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SOCIAL AND CULTURAL FACTORS OF THE ECONOMIC CRISIS IN GREECE

Abstract: This article aims to analyse social and cultural factors of the economic crisis in Greece. For the purposes of assessing their impact on the crisis, there were used statistical data describing the Greek society before and during the crisis, as well as results of surveys and three categorised interviews conducted in 2013 among Polish economic migrants living in Athens. The first part of this paper provides the analysis of selected macroeconomic categories showing the scale of the crisis and their influence on shaping the social capital in Greece particularly with regard to the demography, the social structure and the labour market. The second part presents the Greeks' cultural characteristics contained in classical typologies of cultures and their impact on the crisis based on the perception of the Poles living in Athens.

Keywords: Greek society, national culture, economic crisis, social capital.

INTRODUCTION

For the recent several years the crisis in Greece has been one of the most important economic problems detrimental not only to the Greek society but, what is important, to the interests of the majority of Member States of the European Union. Almost on a daily basis on each online portal one reads press reports concerning public debt, inflation, GDP, unemployment and consumption in Greece. We are "bombarded" with information on the alarming scale of the economic degradation, the enormity of internal debt as well as the level of corruption and unjustified social packages intended for the public. The extensive knowledge shows the economic "collapse" of this country which is very attractive in terms of the economic development, however, it is exclusively limited to the exemplification of the robber economy effects and to predictions for the future not only for the Greek people, but also for Europe. Nevertheless, in this knowledge there is a certain gap, since it lacks in the real causes of the crisis which are rooted in the society specificity and its cultural characteristics.

It imposes the need to seek answers to simple and yet difficult to resolve questions: *why has the developmentally attractive state having the thriving sector of tourism services, being ranked first in the global shipbuilding industry as well as having the greatest tonnage of sea and ocean vessels, quite prosperous agriculture and a relatively small number of educated citizens fell into the trap of the economic crisis? Why with such a great potential resulting from the location not only at the seaside, but also at the meeting point of influences of Western countries and Russia, has Greece become a failed state?* Many analysts claim that the reason for this is the excessive consumption and the policy of successive governments caring for the interests of the power and economic elites as well as the demoralisation of the society accustomed to living beyond their means. This is probably true, even though the meaning of the questions is much more complex and induces to search for true sources of the recession, which have been steeped in the Greek society.

Thus, if we assume *a priori* that any crisis does not occur without people involved, in each case the analysis of its sources should turn attention to the society and its cultural characteristics. Therefore, while analysing the Greek crisis factors the emphasis will be put on numerous topics focused under one common denominator which is the social capital and within it - the social structure and cultural characteristics.

THE ANALYSIS OF THE CAUSES AND THE SCALE OF THE CRISIS

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There are numerous causes of the Greek economy degradation. While the Greeks themselves see merely the impact of external factors on the current state of affairs, it is only a part of the truth. Although, in fact, the condition of the Greek economy was significantly influenced by the crisis of the eighties, it is worth noting that it affected not only Greece, but most of the European countries. Nonetheless, it did not generate the same effects everywhere and not all countries managed to resist them. Among them was just Greece. Probably the global crisis only confirmed its situation, exposing the weakness of the economy. At the same time it revealed the true face of the foreign policy and the Greeks' propensity to reap economic benefits from Western European countries. The efficient management of their own potential, undoubtedly driven by geopolitical factors, in particular the geographical location at the interface between Eastern and Western spheres of political influence, allowed for many years of the economic "idyll" and unbridled consumption. The 1980s and 1990s proved to be a kind of a harbinger of "the collapse" of Greece, which was downplayed to such an extent that even unfavourable macroeconomic indicators did not force the authorities to implement profound reforms, especially in the sector of public finances. This happened since there was too high resistance of the society to cover the costs of the long-term predatory economy and the scale of benefits led to its demoralisation.

Despite the decline in production and GDP and the increase in unemployment, the Greek society lived beyond their means and used the social packages offered by the state. Consumption, mismanagement and the fairly liberal approach to work resulted in the budget deficit (according to various sources) even at 16% of GDP and public debt at 110% of GDP in the early 1990s [Greece in the 20th and 21st century, 2014]. This turned out to be only a prelude to a real disaster, as in the following years the Greek economy almost completely collapsed. The year 2008 was a breakthrough when the Greek society first suffered from the actual effects of failing policy and overconsumption. No later than at the turn of the year 2008 and 2009 there was observed the growth in the unemployment rate from 8.1% to 9.1%, which at the end of 2010 reached 14.75% and in 2011 - 21.3% [Greece – The unemployment, 2015]. As a result of the decrease in production and the high costs of maintaining workers, the unemployment continued to increase and in 2012 it reached the level of 26.41% and in 2013 the record level of 27.92% [Greece – The unemployment 2015]. At the same time the negative growth rate was recorded, which dropped to -7.1% in 2009 and -9.6% in December 2011. The rate remained negative until April 2014 and in January 2015 its positive level of 1.2% was obtained as a result of launching assistance packages from the European Union [Greece - The annual GDP growth rate 2015].

Due to the poor condition of the economy, foreign capital was almost immediately withdrawn from the market, which, in turn, resulted in another wave of collective redundancies, withheld demand and a decline in inflation. It is noteworthy that even with such unfavourable economic indicators, consumption and social packages were still not reduced and the spending of money was not monitored. Here is an example of the demoralisation scale of the Greek society given by one of the Polish migrants who has been working in Athens since 1994:

(...) The Greeks ate up money from the European Union, robbed their own country by not paying taxes, taking bribes and overstating investment costs. (...) In one of the regions subsidies were collected for the cultivation of orchards for many years. Satellite monitoring did not detect anything wrong, as orchards existed there. The inspection revealed that in fact the trees were pumped dummies (...) another example: a bus driver got a bonus of about EUR 500 for the timely arrival at the bus stop. It awakens some reflections, doesn't it? Just imagine that a Greek employing a migrant pays his family contributions from the migrant's accident insurance. He simply robs the employee making his social insurance deductions only for a few days - the rest goes for his family members².

² The extract of the interview conducted in 2013 in Poland with a Polish economic migrant (an anonymous person residing in Athens since 1994 – Świętokrzyskie voivodeship).

The most acute consequence of the recession turned out to be national debt, which reached the most unprecedented proportions since the Argentinean crisis. In 2010 its level was of 129.7% of GDP, a year later it increased to 146% of GDP. Subsequent years saw a rapid growth of public debt, which in 2012 reached 173.1% of GDP, in 2014 - 175% of GDP and 185% of GDP in 2015. The exception was the year 2013, when public debt fell to 156% of GDP, which was the effect of launching aid packages by the European Union. This, however, turned out to be only the incidental aid measure, as it allowed to cover merely current expenses and debt interests. Forecasts for the coming years are alarming, since the increase in public debt to 188% of GDP in 2016 and to 197% of GDP in 2020 is projected [Greece - Public debt to GDP, 2015].

The decline in production and a rise in unemployment affected the gradual reduction in demand and, consequently, the decline in inflation that, while remaining at an average level of 5% in 2010, already in 2011 experienced a significant regression to the level of 2.4% and 0.8% at the end of the year 2012. Since early 2013 until today we have been observing in Greece deflation at an average rate of 2%, which means that as a result of the lack of money the demand on the market was hampered, and it led to the decline in prices of goods and services.

It is just a synthesis of the economic situation of Greece in the years 2009-2015, which should be viewed from a societal perspective, including demography, the age structure and the intellectual potential.

THE GREEK SOCIETY - THE SYNTHESIS OF ANTHROPOGENIC CRISIS FACTORS

One of the areas of the analysis of anthropogenic factors of the crisis in Greece are the demographics characteristics of the society. In order to make their overall assessment, it is appropriate to analyse changes of the Greek population during the crisis, as well as their age structure and the intellectual potential. At the outset of the analysis it is concluded that the crisis has significantly contributed to the decrease of the population. This is confirmed by the statistical data which indicate that the population dropped from 11.18 million in 2011 to the level of 11.12 million people in 2012-2013 and 10.99 million in 2014³. [The Central Statistics Office of Greece 2014]. Forecasts for the coming years predict another decrease, namely in 2020 there will probably be about 10.7 million Greeks [Greece – The population 2015]. However, these data raise doubt due to the Greeks' relatively flexible approach to the issue of the registration requirement and the ineffective control system of refugee inflows.

It can be assumed that the population in Greece is at least one million inhabitants higher than the official data of the Central Statistics Office of Greece. *What factors contributed to the decline in population?* The answer is simple, namely the fertility rate in Greece is falling and at the same time more and more Greeks are leaving the country in search for favourable living conditions. It is worth noting that the Greeks' emigration mainly applies to wealthy people who want to protect their assets from the effects of the crisis. There is another phenomenon related to the Greeks, that is the historically shaped emigration which contributed to the fact that their own state is inhabited by only half of the Greek population, and almost 12 million constitutes a diaspora scattered around the world. What is important, this part of the Greeks does not participate in generating GDP and shows no interest in the situation in the country.

The population density indicator is significant from the Greek society analysis point of view as it is very uneven and depending on the years it ranged from 83 to 85 inhabitants per km². For almost 20 years the highest rate of population density has concerned the geographical region of Attica, where there are more than 900 people per 1 km², which means that the average density is more than 10 times greater than in the whole country. Disparities in the population density and its distribution are the most noticeable between insular regions and the

³ In Greece the conversion area to determine the density of population is 132,000 square kilometres.

mainland part of Greece. Numerous Greek islands are still deserted or inhabited only by a few families. Up to now, people who live on many of these islands "do not exist" for the state administration, do not pay taxes and - what is interesting - they do not seem to identify themselves with the Greek people. In some ways, they live "away" from the crisis, they do not care about it and take an optimistic view into the future. According to one of Polish migrants:

(...) On one of the islands - I don't remember its name - it was observed that 90% of people are blind. It's a sham, because these people being entitled to benefits ran their economic activities, they were even taxi owners. Funny, isn't it? In Greece, it isn't funny at all. There is a social acceptance for that⁴.

The mainland distribution of the population is also of very diverse character, because the urban population is of about 57.7%, while rural areas are inhabited by 42.3% of the Greek people. Almost 1/3 of the population - nearly 4 million people - live around Athens and Thessaloniki located in the Attica region [Greece – The population 2015]. Given the Greek population size (about 11 million) and its geographical distribution, it is concluded that almost half of the Greek GDP is the work of people living in the industrially developed region of Attica and the touristically developed island part. This is related to the employment structure in production and services sectors and draws attention to disproportions in the level of life of the Greeks.

What is more the social capital of Greece is shaped by the gender structure which substantially affects the productivity of the society. Statistics show that women make up 50.5% of the population, while men - 49.5%, which means that the distribution is balanced [Demographic distribution, 2015]. Unfortunately, only half of Greek women work, which stems from the traditional model of society. An interviewed respondent stated that before the crisis women hardly ever participated in the economic life of Greece and exhibited the high propensity for comfortable living:

(...) Greek women even if they did not work - what is the rule - they did not look after children, just hired a babysitter, a foreigner as usual. This shows the scale of corruption in the society. Has it changed today? In many homes there aren't women who don't work and at the same time entrust the childcare to employed women (...)⁵.

As other reports show, even in the face of the crisis, the basic chores were delegated to migrants and meals were eaten in restaurants. It happened many times that working women were employed in positions artificially created by their husbands in institutions where they were working, but actually they remained at home.

The average life expectancy is similar - in 2014 it was 81.2 years for women and 75.9 years for men. Notably, it is the highest life expectancy rate among European Union countries. Juxtaposing the rate of nearly 15% of the Greeks in pre-productive age - children between 0 to 14 years – against a very high indicator of the life expectancy may lead to the conclusion that the Greek society is ageing, which, given the gradual decline of the population, makes prospects for Greece not very promising. The demographic ageing is also confirmed by the low and still falling fertility rate. While in 2011 it stood at 1.6 child per woman of reproductive age, in 2013-2014 it dropped to 1.4. If one takes into account that the index of 2,11-2,15 children per woman is the guarantee of the generational replacement extension in the period of 100 years, one can see that current trends deviate far from the norm. This means that at such a pace of growth of migrants, in half a century the Greek society may constitute a minority in their own country.

Demographic problems in Greece have significantly affected the economy, because they have intensified the high cost of living of pensioners representing almost 18% of the population. In addition, the poor state of the economy is charged to expenditures on social benefits which grow each year despite the fact that up to 67% of the population is of working

⁴ The extract of the interview conducted in 2013 in Poland with a Polish economic migrant (an anonymous person residing in Athens since 1994 – Świętokrzyskie voivodeship).

⁵ The extract of the interview conducted in 2013 in Poland with a Polish economic migrant (an anonymous person residing in Athens since 1997 – Podkarpackie voivodeship).

age (under Greek law, they are people in the age range 15-65 years). It is worth noting that young people learning aged between 15-23 constitute almost 15% of them.

A very important observation is the homogeneous ethnic structure of Greece, which, despite the influx of migrants from Asia, Africa and Central and Eastern Europe, stands at 97% of the whole population. Among legalised minorities there are 1.5% of the Macedonians, 0.9% of the Turks and 0.6% of the Albanians and the Bulgarians. Other nations are illegal economic migrants which include 40 thousand of the Poles [The Poles in Greece, 2013]⁶ and also the Filipinos, the Egyptians, the Pakistanis, the Russians, the Romanians, representatives of the nations of the former Yugoslavia, as well as the increasing number of the Vietnamese population and other nationalities from the Far East. Migrants are divided into two groups: the so-called "old" illegal migrants coming from Central and Eastern Europe gainfully employed in Greece and "new" ones, originating from the Far and Middle East and Africa, who came to Greece relatively recently, as a result of the socio-political system.

The first group of migrants represents an important - despite the low percentage - element of the Greek society, because it is somewhat assimilated with the Greeks, familiar with the market realities and the specificity of the society and "has found" in this country a chance for living and work. In spite of the crisis, they work in Greece and have adapted well to the functioning in "the economic chaos". This is confirmed in own research results which show that almost half of the 58 respondents of the survey conducted in 2013 among labour migrants living in Athens from 3 to 30 years did not consider returning to Poland despite the crisis and a revenue decrease or even job losses. Although since 2013 the situation has deteriorated markedly, the majority of the surveyed (52 respondents) are still working in Greece, and those who had declared a return to Poland emigrated to western Europe, and most of them were respondents living in Greece for the shortest time⁷. *What made the migrants (probably not only from Poland) do well in the crisis reality?* Undoubtedly, it was a financial factor and the lack of the Greek government control over migrants' income. One of the interviewed respondents residing in Greece since 1994 in response to the question about the reasons for his leaving to Greece gave the following answer:

(...) The unemployment and the lack of prospects led me to leave (...) thanks to my working in Greece I managed to build a house in Poland. It was a golden age, especially that in Greece no one asked about taxes and the Greeks themselves paid any price for work done and appreciated Polish professionals. I remember when I entered the labour market I accepted orders only at representatives of elites. They paid a lot and did not grumble. In their homes I did such wonders that a Greek simply would not be able to do. I gained recognition and reputation and the business developed. Interestingly these important people were aware of social problems in the country, they formulated negative opinions on their compatriots' mentality and culture (...) Investments from the EU gave a lot of opportunities and the society grew rich at the expense of the state (...) everyone made money on everything possible, especially constructions were burdened with three times higher than actual costs. Con men and intermediaries issuing licences and concessions obtained benefits from them. An example can be the Olympic stadium, the construction of which consumed three times as much as it should have. Everyone earned thereon and

⁶ According to the data provided by the Polish Embassy in Greece, the number of the Polish population may be of about 20.000 (estimates), including the majority of representatives of the Polish Greek community. As stated by Leszek Wątróbski, the Polish Greek community is the least known in Europe. It lives mainly in Athens which houses one of the largest Polish schools abroad; Polish pastoral ministry run by the Jesuits; Polish: kindergartens, associations, shops and magazines.

⁷ The research was carried out with the use of the correspondence method through contacts established with one of the migrants from the Podkarpackie region having lived in Athens since 1994. Purposeful selection was applied, the criterion of which was the minimum three-year-long period of stay in Greece and the lack of the legal residence permit. This article presents only some results of the study.

the Greeks took money practically for nothing. They did not come to work - as is their habit - but when they came, they did not perform their work conscientiously (...) Let me give you another interesting example, after the earthquake in 1998 money flowed into Greece from international organisations and other countries. The Greeks almost immediately used the tragedy for their own account profiting from fictitious damages. I repaired the facade of a school that had not been affected by the disaster – just a small crack caused due to natural factors cost so much that I am ashamed even to say. Half of the amount went to the pocket of the man issuing permission for the renovation (...)⁸.

Another respondent's statement confirms the high level of the assimilation of the Poles in Greece and their propensity to take advantage of the malfunctioning state:

(...) This country is left especially by those who have worked there for a relatively short time. People like me stay, because despite the crisis I can get money and send it to my family. What would I do in Poland? I would wrangle with the officials - I'm not even able to switch to a new life (...) although this is not what it used to be, however in Poland I may not earn half of this money. In the Podkarpackie region it's difficult to find a well-paid job, so I have stayed here. I know the labour market, have contacts and despite the doldrums I will always earn a little bit⁹.

The second group of migrants are victims of smuggling people illegally from the Philippines, Indonesia, Afghanistan, and North African states¹⁰. Interesting information can be found in a part of the interview with a Pole residing in Greece. The following response was received to the question about the status of the other groups of migrants living in Greece and the possibility of commencing employment:

(...) Unfortunately, they don't work like we do, they are the poor who live in ethnic ghetto areas and live with what they find in dustbins and on the street. Day-to-day they stay behind the fence and are let out on the streets during certain hours. This is a terrible phenomenon - in Poland one can't observe it. I'll say more, such a migrant is usually a victim of criminal groups. Probably the transfer of one man costs around 2 thousand dollars. They come here for bread to the so-called a better world. Regrettably, it turns out to be different. It happens that they do not reach Greece. They pay money to gangs and then end up on the sea left to the mercy of fate or are drowned. This is a nightmarish phenomenon¹¹.

CULTURAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE GREEKS

Over the centuries, the Greeks have become a kind of a conglomerate of diverse cultural features resulting from the diffusion of different cultures clashing within the Greek territory. The intermingling of different cultures influences permits a brief analysis of their cultural characteristics based on the typology by Edward Hall and the four-dimensional typology by Geert Hofstede. In the light of the Edward Hall's theory the Greeks undoubtedly

⁸ The extract of the interview conducted in 2013 in Poland with a Polish economic migrant (an anonymous person residing in Athens since 1997 – Świętokrzyskie voivodeship).

⁹ The extract of the interview conducted in 2013 in Poland with a Polish economic migrant (an anonymous person residing in Athens since 1994 – Podkarpackie voivodeship).

¹⁰ The "new" migrants are victims of international mafia criminal activity that draws huge profits from trafficking people to Europe. Most migrants who have paid to come to Greece do not arrive at their destination and are left in rafts on the sea or are thrown out of the ships. Only few reach the land and increase large numbers of "unwanted" visitors. Greece is located on migrants trafficking routes from east to west and the biggest problem is the border with Turkey, where the scale of migration led the Greek authorities to build a ditch with the length of 120 km, the depth of 7 and the width of 30 metres. It is estimated that over the 2009-2013 period more than 400 thousand illegal immigrants came to Greece each year.

¹¹ The extract of the interview conducted in 2013 in Poland with a Polish economic migrant (an anonymous person residing in Athens since 1995 – Świętokrzyskie voivodeship).

represent a high-context culture, namely they are multiactive, open and attached to their traditions, the patriarchal family model (Hall, 1984). Whereas, in the typology of the four dimensions by G. Hofstede, the Greeks show moderate collectivist features, masculinity, the high power distance and the low level of uncertainty avoidance [Hofstede 2003]. The high power distance, in a political sense, describes cultures rather characterised by preferences in authoritarian forms of governance. In contrast, cultures of the low power distance postulate the equality of all people and representatives of these cultures cherish their independence and do not expect an obedience. In spite of democracy the Greeks are people still showing such tendencies. When making the characteristics of the Greeks on the basis of the degree of uncertainty avoidance, one can see a duality. Namely, the research conducted by G. Hofstede took place during the stabilisation system period in this country and does not take into account the current economic and socio – political situation. In the light of circumstances at that time, the author classified the Greeks as a culture with a high degree of uncertainty avoidance, which is currently changing in certain aspects of the Greeks' life.

The Greeks' *masculinity* remains unchangeable as a feature resulting from the traditional patriarchal family model, in which a decisive role is played by a man. He is its head and earns for the maintenance of the house. A woman in the social hierarchy takes the place established in the tradition, that is she is a mother and a wife taking care of the household and ensuring the family warmth. The Greeks' *masculinity* is also determined by social values such as: success, money and material wealth. Whereas *femininity* (womanhood) is the interpretation of the quality of life and the concern for others [Mikulowski Pomorski 2003]. Among male culture characteristics there are items such as male patriarchy in governing and domination both in the family and in the society, the role of children upbringing assigned to women, the life subordinate to work, money has a special role, independence and ambitions are the basis for any action, and the success decides on social respect.

It is obvious that the general characteristic of the Greek culture does not allow an objective assessment of cultural traits, however, it forms the basis for deeper analyses. When synthesising various approaches to the culture and the stereotype of the Greeks in the opinion of other nations, one may be tempted to create the following cultural profile of this nationality:

- positive qualities - hospitable, polite, friendly, open-minded and relatively tolerant, attached to the tradition, respecting the social order and the heritage of generations and ancestors, willing to play and have fun;
- negative qualities - brawlers, noisy, insistent, prone to corruption and nepotism, lazy, carefree, scruffy, not very productive, of a low level of qualifications.

A great number of the aforementioned cultural traits are not identical to those assigned to the Greeks by respondents of research conducted with the use of a survey method (correspondence) on the above mentioned sample of 58 Polish labour migrants living in Athens. However, before they are presented, as a preliminary remark just a few words about the research sample and sociodemographic characteristics of respondents. The study participants were the Poles in three age categories: 32-40 years (32 persons), 23-31 years (16 people) and 41-50 years (10 persons), while 18 respondents were women in the first age category. The equal distribution referred to people with secondary and vocational education - for 24 people, and only 6 persons declared basic and 4 higher education (they were women). Among all of the respondents only 2 women remained unemployed in Greece and bore the responsibility for childrearing. The rest of them worked in different professions, men mainly in the construction industry and transport, while women in the trade sector. The main criterion for selecting the sample was the period of the stay in Greece from 3 to 30 years. It is worth noting that only 5 of the respondents declared that they were staying in Greece with their families, whilst the other persons lived and still live there alone. The majority of respondents came from Podkarpackie, Świętokrzyskie, Lubelskie and Małopolskie voivodeships and only 3 of them represented Kujawsko-Pomorskie, Wielkopolskie and Warmińsko-Mazurskie provinces. As a reason for coming to Greece each of them pointed out difficulties in the labour market in Poland or low wages.

At the outset, it is worth to focus on the attitude of the Greeks to economic migrants. The study results show clearly that passive antagonism and indifference, without aggression, exist between the Greeks and the "old" migrants, regardless of their nationality. In addition, no symptoms of the cultural assimilation appear, as evidenced by declared by the respondents limited (except for professional) contacts of the Poles with the Greeks. The study findings indicate that the vast majority of the Poles are treated in Greece as labour force (relatively cheap), but well qualified. Although employers are eager to recruit the Poles, the society treats them as competition on the labour market. Such views were expressed by most respondents - 36 people (62%). Noteworthy are their selected responses justifying the attitude of the Greeks towards the Poles:

(...) they don't like foreigners; they're angry with all foreigners for the crisis which they started themselves; on the one hand they respect our craft, on the other hand they don't want to pay and they deceive; they blame everybody for the crisis; they don't like anyone who isn't a Greek; the Greeks are lazy bones who have no respect for anyone or anything and we are for them too smart and hardworking, so being at the advantage in their own country, they treat us like the stiffs; they cheat always and everywhere – on money, insurance and other matters, yet they know that their professionals cannot be compared with ours; definitely they treat us like machines to work but at every step they point out that we have to go back to Poland since we're guilty for the crisis (...)

The statements indicate a certain dualism, in which both poles seem to be in contradiction. The Greeks show respect to the Poles for their professionalism and as competition on the labour market at the same time. In the Polish-Greek relations there is a feedback loop; in the Poles' perception a Greek is given a negative image as far as the attitude to work is concerned. This is evidenced by responses categorising them in terms of punctuality, competence, productivity, loyalty to an employer, diligence, initiative and integrity. Given the adopted categories, a statistical Greek shows rather negative features and is described as *unpunctual, unproductive, low-skilled, lazy and dishonest* as well as *devoid of creativity*. The analysis of socio - cultural traits of the Greeks in the eyes of respondents allows to classify them as a nation which is characterised by the following positive features: *social solidarity, commitment to tradition and religion and respect for relatives and family*. Features as follows: *the relatively low level of personal culture, the low level of intelligence and education, intolerance, clearly outlined belonging to social class and rather negative attitude to authority and the public order* constitute the negative profile of the stereotypical perception of the Greeks in the opinion of the Poles.

The importance of the socio-cultural situation in Greece is indicated by answers to the question (multiple choice format on 4 rank order levels) concerning the causes of the Greek crisis. Alongside improper managing EU fundings (23 responses at the highest - 1st rank order level) respondents pointed to socio-cultural factors as the main reason for the crisis in Greece (18 responses at the highest - 1st rank order level). Among the features that the most considerably influenced the crisis there were indicated: excessive consumption - 43 indications, mentality - 23 indications, the attitude to work and the unfavourable social structure – for 21 responses. Less attention was paid to the level of education - 15 responses, and laziness, corruption and bribery - 12 answers which were considered as substantial at 2nd rank order level - 45 responses, but in the configuration with the cultural characteristics and mentality.

CONCLUSION

The crisis in Greece is a very interesting and at the same time evaluation research area. The socio-cultural factors included in this article represent only a small part of the whole range of research issues, but the volume of this work does not allow for a comprehensive approach to the problem. For the purposes of the article there were made only generalisations and the synthesis of main findings which, though fragmentary and not allowing their extrapolation to the whole environment of Polish migrants, show the directions of searching for

answers to questions about the causes of the crisis. This is evidenced, for example, by the recent events related to the referendum on reforms, or the battle between the European Union and Greece aimed at introducing a guarantee in the form of protecting the state's assets, worth over 50 billion EUR towards the potential embezzlement of further funds earmarked for reforms. As it turns out, even the threat of bankruptcy does not make the Greeks more willing to sacrifices and restrictions. They are still blaming the European Union for the crisis, not seeing its causes in their own mistakes. At the end, in order to confirm the minimal chances of Greece for overcoming the crisis a statement by one of the respondents interviewed will be cited:

(...) It will take centuries to change their mentality. Any attempt to initiate changes will end with the rebellion and the internal conflict. Nothing functions smoothly, but grey market. The Greeks are unhappy after the introduction of the sanctions imposed by the European Union and further austerity measures. They blame the European Union, especially Germany, for the crisis in their country. All this is simply untrue. The money they got should allow them to create the economic power, but everyone knows how it is. The government has successively introduced new burdens to the society, even the reverse tax has been established, and yet they still do not have the will to undergo change. It's still ubiquitous to see restaurants full of the Greeks drinking and eating with a smile on their faces. That says a lot. A great deal could be said about this beautiful country, its culture and heritage. However, it must be stated that the Greeks have put themselves into the crisis and they will not emerge from it for a long time. As well as they will not leave the European Union since Greece has the strategic geographical location for safety and continues to be a good sales market. This also affects the deepening of the crisis (...)¹².

¹² The extract of the interview conducted in 2013 in Poland with a Polish economic migrant (an anonymous person residing in Athens since 1995 – Świętokrzyskie voivodeship).

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