

COMMUNITY POLICING AND COOPERATION WITH EXTERNAL ENTITIES IN THE FIELD OF SECURITY - THE CASE OF THE MURSKA SOBOTA POLICE DIRECTORATE

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Received: 2nd August 2022

Accepted: 28th August 2022

Review paper

Abstract: *The term "policing" describes all activities carried out by the police as an organisation. One of the fields of police activity is also community-oriented policing, comprising the activities of the police, which at the local level focus directly on the local community, and include repressive and preventive action with the aim of ensuring the highest possible level of security. The paper shall present the operation of the Murska Sobota PD in the local community and cooperation with all the entities with the basic aim of increasing residents' satisfaction with a sense of a safe living environment.*

Key words: *community policing, plural policing, security, Murska Sobota Police Directorate (MS PD), Slovenia*

1. INTRODUCTION

Around the beginning of the twentieth century, police work began to change in parallel with the development in the light of extensive and important social, economic and political changes. In the field of policing, these changes that have influenced the perception of the role of the police in a democratic society stand out: the professionalisation of policing, bringing the police closer to the community, connecting with other institutions in preventing and responding to crime, expanding the role of the police - from fighting crime to ensuring the quality of life and reducing the fear of crime. With the introduction of plural policing, the police transferred individual tasks to other operators and in this way also partially relieved its burden. Plural policing belongs to the public-private model of policing (public-private divide policing) (Ponsaers, 2001). It developed as a response to a too narrow and too traditional concept of the police and policing. Modic, Lobnikar and Dvojmc (2019: 219) emphasise that plural policing is "characterised by concepts such as breaking police work into smaller parts, splitting,

redistribution and fragmentation of police work, consumerism, privatisation, (un)safety and responsibility."

Today, policing is understood as activities carried out by professionals within a number of organisations (it is the professional implementation of certain activities) and/or by individuals in the community. Policing is performed by authorised state employees within the organisation which is most often called the police, with broad powers to deal with crime and establish and maintain law and order. In addition to police employees, policing is also carried out by other (state) employees at the local and state levels whose primary tasks fall within the field of policing (certain tasks of the customs, anti-money laundering agencies, intelligence services, military police, etc.). Policing is also carried out at the level of local self-government (municipal warden services) and in the framework of carrying out economic activities (private security, detective work, security consulting). Some authors also include surveillance with technical means under policing, especially video surveillance of certain public spaces, parking lots, etc. Stenning (2009) defines the pluralisation of policing as a dominant trend in the development of policing around the world in the last two decades, as public and private police organisations have been gradually developing in close connection with each other, as a result of which the modern model of the implementation of policing is characterised by the distribution of police tasks among different operators. The concept of the public-private model of policing is thus closely related to the concept of plural policing, which represents the process of transferring the performance of typical police tasks to private and other state and local police, security and supervising organisations. Thus, the public no longer perceives the state police as the sole bearers of responsibility for ensuring security, as this role has also been taken over by other public and private organisations that contribute to ensuring security with their activities. Such organisations include the state prosecutor's office, the customs, inspection services, security and intelligence services, court and judicial police, local police, private security organisations and detective organisations.

The main challenges of modern policing in Slovenia remain the cooperation between the various entities of the plural police family, the unification of standards in the area of powers of the representatives of organisations in the field of policing, and the issue of control over the activities of the analysed organisations. The purpose of the paper is therefore to examine the cooperation of the institutions of the plural police family in the area of the Murska Sobota PD and analyse the activities of public and private organisations that cooperate with the police in Pomurje in order to ensure security.

2. COMMUNITY POLICING (CP)

The progress and modernisation of society also brought about complex social relations and constantly new security occurrences, which led to the gradual development of modern policing approaches. For a long time, the police used the traditional (more repressive) model of police work, the purpose of which was primarily the fight against crime, and its success can be demonstrated with police statistics (Mesko, Sotlar and Lobnikar, 2018). But over time it became clear that the traditional model was not sufficient to ensure security in local communities, as many problems were not linked directly to crime. The police realised that it was necessary to build on relations between police officers and residents. Traditional models began to be supplemented with preventive activities in the local environment, and the reactive approach was replaced by a proactive one. With this, they set out to solve the problem of crime, disorder and other problems about which they warn the residents in local communities. New forms of preventive work, based on cooperation between citizens and the police, have begun to be developed, as well as joint identification of security problems and a focus on solving them (Policija, n.d.). Changes also took place in the Slovenian Police, the role of which had to

change after the independence of Slovenia and the change of the social system. This encouraged a new approach and a new form of community policing (ReNPPZK19–23, 2019).

Community policing is one of the main concepts of crime prevention (and reducing the fear of crime). It is similar to self-protection by the citizens in local communities while simultaneously cooperating with the police, aimed at solving problems in the local community in question. At the same time, Mesko (2001) points out that community policing is based on the assumption that it is necessary to look for problems in the community, discover the causes of these problems and take appropriate measures. Desired results of community policing are preventing crime, reducing the fear of crime, increasing residents' satisfaction with life in the community, solved problems, and the legitimacy and legality of police work. And the goal of community policing is to improve the quality of life of the residents.

Community policing is based on partnership cooperation and trust and is carried out professionally. Specifically, high-quality and fast elimination of security problems is a condition for public satisfaction and sense of security. It is crucial that police officers have a respectful attitude towards residents and, ultimately, this applies to every contact with residents, as people's trust can be lost due to the slightest mistake. The fundamental mission of the police is above all to serve the people (ReNPPZK19–23, 2019).

Partnership cooperation between the police and local communities in Slovenia is already defined in the Organisation and Work of the Police Act, 2013, which stipulates in Article 35: 1) cooperation of the police with the authorities of self-governing local communities; 2) cooperation of the police with other authorities, organisations and institutions, civil society and private persons; 3) cooperation of the police with state authorities, self-governing local communities, legal persons, sole traders, the law enforcement authorities of other countries, self-employed persons and with other authorities and organisations; 4) establishment of councils, advisory committees, commissions or other forms of partnership cooperation (Organisation and Work of the Police Act ZODPol, 2013).

Police work (in the community) is effective only when police officers are actually present in the community and cooperation is established in identifying problems and eliminating the causes of their occurrence. The police, however, have varying degrees of success in establishing appropriate contacts with citizens and the local community. To some extent, this is conditioned by social order and the actual attention given to this by the state (ReNPPZK19–23, 2019). The police carry out preventive activities in various areas of work, which are supported by materials and presentations for residents in the form of lectures, round tables, participation in fairs, and appearances in the media. The main operator of these activities at the local level is the neighbourhood police chief. However, community policing is the task of all police officers, not only the neighbourhood police chiefs; therefore, everyone must be aware of this responsibility, and the management must adjust to this (ReNPPZK19–23, 2019). Partnership cooperation is implemented at the level of police directorates and police stations. These report on a security situation in a certain local community in direct contact with mayors and municipal councils. Police station areas are divided into neighbourhood police areas, which are headed by the neighbourhood police chief. Operational tasks in the neighbourhood police area are performed by all police officers.

In the 2013 strategy of community policing, the police set goals to increase partnership cooperation with the local community, state authorities and civil society, increase the visibility and presence of police officers in the local community, increase the feeling of security, and increase trust and satisfaction with the work of the police (Policija, n.d.). The essence of the strategy is also to increase the independence of police stations, which should adapt their work to the needs and interests of the local community in the field of security. Commanders should

reflect the situation in the local community by independently determining police station tasks. The aforementioned goals can be achieved with the initiatives given by the police to local communities in the context of establishing security advisory committees and cooperating with residents and representatives of local communities. Greater visibility and presence of police officers are also important, as well as the coordination of municipal security programmes with the local community, professional performance of tasks and attitude towards people, and training of police officers in this field. "A police officer's community policing begins with 'good day' and ends with 'goodbye.' A polite approach, or the approach of an authorised official, must be the foundation for any further action by the police officer. If there is no such foundation, it is difficult to talk about community policing" (Smolej, 2013, p. 7).

The Security Advisory Committee is one of the forms of consultative bodies (in addition to, for example, councils and commissions), which are important in solving security issues in local communities. They are established by the municipal council at the initiative of the mayor, and the idea is that in the context of councils/advisory committees, citizens can make decisions or give opinions with regard to the issues of the local community (Local Self-Government Act ZLS-UPB, 2007). Other entities also participate in such committees, such as the police, private security companies, the mayor, etc. The purpose of establishing consultative bodies is primarily to exchange opinions on issues in the local community and ideas on how to solve them (ZODPol, 2013). The presentation of the work of the police and the exchange of information with the participants are also important. The main purpose of advisory committees is therefore to better ensure security in the local community where partnership cooperation with the police and other entities is emphasised, which is especially important for the implementation of community policing.

3. COMMUNITY POLICING AND COOPERATION WITH EXTERNAL ENTITIES

Modern policing includes activities carried out by professionals from various organisations and individuals in a certain (local) community. Modic et al. (2014) state that policing is carried out by authorised state employees in the framework of the police with broad powers to manage crime and maintain law and order. But the police are not the only ones who carry out the tasks of policing. Others include customs, money laundering prevention agency, intelligence services, military police, and judicial police officers. The latter perform policing at the state level. Policing is also carried out at the local level (municipal wardens), in the context of carrying out economic activities (private security companies, detectives) and with individuals organised in informal networks for the implementation of supervision. All of the aforementioned operators of policing can be connected into the concept of plural policing. Within the framework of plural policing, the police maintain a leading role in ensuring security and law and order, as well as in preventing criminal acts.

"Organising and ensuring security in the local community is a strategic task and an integral part of the system for the provision of internal security" (Modic et al., 2014, p. 227). At the same time, it applies that modern approaches to ensuring security are built on partnerships in which the state connects with the local and the public with the private. Ensuring security at the local level is mainly focused on preventive activities, when the community helps its most vulnerable members. In this way, methods of improving cooperation with people in the community are sought, and local supervision and the systems of functioning of state institutions are improved¹.

¹ Pecar (1992) divided supervision into formal social supervision, informal social supervision, and institutionalised informal social supervision. Formal social supervision is repressive supervision carried

The police are primarily responsible for responding to threats to security, but they find that security concerns are too often left to them alone and due to a lack of information, they often cannot react in time to occurrences and actions that disturb the residents (Policija, n.d.). By cooperating with ministries, local communities, non-governmental organisations, civil society organisations and private security services, the police plans to create partnerships cooperation for the purpose of successfully combating crime. In addition to the preventive activities of the police, in order to effectively prevent crime, it is also necessary to involve organisations at the state and local levels, the private sector and civil society. As a result, the resolution (ReNPPZK19–23, 2019) sets goals to achieve a greater number of partnership relationships between the above-mentioned entities. The cooperation with communities, municipal warden services and individuals must be adapted to security problems that have arisen or are expected. It must be timely and implemented in a way that will be effective and improve security in a certain area. The community will be satisfied with the work of the police only if the police respond to security problems as soon as possible (ReNPPZK19–23, 2019). The cooperation between the police, warden services, private security services and other entities of plural policing represents an important challenge while aiming towards a common goal: public safety. Professional relationships, cooperation and trust can be built by conducting joint training.

Cooperation at the local level is most often organised in the form of security advisory committees. These are established by mayors for the purpose of cooperation, and it is in these committees that priorities in the field of crime prevention and ensuring security at the local level are determined. Police officers, school representatives, social services, private security companies, societies, non-governmental organisations and private companies all participate in security advisory committees. When involving local residents in ensuring security at the local level, they should only focus on identifying problems and not on finding solutions for certain problems (Mesko et al., 2018). The main function of security advisory committees is to connect, organise and guide everyone who deals with security issues. Research on the work of municipal security advisory committees showed that in some municipalities they functioned effectively, while in others they were merely an unrealised idea. Some of the obstacles to the successful operation of security advisory committees were unclear roles of committee members, different understanding of security problems, lack of knowledge and unwillingness to cooperate. Nevertheless, in some places positive effects were also shown in the form of actual cooperation, raising public awareness on the issues, discussions and democratisation of social control.

When ensuring security at the local level, it is important to take into account the size of municipalities and the specificity of the problems of individual municipalities, as these can vary greatly among municipalities. The 2017 Safety in Local Communities research showed which future trends for ensuring security the residents are most in favour of. In order to effectively ensure security, residents are more in favour of social prevention than traditional forms of supervision and stricter penalty policies (Mesko et al., 2018). New technical solutions for greater traffic safety, improving the safety of children on the way to school, and changes in the penalty policy stand out. This is followed by more consistent but more flexible punishment with alternative methods of punishment. However, they were least in favour of additional pluralisation and privatisation of security. Police officers are more committed to

out by the state in order to control deviance. This includes the police and municipal warden service. Informal social supervision is a local community, where we find primary and secondary groups of people (family, school, neighbourhood) that influence behaviour and values in society through interaction. Institutionalised non-social supervision falls somewhere in between, as it is to some extent regulated by the state. This includes private security and detective services.

strengthening security advisory committees than residents. As part of the mutual cooperation between the police and the public, a symbol has also been developed that illustrates the partnership relationship of cooperation between the police and the public in the field of security (Figure 1).



Figure 1. Partnership cooperation
Source: (Policija, n.d.)

4. MURSKA SOBOTA POLICE DIRECTORATE CASE STUDY – COOPERATION WITH EXTERNAL ENTITIES IN THE FIELD OF SECURITY

The MS PD can be praised as an example of good practice of police cooperation with residents. In the past decade, the Pomurje police successfully implemented a model of community policing and took an important step towards a safer local community, as evidenced by the satisfaction of Pomurje residents with the work of the police. The high satisfaction of Pomurje residents with the work of the police, especially community policing, is undoubtedly (also) the result of individual projects that the police carried out for local residents or together with them and other entities responsible for security in the local community. The most prominent examples of good practice of community policing of the MS PD are the following: 1) Project *Back to the people*;² 2) *Detective Francek Academy* in Terme Banovci spa;³ 3) Project *The Family in Traffic* in cooperation with primary schools, in which the Prevention Council of the municipality of Lendava also became involved; 4) Preventive projects *We will paint*;⁴ 5)

² The goal of the project was to strengthen the cooperation of the police with the residents and to involve all entities in eliminating the causes that enable the emergence of security problems for all people and institutions in the local area. They followed the conclusion of others that the police can be more successful in the local community if they connect more closely with the community or the people in it and, together with them, determine the causes of negative behaviour and try to eliminate them with joint efforts. They achieved the efficient implementation of the work of the neighbourhood police area and ensured that the measures are traceable/verifiable for each neighbourhood police area, police station and the entire police directorate.

³ During winter holidays, neighbourhood police chiefs and other police officers actively participate and lead preventive campaigns for children. The police, together with children who are spending winter holidays in Terme Banovci spa, "trace" the suspects of crimes and if they escape, they try to catch them together with police dog handlers, they conduct viewings of the scenes of crimes and fires, challenge the traces that suspects leave at the scene, and the children also learn about the differences between detectives in the past and today, as well as police self-defence, and take a safe driving test on a simulator (mastering a motorcycle).

⁴ The project was implemented at the initiative of the neighbourhood police chief of the Murska Sobota urban municipality, Tomaz Trajbaric, in cooperation with the Murska Sobota urban municipality. The

*Sobota bicycle and Overcoming obstacles for the blind together;*⁵ 6) Project *Thank you for not using a mobile phone;*⁶ 7) Regular working meetings with the mayors of Pomurje municipalities, where the state of security in the municipality is presented. In this way, the local community is informed about new developments in the field of security, and issues, experiences, cooperation, initiatives, etc. are also exchanged; 8) In cooperation with the Cerebral Palsy Association of Slovenia, the Sonček Murska Sobota Centre produced magnets featuring "Policeman Leon" - an exemplary young driver, which they hand out to young people at various events and thus draw attention to traffic safety; 9) Active cooperation with Roma radio, Hungarian radio and the local media (sharing preventive advice on the air, etc.); 10) Participation in the *Lifelong Learning Week* project at the Franc Miklosic High School in Ljutomer, where neighbourhood police chiefs and criminal investigators present their work and provide individual interesting safety information to high school students; 11) Preparation and introduction of a special *form for working with victims of crimes*. Its purpose is to improve the situation in the field of work with victims of crimes, especially victims of domestic violence. It is mainly used by neighbourhood police chiefs when working with victims and it shows the activities of the police in monitoring the situation in the family, and the findings are also very important when dealing with possible new or repeated violations or the commission of criminal acts; 12) Taking care of the cultural and historical presentation of the work of the Pomurje police to local residents with the publication of the book "*Zgodovina orožništva in pomurske policije*" (History of Gendarmerie and the Pomurje Police) and the opening of the Museum of the History of the Slovenian Police at the MS PD in 2017; 13) Training police officers to work with AED and help in cardiac arrest, which has already proven to be effective in practice; 14) Initiative and active cooperation with SI-CERT in publishing the brochure "Safe on the Internet" for the entire Slovenian police.

The MS PD can also boast of active participation in charity campaigns, the most famous of which is the *annual concert of the Slovenian Police Orchestra*, from which the collected funds are donated to the children in the region who are in need of help. This year, they collected €2,037.26, which will be used to finance school activities, i.e. to purchase workbooks, textbooks and other necessities.

At the Murska Sobota PD, from the plural policing perspective, the police cooperate mainly with the security services, security guards, private detectives, customs officers, inspectors, municipal wardens, and in some communities also with the public. All these authorities also participate in preventing crime. This task of theirs is especially important nowadays, when everywhere in the world and also in our country there is more and more crime every day, which appears in increasingly serious and more organised forms, and there are also more and more criminals who are increasingly specialised in their area of crime. The development of technology is also very useful for them because technology not only helps the police in catching criminals, but also makes the work of criminals easier and faster. For this reason, it

negative content painted on the walls of the buildings in the Murska Sobota park was painted over with graffiti or changed.

⁵ Together with the Murska Sobota Disability Council the police inspected access for the disabled, markings on the road and parking spaces, adequacy of pedestrian crossings and pavements, operation of traffic lights and signalling efficiency, etc.. The Murska Sobota urban municipality has given an electric bicycle to be used by the Murska Sobota Police Station for a period of 5 years.

⁶ The purpose of the preventive project was to warn and make all drivers aware of the dangers of using mobile phones while driving. The police are fundamentally a repressive body and take repressive measures against drivers who do not respect the legal ban on using mobile phones while driving. However, conscientious drivers who do not commit such offences and are aware of the negative consequences that can arise from using a phone while driving are often forgotten about.

is important that it is no longer only the police who have the power to maintain order and prevent crime in the country, but that they are also assisted by the authorities listed above within the scope of their powers, which are unfortunately too limited (Dolenc, 2010).

A great interest of the Murska Sobota PD is the mutual cooperation of the police with the security advisory committees. The following security advisory committees operate in the area of the Murska Sobota PD: the security advisory committee of the Murska Sobota urban municipality, the security advisory committee of the Puconci municipality, the security advisory committee of the Beltinci municipality, the security advisory committee of the Cankova municipality, the security advisory committee of the Gornja Radgona municipality, the security advisory committee of the Radenci municipality, the security advisory committee of the Sveti Jurij ob Scavnici municipality, the security advisory committee of the Verzej municipality, the security advisory committee of the Tisina municipality, the security advisory committee of the Ljutomer municipality, the security advisory committee of the Razkrižje municipality, and the forum for ensuring the safety of the public in the areas of the municipalities of Crensovci, Dobrovnik, Kobilje, Lendava, Odranci, Turnisce and Velika Polana.

5. CONCLUSION

To sum up, each mentioned project and its results bear witness to the fact that the MS PD is an example of good practice of community policing, which must by no means rest on its laurels but must also strive in the future to be accessible and visible to people so that people are also willing to cooperate with the police. There must be constant cooperation between the police and the local community. Therefore, the Murska Sobota PD must also in the future constantly strive to ensure that relations with all entities in its area are the best possible and that cooperation with them is at the highest level. The cooperation of the police with the security advisory committees is particularly important, and these relations must be constantly upgraded and maintained. An important role should also be given to the neighbourhood police chiefs, who are the first point of contact with the public and who play a very important role in ensuring comprehensive security in the area of the Murska Sobota PD. Therefore, it is necessary for the police, in cooperation with the local community, to constantly carry out activities which are aimed at the residents with the purpose of providing them with satisfaction and a sense of security.

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