

Fuenlabrada is a city of 200,000 inhabitants about 20 km, south of the capital city Madrid. It's a city with a young population, with 35 % of the population under 30 years of age, for many years it was the youngest city in Europe. During the (nineteen seventies) 1970's the population increased dramatically, thanks mainly to the arrival of migrant (*national*) workers from surrounding regions who came to Madrid for work and because of this the bulk of the population has always been from outside the city.

These factors have shaped Fuenlabrada into a young predominantly, working class area. With housing in Fuenlabrada being mainly high-rise apartments we find an increased concentration of people spread over a reduced area. This type of housing, many more than 8 stories, gives rise to many problems in the day to day co-existence of the population. Add to this the recent influx of non national workers we find that the problems multiply.

One of my duties there is public relations between the Fuenlabrada Police Service and the diverse society. My role is to develop strategies which favor relations between minorities and the police service, among these, the migrant minorities.

Fuenlabrada has experienced a change in its neighborhoods, as much in its appearance, as in the languages spoken, its religions and customs. In fact, in just 10 years we have gone from an immigrant population of three per cent to a population of sixteen per cent at present. Furthermore, in 2006 it was understood that thirty per cent of children under the age of six, had one parent of a different nationality. This fact demonstrated what was going to be the "panorama" for the youth of Fuenlabrada nowadays.

We must take into account that the Police Services are the first to act when a local conflict occurs, and the way in which these situations are managed can often resolve later conflicts.

Parting from the point of view that we are a public service, we understood that there were a series of barriers which we had to eliminate and which separated the police and other emergency services from these new neighbors.

## **What it was that we had to do to eliminate these barriers?**

### **Firstly, created a network of contacts**

Police need to dialogue with members of communities, identifying leaders and creating communication channels, developing joint programs to improve relationships and help each of the residents of the city.

After many hours of talks, we have created enough confidence to develop a strategy to maintain contact 24 hours 365 days a year, with migrant association leaders in order to solve emergency problems that may occur.

### **Secondly, the creation of a forum for dialogue between new and old members of the community,**

We firmly believe we will have been successful when these types of actions are no longer necessary, and it is for this reason that mutual knowledge between communities will be needed. These meetings are every three months and address topics related with the safety of the city and coexistence. All neighborhood associations who wish to participate are represented.

### **Another action to be taken into account is the facilitation of knowledge of the rules and customs of co-existence for newcomers to our community.**

Holding informative talks and workshops in their meeting places and places of congregation, in which we can explain the rules and customs of our city. Even in these talks we give advice on civil protection. And often encouragement to volunteer civil defense service.

Thanks to these advances our work has become known by associations of immigrant and minority communities, and we have been able to mediate and resolve conflicts between neighbors and community members of different nationalities. Through these measures, we have achieved an increase of five per cent in the number of police officers from immigrant families, and at the same time we have succeeded in creating and promoting trust between immigrants and police improving by fifteen per cent the number of immigrants who reported crimes as victims of crime.

The main idea is that all neighbors of the city are part of the solution, so we need to develop programs addressing the different cultures, languages, and so on... of the city to manage emergency situations.

One of our main targets is to sensitize the population that the solution to safety the city is not alone in the police. Each member of society has to do something to keep the city safe, so migrants are part of the city and also part of the solution.