

Athens 08/11/2014

First, I would like to thank you for the kind invitation, which gives me the opportunity to discuss with you about the immigration issue in Greece, its development, the impact it has on the country and about its future, both in Greece and in Europe.

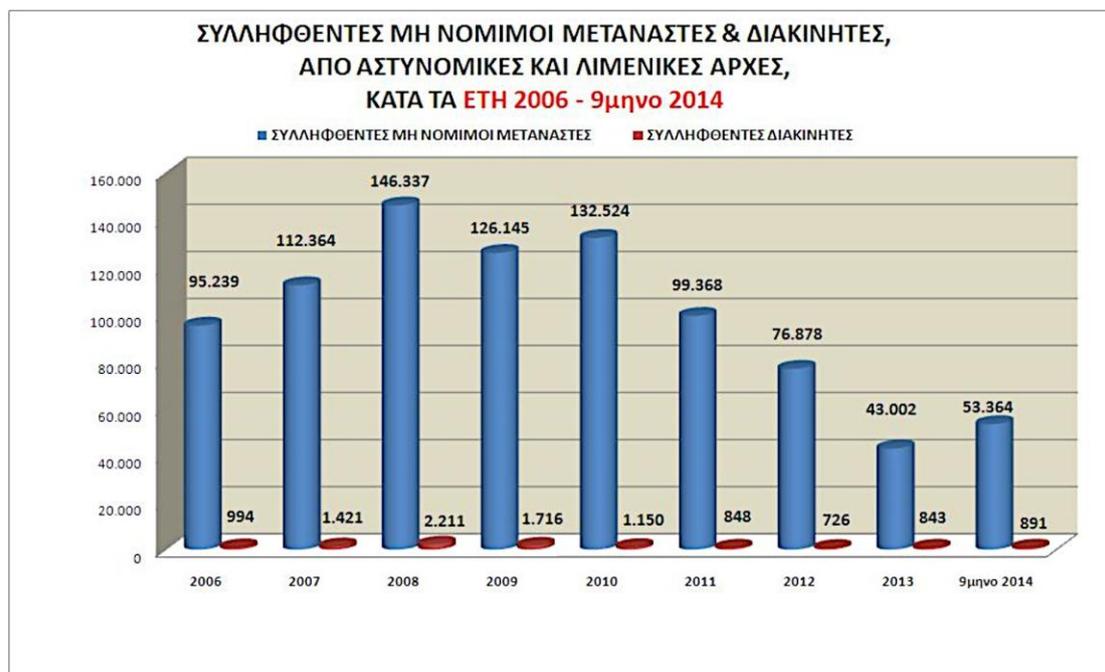
## THE IMMIGRATION ISSUE IN GREECE

In the last twenty-five years Greece has changed, from a sending, to a migrant-receiving and again to a sending country. Recent research at the University of Crete estimates that the number of Greeks who emigrated from the country ,the last 4years, exceeding 200.000.

According to the official 2011 census, the total number of immigrants, legal and illegal, in Greece, amounts to 912.000. Out of them, 440.000 are legal, 68% of which are of Albanian origin (300.000). The remaining are illegal immigrants, and their number is probably greater than 500.000, since it is very difficult, even impossible, to spot them.

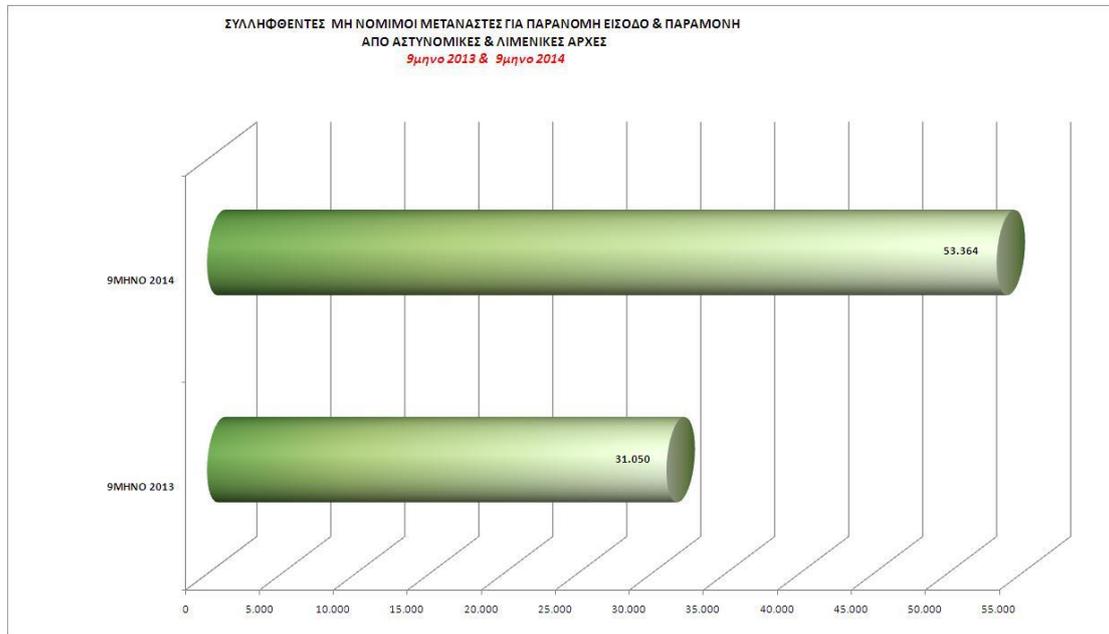
On the other hand, it is true that the number of legal immigrants who entered Greece last year has significantly decreased. This is due to the economic crisis and to the better guarding of our borders with Turkey, as well as to the construction of the fence in Thrace.

But the number of those who come to Greece through Turkey and the sea borders continues to be large, over 16.000 in 2013, while the total number of illegal migrants in the same year, was close to 40.000.

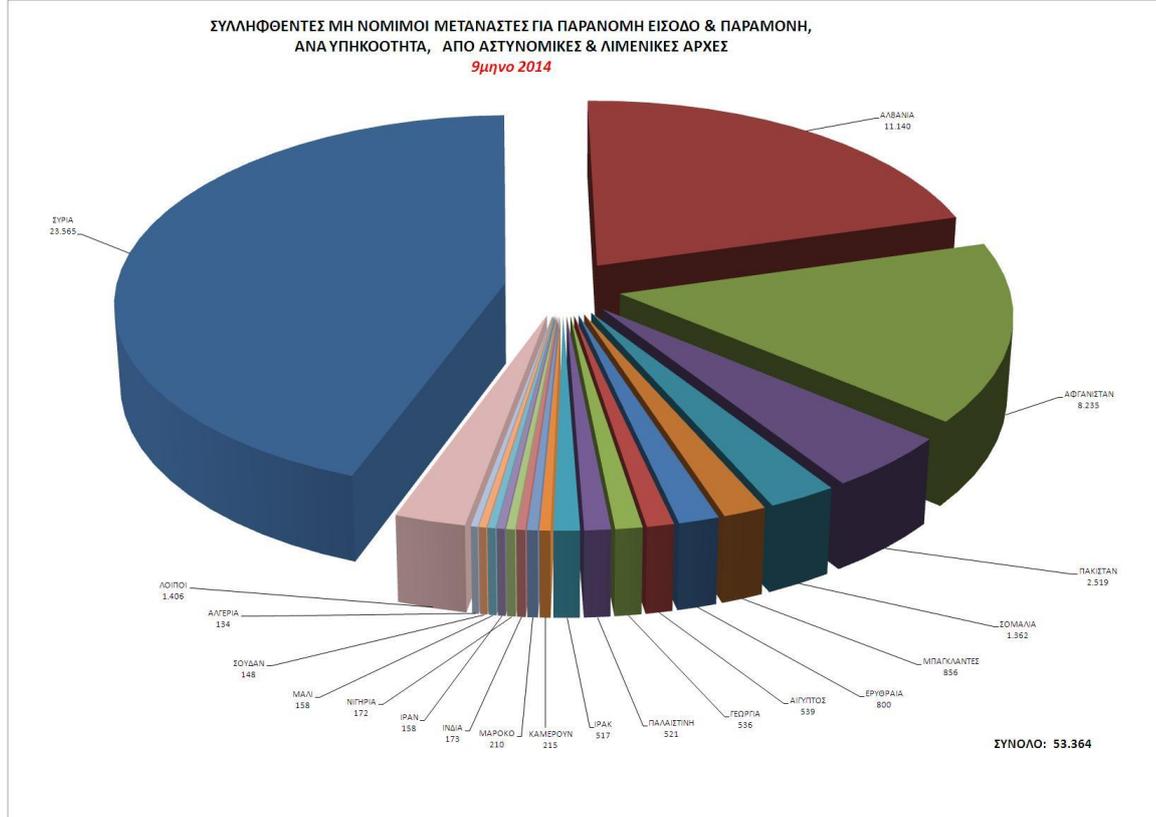


This table shows the number of apprehended illegal migrants and traffickers, by police and port authorities for the years 2006 up to 09/2014.

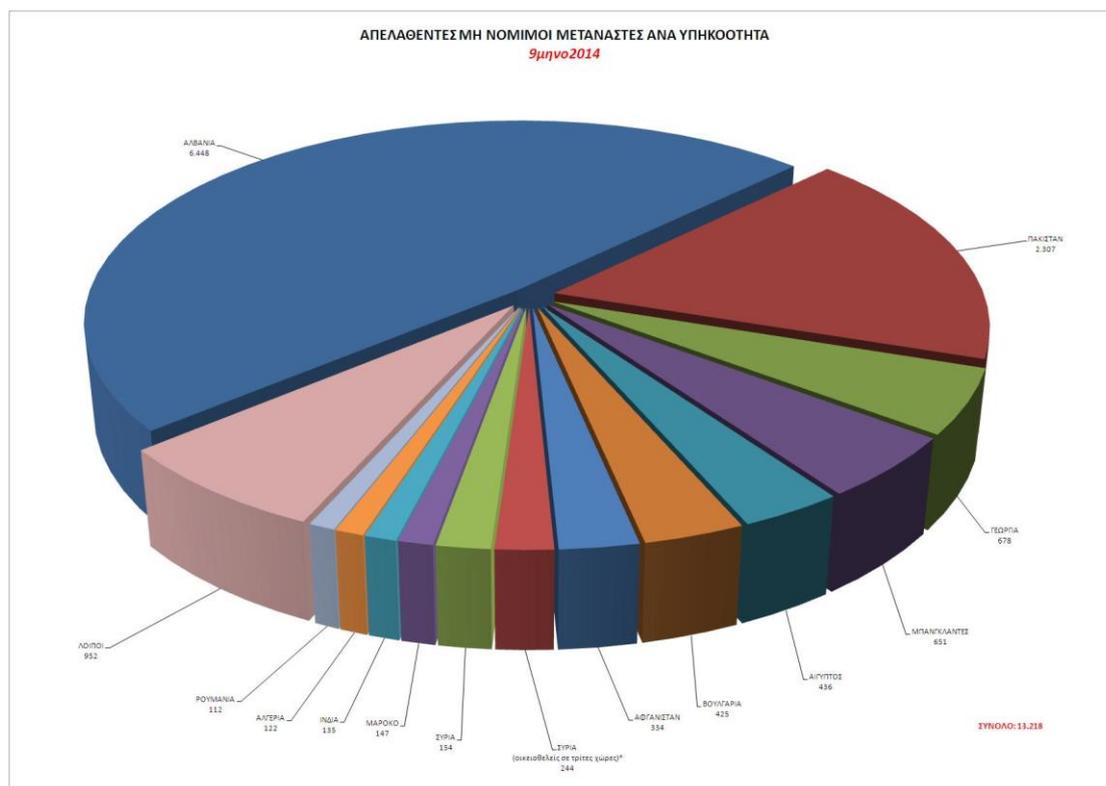
If we compare the number of immigrants that entered Greece during the first nine months of 2014 with the equivalent number of 2013 we observe an increase of over 70%!



This table shows the number of arrested illegal migrants based on their country of origin. The largest percentage of those are coming from Syria (23.565), Albania (11.140), Afghanistan (8.235), Pakistan (2519), Somalia, Baglantes, Eritrea and Egypt.



This table shows the total number of illegal migrants who were deported during the first nine months of 2014. The repatriation of 13.218 illegal migrants happened in cooperation with IOM. The vast majority of them are Albanians(6448) and Pakistanis (2307) and were returned to their countries of origin.



Despite deportations, a large number of undocumented immigrants are trapped in the country. What I mean by this is that these people are released, as they cannot be kept on the reception camps after a stay of 18 months maximum, and they try to move to Athens and to other cities and ports in an attempt to eventually go to other European countries.

## PROBLEMS

The situation is, therefore, that more than 500.000 illegal immigrants have gathered in Athens and other major cities of Greece, who do not have the ability to leave Greece or to be legalized.

These immigrants make use of public goods and services (education, health, social benefits, transportation) although the country does not receive any subsidy for them by the EU, because no such fund exists. Because of the economic crisis, they cannot find a job, and this results, in many cases, in law-breaking behavior.

Unfortunately, the other European Union states do not accept any responsibility in dealing with this problem, on the claim that it is an issue that must be resolved by Greece alone.

The vast majority of legal immigrants are here for more than 10 years.

The last major legalization took place in 2005 and as previously mentioned in the vast majority of them they are Albanian nationals and are indeed integrated into the Greek society.

But the last two years because of the economic crisis a significant number returned to Albania because of failure to find work in Greece.

At the same time a large number of young and highly educated Greek people migrate to other countries of the European Union as well as in the United States of America, Canada, Australia and elsewhere.

This creates an additional problem for Greece because the indigenous population is constantly decreasing furthermore due to the low birth rate, while at the same time, the number of immigrants increases either due to the continuous entry of new people or due to the fact the ones already in Greece have more children.

This perspective along with the problems mentioned previously creates an unpleasant situation for Greece, which the political party of Golden Dawn is taking advantage of.

It is therefore likely to observe in the short term, a social explosion in Greece that could affect other European countries.

## **SUGGESTIONS**

In our opinion, there are, at least, two situations in which the EU should help Greece as soon as possible.

A. Create a new fund for “trapped” undocumented immigrants in the country, until they find their way back.

B. Immigrants entering Greece and detained in the reception centers, can remain there for a year and a half, at most.

If the return to their country of origin cannot be achieved, they will be released, and apparently they will remain in the country.

We believe that the overall responsibility and the management of these people should not be a matter concerning only Greece but should be a matter of great interest for the rest of Europe. So it is necessary to find a way, to share this responsibility proportionally among all European States in order to speed up the procedures.

Finally, a lot of discussion is required both for the signing of agreements for sending migrants to the countries of origin as well as for monitoring the agreements with neighboring countries from which illegal immigrants are entering.

Thank you very much and we look forward to your comments and your questions.

Alexandros Zavos

President IMEPO

[alzavos@yahoo.com](mailto:alzavos@yahoo.com)

[president@imepo.org](mailto:president@imepo.org)

mob. +306948058515