows, mainly of applicants for international protection and, secondarily, of irregular migrants from the Middle East, the conflict-ridden regions of Asia and Africa and North Africa, has led to the exceeding of the limits of Greece's reception and accommodation capacity. Consequently, this huge number of inflows has given the phenomenon characteristics of a humanitarian crisis (Gemi and Feta, 2024). At the end of 2023, according to estimates, 117.3 million people worldwide were forced to flee their homes within and outside their countries, due to conflict, violence, political or economic instability, as well as due to climate change and other disasters (IDMC, 2024). This number includes 68.3 million internally displaced persons, 31.6 million refugees and persons in refugee-like situations, 6.9 million asylum seekers, 5.8 million other people in need of international protection under the mandate of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and 6 million Palestine refugees under the mandate of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (IOM, 2024). Of the internally displaced, an estimated 9.1 million people were displaced within Sudan, the largest internally displaced population ever reported. This was followed by Syria (7.2 million) and Congo (6.7 million) (IDMC, 2024).

Compared to a decade ago, the total number of refugees worldwide has more than tripled. The largest proportion of refugees worldwide were from Afghanistan and Syria. They were followed by Venezuela (6.1 million refugees and other people in need of international protection) and Ukraine (6 million refugees) (IOM, 2024). According to a report by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the number of people migrating globally has increased from 84 million in 1970 to 281 million in 2020. Taking into account the growth of the world's population, the proportion of migrants has increased from 2.3% to 3.6% in fifty years. (UNHCR, 2023).

### **3. ILLEGAL BORDER CROSSINGS IN THE EU – ASYLUM APPLICATIONS**

In the first 11 months of 2024, irregular crossings of the EU's external borders decreased by 40%, to 220,700, according to data collected by the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex). This significant drop is mainly due to large reductions in flows in the Western Balkans (-80%) and on the Central Mediterranean routes (-60%) (FRONTEX, 2024). The Central Mediterranean region continued to decline in 2024, with irregular migrants limited to 62,000 in the period January-November. The reduction in flows is largely due to preventive measures taken by the Tunisian and Libyan authorities in the context of restricting smugglers (Politis, 2025). At the same time, different routes are showing increasing pressure elsewhere. In particular, flows from West Africa recorded 41,800 crossings in the period January – November 2024, which is the highest number since 2009 (FRONTEX, 2024). Security issues and the existing humanitarian situation in the West African region led to the large number of migrants. Smugglers in this region, in order to make more profits, directed even more people on a dangerous journey to the Canary Islands (Velazquez, 2024). The largest increase in flows was recorded in 2024 at the eastern land borders with a 200% increase to 16,530 arrivals. The largest percentage of people detected on this route were Ukrainian men of military age (FRONTEX, 2024). According to the latest available data from FRONTEX, the Aegean route recorded an 18% increase, raising the number of migrants to 64,000 in the period January – November 2024. The dangerous sea crossing of the Mediterranean, in which smugglers' rings lead thousands of people, continued to have a devastating toll with over 2,200 lives lost at sea in 2024, according to UNICEF estimates (CNN Greece, 2025).

In terms of asylum applications, in 2023, there were 1,048,880 first-time asylum seekers (non-EU citizens) seeking international protection in EU countries. This is an increase of 20.1% compared to 2022 (873,680) and is the highest number since the peaks recorded during the refugee crisis related to the war in Syria in 2015 (FRONTEX, 2024). People who applied for asylum for the first time in the EU represented the vast majority (92.9%) of the total number of asylum seekers (1,129,640) recorded in 2023. Most were men, with the 18-34 age group accounting for 41.7% of the total. The percentages of boys and girls under 14 years of age were similar, with more boys (5.1%) than girls (1.5%) aged 14-17 (FRONTEX, 2024).

In terms of destination countries, Germany accounted for 31.4% of all asylum seekers in the EU, with 329,035 applicants registered in 2023. This was followed by Spain (160,460 or 15.3%), France (145,095 or 13.8%) and Italy (130,565 or 12.4%). The lowest number of asylum seekers was observed in 2023 in Hungary (30), Slovakia (370), Malta (490) and Lithuania (510) (EUAA, 2024). Among EU countries, the number of first-time asylum seekers increased in 13 countries in 2023. The largest relative increases, compared to the previous year, were recorded in Latvia (+198.2%), Greece (+98.8%), Italy (+69.1%) and Germany (+51.1%). The largest decreases were observed in Austria (-49.3%), Denmark (-47.4%), Malta (-46.4%), Cyprus (-46.0%) and Lithuania (-43.6%) (FRONTEX, 2024).

A total of 48,721 refugees and migrants arrived in 2023, an increase of 159% compared to

2022 (18,780). Of these, 41,561 crossed the Aegean Sea and 7,160 crossed the Evros River, according to UNHCR data (Gemi and Feta, 2024). In 2024, the situation worsened with the number of migrants and refugees increasing by 79% to 61,480, the highest number since 2019, according to an analysis of UNHCR data (UNHCR, 2024). The majority of the newly arrived individuals were from Syria (31%), Afghanistan (20%), Palestine (16%), followed by Somalia (6%) and Eritrea (4%) (Aida, 2023). According to data from the Ministry of Immigration and Asylum, in the first ten months of 2024, the Asylum Service recorded 54,315 new asylum applications and 4,184 previous requests, with the majority of applicants being from Syria (30.6%), Afghanistan (19.4%), Egypt (10%), Turkey (6.2%), Palestine (3.6%), Iraq (3.5%) and Pakistan (3.2%) (YMA, 2024).

#### **4. UNACCOMPANIED MINORS**

In Europe, the influx of unaccompanied minors began in some Member States, such as Germany, as early as the late 1970s. Before 1990, they also appeared in the United Kingdom and France, in the late 1990s in Spain, while in the 2000s, Belgium and Ireland were added to the host countries (Pompidou, 2022).

In Greece, unaccompanied minors appeared with the first migratory flows in 1990 and are the so-called children of the traffic lights. Specifically, after the dissolution of the former Yugoslavia and the crisis faced by neighboring Albania in 1990, the country welcomed a large number of unaccompanied minors for about a decade (Teloglou, 2008). The UN High Commissioner for Refugees is seeking a mechanism to identify unaccompanied children, as many of them give false dates of birth to the authorities in the hope that they will not be stopped and thus continue their journey to the country of destination. Some are still unaware of the procedures for providing them with assistance. The majority of them come from Afghanistan and Syria, followed by Egypt, Pakistan, Iraq, Morocco, Bangladesh, Somalia, Sudan and Algeria (EASO, 2019). Unaccompanied minors are usually boys between 12 and 17 years old. Younger children rarely come alone, but they can often get lost with their parents during the journey or traffickers choose to separate them (NCSS, 2021). A minor is a third-country national or a stateless person under eighteen (18) years of age (Directive 2013/33/EU of the European Parliament).

An unaccompanied minor is a person under eighteen years of age who enters Greece without the accompaniment of an adult who is responsible for him or her in accordance with Greek law, and for as long as the care of him or her has not been assigned to an adult. (Article 2, paragraph 1 of Law 4636/2019, A'169).

“Separated minor” or “separated minor” is a person under the age of 18 who does not enjoy parental care, but is accompanied by an adult relative, who essentially takes care of him (article 41 par. i of law 4636/2019).

The term “international protection” includes both refugee status and subsidiary protection status based on the Geneva Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the New York Protocol, as ratified by law 3989/1959 (A' 201) and law 389/1968 (A' 125) respectively, as well as Directive 2011/95/EU. (EASO, 2016).

A guardian is a person appointed by the competent public authority to assist a minor who is a third-country national or a stateless person and who is deprived of parental care in his or her affairs, is independent of the authorities responsible for determining the legal residence status, ensures the best interests and general well-being of the minor and supplements the minor’s legal capacity, where necessary (EASO, 2019).

A representative is understood to be the person or organization designated by the locally competent Juvenile or First Instance Prosecutor in order to assist and represent an unaccompanied minor in the procedures provided for asylum procedures and reception

conditions, as these have been incorporated into national legislation with the aim of ensuring the best interests of the child and completing the minor's legal capacity where necessary (Law 4636/2019).

## **5. THE EXTENT OF THE PHENOMENON IN EUROPE**

In 2023, based on available data, the total number of unaccompanied minors who applied for asylum in EU countries for the first time reached 41,525 people, an increase of 4.0% compared to 2022 (39,915).

The largest number of unaccompanied minors was reported by Germany (15,270), the Netherlands (6,045) and Austria (5,055). More than 2,000 unaccompanied minors applied for asylum for the first time in Bulgaria (3,845), Greece (2,635), Belgium (2,550), Spain (2,505) and Italy (2,205). Among these eight EU countries, the number of unaccompanied minors increased in five compared to 2022, with the highest absolute increase observed in Germany (7,995 more applicants). The highest decrease was recorded for Austria (8,160 fewer applicants) (EUAA, 2024).

According to the statistical data of the Greek Government, in December 2024 the estimated number of unaccompanied minors in Greece amounted to 2414, of which 103 are separated minors who are accompanied by an adult who is not their primary guardian by law. In terms of their demographic characteristics, 89% are boys, 11% are girls and only 15% are under 15 years of age. Regarding their place of residence, 1372 A.A. reside in accommodation centers, 209 in semi-autonomous living apartments, 151 in emergency accommodation structures, 506 in reception and identification centers, 176 unaccompanied minors in controlled accommodation structures for asylum seekers (YMA, 2024). In relation to the countries of origin, 45% come from Egypt, 16% from Somalia, 16% from Syria, 10% from Afghanistan, 3% from Pakistan and 9% from other countries. It is observed that compared to 2023, the number of unaccompanied minors from Egypt shows a large increase, while on the contrary, unaccompanied minors from Somalia have been limited. Over time, according to data from the National Center for Social Solidarity, from 2018 to 2021, unaccompanied minors from Afghanistan and Pakistan, who in 2018 presented the highest percentages, have decreased (SGVP, 2024).

Also, the percentage of unaccompanied minor girls more than doubled between 2018 and 2024, going from 6% to 14%, while the percentage of unaccompanied minors under 14 years of age has fluctuated steadily between 7% and 8% during the same period. Finally, over time, the evolution of the number of unaccompanied minors in Greece has shown a decreasing trend. However, with regard to the migration and even more so the refugee phenomenon, it is estimated that official statistics represent only a small part of the real dimensions of the populations (Aida, 2023).

The legal categorization of unaccompanied children, that is, whether they are unaccompanied, separated, beneficiaries of international protection, is a very important feature of their protection. The most important thing, however, is that they are children. In this context, the rules of law at international, European and national levels create a protective regime for minors. (Mentzelopoulou, 2022).

## **6. ENVIRONMENTAL REFUGEES**

A new phenomenon has been observed more and more frequently in recent years at a global level. Large numbers of people, mainly due to climate change, are leaving their homes in search of a better life (FAPESP, 2023). The extent and complexity of forced population movements as a consequence of environmental factors such as deforestation, desertification,

global warming, natural disasters, nuclear and industrial accidents has created a new category of people in need of special legal protection, environmental refugees (The Nansen Conference, 2011).

Migration and displacement caused by environmental factors could in the future take on unprecedented proportions. Projections on the extent of displacement estimate that the total number of people displaced according to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the body tasked by the United Nations to investigate the causes and impacts of the climate crisis, will be 150 million environmental refugees by 2050 (Siscou, 2021).

Regarding the legal status of these people, there is currently no specific legal framework guaranteeing assistance or protection. The Geneva Refugee Convention adopted by the United Nations in 1951, as amended by the New York Protocol (31-01-1967), due to the historical context of its signing, does not cover environmental refugees (IOM Strategic Plan 2024-2028, 2023).

At the European level, today when the cohesion of the Union is being tested by the massive influx of immigrants and refugees, the recognition of a special regime in favor of environmental refugees is not on the horizon (European Commission, 2022:1).

However, there are some initiatives at the international level with the contribution of activists, Non-Governmental Organizations and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, in order to develop a framework of guidelines or a tool that can be applied in cases of external displacement beyond those covered by the existing legal framework and in particular in cases of forced displacement of populations due to climate change and natural disasters (Monsalve, (2023). The Geneva Convention, adopted by the United Nations in 1951, does not include environmental refugees (Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, 1991). It was signed after the war in a historical context different from today. According to the Convention, a refugee is someone who is persecuted “because of his race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or his agreement with some political view”. There is no mention anywhere of people who are forced to move for environmental reasons (Marshall, 2011). In Greece, the majority of refugees belong to the “Convention refugees” and “de facto refugees”. The latter enjoy a weak, uncertain and temporary protection regime which is now applied by most EU countries (Siskou, 2021). According to another view, the legal protection of these people should be released from the provisions of the Geneva Convention, thus avoiding the need to change the national legislation of the states and be based on a new framework founded on environmental law (Gizari, 2020). The theorists of Law in this effort met at the Limoges conference in 2005 and proceeded to adopt a text with references to basic human goods, such as the right to life (European Convention on Human Rights, 1950), to human dignity and health, to the right not to be expelled, to the right to work and to family reunification as well as to social benefits. The convention, based on the principles of prevention and precaution enshrined in international environmental law for the response to ecological disasters, requires states to implement them by providing legal protection to this category of people, otherwise their international responsibility for an internationally wrongful act will be established (SCR 689, 1993).

## **7. DIGITAL NOMADS**

In 1997, the book “Digital Nomad” by Makimoto and Manners was published, which, triggered by the development of technology, described a new working reality, which at that time was considered very distant. The need for work combined with the human desire to travel, brought back the ancient practice of nomadism with modern features (Makimoto, Manners, 1997).

The definition and evolution of digital nomadism cannot be separated from technological

development. This type of worker is initially observed in teleworking positions, which created a wave of travelers in Thailand in the 1980s. Then digital nomads appeared in the USA in the 2000s, when the first programmers started working from their homes (Aroles et al, 2020).

According to a very broad and commonly accepted definition, a “digital nomad” could be described as someone who works exclusively online using technology, while also traveling either within or outside the country, and more specifically, a person who, in the above context, constantly changes their place of residence. These workers do not have a fixed place and working hours and are completely detached from a fixed work base (Whiting and Symon, 2020). To better illustrate the difference between digital nomads and another similar category that is often confused, telecommuters, it is stated that the term digital nomad implies the element of travel (Aroles, Bonneau, & Bhankaraully, 2022).

The trend of digital nomads is on the rise globally (McDonagh, 2021). According to the research study by MBO Partners, the number of digital nomads in the US has been increasing continuously since 2019. As expected, the health crisis with the Covid-19 pandemic acted as a catalyst, accelerating the new work reality, as all countries, even the least technologically advanced, adopted flexible forms of employment such as teleworking (Lund, Madgavkar, Manyika, & Smit, 2020). The highest increase was observed in 2020, where 10.9 million digital nomads were recorded, as opposed to 7.3 million in 2019 — an increase of 49% (State of Independence in America, 2019). In 2021, the number of digital nomads increased by an additional 42% compared to 2020, with 15.5 million Americans identifying as digital nomads (MBO, 2024).

Although not as dramatically as in the early years of the pandemic, the numbers continued to rise steadily in 2022, when 16.9 million Americans reported working as digital nomads. The data shows that the overall increase reached 131% from the pre-pandemic years (2019) to 2022. Following the upward trend, 2023 saw a 2.3% increase in the number of American digital nomads compared to 2022 — translating to approximately 17.3 million people currently identifying as digital nomads in the US. This was followed by a further 4.6% increase in 2024, now standing at 18.1 million (State of Independence in America, 2024).

The biggest change in work, however, concerns the creation of a third category of migrants, digital nomads, and this is because they are completely detached from the place. They can work from anywhere, from their home, from another city, country, continent (Choudhury et al., 2019).

The conditions that gave impetus to the digital nomad trend were initially the fluidity of work, the flexibility of the workplace and, above all, the desire for a balance between work and free time (Orel, 2019). In particular, an important factor in the development of digital nomadism is the beneficial situation for both businesses and employees. Companies have the ability to attract and retain top talents who are motivated by this way of life, and employees work when and where they want (MBO, 2024). The main reasons for digital nomadism are the sense of freedom of being able to work from anywhere, the strong desire to travel, and the desire to get to know different cultures and lifestyles (Hemsley et al., 2020).

The reasons why people were involved in digital nomadism were also presented to us in his research by Schlagwein (2018): Of course, there was the desire to travel, which broadens horizons, but there was also the need to socialize with people with similar interests and concerns. In addition, an important reason is the reduced cost of living in some countries such as Thailand, Portugal, etc., which even with travel, was much lower than the cost of living in their country of origin. Without the low cost, many survey participants reported that their income would not be enough to support this lifestyle, they would have to work much longer, and their quality of life would be worse. Furthermore, a country with a low cost of living is a competitive environment for starting a new business (Schlagwein, 2018).

Although digital nomads report high levels of satisfaction, their work situation faces

some difficulties (Sutherland et al., 2019). The top challenges reported by digital nomads are financial stress (27%), separation from family and friends (26%) (Thompson, 2018), their safety (24%), time differences that make work difficult (23%), and professional burnout (21%). These challenges have existed over time, however, the number of digital nomads reporting them has decreased since 2020, mainly due to the relaxation of pandemic measures (Michos, 2021). Regarding the type of their work, (Vincej, 2022), according to a 2022 survey, 37.8% are freelancers and 33.1% are company employees who work remotely. 10.2% are company owners and 7.9% are innovative entrepreneurs. 29.9% are active in the IT sector and 15.7% are involved in marketing (Katrana, 2022). The reduction in tourism revenues caused by the pandemic has led several countries, taking into account the forecasts for the high number of digital nomads in the coming years<sup>6</sup>, to choose and adopt a policy to attract them, providing significant economic incentives (Corbley, 2021). According to a survey by a body that provides information on global visas, the best destinations for digital nomads were sought, prioritizing some elements that directly affect the lifestyle of a digital nomad. These factors include: Availability of active visas, internet speed, tax criteria and tax-free duration, necessary income for visa applications, cost of living in euros, Global Health Score (GHS), and popularity of Tourism.

These factors are combined to form a score, highlighting the most suitable countries for digital nomads. According to this ranking, Spain is the top country, with a score of 4.50. Argentina follows in 2nd place with a score of 3.72. Romania, the United Arab Emirates and Croatia are ranked in 3rd, 4th and 5th place respectively to complete the top five of the list of the best countries for IDPs. (Visaguide.world, 2024). Greece, according to this ranking, is in 28th place. The high 20% tax rate, the very low internet speed, the high monthly income required for the issuance of a residence permit and the relatively high cost of living are highlighted as inhibiting factors (Visaguide.world, 2024). Greece seeks to attract IDPs through legislation with the new "Immigration Code" (Touchtidou, 2021). In this context, the current legal regime, the new law 5038/2023, is presented. The aim is to update the Immigration Code and reduce the time and supporting documents for the provision of residence permits by the Greek state to third-country citizens (Immigration Code, 2023).

However, apart from the legal framework, infrastructure and internet issues that need immediate attention are of key importance in attracting Digital Nomads (Pantziou, 2021). The average speed of 36.42 Mbps ranked Greece in 100th place worldwide, while our country was among the 10 countries that had the most to do, in terms of the fiber optic network, since 3.99 million households were still unable to connect (Tsoulakis, 2021). Although the project started in 2019, coverage was at 7% and far from the European A.V. (44%). In addition, the country had the most expensive internet in the EU: in 2020 it was 73% more expensive than the European A.V. (Tsoulakis, 2021). The situation in 2024 remains similar, with few things having improved, both in terms of speed and prices, as according to a study carried out on behalf of the European Commission, our country has attractive prices at low speeds, but is expensive at speeds above 100 Mbps (broadband connections). For mobile connections, Greece is ranked among the relatively expensive countries (European Commission, 2022).

## **8. RESEARCH CONDUCT**

### ***8.1.1 General***

The research method followed in this paper was to conduct a quantitative survey using a structured questionnaire with the aim of investigating the knowledge and opinions of the participants on the new types of refugees-immigrants, analyzing the data and finally formulating conclusions and suggestions.

### **8.2 Purpose - research questions**

The purpose of this paper was to record the opinions of public sector employees on the new types of refugees-immigrants, as well as to investigate their knowledge of the institutional framework that governs them. The research questions of this paper were formulated as follows:

- a. What are the knowledge and perceptions of public sector employees in Greece on the management of the migration-refugee issue to date?
- b. To what extent do they know and what are their views on the new types of refugees - immigrants?

In particular, it was sought through the recording of their views to draw useful conclusions and to record proposals, in order to make Greece a model country in the implementation of the human rights of refugees - immigrants and, in parallel with the social integration of those legally residing in the country, to improve the standard of living of the entire population living in Greece.

### **8.3 Methodological Measurement Tool**

The main measurement instrument for conducting the research was the questionnaire. The respondents - subjects of the research completed a written and anonymous questionnaire that was compiled by the author and aimed at investigating their awareness of the evolution of the refugee - immigration issue and in particular about the new types of refugees - immigrants.

The questionnaire was created in the form of a written text, which was initially subjected to a reliability and validity test by distributing it to a small number of the sample. After the resulting adjustments, it was modified electronically using the "google forms" application for faster distribution and immediate collection of responses.

It then consisted of three parts: The first part contained the demographic data of the sample (gender, age, previous work experience, level of education, family status). The second part included questions investigating their knowledge and opinions on the refugee-immigrant issue in general and its management in our country. The third part, which concerns the new types of refugees-immigrants, consisted of three subsections with 5 questions each. In particular, the first subsection referred to unaccompanied minors, followed by the second section on environmental refugees and the questionnaire was completed with the subsection with questions on digital nomads.

In order to obtain a wide range of possible responses, questions with multiple choice answers were mainly used, where the variety of options was designed to capture the variety of possible responses to the questions given.

The questionnaire also contained some questions with ranking scales, which are a useful mechanism for conducting the research as they incorporate a degree of sensitivity and differentiation of responses, while at the same time yielding qualitative data. They are also particularly useful for capturing the behaviors, perceptions and opinions of the participants.

### **8.4 Measurement procedure**

Before administering the questionnaire in question, in accordance with international practice, it was piloted on a sample of 5 civil servants and the appropriate modifications were made to ensure face validity (Cohen et al, 2008). The main survey followed during the period of December 2024. It was distributed electronically by sending a link through the use of the application

«viber» which directed the participants to the corresponding page of «Google forms». For a more complete understanding of the questions, the necessary clarifications were initially included. The total duration of its completion was approximately 10 minutes.

The respondents, entering the questionnaire, gave their relevant answers. The answers were automatically recorded in real time in a spreadsheet, from where the researcher has the ability to manage them, analyze them and export the results visualized in diagrams.

The main advantage of the online questionnaire was the simple and fast process for collecting data. The ease of submitting the questionnaire led to a high response rate, as the link was sent to 81 people and a total of 57 people responded, a rate of 70.3%. The response rate is considered satisfactory and is probably also due to the presence of a cover letter to encourage participation.

The data collected were processed appropriately and are presented below. After collecting the data, a comparative analysis and search for patterns were carried out in order to find trends in the responses. Each question is also presented with the corresponding graph for the visualization of the results (Rumrill & Cook, 2001).

### ***8.5 Checking the validity and reliability***

The validity of the research is achieved as it is based on a satisfactory sample. Also, as the sample was obtained by random sampling, it is representative and the conclusions of the research can be generalized. Regarding the methodological tool used, its construction is estimated to be able to measure what it has been constructed for. In order to ensure content validity and achieve the greatest possible clarity, the questions it contains are based on the bibliography. Regarding the apparent validity, a pilot study was conducted on a small part of the sample for the possible need to further adapt the questionnaire (Cohen et al, 2008).

Regarding ensuring reliability, the stability of the results was investigated through the deliberate formulation of the same questions (2-3) with different wording and their dispersion within the questionnaire (Ouzouni, Nakakis, 2011).

### ***8.6 Ethical dilemmas***

The most important ethical dilemma of this particular research, as it was addressed to adults, was the anonymity of the participants/subjects. Anonymity was ensured both by the possibility of anonymous completion of the questionnaire, and by the possibility of anonymous data collection through the "Google forms" application. In the introductory note of the questionnaire, assurances were given to the participants to ensure their anonymity and the confidentiality of the information they provided (Cohen et al, 2008).

### ***8.7 Research results – data analysis***

#### ***8.7.1 Sample characteristics***

The sample consisted of 57 individuals, including 50 men (8.7%) and 7 women (12.3%), representing a reduced number of women, which in any case corresponds to the reduced number of women in this particular public sector. The dominant age group, 49.1% (28 individuals), was 35-44 years old, with more than 20 years of experience (66.7%, i.e. 38 individuals), demonstrating the potential and

at the same time the experience of the sample in its workplace. Regarding the level of education of the participants/respondents, we observe in graph 4 that it included all educational levels, with a dominant 38.6% (22 individuals) of compulsory education, making the results of the survey more representative.

The representation of their marital status is presented in graph 5. The vast majority of respondents, 75.4% (43 people), were married.

#### ***8.7.2 Descriptive Analysis-Presentation of Research Results***

The second part begins with the participants' opinions on the most important issues facing the country. This shows that 61.4% (35 people) consider the course of the economy – the standard

of living as the most important issue, 40.4% (22 people) security – crime and in third place immigration – refugees with 31.6% (18 people).

Almost all participants, 89.5% (51 people) consider that the number of immigrants in Greece is excessive or quite large. 77.2% (44 people) believe that their existence has a negative impact on the Greek economy.

Regarding the risk of national identity alteration, if we exclude a small percentage of 7% (4 people) who believe that the presence of immigrants in Greece enriches Greek society culturally, the vast majority of respondents, 84.2% (48 people) believe that their presence constitutes a risk to our national identity. The largest percentage, 91.2% or 52 participants, believe that immigration does not help solve the demographic problem and that their presence, according to 77.2% (44 people), increases crime.

Regarding the operation of reception and identification structures, 59.7% (34 people) have a negative and rather negative impression. Regarding the participants' opinions on migrants arriving in Greece, according to the results, 96.5% (55 respondents) of the sample believe that mass refugee arrivals are a definitely and probably more permanent phenomenon, 82.5% (4 people) estimate that the European Union-Turkey agreement to reduce migrant flows in the Mediterranean is definitely not and probably not effective, and finally 89.2% (50 participants) are of the opinion that in the future more or the same number of refugees and migrants will arrive. Regarding Greece's stance on dealing with refugee-migrant flows, 91.2% (52 people) are of the opinion that it should be stricter, as the limit of migrants that the country can accept has been exceeded. It then appears that 94.6% (53 participants) believe that the EU should provide more assistance to Greece in guarding its borders.

The following questions reflect the majority opinion of the respondents (52.6% or 30 people) that refugees in Greece wish to leave for other European countries, and then 66.7% (38 participants) believe that the state does not provide sufficient care for the integration of refugees entitled to asylum.

The following presents the sample's beliefs about the living conditions in the Registration and Accommodation Centers, the role of NGOs, the financing and management of European funds by the Greek state.

Of particular interest is the question regarding the role of various bodies in the management of the refugee issue in Greece. The highest positive role is played by local communities and ordinary people, while the highest negative contribution is made by the media. This is followed by the third part of the research, with the first section referring to unaccompanied minors. From the data collection, it is found that while the majority of participants are aware of the issue of unaccompanied children, there is a division of opinions regarding whether they receive the assistance they are entitled to, as most are not informed about the establishment of the General Secretariat for Vulnerable Citizens and Institutional Protection and the National Emergency Response Mechanism. In general, there is agreement on the necessity of the social integration of unaccompanied minors, and specifically 59.6% (34 people) consider their inclusion important.

The second section of the third part follows, which is related to environmental refugees. While the majority of the sample is not familiar with the term environmental refugee, most believe that the climate crisis will increase the number of people who will migrate in the coming years. In this context, 52.6% (30 respondents) showing empathy consider it appropriate to provide these people with an “ecological” asylum. Regarding the question of the type of disaster that leads to the most population movements, a division of opinions is recorded, indicating a relative ignorance of the risk of each natural disaster. Finally, the vast majority, 82.4% (47 people) of the civil servants surveyed, believe that the Greek state is not operationally prepared for the possible need to relocate entire settlements to another safe location following a natural disaster.

The survey concludes with the third section, which concerns the knowledge and beliefs of the participants regarding the phenomenon of digital nomads. The majority of the sample, 54.4% (31 people), is unaware of digital nomads and the global trend of attracting them. Regarding the impact of the increase in their number on the Greek economy as well as the measures to attract them from Greece, opinions are divided across the board. Finally, 45.6% (26 participants) believe that broadband infrastructure, speed and price of “fast” internet, which are parameters for choosing a country by digital nomads, are not satisfactory in Greece.

### ***8.8 Discussion of results***

According to the survey results, the participants place the refugee-immigration issue in third place among the issues that concern them after the course of the economy and crime. They believe that the number of immigrants in the country is large, with a risk of altering the national identity. Their presence does not contribute to solving the demographic problem and, in addition, they increase crime without having a positive impact on the economy. For these reasons, estimating that in the coming years the flows will remain increased, they believe that Greece's stance and greater assistance from the EU are required. Regarding the living conditions in the RICs and the role of NGOs, there is a division of opinions, while the majority of the sample believes that the necessary actions are not being taken for the integration of people entitled to asylum. In the management of the migration-refugee issue as a whole, the contribution of local communities and ordinary people is recognized, while the role of the media is viewed with suspicion.

In the section of the research related to new types of refugees - migrants, initially a lack of information about the country's institutional tools regarding their protection, such as the General Secretariat for Vulnerable Citizens and Institutional Protection and the National Emergency Response Mechanism, is recorded for unaccompanied minors, and at the same time the necessity of strengthening their social integration is reflected. Then the belief is reflected that the climate crisis with the increased number of natural disasters will increase the number of people who will be displaced from their homes. These people are considered to be in need of increased protection, a view related to the belief about the lack of operational readiness of the Greek state for the safe relocation of populations, if required. The study concludes with the knowledge and beliefs of the participants regarding the phenomenon of digital nomads. It is found that public opinion is unaware of their existence, the global trend of attracting them, as well as the positive impact they have on a country's economy. It also records the respondents' perception of the need to improve broadband infrastructure.

### ***8.9 Conclusions - suggestions***

In conclusion, it is stated that the research data highlight, with fluctuations of course, the beliefs of the civil servants in the sample regarding the management of the refugee-immigrant phenomenon in Greece as well as their knowledge and opinions regarding the new types of refugees-immigrants. Utilizing these research results, the study concludes with the formulation of specific suggestions. In particular, it is proposed:

Informing citizens about the institutional initiatives undertaken by the Greek state regarding unaccompanied minors, mainly through the establishment of the General Secretariat for Vulnerable Citizens and Institutional Protection and the action of the National Emergency Response Mechanism, in order for civil society to be further mobilized on the issue and, in synergy with the state, to proceed with actions to accelerate the assistance and integration of these children.

Educating and raising awareness among people about environmental refugees. Understanding the causes and impacts of this population movement, as well as designing effective policies and strategies to support them, is crucial for achieving sustainable solutions.

The undertaking of initiatives by the relatively newly established Ministry of Climate Crisis, in order to promote collaborations at local, national and international levels for the protection of those affected and the preparation of operational plans for all natural disasters, which will then be communicated to citizens and tested periodically in the form of preparedness exercises.

The undertaking of the country's initiative at European and international levels for the establishment of legally binding legal rules regarding the protection of environmental refugees.

The preparation of a national strategy to attract digital nomads with specific measures, such as zero taxation, reduced income criteria for granting a residence permit while simultaneously improving infrastructure (price and speed of the internet).

The creation of a campaign to promote Greece at an international level, highlighting the country's advantages as a working environment, as with the arrival of more digital nomads, the Greek economy will incorporate innovation in forms of work and high-level employees.

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