

The police's new multicultural field of action

Successful participation of the Panhellenic Federation of the Police (POASY) in an anti-discrimination project.

POASY's participation in the second phase of the bi-annual EU-funded project to combat discrimination inside the police force is successfully continuing.

The following organisations participated in the most recent transnational meeting (Amsterdam 1-4 November): the project leader, the Swedish Institute for Working Life, represented by Mrs. Maritta Soininen who presides over the project, and Mr. Christofer Lindgren; the Police of Stockholm (which has a special internal department combating racial discrimination) represented by Mrs. Pia Müller and Anki Meimermandt; the Dutch Police represented by Mr. Wim Rueck; the Dutch Expert Centre LECD represented by Mrs. Marlenen Melford, Dutch citizen of African origin; the Swedish NGO SIOS represented by Mr. Valerio Re, of Italian origin; the Dutch NGO COC, represented by Mr. Rene Van Soeren; the Dutch discrimination consultancy EGA, represented by Mr. Paul Abell, Dutch citizen of Indonesian origin; the Greek NGO "ANTIGONE" (National Focal Point of the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia) represented by Mr. Athanasios Theodoridis (Director), Ms. Daphne Mavrommati (EU Projects' Coordinator) and Ms. Claire Venouka (Administrator); and as guests, POASY, represented by its President, Mr. Kyriazidis, and the Mr. Dalkafoukis, member of the management board.

On the first day of the meeting Mr. Theodoridis from ANTIGONE, gave a detailed presentation of the two new EU anti-discrimination Directives (43/2000 and 78/2000) which aim to change the landscape of work relations. It is characteristic that the second Directive forbids all discrimination, be it direct (eg. banning minorities inside the Police) or indirect (eg. through placement tests, which are structured in such a way as to lead to the exclusion of a minority group), which takes place in the area of employment (eg. in the recruitment, promotion, dismissal etc.), as well as all "harassment" which aims to "create an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment". Moreover, it was stressed that the Public Sector, and therefore the Police, is not exempt from the provisions of the Directives, save in extreme cases where it is judged that its mission is obstructed. It is expected that the provision for the "reversal of the burden of proof" according to which the defendant (and not the victim of racism, as was up to now the case) is required to prove that the motives behind his/her actions (eg. recruitment, dismissal, etc.) were not racist, will be important (especially in the case of Greece). Finally, it was stressed that the laws and internal rules of all organisations, be they public or private, which are contrary to the Directives' provisions, must be abolished.

On the meeting's second day, the partners carefully studied the results of a survey conducted by the organisers in a number of groups of police persons in the three countries (Greece, the Netherlands, Sweden), which revealed, after analysis of the data by Mr. Abell's company "EGA", that the crushing majority of the police persons

who took part in these interviews admit that difference and diversity do not thrive in either of the three Police Forces. Concretely, the studies focused on:

A) Questions relating to the arguments for a new diversity policy (eg. whether the Police, as a public organisation, should act as a model for the promotion of diversity inside the force; whether it is true that Greece's population is increasingly diverse and therefore the Police should mirror that diversity, etc.)

B) Questions relating to the possible (positive) results-consequences of a diversity policy (eg. whether by recruiting immigrants the Police would increase its expertise and sensitivity in intercultural issues), and,

C) Questions relating to the existing organisational culture within the Police, in other words, whether it is acceptable today for someone to openly express his religion or his sexual preferences, whether career opportunities are the same for men and women, Roma, coloured people, whether the expression of negative stereotypes or racist comments by their superiors are corrected etc.

The questions are difficult...

A large part of the Greek Police persons outside the major cities who took part in the survey do not view the prospect of diversity promoted by the project positively. As a matter of fact, they expressed heavy criticism against the survey, underlining that it was designed to lead them towards "anti-racist answers" with which they disagree!

However, the representatives of POASY pointed out during the transnational meeting that every police force is responsible for guaranteeing citizens "social peace and cohesion", within the limits of the Constitution and the laws. Taking into account the fact that the police is an institution that plays an important role in the relations between the state and society, its importance is great for democracy, the structure of the state and the social symbiosis of all citizens. Moreover, according to POASY, Greece is currently in a transitional phase, with new facts being shaped by the migration of thousands of economic migrants, which are estimated to be more than 800.000, according to the official data of the Ministry of Public Order.

In addition to this, Greece belongs to the nucleus of EU countries which have opened their internal borders on the basis of the Schengen treaty, and receives every year millions of tourists from various countries of the world. The police, according to POASY, is also an organisational phenomenon which has yet to be studied sufficiently, despite the fact that its creation, existence and function influence public and private life to a significant degree. As a state institution it creates the scientific need to validate its structures and its framework of action, a fact that leads POASY to have a positive view of the promotion of diversity and to support the project's positive outcomes.

According to all of the project's participants, all the above, combined with the internationalisation-globalisation of the economy, the influences of the mass media on an international level and the international political scene, forge a society that is receiving intense cultural influences and which functions on multiple levels, possesses intercultural characteristics and a cosmopolitan character. In other words, a society

that is multicultural. This change signifies deeper and more substantial changes which influence society's and the state's social, economic and political functions. Inevitably, a new framework is forged for the functioning of state institutions in a new environment of action vis-à-vis which the development of new strategies and new action policies is needed, in order to preserve their efficiency and functionality.

The quantitative and qualitative progress of various forms of criminality, the new social requirements, but also the risk of the development of racist and xenophobic phenomena which are created by the increasing multiculturalism of Greek society, form the new multicultural field of action of the police person, and invoke the promotion of a policy for difference and diversity, inside the Police itself, which will aim at increasing the representation of a variety of minority populations within the Force (Roma, documented migrants, groups of citizens with different ethnic-cultural and linguistic cultures, citizens with different religious convictions, disabled individuals, returned ethnic Greeks, senior citizens), so that its composition correctly mirrors the social reality. Finally, the aim of the project is the production and dissemination of a Guide of Good Behaviour for the areas of recruitment, promotions and work conditions in general, inside the Police, in order for diversity and difference to be increased.

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