

On the basis of the European Union's Directives the new multicultural Police is created

Event yesterday at the "Xenia" of Portaria organized by the Panhellenic Federation of Police Employees (POASY) on the prohibition to discriminate inside the Greek Police.

In the coming years, the Greek Police will be faced with a new reality, as it will be required to implement community directives on the equal treatment of persons regardless of their racial or ethnic origin, their religion or other beliefs. In an event organized at the "Xenia" of Portaria, Athenian lawyer Athanasios Theodoridis, Director of the National Focal Point of the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia, spoke of the prohibition to discriminate inside the Police. A bi-annual project to combat discrimination, co-organised by the non-governmental organisation ANTIGONE and the Dutch and Swedish police forces, is already under way. The event was organized by POASY to inform police employees of the changes which are expected to come about in the composition of the Greek Police with the creation of a multicultural police force. Consequently, not only will police men and women be nationals of other EU member states, but also third country nationals residing in Greece, or members of other population groups, such as Roma. The Police Federation also participates in ANTIGONE's project, by elaborating issues concerning the daily life of the Greek police person. The project's aim is to prepare a handbook with recommendations for the leadership of the Greek Police.

"Today, our main objective is to prevent all forms of discrimination between people on the basis of their racial or ethnic origin, their religion or ideology, their disability, age or sexual orientation. Mr. Theodoridis underlined that, for this reason, the European Union has initiated a campaign with the slogan 'For Diversity against Discrimination' in order to raise citizen's awareness against discrimination and inform them of the new EU legislation prohibiting discrimination, which entered into force in 2003". He referred to the EU Directives concerning racial equality and employment equality. He made special reference to the participation of women in the Police, as the criteria for their participation are too strict and create inequality between the two sexes.

Members of POASY and police persons present at the meeting stressed in their interventions that the subject is complex and the new multicultural police force will be both difficult to implement and to gain general acceptance by local Greek communities. It was also underlined that the participation of immigrants in the police in proportion to their percentage in Greek population will gradually start. From the discussion that followed it appears that the creation of the multicultural police will in practice have both negative and positive aspects.

Toula Kekatou