

The Police is strictly male

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The enforcement and observance of public order is considered to be a strictly male affair. The proportionately few women in the Greek Police often face the mistrust of their male colleagues, while in order to enter the force they must overcome a number of difficulties, the most important of which are strict physical requirements. Furthermore, the majority of “active” police employees do not see the administration’s intention to increase their numbers in a positive light. These are the results of research performed on a sample of 306 police employees of various ranks (with the exception of the Leadership) in the context of the EU-funded project “Minority Representation in Police Organisations”, which is carried out by the Swedish Institute for Working Life. At the same time, a number of legislative provisions are shown to legally exclude persons who belong to different religious groups, as well as those who have “divergent” sexual behaviors.

According to data from the Pan-Hellenic Federation of the Greek Police (POASY), 3.907 women served in the Greek Police in 2003, which corresponds to 9,1% of all police employees (the corresponding percentage in the Stockholm County Police is 35% and 33% in the Haaglanden Regional Police). Following a Council of State decision in 2002 the provision stipulating that the percentage of women to be accepted in the force could not exceed 10% was abolished.

However, this development did not favor the representatives of the “weaker sex” in the least. And this due to the fact that the Ministry implemented and continues to implement a very strict definition of gender equality, according to which women and men must fulfill the same height, weight and physical capacity requirements! As if this was not enough, it has compiled a list of diseases which can lead to the exclusion of a candidate. However, the diseases included in the list correspond exclusively to female... attributes.

The attitudes of the 306 police employees surveyed for the audit on the role and position of women in the Greek Police were also very negative. The majority agreed that they are not fit to be employed in a number of services, that they lack the psychological strength to deal with difficult situations and that they do not have the required physical strength.

It is characteristic that 60% of the respondents agreed that an increase in the number of women would not help the Police acquire more “female”, that is more positive, characteristics. Asked whether an increase in the force’s internal diversity (with the recruitment of more women) would enhance the efficiency of the force, 70% answered negatively. However, the issue of the creation of a diverse police force the composition of which will mirror –to a certain extent at least- society’s composition, does not exhaust itself to the presence of women in the force. The doors of the Police Schools remain – in practice at least – closed to “minority” groups such as homosexuals and immigrants. And if the discussion concerning the presence of foreigners in the police force seems for the time being premature – if not completely irrelevant – such is not the case when it comes to homosexuals.

The interviewees expressed themselves passionately against their presence in the force, claiming that such a move would provoke problems and would damage the character of the Police. According to 70% of the police employees surveyed, there exist in the force negative stereotypes as regards homosexuals. The “opening” in the relevant legislation that makes their exclusion possible is found in the list of “unacceptable psychological diseases” in which homosexuality is classified as an “emotional disorder”.