



AUDIT
OFFICE



REPUBLIC
OF CYPRUS

Audit of the Ministry of Justice and Public Order
Executive Summary



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SPECIAL REPORT no. MJPO/01/2019

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AUDITED ENTITIES

MINISTRY OF JUSTICE AND PUBLIC ORDER - ADMINISTRATION

POLICE HEADQUARTERS

DEPARTMENT OF PRISONS

FIRE SERVICE

STATE ARCHIVES

Executive Summary.

Within the framework of the provisions of article 116 of the Constitution of the Republic of Cyprus, the Audit Office conducted a financial audit and compliance audit of the Ministry of Justice and Public Order (MJPO).

The most important findings of the audits concern the following:

Administration of the Ministry of Justice and Public Order.

- A large proportion of the staff employed by various Departments of the Ministry of Justice and Public Order were absent on sick leave.

Police Headquarters.

- In 2017 a total of 26 premises and two plots of land were rented out in order to accommodate the Police force, at an annual expense amounting to "921.624, of which "762.558 (83% of the total expenditure) concerns eight premises.
- Certain of these contracts for premises expired on 31.12.2016 and their renewal is pending, together with the re-negotiation of the amount for the rent.
- For 13 premises that the Police rents and uses, there is no certificate of final approval (from town planning authorities).
- Since 2009, a complete General Spatial Plan was approved by the Council of Ministers, for the creation of a State Administration Centre in Aglandja, at the location where the Police Headquarters and the Police Residences are situated, in order to fulfill the housing needs of the Police Headquarters. However, this project was not approved to be included in any of the consequent Budgets.
- During 2018, "30 million was paid to members of the Police, relating to benefits and overtime, which represents 16% of the total annual salaries ("183,7 million).
- The compensation for overtime duties was granted partially through the granting of vacation leave and which resulted in the accumulation of excessive days of vacation leave, which if paid as financial compensation at a future date when the employee would possibly be on a higher scale than today, would result in a considerable increase of expenditure. Therefore, a time limit should be adopted in granting this built-up leave, in order to eliminate it.
- For the policing of sports events, members of the Police were compensated with an amount of "1,6 million for overtime pay. We recommended the re-examination of the possibility that the Sports Federations might cover this cost, a practice which is also applied in certain countries overseas.
- Since 2014, the system of the stadium steward has been implemented, which was expected to result, with the passage of time, in a reduction, both in the number of Police members that work at such events, and in the cost of overtime pay of the Police. Despite the above, during 2017 a considerable increase (33%) in the cost of policing sports events, compared to 2016, was observed.
- An amount of "216.742 is due by the Cyprus Bar Association for the remuneration of special police officers. The Council of Ministers decided the withdrawal of the special police officers from the Cyprus Bar Association and their repositioning in the Police workforce.

- From an inspection that was carried out by the pyrotechnic sector of the Police Headquarters, in the explosives store situated in the staffing area of the Emergency Response Unit, it was found that the required safety distances have not been adhered to.
- From an on-the-spot check at the Drug Law Enforcement Unit stores, it was found that in some of the stores, the ventilation is not sufficient and/or they do not have fire safety precautions or a fire alarm system.
- During 2017, 64 police vehicles were involved in traffic accidents, in 30 of which, members of the Police were to blame. No responsibility was attributed to any member of the Police, in any of the above accidents.
- During 2018, on a pan-cyprian level, inspections for the ban on smoking had been reduced almost to half, compared to 2016.
- A considerable number of the Police continue to carry out clerical and accounting duties.
- Problems have arisen in the preparation of tender documents, mainly in large and specialized projects, where competition is limited due to nature and complexity of the projects, which should be prepared through comprehensive market research and by ensuring wide participation, without reducing the level of the required quality. The need to accelerate the procedures was also identified. The areas of weakness are mainly the Specification Preparation Committees and the Evaluation Committees.
- The mis-handling of tender procedures by the Police, even in the case of issues that had been pointed out, either by our Office or by the participants in the tenders, led in some cases to the cancellation of tenders, resulting in significant delays in the execution of the relevant projects.
- Although the Police were aware that the life-cycle for specific systems had been completed, they did not proceed in a timely manner with the necessary procedures to secure the adoption of a new system, which would secure the principles of transparency, of equal treatment and non-discrimination of the economic operators, thereby creating the conditions to give the existing contractor an advantage.
- For a specific tender, the tender procedure was not selected after a complete market research . which would have secured the public interest - resulting in terms/requirements/specifications of the tender that subsequently led to the submission of only one tender.

Department of Prisons.

- During the examination of the proper operation of the automatic fire detecting/extinguishing system in the server room, weaknesses were found in the inter-connection of the individual safety systems. Major delays were noted in the handling of the issue.
- In 2017, there was a significant increase (124%) in overtime pay expenditure, compared to 2016, which amounted to " 1,3 million.
- The overtime hours which were credited in the ledger sheets of the staff of the Department at 31.12.2017, against overtime employment, amounted to 16.191 and they have to be gradually repaid and/or granted.

- From a total of 428 employees, within 2017, 20% were on sick leave for more than 42 days, while a proportion of around 6% for 35-42 days.
- There is no system in place for monitoring/registering medication, no one has been appointed as responsible for maintaining the stock of medication and no verification is done of their stock.
- Weaknesses were observed in the obtaining, storing and returning of the personal belongings of the prisoners.
- During the proclamation of a tender for the supply of bullet-proof vests and ballistic frames, via summary procedures and a pre-selection of the economic operators, the promotion of healthy competition was not secured and very high prices were obtained, which led to the cancellation of the tender.

Fire Service.

- Even though two sea vessels which were acquired for the purpose of extinguishing fires and rescue in case of airplane accidents in the marine area around Pafos airport, were received by the Administrator of the airport in 2015, their receipt by the Fire Service was extremely delayed.
- A big delay was observed in the receiving of hovercraft type vessels for Larnaca airport, which are essential in order to respond to cases of airplane accidents in the area of salt lakes.
- A big delay was observed in the receiving of two 4X4 rescue vehicles of 1.000 litre of water, which the due delivery date was 31.12.2016.
- A big increase in the overtime employment hours was observed, which is credited on the overtime cards of the staff.
- After a relevant complaint which had been submitted to our Office, through the investigation of the progress of the relevant tender for the supply of a mobile Control Centre, it was found that the requirements/technical specifications were indeed excessive with regards to the real needs. The inevitable cancellation of the tender caused a delay in the implementation of an important project.

State Archives.

Archival material is spread amongst five storage spaces in different parts of Nicosia, and makes the processing of work at the State Archive and the handling of the archival material more difficult, while the mentioned storage spaces have not been constructed with appropriate specifications for keeping sensitive documents. In addition, the existing archival stores are not in a position to absorb the huge volume of archives of the wider Public Sector, resulting in the State Archive failing to have the capacity to fulfill its legal obligations.