

Police and Diversity

The Police Journal:
Theory, Practice and Principles
2018, Vol. 91(3) 264–274
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DOI: 10.1177/0032258X17721136
journals.sagepub.com/home/pjx



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Abstract

The geopolitical changes that followed the end of Cold War have led to extensive political and social restructuring of European societies. The new social and cultural elements nowadays are highlighting a rich diversity of human characteristics whose protection and respect constitute a fundamental value of democracy. The police have faced one of their greatest challenges in their efforts to integrate diversity as a key component of the police work. The principles of diversity and equality are key pillars of the police mission. Therefore, police practice, protection and acceptance – not tolerance – of diversity contribute decisively to strengthening public confidence in the police and, consequently, enhance the social acceptance and support of police work.

Keywords

Police, diversity, human, rights, equality

Introduction

In recent years and especially from the 1990s onwards, the police have faced a number of complex challenges due to effects of globalisation in all areas of social and political life in every country. Social and geopolitical changes that followed the end of the Cold War along with a series of regional conflicts and social and political unrest have gradually led to a wide range of political and social restructuring. As a result, the composition of European societies nowadays is radically different from the traditional post-war societies. The main feature of the current composition and configuration of Western societies at the beginning of 21st century is diversity, which has various historical, social, political and cultural implications.

In the European Union (EU), diversity is considered both as a fundamental principle and as a driving force towards European integration. It therefore refers to all conscious

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practices that recognise and accept the variety of individual characteristics which determine the composition of our modern societies. In this context, the police have faced one of the greatest challenges in their history in terms of integrating diversity as a key component of police work.

This article focuses on the impact of diversity on the police mission by, first, approaching the definition of diversity based on international legal instruments and then by analysing the meaning of policing in contemporary societies as well as the key elements of a police strategy which are necessary for every modern police service to deal with aspects of community diversity in an effective and efficient manner. A case study concerning Greece is also included and elaborated on in terms of the current Greek society's diversity situation, the existing legal framework and the latest developments within the Greek police in dealing with diversity.

Defining diversity

First, it should be underlined that diversity is the cornerstone of human rights in the Universal Declaration¹ of United Nations (UN) adopted in 1948, whereby it is clearly foreseen that all individual rights and freedoms are protected without any form of discrimination and that everyone is equal before the law.² It is undoubtedly the very first international effort to officially recognise and protect world diversity in the history of human rights, setting the legal framework for further developments. On that basis, the European Convention on Human Rights,³ which followed in 1950, declares the protection of fundamental rights and freedoms, and explicitly prohibits any form of discrimination with regard to sex, race, language, religion, political or other beliefs. Later, in 1969, the UN Convention⁴ on the elimination of all forms of racial discrimination was adopted, underlining that all human beings are equal before the law and are entitled to equal protection of the law against any discrimination or any incitement to discrimination. It is worth mentioning that racial discrimination is defined therein as any exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, colour, descent and national origin that compromises recognition or the exercise of any human rights and freedom. Finally, the European Union Directive⁵ issued in 2000 reaffirms the right of all persons to equality before the law and protection against any form of discrimination as a universal right. Furthermore, it elaborates the concept of discrimination by specifying it as both direct and indirect in the framework of the implementation of equal treatment. In fact, the direct discrimination refers to racial or religious reasons based on when a person is treated less favourably than another, whilst indirect discrimination is when, for the same reasons, a person is put at a disadvantage as a result of a specific practice.

In view of the aforementioned and although there is no single and universally accepted definition of diversity, the concept of diversity consists of the complete understanding and acceptance of all various and different human characteristics existing in the wider community. Therefore, gender, race, ethnicity, age, social and economic status, physical and mental abilities, disability, sexual orientation, religious and/or other beliefs that identify a person or a social group are the key features of the complex concept of diversity.

Police strategy on diversity

The police mission focuses on preventing and combating crime, protecting life and property, but also protecting individual rights and fundamental freedoms, as provided for by constitutions, laws and international conventions. In this respect, the principles of equality and equal treatment without any form of discrimination constitute the essence of democracy, of which the police force is a main institution.

It is known that the concept of policing consists of a set of functions and processes that formulate an official, systematic and organised procedure of social control (Stergioulis, 2008: 41). In the past, policing was basically conceived and implemented on the perceptions and needs of the police and primarily aimed at suppressing crime. In recent years, this approach has been reviewed and policing is designed and prepared primarily by taking into account the needs of communities. The current social conditions and the overall configuration of Western societies are largely governed by the element of diversity. Thus, diversity has been the key factor that has led police departments to apply radical changes in policing strategies characterised by the active participation of citizens, local authorities and other relevant social actors, which nowadays constitute the philosophy of community policing (Stergioulis, 2008: 35).

A typical example of a diversity strategy can be found in the London Metropolitan Police (the Met) (Metropolitan Police Service, 2012). Specifically, in July 1997 the Home Office announced an independent judicial inquiry into the racist murder of Stephen Lawrence that took place on 22 April 1993, due to serious allegations made by the victim's family regarding omissions and racist police behaviour that ultimately led to the acquittal of the perpetrators. In February 1999, the report of the independent judicial inquiry was published, accusing the Metropolitan Police of serious investigative omissions as well as of police racist behaviour.⁶ Based on the findings and recommendations of the report, the Metropolitan Police proceeded to develop a uniform strategy for diversity, adopting a series of institutional changes in policing, cooperation with the communities, police recruitment and training. In particular, diversity was recognised as a fundamental factor of the police mission, taking into account the different needs of different minority groups and ethnic communities in London, whilst a direct police intervention and response was introduced to meet their requests. Specific measures were also adopted to effectively address hate crime cases and community liaison officers have been appointed. Moreover, safe neighbourhoods teams have been created as well as websites for facilitating citizens' communication with the police. Finally, the Met reformed its police recruitment system so as to enable members of different ethnic groups and social minorities to join the police and reflect their best possible representation within the overall police personnel.⁷

Basically, a policing diversity strategy should focus on the following main points:

- Developing cooperation with communities and the local authorities by establishing neighbourhood policing and appointing community liaison officers with an emphasis on the support and protection of vulnerable social groups.
- Improving communication with diverse communities through partnerships to promote common understanding of their needs.

- Encouraging the engagement and involvement of diverse social groups in expressing their views on policing matters by establishing, for example, open advisory groups, websites, etc.
- Establishing a reliable and consistent police system through which all relevant requests and complaints are responded to in a timely manner, treated fairly and victims of crime are given appropriate care.
- Designing and implementing a training module for police personnel and developing an organisational culture where the value of diversity is fully accepted and respected.
- Reforming the police recruitment system with the aim of ensuring that the workforce reflects society's diversity in the best possible way.

In conclusion, the adoption of a concrete strategy and the establishment of special structures within the police force focusing on the protection of diversity contribute significantly to the consolidation of public confidence in the police, whilst the police work is surrounded by the active support of citizens and the community authorities. This particularly has a positive effect on the image of the police service and the level of social acceptance of police work.

Policing and diversity in Greece

Greece used to be characterised by its particularly high level of homogeneity for a long period in the past. Since 1990, however, the geopolitical changes in Europe and worldwide have drastically affected the composition of Greek society. Whilst in 1991 the percentage of foreigners living in Greece was only around 1.6% (167,276) of the total country's population, in 2011 the percentage amounted to over 8.3% (912,000), comprising 16 different nationalities (Greek Statistical Authority, 2014). Taking into account the migration and refugee crisis that Greece has been confronting over the last few years, the aforementioned percentage of different nationalities living in the country today is expected to have significantly increased.

Policing in Greece has been radically influenced by the new composition of the modern society. The police have faced new challenges and experiences in meeting with new cultures and demands of newly-formed ethnic groups whilst, at the same time, they had to manage an obvious change in the overall map of criminality, indicating an unprecedented participation of foreign perpetrators, mainly in petty crime offences. In parallel, the traditional police work had to be reformed based on new societal needs and requirements, but also due to an alarming increase of criminality. Nevertheless, the Hellenic Police also had to manage an increasing number of violent incidents involving racist behaviour and practices, mainly in the big cities.

In an effort to promote awareness within police personnel of protecting and respecting diversity, the Hellenic Police Headquarters has undertaken two main initiatives in recent years. First, a Code of Police Behavior (Hellenic Police Headquarters, 2004) was issued, where, amongst other things, it is stipulated that a basic parameter of police behaviour is to avoid any prejudice due to colour, gender, ethnic origin, ideology and religion, sexual

orientation, age, disability, marital status, economic and social position or any other distinctive element. In addition, the police officer must be particularly concerned about the protection of children, women, the elderly, disabled people, refugees, members of minorities, vulnerable social groups and victims of physical, psychological or sexual violence or exploitation. Second, the Hellenic Police Headquarters issued the Guide of Police Behavior on Controls, Arrests and Detentions of persons belonging to different religious and social vulnerable groups (Hellenic Police Headquarters, 2013). The guide provides specific directions as to how police officers should handle relevant cases and incidents by respecting diversity and fighting discriminations related to race, ethnic origin, religion, belief, disability, age, or sexual orientation. In fact, the Police Behavior Guide, apart from enhancing awareness on diversity, is also intended to contribute to the creation of an overall police culture in dealing with diversity within all aspects of police work. It was clearly mentioned and accepted by the Hellenic Police that those members of society that are usually subjected to police mistreatment or torture are the most insecure and vulnerable due to their diversity, thus calling upon all police ranks to eradicate violence and behaviours that threaten the foundations of democracy and prevent equal participation in society.

At an operational level, a number of special police services aiming to confront racist violence effectively⁸ have been established. These new police services are authorised to investigate and prosecute crimes involving discrimination or acts and actions that could lead to discrimination, hatred or violence against persons or social groups based on race, colour, religion, origin, sexual orientation, gender identity or disability. In particular, their main competencies are as follows:

- to intervene ex officio or following relevant complaints and investigate crimes involving the commission, preparation, or causing public incitement, provocation or stimulation to commit offences that can lead to discrimination, hatred or violence against persons or group of persons because of race, colour, religion, descent and national or ethnic origin
- to collect, process and utilise appropriate information and data relating to the commission or preparation of offenses with racist features
- to coordinate and guide the Response Agencies Racist Violence of Security Departments throughout Greece to fulfil their mission
- to develop partnerships with co-competent state bodies and services and other social institutions and organisations aiming at the effective management of racist violence
- to undertake initiatives or to provide assistance to other authorities' initiatives that are intended to prevent and combat racist violence
- to carry out controls and supervision in areas where increased risk of racist attacks are possible
- to cooperate with international organisations and institutions as well as bodies and representatives of vulnerable social groups who have received or are likely to receive racist attacks
- to inform victims of racist violence about their rights

- to inform competent services on cases requiring the provision of medical or hospital care or psychological support to victims of racist attack, as well as to ensure the presence of an interpreter if requested or necessary
- to inform the competent prosecutor of racist violence cases as well as the Foreign Ministry and the consular authorities of foreign victims' countries
- to keep statistics of racist violence incidents and produce relevant reports.

Nevertheless, a major disadvantage in the overall process to promote awareness on policing and diversity and combating diversity related criminality was the lack of an appropriate structure in the Hellenic Police for recording police incidents, cases and crimes related to all types of discrimination. In reality, the problem was spotted years ago by the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia, 2005) in an official report where it was indicated that no official public data of criminal justice on racist crime and racist violence, or data on discrimination including racist violence and racist crime were available in Greece.

The lack of a systematic recording mechanism by the Police was also underlined in the Special Report of the Greek Ombudsman (Greek Ombudsman, 2013: 6–16) on the phenomenon of racist violence in Greece, in which a significant difference in the number of cases identified was highlighted between Police Headquarters and the Ombudsman Office. Specifically, according to data provided by the State Security Police Department, in 2012 there were recorded 84 incidents, the majority of which took place in the centres of large cities, mainly against immigrants, resulting in minor bodily injuries and stealing small amounts of money and mobile phones. On the other hand, according to research conducted by the Greek Ombudsman in the same year (2012), there were recorded 252 cases related to colour, religion and sexual orientation. It is worth mentioning that in the above data provided by the police, it was also reported that in 22 incidents police officers have been involved. These incidents concerned criminal actions against foreigners and other individuals who belonged to or identified themselves as belonging to different racial, religious and social groups.

In order to fill the gap of the lack of a recording mechanism by the Greek Police, the National Commission for Human Rights in cooperation with the United Nations established a network⁹ for racist violence at national level, which amongst other things is also responsible for recording all forms of diversity-related criminality. According to last year's annual report of the Incident Reporting Network of Racist Violence, in 2016, 95 incidents of racist violence were recorded, with more than 130 victims. Immigrants and refugees were targeted in 31 cases due to ethnic origin, religion or colour. In 57 incidents, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning (LGBTQ) individuals were targeted. In five incidents, religious and symbolic sites were targeted as well as the Jewish community. In 31 cases, more than one victim was targeted, whilst in 54 cases the attack was carried out by a group (Racist Violence Recording Network, 2017: 7). These findings show a significant decrease of diversity related crime in Greece compared to the 2015 annual report (Racist Violence Recording Network, 2015) of the same network. Specifically, in 2015, 273 incidents of racist violence with more than 300 casualties were recorded. In 75 cases, migrants or refugees were targeted because of ethnic or ethnic origin, religion or colour. In 185 cases, LGBTQ individuals were targeted. In five cases,

human rights defenders were targeted, either because of their action in favour of refugees and immigrants or because of their anti-Semitic action. Finally, in five incidents, sacred or symbolic spaces or clubs were targeted.

In an effort to tighten up controls on police abuse actions, the Ministry of Public Order has established a special police service which is directly accountable to the minister himself. According to the Law,¹⁰ the Office for the Control of Abuse Incidents is responsible for collecting, recording and evaluating complaints of actions by the Greek police, coastguard and fire brigade conducted in the course of their duties relating to tortures, insulting human dignity, offenses against life or physical integrity, illicit use of a firearms and any other offensive behaviour against everyone in the Greek territory. Nevertheless, this new service has never come into force to date. It should be underlined that the failure of operation of the this new service and the confirmed participation of Greek police officers in cases of racism and discrimination has caused a strong reaction from the European Commission on Racism and Intolerance of the Council of Europe, which has invited the Greek Authorities to establish an independent body which shall be entrusted with the investigation of the alleged cases of racial discrimination and racist behaviour motivated by the police (Council of Europe, 2015: 26).

The fact that the existing legal and police deontology frameworks do not appear to deal with the issue of diversity sufficiently in Greece, and the increasing number of criminal acts related to diversity with the involvement of police officers in a number of cases, indicate that there is obviously un urgent need for the Hellenic Police Headquarters to strengthen the competencies and the manpower of the newly established anti-racism police services as well as to enhance training programmes on diversity involving all police ranks, especially those who are assigned with patrols and policing tasks on a daily basis.

Police training on diversity

Apart from special structures and concrete strategies on diversity that should operate in a modern police service, appropriate police training is a fundamental and essential precondition for increasing awareness on diversity (see Clements, 2008: 183). The ultimate objective of police training on diversity is to provide specialised knowledge and skills in order for the police officers to handle relevant cases effectively, but also to formulate, in the long term, the necessary police culture (see Chan, 1996) with regard to the importance and the imperative necessity to respect and protect diversity in society.

An extremely important aspect of diversity is the respect and implementation of the principle of equality, which is the cornerstone of police work. Although the principle of equality is often taken for granted, it is not always fully applied in all aspects of police work, especially when such aspects are related to diversity, where incorrect police behaviour and practice lead to a violation of basic individual rights and fundamental freedoms. It is therefore necessary that through appropriate police training it is fully understood that the principle of equality applies when the variety of human characteristics which make up the concept of diversity are fully respected and protected in every sector of police work.

Police training should elaborate on the substantial meaning of the principle of equality and apart from its legal framework it consists of a wide range of police practices, attitudes and perceptions in relation to all forms of discrimination. Police services should be provided to all citizens on a fair and equal basis; otherwise police work is criticised for its inequality and characterised as discriminating. That is one of the basic reasons that lead citizens to seriously question police work and reduce the level of public confidence towards the police. It is of utmost importance for every police officer to fully understand that all people, regardless of race, religion, colour, belief, sexual orientation and especially those with characteristics of disabilities, age, etc., are entitled to equal access to police services, equal opportunities and fair treatment. This is feasible only when inappropriate, unfair and discriminating police practices and perceptions are totally eradicated within a police authority.

The issue of diversity may well be included either as a single module in police training programmes, based on the existing provisions of relevant international conventions already mentioned or by incorporating diversity in educational programmes of community policing, given the fact that the philosophy behind community policing is based on the constant and immediate contact, communication and cooperation of the police with citizens and communities on a daily basis. In practice, diversity may be the subject of police training, both through the study and analysis of specific cases (case studies) that have been dealt with by police services, as well as by the use of new technologies such as simulations (see Krätzig and Hudy, 2012), a technical learning process that constitutes an integral part of police training over recent years.

In conclusion, compared to the police training in traditional societies, the subject of diversity nowadays is undoubtedly considered as a new module in the overall police training concept. However, the basic feature of modern societies is multiculturalism, implying that a wide range of cultural perspectives, beliefs, attitudes, abilities, skills, values, etc. do affect police work in a catalytic way on a daily basis. All these differences are human characteristics which must be fully recognised, protected and respected by the police and it should be displayed in all aspects of police work in a professional manner.

Conclusions

The police are entrusted with the main responsibility of preventing and combating crime, but beyond that, police work extends to a wider range of other activities within a multicultural environment. In this complex social environment, the protection of human rights and individual freedoms is a key component of the police mission. Therefore, the features that make up diversity are under the full protection of police authorities.

Diversity is, in fact, an essential value of democracy and the principles of equality and equal treatment are key pillars of police work. Protecting and accepting – not tolerating – diversity is undoubtedly a substantial contribution to strengthening social cohesion (see Council of Europe, 2004), but also a decisive factor to strengthening public confidence in the police.

Police ethics and professional deontology are major key points. When police practices are governed by the principle of equality and equal treatment without prejudices and discriminations, it consequently leads to social acceptance and support of police work. It

is therefore an imperative need for every modern police service to undertake those necessary initiatives, which will contribute to the creation of a common police culture in accepting and protecting diversity.

Due to globalisation and multiculturalism, it is absolutely necessary for the police service nowadays to establish its own strategy for effective and efficient policing within a society of diversity. In this context, the needs of the ethnic, racial, religious and other vulnerable social groups in the wider community should be taken into account and be served on an equal and fair basis.

Cooperation and common understanding between the police and local authorities as well as with associations and representative bodies active in the field of diversity constitute a prerequisite in the police's efforts to support and protect diversity in practice.

Training is the basis for increasing awareness on diversity, as well as for handling relevant criminal cases. Police academies and further police training schools within the European Union should incorporate common curricula on diversity, taking advantage of the experience, the expertise and the training tools offered by Cepol¹¹ as the main EU agency for law enforcement training.

The concept of diversity from the police perspective is strongly related to a positive police culture which has to be developed within the workforce. An appropriate police culture is dependant not only on appropriate police training of police recruits but also on their further socialisation within various police services during their police career, where most of the prejudices, negative perceptions and stereotypes are being developed.

Finally, police services should review their recruitment systems so as to encourage and allow access to their ranks of applicants from different ethnic, minority and other diverse social groups. It is essential for the efficiency and the effectiveness of police work that the multiculturalism of society is well mirrored within the overall staffing level of the police service, a fact that also increases the police's credibility and the public's confidence in them.

Author's note

Author's CV: http://www.ouc.ac.cy/web/guest/home?p_p_id=PA_CONTACTS&p_p_action=1&p_p_state=maximized&p_p_mode=view&_PA_CONTACTS_struts_action=%2Fext%2Fparties%2Fcontacts%2Fload&_PA_CONTACTS_mainid=1390&_PA_CONTACTS_loadaction=view

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Notes

1. Universal Declaration of Human Rights, UN General Assembly, 10 December 1948, 217 A (III), Article 2: 'Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration,

- without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.’
2. Ibid., Article 7: ‘All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law. All are entitled to equal protection against any discrimination in violation of this Declaration and against any incitement to such discrimination.’
 3. European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, Rome, 4.XI.1950, Article 14, Prohibition of discrimination: ‘The enjoyment of the rights and freedoms set forth in this Convention shall be secured without discrimination on any ground such as sex, race, colour, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, association with a national minority, property, birth or other status.’
 4. International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, General Assembly resolution 2106 (XX) of 21 December 1965, Article 1.1: ‘In this Convention, the term “racial discrimination” shall mean any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life.’
 5. Council Directive 2000/43/EC of 29 June 2000 implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin, Official Journal L 180, 19/07/2000, Article 2: Concept of discrimination: ‘(a) direct discrimination shall be taken to occur where one person is treated less favourably than another is, has been or would be treated in a comparable situation on grounds of racial or ethnic origin; (b) indirect discrimination shall be taken to occur where an apparently neutral provision, criterion or practice would put persons of a racial or ethnic origin at a particular disadvantage compared with other persons, unless that provision, criterion or practice is objectively justified by a legitimate aim and the means of achieving that aim are appropriate and necessary.’
 6. Recommendations of the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry, Appendix 2, in Hall *et al.* (2009: 273)
 7. In 2015, the Metropolitan Police Service reached a percentage of 12.4% of representation of black and other minority ethnic background police officers in the workforce; see House of Commons, Home Affairs Committee (2016: 3).
 8. Presidential Decree 132/2012, ΦΕΚ α-239/11-12-2012, establishing two central police services and 68 police offices throughout Greece.
 9. The Incident Reporting Network for Racism Violence was established on 1 October 2011. It is an initiative of the National Commission for Human Rights and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in Greece, with the participation of 35 non-governmental organisations and institutions that provide legal, medical, social or other supportive services and come to the aid of victims of racist violence. The establishment of the network was the result of the absence of a formal and effective system of recording incidents of racist violence as well as the need to interconnect the bodies recording such incidents on their own initiative.
 10. Law 3938/2011, ΦΕΚ 61^α, 31 March 2011.
 11. There are already a number of common curricula developed by Cepol for use by the national police training programmes of EU law enforcement authorities according to their individual needs, such as terrorism, trafficking in human beings, domestic violence, police ethics and prevention of corruption, money laundering, civilian crisis management, drug trafficking and Europol (Cepol, 2017).

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