

## Application for the Early-Career Scholars Research Fund

Project Title	<b>Gender, Migration and Working Conditions in the Tobacco Industry of Aetolia-Acarmania (Western Greece) during the interwar period</b>
Candidate Information	Dr. Anna Batzeli (FCCC; University of Peloponnese, Greece)



*Figure 1: Women Tobacco Harvesters in Agrinio (Aetolia-Acarmania), source: Agrinio Tobacco Museum*



*Figure 2: Tobacco Harvesters in the 1930s, source: Snus and Match Museum*

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### Application Contents:

- i. Brief Description of the project
  - ii. Expenses to conduct archival research at the Regional State Archives of Aetolia-Acarmania
  - iii. References
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## **i. Brief Description of the Project**

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Being among the main tobacco producers at EU level, Greece has long history in tobacco cultivation, with first reports of tobacco production in the Greek territories dating back to the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, while the country was under the Ottoman Turkish rule. Since the country obtained independent statehood, tobacco leaf production remained among the main agricultural products. In 1833 Greece produced 331 tons of tobacco leaves; in 1890 exceed 2,250 tons and in 1913 reached the 11,498 tons. Annual production significantly increased in the interwar period with 33,116 tons in 1923, 37,097 in 1930 and 52,424 in 1939 (Dimopoulos: 2012), acting as an important source of revenue for state government. Development of the tobacco leaf production was a result of targeted agricultural policies and also linked to the influx of Greek refugees from the Asia Minor. In particular, during the interwar period Greek-Turkish tensions escalated. Among the issues of the dispute were the territorial acquisitions Greece was rewarded in Smyrna by the Treaty of Sevres. The Greco-Turkish war that followed resulted the great fire of Smyrna (or the catastrophe of Smyrna), which led thousands of displaced Greeks to seek for refuge in Greece (Stewart: 2004).

Reception and settlement of the refugees arriving from Turkish territories was a key challenge. Tobacco leaf production offered employability opportunities to many of them, with some Greek MEPs commenting that thanks to the tobacco the Greek state managed to financially integrate the refugees (Katsapis: 2011; Flevaris, Rentetzi: 2014).

It should be noted that Greek refugees from the Asia Minor brought significant expertise in the field of tobacco cultivation, being themselves tobacco producers in the place of origin. A significant proportion of the newcomers were women (with or without children), often acting as carers for the elderly, ill and/or handicap relatives. Several refugee women shortly after their arrival seek for a job at the tobacco sector. In the region of Aetolia-Acarnania (Western Greece), dozens of refugee women were employed at the local tobacco factories and other small and medium enterprises. According to transcripts, at the time it was a taboo for local women to claim wage-paying jobs. But soon, they followed the lead of the refugee women, as their entry into paid work was an important factor for their and their families prosperity (Aggeli: 2007).

Aim of the project is to explore gender and migration narratives and counternarratives of women's labour in the tobacco industry in the Aetolia-Acarnania region. The nature of work and types of employment, wage rates and gaps, the working conditions and the impact of the employment of women in the family and social life will be thoughtfully examined. Inter alia, the project anticipates to measure the extend women's employment in the tobacco industry led to the development of female consciousness and to define if gender (and/or origin) affected type of employment and remuneration.

To this aim, archival research at the Regional State Archives of Aetolia-Acarnania needs to be conducted, as the Regional office hosts collections of archival resources related to local enterprises, press and labour associations. Collected documents will be analyzed and supplement literature review and desk research of digital archives. Research findings will be published at a peer-review journal and/or conference at a later stage, acknowledging the financial support provided during the implementation of this project.

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## ii. Expenses to conduct archival research at the Regional State Archives of Aetolia-Acarnania

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- Accommodation Expenses (for 12 days): 720 EUR (849,81 USD)
- Transportation Expenses (bus from/to Athens): 50 EUR (59,1 USD)

The total cost specification is: 770 EUR (908,82 USD)

Notes: i. Exchange Rate EUR-USD on the 23rd of October 2020. Prices for accommodation are based on average Hotel/Airbnb prices for accommodations in a 5 mile range from the Regional State Archives of Aetolia-Acarnania.

ii. There have not been submitted other funding applications for this project.

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## iii. References

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- Spyros Flevaris, Maria Rentetzi. *101 notes on oriental tobacco* (Benaki Museum, 2014).
- Matthew Stewart. "Catastrophe at Smyrna." Published in *History Today* Volume 54 Issue 7 July 2004, <https://www.historytoday.com/archive/catastrophe-smyrna>

Sources in Greek:

- Maria Aggeli. *Women and Men workers in the Tobacco Industry* (Ioannina, 2007).
  - Martha Dimopoulos. *Tobacco cultivation in Rodopi* (Kalamata, 2012).
  - Konstantinos Katsapis. *Refugees settlement in the Interwar Greece* (EHW, 2011).
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