

Finance & Migration

Conference

eabh in cooperation with National Bank of Greece

11 June 2021

National Bank of Greece

82 & 93 Eolou Street

10551 Athens, Greece

Call for Papers

This conference will look at the relationship between the financial sector and migration - taking a comparative historical view.

It's impossible to look at human history without acknowledging continuous migratory flows and mass movements with the rise and fall of empires and nations. We are interested in scholarly work on how these movements of people were financed during chaotic times and how these migrants were integrated into the financial systems of the country of their arrival. Which is the spectrum of agency between private networks, state responsibility and the banks in between?

Considering the excellent archival sources of the National Bank of Greece, the case of Greece after the end of the Ottoman Empire and the ensuing population exchange with Turkey is a particularly interesting case to study. It offers an opportunity to revisit the Treaty of Lausanne (1923) and the role of the League of Nations from this angle. How were the integration and rehabilitation of these refugees financed? Topics of interest include the provision of immediate economic relief, launch and management of refugee loans and exchangeable property, urban rehabilitation, redistribution of lands and the link between migration, finance and industrialisation. Research on this case could come from the perspectives of the League of Nations (Geneva), the Foreign Office Records (U.K.), the Bank of England, Hambros Bank (and other foreign banks that underwrote the Greek refugee loans), the Centre for Asia Minor Studies, the Agricultural Bank of Greece Archives, the Greek State Archives, etc.

The cases to be studied in this regard are manifold. After the Great War and the end of the Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian Empires, European States were bankrupt or even worse, had fallen into hyperinflation. How did the financial system deal with the hundreds of thousands of people that moved from and to Greece, Turkey, Bulgaria, Austria, etc.? Or at the same time the Mexican repatriation/ expulsion during the Great Depression in the United States of America? How did systems deal with the mass exodus of people in Poland, the Czech Republic, Germany after the end of WWII in 1948; the fleeing masses in Hungary in 1956/58, the boat people of Vietnam in 1975? Or much earlier, the American Colonization Society and the establishment of the country of Liberia (1822-1827)? - just to name a few cases.

Concluding, we would like to ask the question if there are any parallels to the contemporary world? How are both, integration and repatriation of global refugee movements (e.g. from Africa and the Middle East) dealt with by the financial sector today (refugee integration loans, alternative financial arrangements for immigrants)? Who is in charge? Private financial institutions, states or supranational actors? And which would be the lessons to be learned from history?