

Me and Georgia

I am happy that I have been working for the Estonian Police since its re-establishment, and for the last 10 years I have held positions which are directly linked to training arrangements for Estonian police officers, including its' international aspect. Up until 2004 my experience had been limited to communicating with the police schools and trainers of "the old Europe", when Estonia was still a candidate state of the European Union and later when our country had become a full member of EU. In 2004 the Government of the Republic of Estonia decided that the target country for developmental cooperation aid would be a fledgling democracy in Caucasia – Georgia. My generation associates Georgia with hot-blooded, proud and beautiful people, where the nature is magnificent, there is a lot of singing, wine flows, and each person is a gift from God...

In February 2005 I was invited to participate in the evaluation project of the Police Aid Programme of the Georgian Mission of Organisation of Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). My task was to evaluate the developmental needs of the Police Academy of Georgia. In the field of police work, which started in the OSCE Mission in Georgia in the second half of 2004, the aid programme was focused on four areas which were and still are strategic management, police training, personnel work of the police and community policing.

I remember that the February of 2005 in Tbilisi (the capital of Georgia) was cold... The beautiful and proud Tbilisi, as I remembered it from the time 18 years ago, had been replaced by a grey and extremely sad city. The working space of mine and my colleague, (Plamen from Bulgaria) at the Georgian Police Academy had no heating system and there were power cuts 7-8 times a day. Yet, despite these circumstances, we managed to map the developmental needs of the Academy, plan the construction and design of the library, and set out guidelines for the development of curriculum in three weeks. In addition, we gained something invaluable – friends and good colleagues.

Visiting Tbilisi again in May 2006, with the delegation from the Estonian Public Service Academy, at the invitation of the Ministry of the Interior of Georgia, I was surprised at how much the city had changed. There was construction going on everywhere, the people in the streets looked a lot happier and my dear friends and acquaintances were much more self-confident and successful.

From March until October 2007 I was again on an OSCE Mission, this time as an international expert of the project of personnel management. My predecessor, an expert in the same field, Paolo del Mistro from Canada, had outlined the aims and tasks of my project so well that it was quite easy for me to start developing the drafting of work descriptions and instruments of personnel recruitment. We got the necessary tests for personnel evaluation and trained the personnel recruiters and interviewers. We bought computers and necessary additional equipment for all the personnel workers of regional units and taught them how to use them. Thanks to this project I now know wonderful personnel managers from all the police regions in Georgia.

This year I have been involved in two projects – in the spring we taught the principles of community policing with two lecturers from the Georgian Police Academy – David and Mamuka - to the patrolling police officers and constables of the regions of Tbilisi, Mtsheta Mtianeti and Kahetia. Over a hundred police officers attended our courses. Georgian police officers are notably more open and active in the courses than, for example, my northern compatriots. You simply cannot escape discussions and thorough debates! You can imagine how sorry we were to part from each other at the end of the

courses.

My second project, which is related with crime prevention, started in July. I had arrived in Batumi on 7 August to make plans with the local police leaders for the organisation of events focused on traffic safety and drug prevention, when the war began. I do not want to think back to the terrible stampeding through the city of Gori when death-bringing planes had once again suddenly appeared above... There are no winners in such conflicts, only losers. And unfortunately my Georgia has been very badly hurt and needs help.

Nevertheless, my Georgian friends are not complaining. They are proud and I know that their spirit is strong and they support each other as one big Georgian family. I wish with all my heart for their hope and faith in a better world to be restored.

And each time I go through passport control at Tbilisi airport, I say to myself 'Georgia, see you soon.'

By Piret Palusoo, Adviser to the Police College of Estonia