

## ENVIRONMENTAL MIGRANTS-REFUGEES AND CRISIS MANAGEMENT POLICIES

*PhD lecturer MARIA VLACHADI, University of Crete, Greece*

*Msc in Acording and Control GIORGIA ALEXANDRI, University of Pireus, Greece*

**ABSTRACT:** *Climate change is one of the biggest emerging environmental challenges of our time, which is taking on ever greater dimensions from the time of the industrial revolution to today, with incalculable adverse effects on the economy, physical and mental health, and society in general. The effects of climate change force many people every day to seek shelter in other parts of the world. According to many scientists, climate migration is the most important problem that humanity will face in the coming decades. Although objections have raised from time to time about the reliability of estimates of climate displacement, of estimates of climate displacement, no one can dispute the existence of the phenomenon and the consequent trend of population displacement. Additionally, environmental migration can be the result of a slow process of environmental degradation. The international community will be asked to face significant challenges regarding this issue and it will become imperative to create a comprehensive proposal, which will act as a shield of protection and which will aim to defend the rights of people who are forced into displacement due to environmental degradation. Finally, the research part presents the research conducted and analyzes the conclusions obtained from the collection and analysis of the questionnaire data, which includes targeted questions of a mixed type and which was distributed to people in the population who were easily accessible (convenience sampling), so as to ensure on the one hand the greatest possible participation of them in this research and on the other hand to illuminate as fully as possible the prevailing opinions and beliefs of these individuals regarding the issue under consideration.*

**Key words:** *environmental migrants-refugees; climate change; managing policies;*

### **Legal-regulatory framework for climate change and environmental migration in Greece**

Climate change is one of the most urgent global challenges and it directly and indirectly affects environmental migration worldwide. However, the relevant legal and regulatory framework presents significant gaps in its interpretation. Otunnu, O. (1992) states that in today's geopolitical conditions distinguishing between the various factors that lead to population movements is extremely difficult. According to Brown O. (2008), if climate change follows the current trend, it is estimated that the number of environmental refugees will reach 200 million people by the year 2050. Kolmannskog V. 2012 states that "when governments increase with target vulnerable groups and contribute to environmental destruction, this could be considered persecution", as when e.g. a government causes famine by reducing the flow of water, poisoning it, or destroying crops." According to guidelines from

the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR, 2017], when natural disasters and events that were to occur in the near future are linked to cases of armed conflict and generalized violence, then one could meet the criteria of the Geneva Convention of 1951.

But even if the effects of climate change or environmental disasters are characterized as "prosecution", the 1951 Geneva Convention requires that such prosecution be connected with one of the limited grounds of prosecution mentioned in the Geneva Convention, i.e. due to race, religion, nationality, political beliefs or membership in a particular social group [Krotsi M.- Papaspyropoulos K, 2018].

In addition, the New York Protocol of 1967 does not include specific provisions for the protection of people who are displaced due to climate change or other environmental disasters [Krotsi M.- Papaspyropoulos K., 2018 & UNHCR, 2010] as it is considered difficult to be an "environmental refugee" to establish the existence of a well-founded and justified fear of

persecution [Krotsi M.-Papaspyropoulos, 2018, ref. Britton J. Bush, 2013]. The 2017 Naples Protocol recognizes the challenges of environmental migration and calls on Mediterranean states to develop policies and initiatives to protect environmental refugees [Mediterranean Climate Initiative, 2017].

In general, Greece does not have a special legislative framework for the protection of environmental refugees, however, there are various provisions in laws that can be applied to protect these population groups. Law 3907/2011 is the basic law for asylum policy in Greece and provides protection to persons at risk of serious harm, as described in Article 15 of the Directive on the minimum standards for the recognition and protection of refugees [Directive 2011/95/EU].

It also actively participates in the implementation of European policies for the protection of refugees including refugees affected by environmental factors.

The incorporation of Directive 2011/95/EU and Directive 2013/32/EU into Greek law is part of the effort, providing a framework for the recognition and protection of people displaced by climate change [Directive 2013/32/EU]. There is also an emphasis on the recognition of the risks caused by climate change and the development of strategies to deal more effectively with its consequences [Tsakiris K., 2019].

With Decision No. 4/23.12.2019 of the Governmental Economic Policy Council [Government Gazette B'4893] the National Energy and Climate Plan (NECP) was approved. cooperates, in this direction, with international organizations, such as the UN and the IOM to develop joint programs and actions to provide assistance to climate migrants and contributes in supporting efforts to recognize them at the international level (IOM, 2019). However, the lack of a clear definition and specific legislative provisions for environmental refugees makes this group exposed and vulnerable [McAdam, 2012]. But also the application of the relevant legislative provisions becomes limited in practice due to a lack of resources and infrastructure as well as due to the difficulty in recognizing environmental causes as a basis for providing protection [Papadopoulou A., 2015].

In Greece, the above cross-sectoral approach has not yet been sufficiently developed, thus limiting the effectiveness of efforts to protect environmental refugees [Tsakiris K., 2019].

Following the European Climate Law, the National Climate Law 4936/2022 [A' 105/27.05.2022] was issued for the first time with the title: "National Climate Law - Transition to climate neutrality and adaptation to climate change, emergency provisions to address the energy crisis and protect the environment".

### **International treaties and initiatives for environmental refugees/immigrants**

In the new relevant legislative framework, the special characteristics of the specific population group should be taken into account, such as e.g. is the "need for protection" and "forced displacement" [Pires-Ramos E., 2011]. To date, there is no terminology and legal framework for those who cross international borders due to the consequences related to climate change, and therefore environmental refugees are never mentioned when the World Refugee Day is celebrated by the UN, on June 20 [Maravelidis I.-M., 2021].

The international legal texts on the specific issue are not binding but are based on the discretion of the respective states to deal with the situation in question. In summary, the following legal texts exist:

**I.** The Organization of African Unity [OAU] Convention of 1969, which gives a broader interpretation to the definition of a refugee and which is valid as a regional extension of the 1951 Convention, regulates, however, only the specific problems of Refugees in Africa with the end of colonialism era and the subsequent movement of these population groups. What is requested in this case too is the investigation of the flexibility of the term "refugee", so as to include environmental causes in the reasons for inclusion in the refugee's protective status in the other host countries [Koutsouflianou D., 2022-2023].

**II.** The World Charter for Nature [1982] is a non-legally binding text which, inter alia, concerns the protection of forests, indigenous populations, biodiversity and vulnerable ecosystems and differs from the Stockholm Declaration and the draft Principles of UNEP both substantively and morphologically as in contrast to the previous instruments, which were anthropocentric [protection of nature for the benefit of humanity], the Charter in question is an ecological instrument, which focuses on the

protection of nature as such [Georgiadis A - K., 2022 and Karamanlidis, 2023, ref. in "World Map of the United Nations", 1982].

**III.** The Cartagena Declaration [1984]. The Cartagena Declaration on refugees includes elements from the refugee definition of the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol [Hatzithanasiou M.-A., 2017]. Although it is not a binding legal text, most Latin American states apply in practice the definition of refugee that it contains and some of these states have also incorporated it into their national legislation.

**IV.** Agenda 21 of the UN Summit in 1992 on Environment and Development refers to the displacements that may be caused by a natural or man-made disaster without, however, any reference to the nature of the people forced to be displaced, nor to the type of displacement -intra-border or cross-border- [Danilakis V., 2020].

**V.** The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Handbook on Procedures and Criteria for the Determination of Refugee Status (UNHCR, 1992). In order to submit an asylum application in a country, at least one of the five justified fears of persecution of the Geneva Convention of 1951 must be present and at the same time there must be a direct connection between the reason for movement and environmental natural disasters [Katsaris A., 2010 and Danilakis B., 2020].

**VI.** The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the Basic Principles for Internal Displacement [UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 1998]. According to McDowell C. & Morrell G. [2007], many of the communities, which have been displaced due to disaster victims face the same challenges and problems as those displaced by armed conflict [McDowell C. & Morrell G., 2007].

**VII.** The Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development (2002), which calls for the protection of natural resources that form the basis of economic and social development and the reversal of the current trend of natural resource degradation through the management of this base in a sustainable manner and comprehensive [eur-lex.europa.eu].

**VIII.** The Case of Murillo Saldias and others v. Spain [Decision of 28.11.2006], which concerns a natural disaster that occurred on August 7, 1996, in the area of the Municipality of

Biescas, Spain, and in which the first applicant, Sergio Murillo Saldias succeeded in recognizing the objective responsibility of the authorities for the death of his family members and in compensating each of his deceased relatives as according to the ECtHR there was a violation of human rights as the national authorities did not comply with the general duty to protect life and physical integrity of the governed [Kotsoni M., 2017].

**IX.** The text of the Greens of the European Parliament entitled "Declaration on climate migrations", June 11, 2008, p. 1 [§8], which contains a clear reference to the nature and behavior of people displaced by climate change and at the same time proposes the establishment of an international legal framework and international cooperation to provide coverage for displaced people affected by climate change and they demand that their issue be recognized internationally while at the same time security issues are raised, which would have serious negative consequences in the countries receiving the immigrants [Danilakis V., 2020].

**X.** Resolution 124 of the UN General Assembly [Resolution 124 of the UN General Assembly, 2008], in which for the first time an attempt is made to create a coherent link between refugees and climate change [Georgiadis A-K., 2022].

**XI.** The Budayeva Case (20.03.2008) v. Russia and the Judgment of the European Court of Human Rights, which ruled that according to Article 2 (Right to life) the State Party had failed to take the necessary measures to protect its citizens from environmental disasters [Danilakis V., 2008 op. ref. European Court of Human Rights, 2008], an extremely important decision as on the one hand it provides for the first time the possibility for those who have been affected by natural disasters to request compensation from the respective state authority and on the other hand, care is taken to take measures to prevent corresponding disasters [Danilakis V., 2020].

**XII.** In the year 2006, the government of the island state of the Maldives proposed the adoption of a Protocol, with the aim of preventing and preventing damage caused by natural, man-made or mixed disasters and which included the provision of environmental factors as reasons for recognizing refugee status but and the possibility of protecting these population groups [Tsonou E., 2022].

**XIII.** The Convention for Persons Displaced by Climate Change of 2009, which was the result of an initiative by academics and researchers [Tsonou E., 2022].

**XIV.** A similar initiative was implemented by members of the CRIDEAU Institute in collaboration with the University of Limoges, who formulated a draft convention on the rights of individuals who leave their place of origin after a disaster [2009], which provided for both cooperation at an institutional level as well as the production of new, innovative ideas [Tsonou E., 2022, op. ref. <https://cidce.org/en/>].

**XV.** The Nansen Initiative in the year 2012 starting from Norway and Switzerland and with the support of the High Commissioner and the Norwegian Refugee Council. The goal is to settle the legal gap for environmental refugees [Pemptousia, 2017].

**XVI.** The Kampala Convention, which was signed by the member states of the African Union, concerns exclusively displaced populations within Africa - including those affected by natural or man-made disasters -, has been in force since the end of 2012 and is the first legally binding text [Tsonou E., 2022].

**XVII.** The Paris Agreement on Climate Change -COP21-(2015), in which it is expressly stated that the contracting parties recognize the fact that climate change is a matter of paramount importance and concern for humanity and that they are obliged to take into account human rights, in particular of the most vulnerable social groups, including refugees (U.N., 2015). It entered into force in 2020 and aspired to reduce global warming to well below 2°C compared to pre-industrial times, but did not include any provision for financial compensation for countries affected by natural disasters due to warming (moa.gov.cy, 2015). With the adoption of the Paris Agreement, the international community is called upon to face the effects of climate change on the one hand due to its environmental severity and on the other due to its economic dimension [Augerinopoulou D-Th, 2018].

**XVIII.** The European Green Deal (December 11, 2019) Innovative development strategy, which aims to make the EU as the first climate neutral continent by the year 2050 [Sikora A., 2021]. It proposes measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 55% by the year 2030, increase biodiversity and transform climate and environmental challenges into opportunities in all

relevant Union policies [Sikora A., 2021]. The need to adopt the European Green Agreement also arose due to the finding that the existing living conditions of citizens are not acceptable and will be the cause of many future disasters [Chetsa H.-G., 2020]. It is generally a very strong effort to deal with the effects of climate change in the post-pandemic era.

**XIX.** The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction ("Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction"). It focuses on the prevention, preparation and response to both natural and man-made disasters and the preparation of societies, so that they become resilient to disasters, which are related, among others, to climate change [Augerinopoulou D-Th, 2018].

## Experimental part

### Purpose of the research

Through the results of the research, an attempt is made to gain a deeper and more substantial understanding of the opinions of the interviewed population regarding the concepts of environmental migration and the environmental immigrant due to the phenomenon of climate change, the knowledge they have regarding the existing environmental migration programs worldwide, their opinions regarding the share of responsibility and the effort to raise awareness of the general population on the issue of climate change and more specifically on the consequences caused by the ever-increasing intensity and frequency of extreme weather phenomena, with the ultimate goal of raising awareness and mobilizing them to find solutions and ways of substantial prevention and effective treatment of this phenomenon.

### Research method

To collect the information, an anonymous online questionnaire of mixed type [open and closed type questions] was used, which consisted of a total of 8 questions and which was distributed to the participants during the period of June-July 2024.

Convenience Sampling was carried out, in which included members of the population who were easily accessible. The main advantage of the above method is the collection of data from primary sources.

In addition, one more element, which we consider important to point out, is the limits that

should be set by the researcher regarding the extent of the questionnaire [Liana M.-Radaïou E.-D., 2015]. It is empirically proven that in cases where the extent of this does not go far beyond the normal it increases the response rates by reducing the probability of missing values in some questions [Blaxter et al., 2001].

### Sample survey

The sample for the purposes of this research was a total of 112 people, of which 101 responded and completed the questionnaire. The age range of the participants varied as follows: 66 of the 101 participants belonged to the age group from 46 to 60 years old; 28 participants in the age group 30-45 years, 6 participants in the age group 61-75 years and 1 participant in the age group 15-29 years. In addition, all the people who participated in this research had an educational level of higher education.

According to the above data, it should be pointed out that due to the fact that the questionnaire was answered by all the people who proved willing and available to participate in the specific research, we cannot express with certainty the conclusion that these people are a representative sample of the total population of the country and therefore proceed to generalize the results to the total population. [Farrokhi & Mahmoudi-Hamidabad, 2012 & Creswell, 2016].

## Results of the Survey

### PART I - Demographic Data

The majority of participants belong to the age groups of 30 to 60 years. The high percentages of participants in the two above age groups can be attributed to the experience and increased recruitment regarding the issue of environmental migration and environmental refugees, which these individuals possess. They are in a productive phase of their lives [they are workers] and have direct, regular and multifaceted information both from the online media and from the press and television regarding the constantly worsening climate conditions and environmental disasters in our country and worldwide. Indeed, some of them may have personally experienced some kind of destruction to their property due to the recent floods and fires that occurred in our country.

Regarding the level of education of the participants, all of the participants have a higher education degree.

### PART II - Analysis of the participants' knowledge and opinions regarding the phenomenon of environmental migration

1. The answers to the question if you know the term "environmental migrant" were overwhelmingly in the affirmative. In particular, 98 of the 101 participants (a rate of almost 99%) answered yes in one word, 1 participant (of the age group 46-60 years) answered that: "he understands the concept although he has not read the definition of an environmental migrant somewhere", 1 another participant answered that he "knows the definition, but not in depth" and 1 more participant went even further and gave us some kind of definition in relation to climate change. More specifically, he said: "Climate change will radically change the lives of millions of people in the coming decades, and many of them will be forced to temporarily or permanently leave their place of residence. These are environmental immigrants." From the above data, we come to the conclusion that all the participants in this research are familiar with the term "environmental immigrant".

2. To the question "how intense do you think is the phenomenon of environmental migration worldwide?" we received the following answers: 39 participants [percentage 39.4%] consider this phenomenon very intense, 27 participants (percentage 27.3%) very intense, 19 participants (percentage 19.2%) fairly or moderately intense, 1 participant answered that "in some areas very strong, in others (e.g. in northern Europe) not strong at all. In the areas with high intensity (e.g. Africa) no accurate recording has been done due to a lack of the appropriate mechanisms. In general, however, it is an escalating phenomenon worldwide.

Already Mediterranean countries appear to be affected by climate change and are candidates for desertification in the future", 1 another participant responded that "about 18 million people - 61.5% of global displacement - have been forced to move due to natural disasters", 1 another participant responded that "the movement of populations within and across national borders is a modern reality and an ever-increasing phenomenon, especially when it comes to movements from poor to rich countries.

Many of the mobile populations are directly or indirectly forced to migrate by severe environmental changes and problems – such as natural and technological disasters, climate

change and land resource degradation, expropriation and armed conflict. They are characterized as "environmental refugees" or "environmental immigrants" and their number in recent years is constantly increasing", 6 of the participants (6.06%) answered that the specific phenomenon "starts to become more and more intense", 1 more participant answered that "I don't have in mind. But I am afraid that with climate change it will swell in the coming years", 3 participants [3.03% rate] that "it is quite intense in recent years and tends to increase continuously due to climate change", "quite intense in the last decade", "quite intense in recent years" and 3 more participants (3.03% rate) that "it is not so intense yet", "not very intense", "I think it is not yet or it does not seem to be so intense".

From the opinions presented above, we are led to the conclusion that the majority of respondents [at a rate of approximately 99%] consider that the phenomenon of environmental migration is generally intense and some of them argue, in fact, that this phenomenon is going to intensify because further in the following years. At this point, we should of course also mention the opposing views of those people, who argue that the intensity of this particular phenomenon is not or does not seem to be that noticeable. However, in the last case of answer: "I think that it is not yet or it does not seem that it is so intense" we can discern some doubt in the answer of the interviewed person as he maintains some reservation regarding whether in reality it does not exist or it does exist but it does not seem the intensity of said phenomenon.

3. To the question "which groups of environmental migrants do you know?", the answers were as follows: 9 of the participants [rate of about 9.09%] answered that they "don't know any specific group" or that they "don't know any specific categories, but they assume that they are grouped according to the event leading to migration" or "I don't know. I assume some due to natural disasters?" while 91 participants (percentage 91.9%) mentioned specific categories of environmental migrants, with the following reports being most typical: They know "migrants due to climate change, natural and man-made disasters, due to war conflicts in countries in the Middle East and Africa", "the groups coming from areas with severe water scarcity, aridity and the inability to find water. Also, from areas where extreme weather events have intensified

(earthquakes, floods, hurricanes), extreme weather conditions (very high temperatures for a long time) have increased, from areas threatened by soil erosion and drinking water boiling.

More generally, environmental migrants are displaced from their areas due to a lack of basic living conditions, safety and hygiene, from factors derived from the presence or absence of a quality environment", "the Eskimos", "transient and permanent", "immigrants due to deforestation forests of the Amazon, the immigrants of the Kiribati islands due to rising sea levels, the island of Montserrat in the Caribbean due to a volcanic eruption, etc.

Finally, 1 participant gave the following answer: "The modern history of Greece is closely connected with the migration phenomenon. Due to its geographical location and its economic and political situation, it has been from time to time a point of departure for migratory flows or a place of reception or an intermediate destination. In the last decade the number of immigrants/refugees is higher than ever, mainly due to war conflicts in countries in the Middle East and Africa", who considers the immigrants/refugees due to war conflicts as environmental refugees/immigrants. It is an extremely interesting point of view, which we consider to have as its starting point the fact that people who are forced to move due to some environmental degradation/ destruction due to human interaction with the environment (such as the overexploitation of natural resources or technological and industrial accidents) actually belong to environmental refugees, who are added to the category of existing climate change refugees/migrants.

4. To the question "what programs do you know about international environmental migration?", the responses of the participants were as follows: 1 of the participants answered that "I know that in general there are programs to limit greenhouse gases and the increase in global temperature, so indirectly limiting the causes of environmental migration.

In general, however, the term environmental migrant has not been officially established and is not part of the protection framework of refugees that exists", 1 other participant that "there is nothing concrete, as it appears, at the moment, those who are forced into precarious situations, due to climate change, do not meet the technical conditions for the recognition of refugee status.

Which is indulgently stupid, when we know

that climate disasters and migration are happening today, now. And that climate migration takes place under the worst conditions, with people facing famine, water shortages, conflict, or their homes being literally underwater. Moreover, many communities worst affected by climate change have had the smallest roles in creating the climate problem.

Until it is clarified who can be granted asylum, the focus remains on human rights by securing livelihoods for those forced to move due to climate change and developing infrastructure to facilitate the lives of those who cannot move. These require a cost and the question that arises is who should pay for the plight of the climate vulnerable", 18 of the participants (percentage 18.2%) answered that they did not know of any program and the remaining 81 (percentage 81, 8%) mentioned the following programs: *"the relocation program of the International Organization for Migration (IOM)"*, *"the program for the environment of UN"*, *"the Agenda 21"*, *"the Paris Agreement on climate change"*, *"the Nansen Initiative"*, *"the European Green Deal, which aims to make Europe the first climate-neutral continent by 2050"* and *"the 8th Environment Action Programme, which aims to gradually reduce greenhouse gas emissions and strengthening absorptions from natural and other sinks in the European Union, in order to achieve the goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 and achieving climate neutrality by 2050"*. From the answers collected above, we find that the issue of climate change in general and environmental migration in particular, which is a direct consequence of the former, is of great concern to the inhabitants of our country, regardless of age and gender, as the resulting consequences affect to a greater extent or to a lesser extent all social classes.

5. To the question "do you think that the country of origin is responsible and to what extent for the displacement of these population groups?" we received the following answers: 65 of the participants (about 66% - more than 50% of all respondents) answered that the country of origin is to a large or very large extent responsible, citing the most characteristic answers, which mainly focused on the following: *"in the lack of timely and effective information measures for citizens during the occurrence of extreme weather phenomena and mainly in the lack of political planning and programs for restoration and*

*smooth adaptation of citizens after the occurrence of natural disasters"*, *"the state is largely responsible due to the implementation of insufficient development policies, adoption of preventive measures and crisis response actions"*, *"the climate crisis did not appear suddenly, although it accelerated with an amazing speed."*

Those in powerful positions have long known about the human impact of the climate crisis, but have done nothing about it when it would have been crucial to act. *What should be done?* Rich industrialized countries produce the lion's share of the greenhouse gas emissions that have led to the current crisis. Less industrialized, poorer nations are now paying the cost with the effects of climate change and resource scarcity. Although it is obvious that this is really unfair, rich countries do not seem to feel that they have any historical obligation to help those who have been harmed. But whether they are 'climate refugees' or 'environmental migrants' or 'climate victims', these people deserve some justice', he is 'responsible to the extent that he could possibly take some measures in order to deal with the effects of environmental crisis', *"definitely responsible in most cases"*, *"yes as there is no infrastructure to support people in case of natural disasters in the countries of origin"*, *"to a high degree as it does not take into account the emerging conditions and accordingly does not take prevention- adjustment measures"*, *"yes, the respective state of origin is responsible for the displacement of the population groups, since it must provide clear directions for the protection of the natural environment and the rational management of natural resources, the planning, implementation and operation of the investments that will be carried out in the context of the respective environmental protection program"*, *"is responsible to the extent which did not create infrastructure and did not provide alternative solutions to avoid migration"*, *"The state of origin is responsible when it does not take measures to prevent, i.e. limit the causes of environmental migration but also to deal with it, if there is a need to relocate populations, so that entire groups are not required to leave outside the state of origin"*, 34 participants (ate of approximately 34.3%) answered that it is partially or to a low degree responsible, with the most typical answers being the following: "the degree of responsibility of each state is graded according to the causes that cause the environmental-immigration flows . For example,

the lack of management plans for river basins in Thessaly was a state responsibility. Because of this lack, populations of various villages were forced to relocate (temporarily or permanently).

In other cases, (decreased rainfall, severe drought) the blame exists, but the causality is weaker. For example, the state may take care of the maintenance of the networks (so that there are no leaks), but even if the maintenance is successful, the risk still exists in case of a prolonged drought", "only to the extent that it did not take timely measures to normalize the phenomena that lead to displacement, although the measures related to environmental management do not have immediate results and need to be taken in time so that a situation does not become irreversible.

But it is certainly not an issue that can be solved by a state alone, as the environment and its phenomena know no borders and need synergy at a wider international level", "the degree of responsibility of each state is graded according to the causes that cause the environmental- migration flows. For example, the lack of management plans for river basins in Thessaly was a state responsibility. Due to this lack, populations of various villages were forced to relocate (temporarily or permanently).

In other cases (reduced rainfall, severe drought) the responsibility is there, but the causality is weaker. For example, the state can take care of the maintenance of the networks [so that there are no leaks], but even if the maintenance is successful, the risk is still there in case of a prolonged drought", "responsible to a degree (5/10)", 1 other participant answered "to a certain extent the state of origin is also responsible, due to the effort to serve some aspects of the development process, such as policies that have to do with the exploitation of land for the construction of road networks and dams, etc. .p, a fact that limits the forests and natural beauty of the area.

In addition, war is another reason for the persecution of this category of citizens of a state, as it results in the destruction of the natural environment from the use of chemical and nuclear weapons, the pollution of the atmosphere, soil and water" and finally, 1 still respondent answered "I don't know. Probably."

6. To the question "What measures do you suggest should be taken to limit the phenomenon of environmental migration?", the answers are

varied and we will list some of them selectively below: "better organization/preparation of states", "providence and prevention against environmental disasters [e.g. storm Daniel that hit Volos]", "care for people affected by intense environmental changes", "assignment of responsibilities to companies that operate at the expense of the environment being aware of their actions", "measures to deal with the climate crisis, on a global level. I do not think that individual states can deal with it", "the immediate adoption of measures at the international level and the strengthening of local action by helping the populations that are experiencing or are going to experience change in the places they live", "improving infrastructure", "protection of the environment and water resources", "flood protection projects", "climate research", "is not a phenomenon that is easily dealt with.

They need international agreements and a holistic approach, strategic planning in environmental issues. Individual states must reforest, maintain networks, develop management plans for disasters (floods, fires)", "execution of natural resource exploitation projects, reduction of pollutants and carbon emissions worldwide", "flood control projects, dams, reduction of the use of substances that affect the atmosphere", "infrastructure development, adequate information, more funds to prevent the consequences of climate phenomena", "strengthening environmental policies and the ecological consciousness of citizens", "Measures to protect the environment and deal with natural disasters, e.g. anti-flooding, anti-fire works, pollution control, etc. respectively, in order to reduce the burden on the planet and preserve natural resources", "the most important measure is the commitment and joint action of the polluting countries of the global north, in order to face the issue of climate change and the needs of the countries that will suffer more in the global south", "adopting sustainable development, adopting and implementing necessary specifications in the building-construction of factories & businesses, in transport, etc.", "some of the measures that can be proposed concern:

-Limiting risks and nuisances to the natural environment: The infrastructure and investments planned must incorporate plans to limit and deal with risks of pollution or destruction of the natural environment (forest lands, agricultural ecosystems, marine environment, etc.).



-Avoidance of changes in the qualitative and quantitative characteristics of water: in the design of infrastructures and investments care should be taken to avoid or minimize changes in the quantitative and qualitative state of water.

-Protection of the marine environment: The prevention or minimization of impacts on the marine environment, as well as the protection of sensitive marine or coastal formations, should be a requirement for program support for projects or investments in coastal or marine zones.

-Incorporation of environmental innovation: the development of technical, scientific or organizational knowledge must be encouraged by the integration of innovative technologies and methods and a beneficial sign for the environment, especially in terms of the development or introduction of new or significantly improved items/products and equipment, management systems and organization, in fishing and aquaculture, as well as the fuller integration of the projects into the environment of the receiving area.

-Biodiversity protection for the preservation of protected species and habitats, as well as checking compatibility with the provisions of the management plans of the affected areas", "to the extent possible:

a) to carry out infrastructure projects to avoid the main causes that cause the environmental immigration;

b) to educate citizens so that through changes in their daily life they contribute to the protection of the environment in the medium and long term and

c) to have an alternative solution so that the citizen who is inevitably affected by environmental disasters is not forced to leave the country completely off, but to remain and contribute to the improvement of the relevant conditions":

1. at the European and International level, the issuance of regulations and directives by tightening the limits of carbon dioxide emissions and other environmentally harmful gases and pollutants;
2. adoption of the regulations and directives by national legal orders and full compliance with them;
3. innovative inventions that are more environmentally friendly
4. development of ecological consciousness among the people", "it is necessary to

implement an environmental policy with appropriate measures:

- prevention, in order to avoid as far as possible extreme environmental phenomena and deterioration of climatic conditions, e.g. greenhouse gas reduction measures;
- execution of appropriate projects, e.g. anti-flood works, anti-seismic buildings, etc. to limit the catastrophic consequences of the phenomena;
- financial support for immigrants, so that they can recover within their country" and other views of a similar content.

In conclusion, from the quoted opinions of all the participants in this research, we are led to the conclusion that there is, in principle, a range of actions, actions and targeted policies, which should be taken into account by the competent bodies during the process of drawing up policies and implementing actions related to the environment and ecosystems and on the other hand, that the taking of measures related to the protection of the environment should be collective and global, so that it has the desired results.

In addition, the participants give special importance to the assistance and assistance of each individual citizen in taking measures to protect the environment and prevent - to the extent possible - environmental disasters - primarily through the development and cultivation of ecological consciousness. However, in addition to taking the necessary preventive measures, the participants pointed out the extremely urgent need to provide substantial assistance and active support to those affected by climate change, in the "aftermath" of the occurrence of the various environmental disasters, in order to prevent the possibility of forced abandonment of their place of residence and their relocation to new lands or at least to ensure the "temporary" nature of the movement of these population groups and to make visible the prospect of their return to their usual places of residence.

### **Concluding remarks and proposed actions**

It is a fact that the issue of environmental migration as a direct consequence of climate change and rapidly evolving environmental degradation, especially during the last decade, is no longer placed in the distant future, but constitutes a short-term visible risk [Zafiroudi I.,

2018] with incalculable consequences. Apart from the independent initiatives, which have been taken from time to time by individual states and whose value and contribution to dealing with the issue in question is judged to be extremely important, such as e.g. are Sweden and Finland, countries which, in their efforts to find a solution to the issue of climate refugees, grant recognition of asylum or humanitarian protection to people who cannot return to their country due to natural disasters. [Martini I., 2021] it is considered necessary to undertake coordinated actions on behalf of the international community to effectively deal with the phenomenon. At the same time, disruption of public order - as the concept of public order is understood in the African and American regional conventions - is not recognized as being disrupted in cases involving climate change and the environment. An exception is the mention of the Arab Treaty "especially in natural disasters" and which is a favorable development in the issue of recognition and protection of climate-displaced persons, so that its international institutionalization becomes possible in the future [Kotsoni M., 2017].

In the above proposal, however, there is also a strong counterargument as it has been argued from time to time that if the Convention included climate refugees, then in this case, the international protection provided to other categories of refugees would be somewhat weakened [Kotsoni M., 2017].

Another observation, which seems to arise as a consequence of the above, is related to the age-long gap, which has always existed between the countries of the rich North and the poor South. It is a fact that the North is disproportionately responsible for causing global environmental problems as it is scientifically proven that the poorest 37% of the world's population is responsible for 7% of carbon dioxide emissions, as opposed to 15% of the population of developed countries, which produces approximately 50% of these pollutants [Manalis P., Margariti Sp., 2018].

More generally, the time period 2010-2040 can be seen as a period of geopolitical restructuring worldwide, which creates instability and is potentially dangerous for social cohesion mainly in terms of the growing problems of access to natural resources, especially in the energy sector as well as in relation with the effects of climate change [Vlachadi M., Koufioti G. and Kounios A., 2019]. In this period, the emergence

of new powers is increasingly felt, as well as a shift in global strategy in terms of Asian management policies and the relative loss of the hegemonic regimes of the Western world and especially Europe, making countries such as the US and Russia as dominant military powers. In the spirit of the above developments, climate change is one of the main forms of "asymmetric threat", by placing the above term in a sociological context, on the basis of which it is interpreted as a reference to emergency needs, which result from population movements, migratory flows etc. [Vlachadi M., Koufioti G. and Kounios A., 2019].

In addition, it would be right and fair that the obligation and responsibility for any kind of assistance and support for climate refugees should be undertaken and processed by the developed states, based on the principle of common, but differentiated responsibility, as those states, which as industrialized have produced the largest quantities of polluting substances, which have contributed to a decisive degree to the environmental degradation of the planet [Bierman F. & Boas I., 2008].

The ultimate goal of the above project would be the creation of a long-term plan of action based on advance preparation and the coordinated action of all involved entities for a organized relocation of population groups affected by environmental disasters, which are most at risk from the occurrence of an emergency situation [Tychala St., 2020].

In order to strengthen the above effort, the more substantial participation of those states that have more developed infrastructures and greater economic potential in undertaking climate initiatives and in investing resources in the field of research is deemed necessary, with the ultimate goal of producing sustainable development models based on principles of sustainability and environmental justice. In this context, more emphasis should be placed not so much on the causes of climate mobility but on the needs of climate refugees and their rights, which still remain unprotected and violated [Ferris E., 2017].

Environmental migration can take many and complex forms: it can be temporary [e.g. the first response to an earthquake and the return of those affected to restore the damaged environment] or permanent [e.g. in cases of desertification or floods with a long-term effect on the environment], voluntary (e.g. when soil erosion

continues to develop over a long period of time) or forced (in the event that a tsunami or typhoon occurs and people are suddenly forced to move for an indefinite period of time), intra-border (in neighboring areas within the country and more commonly from rural to urban areas) or cross-border (outside the border, in another country), individual or collective and so on. while the term "environmental disturbance" refers to any kind of physical, chemical or biological changes in the ecosystem, which make it temporarily or permanently unsuitable for living [Martini I., 2021].

However, both the aforementioned Global Compact and the Global Compact on Refugees do not define a precise legal and institutional status for climate refugees, i.e. they do not make it clear to what extent climate change must be addressed by the international community within the framework of the Compact [Tsoukas G., 2023].

Therefore, the need to establish on behalf of both the international community and the European Union, as well as the governments of the individual states, a special legislative framework for people who are forced to move for environmental reasons is considered extremely imperative. In particular, it is considered necessary to define the content of recognizable protection and the rights that derive from it [Martini I., 2021].

Finally, it is worth mentioning that the new Climate Action Plan [CCAP] is a positive step in the direction of addressing the climate change phenomenon, based on increased funding for its development and with the aim of reducing pollutant emissions and strengthening alignment with the goals of the Paris Agreement to limit the increase in global temperature to 1.5 co. (degrees

Celsius) compared to pre-industrial levels and to achieve climate neutrality by 2050 [Municipality of Athens, 2022]. The above action may not be directly linked to dealing with the phenomenon of climate change, but it may, however, limit the possible mass forced movements of population groups affected by environmental disasters [Martini I., 2021].

In conclusion, as the climate crisis constitutes a major threat to international peace and security and as we are the first generation to know the rapid deterioration of climate conditions and their disastrous effects, but also the last generation to have the opportunity to intervene immediately and take drastic measures to prevent the further spread of this global environmental crisis, we know exactly how we must act, both individually as citizens and collectively as a state and in cooperation with International Organizations. The issue of social exclusion of individuals and groups should be at the center of reflection in modern societies as, according to the philosopher and sociologist Raymond Aron, formal and individual freedoms are not an indication of the most secure condition for the dignified living of certain social groups, whose free realization is called to ensure society [Vlachadi M., 2009].

It is widely accepted that government practices around the world, which have been followed over time in the direction of dealing with inequalities mainly at the social level, although they set as their main goal the elimination of the problem in question, have not succeeded in achieving their goal to the desired extent this, because in the majority of cases the measures that were adopted were outdated and consequently powerless to respond to the increased demands of modern circumstances [Vlachadi M., 2009].

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