



***The Europeanisation of national immigration policies?  
Liberalising effects of EU membership  
in a “new” immigration country***

***Georgia Mavrodi***

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**Abstract**

This study examines the impact of European integration in immigration issues on Greek immigration policy. Contrary to widely held claims that immigration policies in Europe become more and more restrictive – the well-known debate on “Fortress Europe” – Greek legislation on entry, residence and rights of third-country nationals has undergone gradual liberalising developments. This paradox drove my inquiry into the factors, institutions and processes that may explain liberalising immigration policy change for a period of fifteen years (1990 – 2005). Greece, similarly to the rest of southern European “new” immigration countries, is often charged with the implicit or explicit assumption that its recent turn into a host country for immigrants makes her receptive to the restrictive influence of EU policies on immigration. Is that so? What impact, if any, has cooperation on immigration issues at the EU level had on Greek immigration policy developments and why? What form has it taken, under what conditions, and what mechanisms have been at work? In search for answers, my research combines a qualitative single-country case-study with the comparative method. The lens of analysis is put on Greek immigration policy making and change across domestic institutions and policy areas. Rules and regulations on entry and residence of third-country nationals for employment purposes and family reunification are process-traced and compared across the executive, the legislature, and the judiciary. At a second stage the same policy area is compared to other fellow areas, namely student immigration, ethnic immigration, and citizenship. The study draws on a variety of primary sources, including parliamentary debates, administrative documents, Court rulings and EU documentation. Policy developments taking place in other EU member-states are also kept in sight on the basis of the available secondary literature. Greek immigration policy has relied on institutional and policy continuities to a greater extent than one might imagine when thinking of “new” immigration countries. The latter are far from a “tabula rasa” in migration issues and their previous rules, regulations, and domestic institutional legacies should be taken into consideration in order to understand their immigration policies at present. A series of Greek restrictive regulations and practices concerning immigration controls had been rooted before “Fortress Europe” was developed. At the same time, however, Greece lacked a regulatory framework for immigrant settlement - including attention at immigrant integration. This provided for incompatibilities with the developing set of common EU norms on the rights of legally resident third-country nationals, which caused significant EU pressures for national policy change. The on-going process of integration in immigration issues at the EU level affected the timing and the direction

of domestic policy-making but the extent and degree of this effect across policy areas and domestic institutions have been differential. Greek participation in the common EU immigration policy alone cannot account for all European effects on national immigration policy. Nevertheless, it has been the most powerful institutional framework to induce or facilitate liberalising changes in the Greek immigration legislation in the last two decades. These findings support a reconsideration of the nature, policy dynamics and limitations of “Fortress Europe”, and they invite for further research in the rest of the EU member states.



**Jury:** Andrew Geddes (University of Sheffield), Donatella Della Porta (EUI) (Supervisor), Virginie Guiraudon (CNRS) (Co-supervisor), Anna Triandafyllidou (Democritus University of Thrace)

### **Bio**

Georgia Mavrodi holds a Diploma in International Relations and Political Studies from the University of Macedonia in Thessaloniki (GR); a Master of Arts in European Studies from the University of Bath (UK) and the Humboldt University of Berlin (D); and a Master of Research in Social and Political Sciences from the European University Institute, Florence (IT). She has also attended courses in Law at the Catholic University of Nijmegen (NL), and in American politics and International Relations at the Free University of Berlin (D). Georgia specialises in European integration, and in immigration and refugee policies. Her publications include book chapters in edited volumes and articles in international refereed journals, and she has delivered lectures at the University of Macedonia, Greece; the University of Florence, and the James Madison University in Florence. Since September 2009 she has been teaching at the MA Program in Political Science/European Union Policy Studies of the James Madison University in Florence.