

Excellent policing: challenging the 21st century.

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1. *Standing at a threshold of fundamental change.*

Most, if not all of the police organisations are striving for new strategies in order to improve police effectiveness. But the world is changing dramatically and globalisation seems to become the most threatening factor. Police organisations and professionals should become active in a new and complex environment, not only by other challenges on the national and international but also on the local level.

Whatever work the police do they do it for the community. Police duties are based upon the needs of the community to be protected from insecurity and crime, the effects of crime and the fear of crime.

We stand at the dawn of a fundamental shift in the way in which public and quasi-public places are policed, with significant implications for styles of policing, community engagement, civic renewal, social inclusion and citizenship. 'Tackling insecurity', 'crime control' and 'criminal justice' are shorthand terms that describe a complex set of practices and institutions, ranging from the conduct of house owners locking their doors to the actions of authorities enacting (criminal) laws, from community policing to sanctions in prison and all the processes in between. Each of these aspects is subject of new developments.

Research on police organisation and functioning indicates a plethora of policing systems.

Much of the early research on policing focused on the nature of the police role and of police culture. A recent development is the emergence of a forum of policy-oriented criminology focussing on the main police activities, operations and performances.

Nowadays most police services (and also the Belgian police) have some form of internal research capacity and most of them focus upon encouraging research and knowledge development in order to support search for better analyses, new strategies and their implementation. It also becomes more natural to build upon experiences from the profit world and to have an active exchange with other partners in society.

Probably based on the growing knowledge and the need to be more than ever an anticipating, clever police two inbuilt features of the police organisation are revitalisation and innovation. In many (especially European countries) some significant changes have been made to the nature of the police organisation including both the development of more central organised policing structures and increasing emphasis on a local orientation with basic command units¹. There have been times when politicians assumed that increased expenditure would lead, almost automatically, to greater effectiveness in crime control but this is no longer the case. The focus is now: better police instead of more police.

The police function includes both basic and specific tasks, the latter being conceived differently in respective countries and organisations. In a world where security and safety are increasingly defined as fundamental values in people's lives, law enforcement organisations become entrusted with a greater span of responsibility and control. At its core, policing

¹ In the Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway and the United Kingdom the police services have or are in a process of re-organisation. Centralisation is in all countries a focus point. See also 'Closing the gap', a British paper describing the fact that a police service should at least consist of 4000 members of staff in order to be able to provide both local and (inter)national police care. In other countries like France and the South of Europe questions are raised about the merging of the different police organisations in a country (e.g. Gendarmerie and Municipal police)

consists in the judicious application of coercive force in the maintenance of social order. It is peace-keeping, peace-making and, if needs be, peace-enforcement. Police officers are charged with responsibility for maintaining a general or specific social order and they do so with the ultimate recourse to coercion.

Policing has adapted and responded to the late modern world and to its political and cultural values. Policing also appears to become increasingly fragmented and complex. Policing today does more than just supply solutions to manage problems of crime and anti-social behaviour; it also institutionalises a set of responses to these problems, themselves consequent in their social impact. The development and implementation of any policy will always raise difficult dilemmas and stir complicated controversies, not only when it comes to policing measures, but also in relation to long-term internal and foreign policies, aiming at the so-called causes of terrorism and crime problems. This results in a shift in the balance of power between the state and the rights and liberties of the individual. The creation of a police service ethic within a transnational civil society predicated on human rights norms is an issue of global importance.

New practices typically emerge as local solutions arise to the immediate problems encountered by individuals and organisations as they go about their daily routines. What they add up to is a process of institutional adaptation in which the whole field of crime control gradually adjusts its orientations and functioning. Over time (police) practise of controlling crime and doing justice has had to adapt to:

- An increasingly insecure economy that marginalises substantial sections of the population;
- A hedonistic consumer culture that combines extensive personal freedoms with relaxed social controls;
- A pluralistic moral order that struggles to create trust relations between strangers who have little in common;
- A 'sovereign' state that is increasingly incapable of regulating a society of individual citizens and different social groups, and
- Chronically high crime rates that can exist with low levels of family cohesion and community solidarity.

Nowadays the aim is also to regulate "self-regulation", compelling people and organisations to behave in the desired manner. In reality, in the field of policing, recourse to command and control remains (too) often not only a resource of last resort, when all else fails, but also one that is symbolically and culturally distinct.

But today's police strategies need to have congruence, a certain 'fit' with the structures and processes of modern society. They represent a particular kind of response, a particular adaptation to the specific problem of social order produced by modern social organisation, but such strategies are not created without a conscious effort. The public demands that something be done about crime and security, that property and persons should be protected, that offenders should be adequately punished and controlled and that the system should operate reliably and efficiently. The recurring concerns can be met in a variety of ways². Efforts to share responsibility for crime control, nodal orientation, to embed social control into the fabric of every day life, to reduce the criminal effects of economic transitions, to protect against repeated victimisation, to focus upon repeating offenders, to support young people and to prevent crime in communities, are adopted by most law enforcement agencies. However, there are still possibilities and opportunities that already exist and could be given much more prominence in law enforcement policy. Promising for the police is the introduction of anti-social behaviour orders and other administrative sanctioning systems such as administrative sanctions, local dispersal orders, house closure powers for example, creating the possibility for a more extensive follow up of police actions. Community policing is still the most prominent strategy but should be adapted to the modern world in all its aspects. It should be linked to 21st century technology (technical led policing?) to make the biggest

² For example, the US, where concerns are growing about the possibility of being locked into new "iron cage" (e.g. mass incarceration)

impact on crime and on the public's fear of crime. Also prominent is the introduction of intelligence led policing. Reassuring policing is nowadays becoming a new trend in the UK and the US. Today some countries are striving to integrate strategies, combining community policing and intelligence-led policing with organisational development towards a global strategy. This opens up the opportunity for tailor-made policing.

2. Excellent policing: a vision on an 'excellent police function'.

One of the key roles in public care is to assure security and liveability in society. Societal security however is also a concern to everyone, to each individual and to each society organisation. The police have to provide an 'excellent police function'.

A secure society is created by and developed through an active and concerned population. The contribution of all societies to this, of the several actors as well as a coherent policy of the authorities and services are extremely important. As an answer to the needs of the population, authorities draw up a complete and integrated security policy at all policy levels. They determine clearly what is to be expected from the parties involved in the security network and in what way competencies and responsibilities as well as the respective tasks are defined. The parties concerned tune their own initiatives and efforts to that policy. They do it among themselves as well. Thus, they jointly contribute to the realisation of goals in the field of security, liveability and crime. The addition of efforts and results of each interested party results in the social effects wanted by the authorities.

Through a five measures security chain (pro-action, prevention, preparation, reaction and after-care) "all" parties concerned contribute completely and in an integrated manner to societal security.

The police's task in this issue is privileged (link between the administrative and judicial chain) as well as exclusive (legal and legitimate use of coercive measures). Thanks to the co-operation of all parties concerned, the police want to build their house 'in and for' a more secure society. Such police house in society provides an 'outstanding police function'. We are talking about a community oriented, information-driven and optimal contribution of police to the joint security approach.

The police can, thanks to their professional know-how and information-position, inform the other parties concerned of problems and future challenges as well as (co)advice how these can be dealt with – under the control of authorities and other person's concerned.

Alongside the police, each party concerned builds a house, taking into account its specific mission (example: teaching a school community; guarantee welfare to the welfare sector;...). . In those houses as well, security, liveability and crime are key-elements as well as their complete and integrated approach. Thanks to the contribution of all parties concerned, guaranteeing an optimal societal security becomes reality.

It is important for each person concerned that he fulfils his role in the security chain, so that the police function can fit into this network approach. In implementation of the missions assigned and with the means at their disposal, police want to meet the expectations of (the) community (ies) by offering an 'excellent' police function. They want to provide this through and after deliberation and co-operation with actors and partners in the security network. The heads of police are also called to account. An excellent police function is the result of a well-balanced combination of basic principles and the careful applying of the building stones and tools.

The vision on an 'excellent police function' is based on four basic principles, especially:

- The government policy in the field of 'societal security';
- The specific police model in the field of 'community policing' or the 'community oriented police function';
- The also specific police and essential working method 'information-driven and technical police function';
- The general 'optimal management' basic principle (as a combination of management models or – theories made especially applicable to the police organisation).

This integration is, at the same time, the merit of this approach. It is not about one "or" other basic principle but we are talking about an "and" story. In order to provide an 'excellent police function', it is important to apply the four basic principles in an 'integrated' manner.

The vision on an 'excellent police function' itself is linked to the image of building a house.

The 'societal security' as a government policy is the dome under which the police make their contribution. 'Community policing' and 'information-driven police' are the basic police principles in this vision on an 'excellent police function'. The community policing police defines the type of police Belgium wants and refers to the finality (1st article of the law on police office), the cultural context of Belgian police and the attitude of their assistants. In connection herewith, the information-driven police is a working-method, which can be considered as the leitmotiv throughout the entire police processes (operational, policy and supporting processes). Without data being converted into information and hence, into knowledge, police can't provide either a basic or a specialised police function. This know-how also results into the formulation of goals, the guiding of actions and the evaluation of effects and performances in order to readjust and redefine goals afterwards.

The general basic principle 'Optimal management' represents a supporting management model. It allows the realisation of the specific basic police principles in a purposeful, step-by-step and well-thought way.

Both these 'specific police' and 'general' basic principles stipulate the way police want their external and internal organisation in order to contribute to societal security.

The keyword distinguishing the 'excellent police function' is "integrate" or "integration":

- external – internal;
- nationally/federally – locally;
- administrative – judicial (operational) police tasks;
- within the police forces;
- among the working processes.

This vision is fundamental for the police organisation and, regardless of the level, "every" head of police should subscribe it to. An 'excellent police function' can be applied to all levels of an integrated police function and can be used for both the operational and the supporting tasks. It also contributes to the improvement of the integrated functioning. Shortly, both the federal and the local police have to evolve towards an 'excellent police function'.

Each police executive can be expected to back up the idea of 'societal security' within which the police provides a 'community oriented and information-driven police function' via an 'optimal management'. How he fleshes out those principles, is either a local or a federal issue. Every police entity furnishes its house "in an unrestrained way and according to its own rhythm". In other words, building plans and foundations are identical to each police house but they decide "what" they put inside and "how" they furnish it.

An increased dynamism might be added to the excellent police function if control- and inspection organisations apply the same conceptual context whilst executing their missions and competencies. Bearing in mind the same goal and speaking the same language, the police forces will, on their way to a successful, community oriented and information-driven police functioning introduce and understand better the recommendations and improvement proposals of those forces.

No revolution but evolution

The vision on the 'excellent police function' doesn't cause any revolution. At home and abroad, police have already made a lot of efforts during the past few years in order to innovate and improve. To that end, they used several basic principles, methods and techniques, building stones and tools. Some of them have already been rather well elaborated and established whilst others are not. It is important to pursue in the same way and to continue evolving and developing, to learn from each other and to grow in a critical and constructive way. Lessons will be drawn from the experience and knowledge acquired. In order to do so, it is not necessary to start from zero each time, but to build further on what has already been established and acquired. The progressive integration of initiatives and experiences in our own country and abroad, in an unambiguous vision of an 'excellent police function' is, for that matter, a huge challenge to police forces.

The vision on an 'excellent police function' results, on the one hand, from existing police strategies and practices and, on the other hand, this vision will continue to develop in accordance with new police (functioning and action) and management perceptions. Examples of this are: the concepts on police policy and security plans, benchmarking and –learning, networks. Some of these concepts will inevitably have to be actualised, modernised and/or integrated in the vision text.

Hence, the vision on an 'excellent police function' is a step in the direction of a complete and integrated conceptual context, which contributes to societal security. To give form and content to an 'excellent police function' supposes nowadays pragmatism, dynamism for the future and ... a long-term vision and approach. The house will and must further evolve. Renovations will always be required in answer to the continuously changing expectations in the field of societal security.

One will have to proceed gradually before reaching the completion of the police house for an 'excellent police function'. To that extent, we have to maintain a balance between a vision-driven approach for an outstanding police function and a pragmatically one. No one can afford the luxury to stay on the sideline and just watch. We build the house together whilst we live in it. It will be implemented, improved and innovated progressively with the support required in the field of communication, training, assistance and succession. Several evaluations are provided for during the building.

3. Conclusion.

Excellent policing is a real challenge for the future, not only because of the fact that it is an integrating and more long standing strategy, giving the possibility to include new philosophies (such as reassurance policing) and methods (such as intelligence led policing), but mainly due to the fact it invites all policeman and -woman to strive for excellence.

Therefore it is essential to build a successful partnership between the police and the community. In order to operate effectively the police needs the trust and support of the citizens. Without a legitimate base the police cannot function. Therefore the police must "anchor" in the society, between street and state, and are there to serve and protect the people, and if necessary "enforce" the rules in the general interest. Striving for excellence is certainly a guarantee for sustainable police-community relations and for confident partnerships in order to participate fully into a global and integrated security strategy. But police cannot act in isolation. The 'societal security' as a government policy is the dome under which the police make their contribution in close cooperation with other partners.

But it is not enough to set up a model: in order to climb to excellence the Belgian police will need to create and implement a specific and well focussed programme in order to close the gap between strategic ambitions and police reality.