

To serve and protect, but not in uniform

As part of its modernisation push, the Malta Police Force is undergoing a civilianisation process, **Angelo Gafa**, CEO of the Malta Police, says.

The first images that come to mind when police are mentioned are those of a uniform, weapons and sirens – elements which, sustained by decades of police procedural paperbacks and television drama, are immediately associated with fighting crime and maintaining public order.

However, modernisation and the constantly changing faces of criminality have introduced various changes in police forces worldwide.

One of these changes is the civilianisation of police forces – civilian corps are nowadays involved in the administration of police forces as well as in crime investigation.

The Malta Police Force is also undergoing a civilianisation process. Probably the first strong signal of this process was the appointment of Angelo Gafa as the first CEO of the Malta Police. Selected after a public call, Mr Gafa is a commerce, public policy and security management graduate and served in the Armed Forces of Malta, the Police Force as well as in the Security Services.

“Economic crime is one area where we constantly need various specialisations”

As CEO, his remit is the administration of the Corps, while the Police Commissioner remains responsible for investigations and general strategy.

“We already have over 100 civilians working with the Police Force,” he says. “However, we are now consciously undergoing a civilianisation process on two fronts: recruiting civilians to help in administration as well as investigative duties.

“Almost bi-annually, we also recruit police inspectors, some of whom directly through a graduate-recruitment scheme rather than through rank and experience. This year, 38 Inspector Cadets will be following a full-time, one-year diploma in policing at the University of Malta’s Department of

Criminology. If successful, these officers will join ranks as inspectors.”

The civilianisation process – also included in this administration’s electoral manifesto and part of a wider push to police reform – is shaped by two realities that the Police Force is facing.

“The first is that there are certain administrative duties which can be carried out by civilians,” Mr Gafa says. “Human resources, finance and public relations duties can, and should, be done by civilians who are not sworn officers. For instance, we have recently advertised a post for a projects manager. Currently, a number of project management duties are carried out by a sworn officer – however, the aim is to set up a dedicated unit to handle project management.”

This, Mr Gafa says, will free up police officers to do core duties.

Last April, a Victim Support Unit was also set up to offer counselling services to victims of crime.

Following the recruitment of a Youth Worker a month ago, this Unit will in the coming weeks be further strengthened with a trainee counsellor, also a civilian.

This year, a Police Counselling Unit was also set up to serve officers – in the future, a psychologist will also be recruited to offer psychological support to police officers in addition to counselling services currently provided by the Unit.

“Also, we lack certain expertise, such as in finance and forensics. True, our officers receive specialised training – however, it would also be wise to recruit experts who, while civilians, would assist police in investigations.

“Economic crime is one area where we constantly need various specialisations. I spent nine years serving in the Economic Crimes Unit and know the needs of this unit. Economic crimes are becoming increasingly complex, so we need specialised civilians to help us carry in-depth investigations.”



Angelo Gafa.
PHOTO: CHRIS SANT
FOURNIER

Another area that is ripe for civilianisation is technology.

“Certain specialised units, like cybercrime and forensics, are in constant need of specialisation which civilians can offer. Also, most of our new projects have an IT element – therefore, we need technology experts to help us update our IT tools and expertise.”

Such a civilianisation process presents a challenge. The Malta Police Force is a long-established organisation and, with 203 years of history under its belt, is rightly proud. The acceptance of non-uniformed civilians as part

of the force will necessarily need a period of integration.

“We also need to attract the right candidates,” Mr Gafa says. “We can do this by promoting our civilianisation. We are already engaging with particular university departments, outlining our civilianisation. This is also the reason why for the first time, this year we will also be at Freshers’ Week. This will give us the opportunity to engage with students and show them the career options the Police Force can offer them.”

For more information e-mail recruitment.police@gov.mt

