

Title of paper: The Individual-level Determinants of Intolerance against Immigrants during Recessionary Times in Greece

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Abstract

In the context of the recent global economic and financial crisis, Greece has experienced an economic turmoil as well as an unprecedented social and political collapse. The Greek Governments have implemented a draconian austerity model within compressed time frameworks including severe cuts in salaries, wages and pensions, reductions in social spending (for education, health and social security policies) as well as increased direct and indirect taxes which have undermined the lives of Greek citizens. The devastating deterioration of living and working conditions has generated a mixture of frustration and anger in the Greek society which -among others- has been directed against immigrants. The hostility against immigrants has been partly expressed by the rise of the neo-fascist Golden Dawn which has grown from a fringe group into a nationwide political party propagating that immigrants are responsible for the socio-economic woes of the country.

The main rationale of the paper is to disentangle the complexities of the Greek intolerance against immigrants using fresh data from the LiveWhat (Living with Hard Times) EU project. Applying an amalgam of theoretical frameworks and approaches, the study unveils the individual-level socio-economic and political etiologies of intolerance against immigrants during recessionary times. The statistical analyses underline that intolerance against immigrants is partly formed by the intense inter-group competition due to the scarcity in jobs and economic resources. Most importantly, it stems from nationalistic attitudes and radical right-wing populist political attitudes and voting behaviors associated with Golden Dawn, where immigrants serve as a convenient scapegoat for the socio-economic ills of Greek society during the economic crisis.

The study unearths one of the social facets of the Greek recession and highlights the necessity of designing policy responses that curtail anti-immigrant sentiments and safeguard the fragile social cohesion of the country. Most importantly, as the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) underlines that the recent debt crisis has been fuelling the rise of anti-immigrant sentiments in Europe, the present study is a step toward further research associated with cross-sectional and cross-national studies that focus specifically on intolerance against immigrants during recessionary times.