



MINISTRY OF INTERIOR &
ADMINISTRATIVE RECONSTRUCTION
THE ALTERNATE MINISTER

Athens, August 17, 2016

Ref.: 4303-A

Mr. Nils Muiznieks
Commissioner for Human Rights
Council of Europe

Dear Commissioner,

I would like to thank you for your letter, dated July 25, 2016, giving me the opportunity to inform you on the following human rights issues falling within the competence of my Ministry:

First of all, I would like to stress that among our main priorities is the fight against crimes that are motivated by hatred, xenophobia, and racism. For this reason, the competence for dealing with these crimes has been entrusted to the Hellenic Police Headquarters and specifically to the State Security Division / Social Issues and Racism Section. This Service gives instructions and offers guidance to Regional Police Services on how to deal with the afore-mentioned crimes committed against individuals and/or groups of people.

For the same purpose, respective Services have been established in other areas of the country, namely two (2) Departments for dealing with Racist Violence in Athens and in Thessalonica and sixty-eight (68) relevant Offices in the rest of the country. Their basic responsibility concerns the investigation of committed crimes or/and of acts related to the preparation for crime, the incitement of the public, the provocation, and the exhortation to commit offences or to proceed to actions that may generate hatred and violence against persons because of their race, complexion, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, etc.

The establishment of a Single State Structure within the Ministry of Justice, Transparency, and Human Rights for the recording of racist incidents, plays an important role as regards the fight against the crimes mentioned above. This Structure immediately informs International Organizations of such incidents and follows the development of relevant cases. All Police Services in the country are obliged to inform this Structure on the recorded relevant data or complaints, for further elaboration and for the following-up of the relevant cases development (criminal court proceedings, etc.).

However, I would like to point out that, according to our data, there has not been registered any substantial change in the number of racist incidents. In 2014, Police Services recorded 85 such incidents, while, in 2015, the incidents came up to 84.

Moreover, we have also undertaken significant initiatives for the fight against discrimination in the field of Police Officers' training, both at basic and further education levels. Police Officers and Police Constables Schools' students take courses on the protection of human rights, such as Human Rights and Constitutional Law Principles, Human Rights and Administrative Law etc. In this context, issues related to racism, xenophobia, minorities, and to international conventions on the fight against racial discrimination and the suppression of genocide are presented and thoroughly developed. Lectures are also given on human rights respect and protection and on the

establishment of European Committees engaged in the fight against racism, intolerance, and torture.

The students of the Further Training Schools of the Hellenic Police and of the National Security School are taught, on a regular basis, subjects on the protection of human rights. Moreover, on the initiative of the Hellenic Police, seminars, lectures, meetings for the Police personnel are held both in Greece and abroad on issues related to human rights, racism, xenophobia and hate crimes as well as the dealing with diversity.

Finally, as regards the broadening of the Ombudsman's competences, besides the latter's right to issue recommendations to the disciplinary bodies and the institution of a regular public review procedure for the evaluation of the National Structure for the Investigation of Arbitrariness Incidents, I am happy to inform you that the new law-draft, a legislative initiative by the Ministry of Justice, Transparency, and Human Rights, which was recently put in public deliberation, puts the Ombudsman in the heart of this National Structure.

Concluding, I would like to reassure you once again of our strong will for cooperation in field of protection of human rights.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nikolaos Toskas', with a long horizontal line extending to the left.

Nikolaos Toskas