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Policing in the Slovak Republic. The organization and current problems of police work

Introduction

The Slovak Republic (hereinafter referred to as SR) is a sovereign state which in compliance with the international law respects the territorial integrity and political independence of all countries. It does not raise claims on the territory of other countries and is not endangered by the armed forces of any other country. The SR is a legal state that respects international law, implements it into its legal system and follows legal regulations on state functions also in the area of security. The fundamental declaration document in the area of security is the Security Strategy of the SR which observes the principal changes in the security sphere of the SR as well as global changes, new commitments and responsibility of the SR to participate in the security and defense of the general community of democratic countries — allies and partners of the SR that are united in the Euro-Atlantic unions and communities.

The Security Strategy of the SR provides the basis for the implementation of security policy of the SR with an intent to keep the required security level for citizens and the state. The SR disseminates values of freedom, peace, democracy, legal state, justice, plurality, solidarity as well as human rights and basic freedoms. In compliance with international legal norms and the Constitution of the SR, the Slovak Republic guarantees safety for its citizens without regard to their origin, social status and place of living. It is the fundamental precondition of the implementation of the human and civil rights and a harmonic development of the society. The SR also guarantees the right to personal safety for all categories of the population living on its territory. With regard to security, the SR faces two challenges that are typical of modern states. The first one is globalization and the second — unequal development in the world and in the SR itself.

Continuing globalization influences the SR in positive as well as negative ways. It brings phenomena and processes which are beyond control of the state, eliminates differences between the internal and external security and the boundaries between national and foreign policy. Economic subjects operating worldwide have an increasing impact on the global development. The expansion of information technologies and general access to the internet enable acquisition of weapon systems and instructions for their production, as well as further gaining experience necessary for planning and execution of attacks. The Financial markets operating worldwide enable terrorist organizations to achieve certain objectives without the assistance and awareness of the state. Globalization is associated with the increasing influence of non-state actors on security and stability in the world. The state monopoly for security and use of force disappears. The ability of the state as a subject of international law to be the key actor in international relationships is confronted by non-state groups, organizations and supranational networks.

The ever more apparent economic inequality in the world is a source of tension and instability and contributes considerably to security risks. The economic and social conditions in poor countries and impoverished regions result in huge differences in the standard of living among the population and consequently promote general dissatisfaction and radicalism. The Uneven economic development generates conditions for extremism and terrorism, abuse of faith and traditions, dissemination of religious fanaticism, establishment of authoritarian regimes, and illegal migration. These differences result in apprehension and attacks on new democratic institutes, citizens' freedoms, development of the economy and culture, or their considerable limitation. The Uneven development in the world increases the danger of various non-military risks.

1. Information on the Slovak Republic

With regard to geography, historical, cultural, political and economic relations, the SR is an integral part of the Euro-Atlantic sphere. The geopolitical position of the SR in Central Europe determines the security policy of the country. The SR has a territory of 49 035 km². 5.4 million citizens of various nationalities are living in the SR¹. 85.8 percent of the Slovak population proclaim to be of Slovak nationality, 9.7 percent of Hungarian, 1.8 percent of Roma and 0.9 percent of Czech nationality². Slovakia is situated in Central Europe and borders on five countries, Austria and the Czech Republic to the West, Hungary to the South (the longest border), Ukraine to the East (the shortest border) and Poland in the North. The SR has been a member of the European Union since May 1st 2004, a member

¹ *Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic*, <http://portal.statistics.sk/showdoc.do?docid=53488> (obtained: 1.04.2014).

² *Statistical Yearbook of the Slovak Republic 2011*, Bratislava 2011, pp. 12–36.

of the Schengen area since December 21st 2007, and a part of the European Monetary Union since January 1st 2009. The valid currency is the euro (€). The SR is also a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the United Nations (UN), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the World Health Organization (WHO), EUROPOL (short for European Police Office) and the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL).

With its membership in the UN, OSCE and other regional organizations and communities, the SR contributes to efforts of the international community to keep peace and security in the world. Through its admission to NATO, the SR became a part of the system aimed at collective defense and security, and is a pillar of transatlantic defense and security is guaranteed by international commitments. By being admitted to the EU, the SR is guaranteed political and economic stability along with opportunity to actively participate in shaping, implementing and improving the European security and defense policies. Through its admission to OECD, the SR became one of the countries with the best developed economy in the world. The economic integration of the SR stabilized its market economy and enabled the country to begin global economic cooperation and to join the international system of development aimed at developing countries. The membership of the SR in influential international organizations has improved its security position and established new conditions for the implementation of these interests. Direct participation in the decision-making processes of international organizations improved the level of security guarantees provided by the organizations as well as the extent of responsibility of the SR for security and stability in the world. The majority of the population of the SR are Roman Catholic (69 percent). The Evangelical Augsburg Church is represented by 7 percent of believers and is the second largest church in the country. A part of the population belongs to the Orthodox Church (5 percent) and 13 percent of population is unaffiliated or other. The political system of the SR is a parliamentary democratic republic, and is represented by the president who is elected directly by the people for a term of 5 years. He shares the power with the Slovak National Council, the Parliament which is a legislative body whose one hundred and fifty members are elected directly by the people for a term of 4 years. The government and the prime minister are responsible for the joint exercise of political power. The SR has a dense road infrastructure which is interconnected with railways and airports throughout the country. There are more than 1,000 protected areas, 9 national parks, and 16 protected landscape areas with numerous rare plants and animals. The climatic conditions differ according to the altitude and summer in the lowlands is dry and warm³.

³ L. Gašpierik, J. Reitšpís, 'Acceptance of Security in Security System of Slovak Republic', [in:] *Národná a medzinárodná bezpečnosť 2010*, Liptovský Mikuláš 2011, pp. 89–101.

2. The structure of security forces in the SR

A common feature of the security forces is the fact that they are established by law and their members performing the activities can apply their authorizations defined by the respective law. The security forces in the SR are divided into two groups, according to their organizational and legal nature. The first group involves state security service, the second one non-state security service. The state security services are components of the state and are charged with the protection and safety of social interests in all areas for which they are responsible. They are executive bodies of the power and their representatives are public agents when performing the service. The structure of the state power security services is shown in Figure 1.

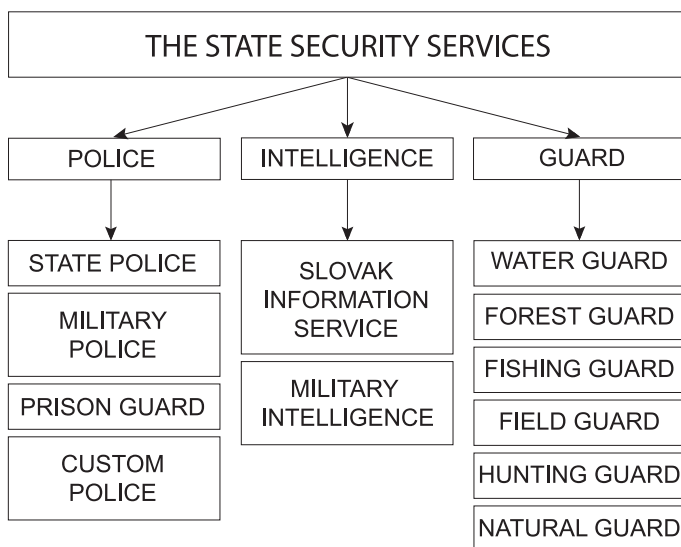


Figure 1. Structure of the state security services

Source: own compilation.

The state security services are executive bodies of state power, while their members are public agents when performing the service.

There is a wide range of non-state police security organizations that are established by law. As opposed to state security services, they provide security services for particular groups or individuals. The employees of the private security services are not public agents when performing these services⁴.

⁴ L. Gašpierik, K. Boc, *Súkromná detektívna služba*, Košice 2010, pub. Multiprint, p. 64.

The division according to the subject of activities:

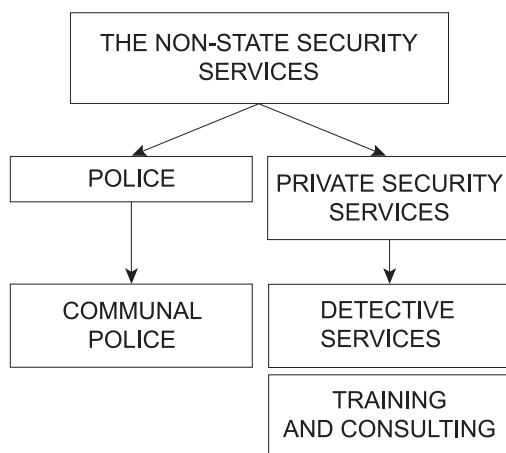


Figure 2. Structure of the non-state security services

Source: own compilation.

2.1. Police in the Slovak Republic

The fundamental document regulating norms for the activities of the European Police is the Declaration on the Police adopted by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe as Resolution 690/1979. The Declaration has no legal force, but the principles defined by the document were implemented into the legal norms for the police of the SR. The legal foundation for the activities of the Police is the Act on Police⁵. The Police of the Slovak Republic are an armed security unit which fulfills tasks associated with issues of national order, security, fight against crime, including its organized and international forms, and tasks arising for the police from the international commitments of the SR. The tasks are performed in compliance with the Act on Police.

The activity of the Police is supervised by the National Council and Government of the SR. The Police observe the Constitution, Constitution laws, laws and other generally binding legal regulations and international agreements to which the SR is committed.

⁵ *Zákon č. 171/1993 Z. z. o Policajnom zbore v znení neskorších predpisov* [The Act on Police Force of 1993].

2.1.1. Tasks of the Police

The Police Force in the SR:

- cooperates in the area of protection of human rights and freedoms, especially protection of life, health, personal freedom, safety of persons and property protection;

- detects crime and searches for offenders;

- cooperates in the area of revelation of tax avoidance, illegal financial operations and legalization of income from criminal activities;

- conducts criminal investigations;

- coordinates fights against terrorism and organized crime;

- provides personal security for the President of the Slovak Republic, Chairman of the National Council of the Slovak Republic, Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic, Chairman of the Constitutional Court of the Slovak Republic, Minister of Interior and others as defined by law or the government;

- provides protection of diplomatic missions and other objects as defined by law or the government and cooperates in the area of physical protection of nuclear facilities;

- provides protection of state borders, if not provided otherwise by special regulations;

- cooperates in the area of public order protection; if it is violated, the Police provide measures for its restoration;

- supervises safety and smoothness of traffic flow and cooperates in its management;

- reveals offenses and searches for offenders, if not provided otherwise by a special law, elucidates the offenses and negotiates them;

- conducts search for persons and objects;

- provides protection and help for witnesses in danger and for protected witnesses;

- conducts forensic expertise, and cooperates in the area of civil aviation protection⁶.

An undercover police officer is obliged to announce that he is a member of the Police verbally and by showing an official card or criminal police badge before an official intervention. He does not have to provide his name, surname and function.

⁶ J. Dworzecki, 'Korpus Policji Republiki Słowackiej. Organizacja i funkcjonowanie. Część I', *Kwartalnik Kadry Kierowniczej "Policja"*, no 2, Szcztyno 2014, pp. 75–92.

2.1.2. Competences of a police officer

A police officer is, according to the Act on Police authorized especially:

- to demand explanations from a person who might contribute to the elucidation of circumstances important for the revelation of a crime or offense and to detention of the offender or culprit as well as to finding the wanted or missing people and objects;

- to ask for identity of a person if it is necessary for fulfilling the tasks assigned to the Police. The identity is disclosed by an identity document (identity card, passport, foreigner registration card). Instead of an identity document the person can demonstrate a card of a representative of the National Council of the Slovak Republic, of a Government member, of a judge, of a prosecutor, of member of the armed forces or a confirmation of a submission, loss or theft of an identity card. If the addressed person refuses to disclose their identity, a police officer is entitled to take them to the Police station with an intent to find out their identity;

- to detain a person who endangers her/his life and health or life and health of other people or property, if the person is caught when committing an offense or crime and there is a reasonable suspicion that s/he will continue breaking the law or if it is necessary for the elucidation of a matter. Further, a police officer is entitled to detain a person who is found on the crime scene immediately after the crime had been committed and there is a connection between him/her and the committed crime. Detention of a foreigner cannot exceed 30 days;

- is authorized to detain an object if it is necessary to find out the real state of the object or if a decision by a respective body is inevitable;

- is entitled to stop and inspect a vehicle. In the performance of official duties he participates in the elucidation of reasons for risks for security and smoothness of railway traffic in the area of railway routes, supervises security and smoothness of railway traffic in the area of railway routes;

- is entitled to inspect an aircraft within implementation of civil aviation security against terrorist attacks as well as to inspect people and luggage to find out whether they transport objects which might be used in a terrorist attack (e.g. firearms, stabbing weapon, cutting weapon, explosives, explosive object or alkali);

- is entitled to inspect the passports of people crossing the borders when providing protection of state borders. In case of a suspicion of crime he is entitled to inspect a person, luggage and vehicle in cooperation with the customs office;

- is entitled to prohibit entrance to an area if it is necessary to fulfill the task. He is entitled to order everyone not to enter the area within the time specified;

- is authorized to enter premises if there is a reasonable suspicion that the life or health of a person is in danger or there is a risk of serious damage to property and the action can no longer be delayed;

— is authorized to use explosives and explosive objects when providing security service for a person, property protection, especially in the disposal of explosive systems, ammunition or within the fight against terrorism;

— is entitled to keep dangerous substances and illegal objects for the purposes of teaching, training, tests and expertise and so on.

2.1.3. Cooperation of the Police with other services

The Police Force cooperates with bodies of public power, the armed forces, the armed security forces, armed units, Slovak information service, legal entities and persons, and with bodies of territorial self-government, especially when setting priorities for crime prevention, security public property protection and focus on the fight against crime. The Police of the Slovak Republic cooperate with other security forces of the SR, especially with:

- Communal Police;
- corps of the Prison and Court Guard;
- Military Police;
- Administration of Customs;
- Organization of the Police.

The Police are subordinate to the Minister of Interior of the Slovak Republic. The Police Forces are divided into criminal police, financial police, riot police, traffic police, objects protection, immigration police, customs police, special units, protection of particular people and inspection services. An organizational element of the Police is also a unit for forensic activities and expertise. The services of the Police are realized within offices of the Police which are founded and canceled by the Minister. He determines the scope of their activities and the internal structure. The offices of the Police are organized primarily according to the organization of courts. The Minister establishes special units that are active in the country and detect and investigate crimes in the field that is within the authority of the Special Court in compliance with respective laws. The services and offices of the Police are governed by the President of the Police Force.

On 31 August 2014, the Slovakian Police had the following structure:

- overall number of the PF — 22,283 employees;
- prison and court police, criminal police (PCP) — 4,866 employees;
- riot police (ARP) — 8,460 employees;
- customs and immigration police (CIP) — 2,128 employees;
- traffic police (TP) — 1,846 employees;
- other — 4,983 employees.

Organization of the Police of the SR is presented in Figure 3.

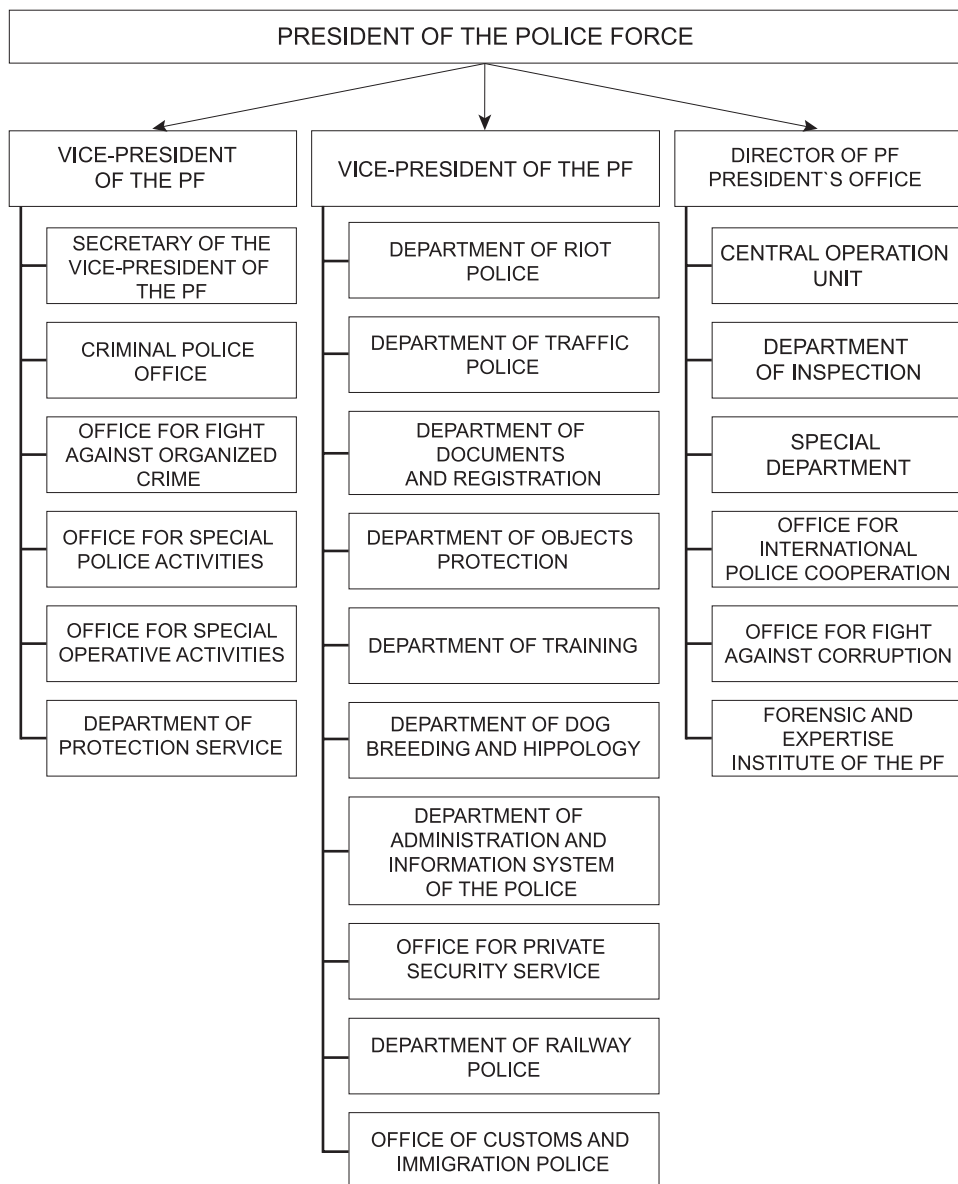


Figure 3. Organization of the Police of the SR

Source: own compilation.

2.3. Development of criminal activity in the Slovak Republic

The state of criminal activities is the number of committed crimes as well as people who committed those crimes in the SR within a specified period, and it is represented by absolute values. The official statistics concerning the SR show the registered crime rate which varies considerably from the actual crime rate. The real crime rate differs within particular types of crime.

The status and dynamics of crime is shown in Tables 1–3 and Figures 4–5.

Table 1. The state of the registered crime rate in the SR and rate of the solved crimes

Year	Crime rate	Solved crimes	Percent
1989	46,332	40,723	87.77
1990	69,827	40,288	57.66
1991	83,418	43,863	49.76
1992	104,947	44,760	42.6
1993	146,139	52,981	36.26
1994	137,712	51,327	37.27
1995	114,579	49,153	42.9
1996	99,402	45,116	45.39
1997	92,395	43,642	47.23
1998	93,859	45,658	48.65
1999	94,016	47,067	50.06
2000	88,817	47,107	53.04
2001	93,053	50,818	54.61
2002	107,373	55,212	51.42
2003	111,957	56,451	50.04
2004	131,244	56,723	43.22
2005	123,563	60,093	48.63
2006	115,152	53,245	46.24
2007	110,802	45,969	41.49
2008	104,758	45,680	43.61
2009	104,905	49,453	47.15
2010	95,252	46,725	40.05
2011	85,696	43,309	50.54

Source: Statistical Yearbook of the Slovak Republic 2011.

Table 2. Development of the registered types of crime in the SR

Year	Total crime rate	Property crimes	Economic crimes	Crimes of violence	Vice crimes	Drug crimes	Other crimes
1989	46332	16769	6404	6260	3543	—	13356
1990	69827	44802	3939	8554	1037	—	11495
1991	83418	64293	3461	8791	658	—	6215
1992	104947	80089	5105	8867	612	—	10273
1993	144730	114214	8597	9617	589	35	11688
1994	136758	107657	7140	9752	703	88	11412
1995	113668	80845	8560	19806	754	606	12097
1996	98557	67305	6400	11202	823	732	12095
1997	92395	62411	4716	11564	769	967	11968
1998	93859	63130	4913	12427	669	520	12200
1999	94017	60275	5902	13531	721	453	13135
2000	88821	52923	6686	13459	783	940	14030
2001	93058	54022	7448	14450	756	1036	15346
2002	107419	57543	14448	15020	773	1114	18521
2003	111957	61034	14863	13724	835	1307	20194
2004	131244	77098	16414	13692	875	1270	21895
2005	123558	65304	19244	12866	794	1678	23672
2006	115152	63077	19168	10858	798	1732	19519
2007	110802	60045	17895	9620	805	2159	14125
2008	104758	54754	16974	9030	840	2285	13034
2009	104905	52399	19518	8337	791	2459	13732
2010	95252	47408	16781	7532	678	1762	13568
2011	85696	43309	16625	6524	949	2300	12281

Source: Statistical Yearbook of the Slovak Republic 2011.

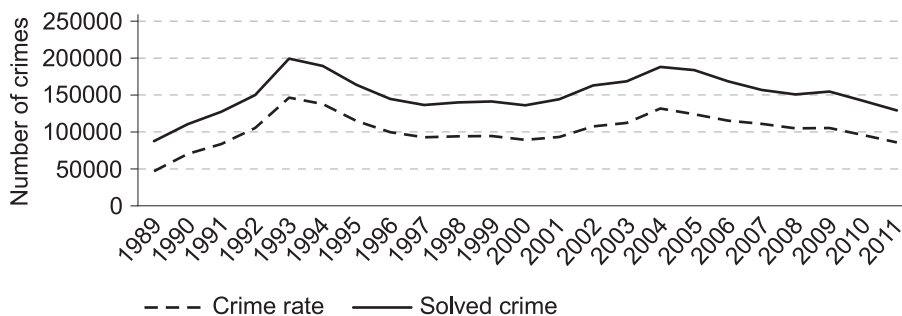


Figure 4. Development of the solved crime rate in the SR

Source: the author.

The level of criminal activity is calculated based on the number of crimes committed within a specified term in a specified territory with regard to the total population. The level of crime is demonstrated as a coefficient per 100,000 citizens. The coefficient is calculated by multiplying the crime rate by 100, divided by the number of citizens. To comprehend the crime rate as accurately as possible it is necessary to single out children from the population (younger than 14) and consider only the population that is involved in criminal activities⁷.

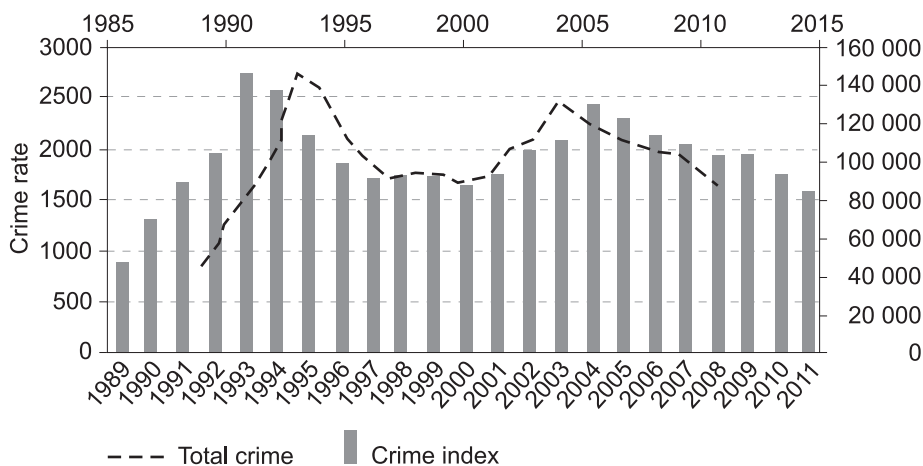


Figure 5. Index of the registered crime rate per 100,000 citizens

Source: created by the author.

⁷ L. Kittel, 'Vzťah bezpečnosti a prevencie kriminality na miestnej a regionálnej úrovni', [in:] *Prevencia kriminality na miestnej a regionálnej úrovni, medzinárodný seminár*, Žilina 2009, p. 263.

To achieve better quality and accuracy of crime rate representation, it is recommended to apply level indicators, i.e. crime rate index. The crime rate index is the ratio between the absolute number of crimes and the total number of people in the population. It represents the number of crimes per 100,000 citizens.

Table 3. Index of the registered crime rate per 100,000 citizens in the SR

Year	Crime rate	Crime rate index
1989	46332	877
1990	69827	1317
1991	83418	1665
1992	104947	1977
1993	146139	2738
1994	137712	2571
1995	114579	2135
1996	99402	1848
1997	92395	1715
1998	93859	1739
1999	94016	1743
2000	88817	1644
2001	93053	1730
2002	107373	1996
2003	111893	2078
2004	131244	2437
2005	123563	2292
2006	115152	2138
2007	110802	2052
2008	104758	1936
2009	104905	1934
2010	95252	1764
2011	85696	1587

Source: Statistical Yearbook of the Slovak Republic 2011.

The structure of criminal activity shows the ratio between particular types and groups of crime to the total number of all crimes committed within a specified period in a specified territory.

2.3.1. The structure of overall criminal activity in SR

The structure of criminal activity in the SR comprises the following types of crime:

- property crime;
- economic crime;
- crimes of violence;
- vice crime;
- drug crime;
- other crimes that do not fit the above categories.

A credible characteristic of the crime rate is its structure. It reflects changes over recent decades which the general public views as alarming and threats to the lives of citizens, health, property, personal freedom and other material and intellectual values.

2.4. Educational system of the Police

The education of police officers follows the national education policy in the field of training of police officers and their professional training. There is an educational system for police officers established by the Ministry of Interior consisting of:

- Stredná odborná škola Policajného zboru Bratislava (Vocational School of the Police in Bratislava);
- Stredná odborná škola Policajného zboru Košice (Vocational School of the Police in Košice);
- Stredná odborná škola Policajného zboru Pezinok (Vocational School of the Police in Pezinok);
- Akadémia Policajného zboru v Bratislave (Police Academy in Bratislava).

In the area of further education of police officers in addition to departmental police schools there is also education and training for special activities provided. Further education of police officers is organized through non-departmental educational institutions and is provided through projects that are co-financed with the EU.

The criteria for professional education include admission to the office of member of the Police. A citizen of the Slovak Republic older than 18 who applies for the admission can become member of the Police if he:

- has a clean criminal record. A person does not meet the requirements if he has been sentenced, convicted or imprisoned for an intentional crime. It is necessary to submit a criminal record certificate during the selection procedure, and the criminal record certificate is procured by the office of the PF that organizes the selection procedure.

— is reliable. A person is not considered to be reliable if he apparently consumes alcoholic beverages, drugs, psychotropic substances or products that can result in dependence.

— has acquired general education adequate to the function s/he shall be assigned. The required qualification is to finish high school with school exit examinations or complete a university program.

— is in good physical and mental health which is necessary for job performance. This is confirmed through tests of physical fitness and psychological and medical check-ups in the specialized facilities of the Ministry of Interior of the SR (each applicant has to be able to swim).

— speaks the national language. The citizen demonstrates a good command of state language during tests conducted in the specialized facilities of the Ministry of Interior of the SR.

— has permanent residence in the Slovak Republic.

— is not member of a political party or a political movement on the date of admission to the civil office in the Police.

— is able to perform legal acts to their full extent.

— has stopped performing activities that are forbidden in compliance with the Act on Private Security Services.

Stredná odborná škola Policajného zboru Bratislava (Vocational School of the Police in Bratislava) prepares police officers at the lower ranks of the civil service in the Police. Those are police officers performing functions with a planned grade second lieutenant, lieutenant and first lieutenant in which specialized police education is required in compliance with the respective Act on State Services of Police. The school also provides further education for police officers through retraining, improvement, complementary courses designed for particular services of the Police, short-term courses, courses and training. The aim of retraining courses is career advancement, improvement courses on demand, and professional English and German courses; IT courses for users of the police information system, courses in criminology, security of road traffic transport, driving courses and others according to the educational projects.

Stredné odborné školy Policajného zboru v Pezinku a v Košiciach (Vocational Schools of the Police in Pezinok and Košice) fulfill the following tasks:

— provide basic police education. Students acquire basic knowledge and skills in the area of service in the anti-riot police, traffic police, criminology, criminal law, marksmanship and physical practice, and according to the needs of the sector in service of customs and immigration police as well.

— the general part of education includes German and English at the level that is required for the performance of police officer's job, PC work, ethics and psychology of the officer's work and management of the registry order.

— practical seminars are part of the studies. They integrate the study of several subjects. The studies are accomplished with a school exit examination consisting of practical and theoretical sections.

— the graduates are usually assigned functions at basic police offices. Later, if required by the office, they can enroll in further studies at the Stredná odborná škola Policajného zboru Bratislava — Devínska Nová Ves (Vocational School of the Police in Bratislava — Devínska Nová Ves) or at the Police Academy in Bratislava — Rača.

2.5. Police Academy

The Police Academy (PA) in Bratislava is a state university that provides education for members of the Police and other security services. The Academy was established through a legal provision of the Presidency of the National Council of the SR No. 370 of 1992. The Academy was opened in the academic year 1992/93 on 1 October 1992. The legal status of the PA arises from the Act on the Legal Code of Universities⁸. The mission of the Academy is to prepare qualified experts with a university degree for the offices of the Police, specialized facilities of the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic and other state and non-state security services; to provide further education, develop scientific knowledge in subjects of study, provide an academic degree through PhD studies, rigorous habilitation and inauguration proceedings.

2.6. Social status of police officers in the Slovak Republic

Social and professional groups live and work in particular social relationships and in specific historical situations. A man is integrated into the social system with his work activity as a representative of various professions, takes various social positions, and assumes roles of a certain level of status and prestige.

Police officers also enter into varied relationships with individuals and groups, enter into a complicated network of organized, power, social, communicative, competence, prestigious, friendly and demographic relations. In their profession, police officers gain a social status which is an expression of their relation to other professions. The social status is associated with the value system of the society, the state as a social institution, and with the process of functioning of the Police.

⁸ *Zákon o vysokých školách a o zmene a doplnení niektorých zákonov* (The Act on the Legal Code of Universities of 2002).

The social status of police officers and the activity of the Police as a whole are under permanent social supervision of the citizens of the Slovak Republic, and are perceived, judged and evaluated by them. There are probably just a few other professions whose activity is watched and evaluated this intensively.

This status also represents a social value considering the fact that the social status of the police officers is evaluated by citizens according to the system of values of the society. This means that social factors (character of social development, level of state functioning, social systems based on values etc.), sector factors (implementation of basic tasks of the Police, information about the results of Police activities, level of trustworthiness of police officers etc.), and also personal factors (abilities, competences, qualities of the police officers, their behavior in contact with the public etc.) are reflected in the evaluation.

Police officers are considered and evaluated from the point of view of the demands, expectations and suggestions as to how a police officer should act and behave. It is therefore necessary to know what the demands are (for example unrealistic–realistic, legal–illegal) and how they are fulfilled by police officers. The analysis of the opinions of citizens of the Slovak Republic as to the social status of police officers, on the influencing and determining factors, requires attention by the scientific and pedagogical departments of the sector of the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic. The prestige of the job of a police officer is expressed by the social gravity and respect which are assigned to this job by the citizens.

A questionnaire on the topic entitled “Social status and role of the Police in the opinions of the citizens of the Slovak Republic” has been designed and re-designed several times over the years in consultation with the Institute for Public Opinion Research at the Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic. Its aim is to assess the level of trust of Slovak citizens, their opinions on the activity in all basic fields of the Police, and to uncover possible factors which influence the trustworthiness of the Police and their social status.

The profession of a police officer is understood as a specific, mainly formalized set of professional activities requiring specialized training directed towards gaining optimal police competence. The prestige of the police officer profession is represented by the social appreciation of its importance, dignity, complexity and respect expressed towards the professional activity of the police. It is a social relationship of particular evaluation and appreciation of the prestigious characteristics of this profession. In connection with the evaluation of the prestige of the profession of a police officer, it has been shown, according to research conducted on the population of the Slovak Republic, that citizens value such indicators of prestige of the occupation which are associated with the basic duties of the Police. Results and effects of their implementation in the society have direct and everyday influence on the citizens. These are mainly duties associated with crime control, ensuring public order, protection of people and property, fight against organized crime, and investigation of crimes. It has been shown that a functioning indicator

of prestige of the occupation of a police officer is how his activity serves the public, how it increases the sense of safety, and to what extent it represents a guarantee of the development of the rule of law and the promotion of a democratic society. At the same time, it confirms the rightfulness of the strategic orientation of the Police to serve the public. The character of contemporary social development continuously elicits needs for the existence of internal order and safety which are perceived by citizens as an organic part of their life, and they wish these needs to be satisfied by the Police.

It has been shown that the social importance, characteristic features of the occupation of the police officer, and conditions in which the work is performed are differently valued. However, the basic duties and activities associated with this profession (protection of people and property, ensuring public order, ensuring fluency and safety of traffic, investigation of crime, fight against ordinary and organized crime) are preferred by the citizens equally without regard to their opinion on the level of prestige of the job of a police officer. This means that the level of prestige of the occupation of a police officer is directly proportional to the aforementioned "action" activities. These activities represent the features which are most valued by the citizens. A high correlation of the prestige of the occupation of a police officer with trustworthiness of the Police confirms that the basic duties and activities of the Police, reliability of their implementation, and the level of citizens' satisfaction with them, have a substantial impact not only on the trustworthiness of the Police but also on the level of the prestige of the occupation of a police officer.

In conclusion, it is necessary to state that the prestige of the occupation of a police officer was examined by the public opinion research, and is shown to be moderately low in Slovak society. Citizens evaluate positively such signs of prestige which express necessity, physical and psychological difficulty, responsibility of the Police, but also its interest, social securities and comforts which are guaranteed by this occupation. The level of professional qualifications and readiness of police officers, their authority in keeping the rules of discipline and professional morality, are evaluated in a negative way. These are the signs of the occupation of a police officer which are perceived by the citizens mainly during immediate contact with police officers and which have the biggest impact on the level of communication, interaction, behavior and relations to the citizens.

According to the citizens of the Slovak Republic, the real level of prestige of the profession of a police officer is evaluated as an occupation which is interesting, requires high responsibility, is mentally and physically demanding, and provides significant social and existential security for the officers. Dignity, authority, respect and regard of the citizens for the occupation of a police officer is low, and it is probably related to lower professional qualifications, readiness of the police officers, and very low level of keeping the discipline and rules of professional ethics. With a very high probability, it can be concluded that negatively evaluated

signs significantly decrease the overall level of prestige of a police officer in our society. This applies primarily to the discipline and professional ethics of police officers; these are the elements which are also negatively evaluated by those citizens who have a positive overall opinion on police officers.

The prestige of the occupation of a police officer is to some extent relatively stable. It is a social phenomenon which is evolving and can also have certain stages of development and is dependent upon various social factors. It is a specific transfer of the impact of the social environment, its impact on subjective evaluation of individual citizens, social communities and groups. Knowledge of these factors and the level of their impact on the prestige of the occupation of a police officer including the evaluation of the police profession by police officers, should become the subject of further research dealing with this topic.

3. Evaluation and information sources of citizens concerning the Police in the selected electronic media

One of the significant factors influencing trust in the Police is the extent of citizens' information on the results of the work of the Police. The source, relevance of this information, content and focus can considerably influence opinions and attitudes of citizens towards the Police.

The relationships between the media, society and individuals are complex, and analyzing the impact of media communication on society is a subject of ongoing debate. The intricacy of this problem does not allow clear conclusions to be made. Analyzing the media–society relationship is not a matter of theory, as several sciences provide alternative clarifications. It is obvious that the entire culture is affected by the processes of mass communication. Many mass media authors play an important role in modern society while disseminating propaganda and influencing public opinion. It is determined by the media which information is reflected by the public and the media can “legitimize” non-traditional opinions and attitudes — any idea seems to be more trustworthy when presented in the media. The media participate in establishing the attention hierarchy, importance and prestige of people and institutions. What is not presented by the media is not reflected by the public, is non-existent for the public, even though it deserves public attention. For these and other reasons — the media are a message themselves — they play an important role in affecting public opinion and their importance is supposed to increase as they influence dispersed collectives in an efficient way. All organizations, especially those controlled by the public, form an image which is a survival strategy in a given society. Cooperation and proper communication with the public and with the media that mediate the information to the public

can influence the perception of the organization by the public. Even though the omnipotence of the mass media has been disproved by empirical research, their influence on the public opinion is to be considered and it will be intensified as a result of electronic media development.

Therefore, within the concept of improvement of trust in the Police there is the need for objective knowledge and information on issues associated with the Police as well as the need for content analysis of the information on the Police presented in electronic media.

Most of respondents are interested in information on the Police, and there are more respondents who think that the information is scarce. Citizens are aware of the differences in impartiality degree of particular media. From their point of view information on the Police is objective and unbiased. In most cases (three quarters) the source of information is television. However, personal knowledge and experience or information from relatives are decisive in the process of own opinion forming and evaluating the trustworthiness of the Police. The information provided by the media is less relevant.

The current results indicate that perception of personal or mediated contact with the Police as well as the extent of attention given, perceptions of objectivity and seriousness of information on the Police provided by the electronic media, influence considerably trustworthiness and prestige evaluation conducted by the public.

The results of the content (qualitative and quantitative) analysis of contributions focusing on issues associated with the Police and presented by electronic media, have pointed to the more or less apparent differences in the approaches of particular media under examination and how the Police and its members are presented. Nevertheless, the applied features of the qualitative analysis indicate that generally the presentation can be considered objective, unbiased, crucial and distant from reality.

The way we see the issue is that the media do not distort reality. They just provide an image of a distorted value system within our society. It is a society in which organized crime, corruption and preferential treatment permeate the political, economic and social sphere of state structures. It is beyond question that most members of the Police honestly and responsibly perform their mission, respect the law, and act in compliance with it. However, negative phenomena also permeate the structure of the Police Force, not necessarily in the way they are presented, but seeing the phenomena itself is the cause of fragile trust and insufficient prestige of the Police.

To put it metaphorically, the voice of the public when referring to the Police is essential, even more important than the results of the content analysis of references to the Police. Responses of citizens confirm that most of our public demand provision of more comprehensive information on the Police and its members.

Conclusion

Security at both regional and local level necessitates not only cooperation between individual elements of the Police. This paper should highlight the necessity for cooperation between the academia and the Police. Currently, when activities and aims of terrorists are unpredictable, integration of all interested security elements as well as academia are necessary for the design of corresponding measures that utilize knowledge of science and practice. Close cooperation with professional associations in the field of private security proved most helpful, especially with the Slovak chamber of private security, which associates businesses operating in the field of private security.

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POLICING IN THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC.
THE ORGANIZATION AND CURRENT PROBLEMS OF POLICE WORK

Summary

The Police perform one of the most important roles within the modern society from the view-point of providing and maintaining peace, order and security. In the Slovak Republic the Police have been in existence for a relatively short time, but legislation regulating their activities and structure has already undergone several reforms. This treatise contains information regarding the structure and tasks of the Police of the Slovak Republic, discusses the development of criminality within the Slovak Republic, and analyses the current social status of the Police.

Keywords: Police Force, Slovak Republic, security.

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