



**Contribution of Cyprus to the OSCE Conference on Racism,
Xenophobia and Discrimination, 4-5 September 2003**

Cyprus has already aligned itself with the statement made by the Presidency of the European Union. In addition the following information is provided concerning several measures (legislative or administrative) and/or activities taken by the Cyprus Government to combat discrimination, racism and xenophobia in the last years. Among them are measures and activities which target the domestic population. Such measures and/or activities include:

Legislative Measures

- Ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (Rat. Law No.1(??)/02).
- Ratification of the U.N. Convention on Consent to Marriage Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriages (Rat. Law No. 16(??)/02).
- Ratification of the U.N. Convention on Organised Crime and its three Protocols (Rat. Law No. 11(??)/03).
- Ratification of Protocol 12 to the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Rights (Rat. Law No. 13(??)/02).
- Ratification of the European Convention for the Protection of Individuals with regard to Automatic Processing of Personal Data and

its Additional Protocol (Rat. Laws Nos 28(III)/01 and 30(III)/03, respectively.

- Amendment to the Ratification of the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights Law (Rat. Law No. 10(III)/03).
- Cyprus has signed the European Convention on CyberCrime and it is now in the process of signing the Protocol of this Convention dealing with criminal offences based on sexual discrimination, committed with the use of the Internet. Ratification by Cyprus of these two instruments (CyberCrime Convention and its Protocol), is foreseen upon accession to the European Union (1/5/04).
- Amendment to the Criminal Code (Law No. 145(I)/02) according to which the age of consent for both heterosexual and homosexual relationships is fixed at 17 years.
- The enactment of the Legal Aid Law No. 165(I) of 2002 which provides for legal aid to persons with low income and for proceedings both before civil and criminal courts regarding cases in respect of violation of human rights and includes family cases.
- The enactment of the protection of Witnesses Law No. 95(I) of 2001, which provides for a comprehensive scheme of protection of witnesses and those who assist in the fight against crime.

Administrative measures

A Law-Preparatory Committee under the presidency of the Ministry of Justice and Public Order and from various Ministries (Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance, Ministry of Education and Culture, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Commerce, Industry and

Tourism and the Council Office of the Planning Bureau), was set up in order to transpose E.U. Directive No. 2000/43/EC, into the domestic legislation. A new piece of legislation - supplementing existing legislation on equality and non-discrimination - is intended to be introduced by the end of 2003. Upon completion of the first draft of the relevant bill, social partners and NGO's on human rights will be consulted. Meanwhile, upon a Decision taken by the Council of Ministers (in July 2003) an independent body on Racism and Equality issues (the Commissioner for Administration) will be established.

Other Measures

- In January 2003, an awareness raising Seminar concerning the two E.U. Directives on non-discrimination was organized by the House of Representatives where all key actors involved on the issue (Governmental and non-governmental sectors, NGOs etc) participated.
- A similar awareness – raising Seminar on the two Directives on non-discrimination was organized by the Ministry of Justice and Public Order and the European Commission, in Nicosia on 25 June 2003.
- Two publications were edited by the M.J.P.O. (in Greek and English), drafted in collaboration with the Ministries of Labour and Social Insurance, Interior, Education and Culture, Health and the Law Office of the Republic. These editions have been widely distributed among participants of the Seminar (June 2003) and also to the public, to pupils of elementary and high schools and to governmental and non-governmental organizations and/or bodies.
- Also, in the light of the European and World Conferences against Racism (2000-2001), an Action Plan was drawn up and a booklet was edited by the M.J.P.O. in March 2002, which was widely disseminated to all governmental and non-governmental organizations, International and European Organizations on human rights, as well as to any interested person (upon request and free of charge).

- A number of anti-racism activities have been organized by the Youth Board of Cyprus with the financial support of the Government. These activities included a photographic exhibition, a camp for youth groups from Cyprus and abroad, anti-racism festivals on the occasion of the International Day of Tolerance, etc.
- Regarding the role of the Police in protecting Human Rights emphasis is given on their duty of maintaining public order so that people can enjoy their rights and freedoms.

Towards this direction, the "Police Human Rights Office" has been established since 1998, which, among other functions, gathers monthly statistical data from all Police Divisions as regards complaints against Police or by Police for ill-treatment:

- (i) Complaints against Police for alleged violence/maltreatment of civilians, suspects, accused in criminal cases or prisoners, and
- (ii) alleged violence/maltreatment of police officers by civilians, suspects or persons in custody.

Special educational programmes, seminars and lectures on human rights are offered by the Cyprus Police Academy, underlining equal treatment for all the people, natives and foreigners.

In addition, during the initial and in service training, police officers are taught and trained in using modern investigation techniques.

Circular letters are sent by the Minister of Justice and Public Order, as well as the Chief of Police, directed to Police Divisional/Departmental and Unit Commanders, instructing them and their Officers to respect Human Rights during arrest, interrogation and detention of suspects and

that they must always exercise particular attention to the Constitution of the Republic, the International Conventions, safeguarding Human Rights and the Laws of Cyprus.

Also, efforts have been intensified towards the systematic specialized training of the members of the Police and other professionals in handling domestic violence cases.

During the last years the Police Human Rights Office, translated in Greek and published more than 5.000 leaflets and texts including the Declaration 690 (1979) of the General Assembly of the Council of Europe and the CPT (The Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment), Standing Orders, which were distributed to all police officers and to the public.

In addition, Cyprus Police continues to apply the Council of Europe Programme "Police and Human Rights Beyond 2000" with numerous activities.

- Also as regards training of the judiciary it is worth mentioning that «the Supreme Court has established, on a permanent basis, a programme for the training of judges of first instance courts. In accordance with this programme, judges of subordinate courts will receive on regular basis training, in various fields of the law and matters relevant, from a broader perspective to the administration of justice.