

In the 1990s the Polish Police was criticized for breaching standards of human rights. There was an obvious need for raising these standards, especially that Police Act stated:

Police officers, while executing their duties, are required to respect human dignity and respect and protect the human rights.

There was an understanding between Police management, governmental institutions including Ministry of Internal Affairs and Ministry of Justice, representatives of various NGOs that respecting and protecting human rights lie at the core of policing. To meet these needs and problems the Chief Commander of the Polish Police decided to set a unique structure which became a great success of the law enforcement in Poland.

The milestones:

- a) 4th December 1998 – the Chief Commander of the Polish Police appointed Major Jacek Węgrzyn as the Human Rights Adviser. His main duty was to coordinate the activities in the programme of the Council of Europe called „Police and Human Rights 1997-2000”, cooperate with NGOs, elaborate the plan of implementation of human rights standards in Polish Police.
- b) The aforementioned programme set up objectives for police institutions in all European countries. The next Human Rights Adviser, Colonel Piotr Bogdalski PhD, was responsible for implementation of these objectives in Polish Police.
- c) 27th October 2004, Geneva – The examination of the fifth periodic report of Poland on the measures taken to implement the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. This examination by the UN Human Rights Committee was a direct impact on appointing the human rights advisers in all regional HQ of the Polish Police.
- d) 8th December 2004 – by the decision of the Chief Commander of the Polish Police – the human rights advisers were appointed in regional HQ and in police academies. Their tasks included:
 - Implementing standards of principled policing, especially concerning respect for human dignity and fundamental rights and freedoms
 - Inspecting police units, including detention centers and behavior of staff
 - Handling of complaints concerning ill treatment and discrimination
 - Disseminating the European Court of Human Rights judgments and recommendations of bodies such as the Council of Europe, the CAT, or the CERD
 - Carrying out research on policing and human rights issues and writing reports about findings
 - Cooperating with NGO’s and public institutions

What was done:

- a) 2005 - Law Enforcement Officer Programme (LEOP) that was launched, coordinated by Ministry of Internal Affairs in cooperation with the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe. The objective of the programme is to improve police skills in recognizing, understanding and investigating hate crimes.
- b) 2011 - introduction of new selection criteria for police officers (with psychological tests to assess the risk of violent behaviour in stress situations) and a new curriculum in police schools (comprising the element of training concerning respect of human dignity in high-risk situations such as apprehension).
- c) 2011 – elaboration of educational kit titled “Victim in criminal trial”;
- d) 2011 – educational sets titled “To Protect And To Serve” was introduced in police schools
- e) 2011 – “Policing and Human Rights” - courses for managers of police units in “ensuring respect for human rights in police management”;
- f) 2011 - initiation of an “early intervention system” with the aim of ensuring respect for professional and ethical standards in daily police work (including workshops for police managers and the production of an electronic newsletter.
- g) 2012 – elaboration of ‘Police Strategy In Human Rights Standards Development for 2013-2015”
- h) 2013 – innovative manual “Human First. Antidiscriminatory Measures in Police. Practical Guide” was published
- i) Implementation of “Anti-discriminatory procedures” in Polish Police
- j) The Chief Commander of the Polish Police appointed the Committee for implementation of the European Court of Human Rights judgments

What next?

- more education, especially in the field of the human rights, also with cooperation with universities
- Serving as liaison officers to ethnic and national minorities to promote social cohesion
- eliminating the cases of torture and inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment
- breaking the “blue wall of silence”
- focusing on the equal treatment in service