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# COMMENTARY



Only an engaging Macedonian police can  
develop a strong community

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The police as a state apparatus is designed to serve to its citizens hence it's truly important to nurture a healthy relationship between the police and the citizens in order to develop a cohesive community. Although lately there seems to be a dangerous trend of law enforcement agencies exercising militarized style policing still there are some positive and innovative examples showing how loyalty can be achieved.

The recently finished European championship in football in Paris apart from the great football presented some creative ways how police forces can handle crowds. An event<sup>1</sup> which took place inside a tunnel road in Bordeaux showed this into practice. Irish fans blocked a tunnel road in Bordeaux and they were chanting fan songs. The police didn't use any kind of excessive force.

1 "Irish football fans take part in 'chant battle' with French police", Telegraph, accessed 18.07.2016, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/06/19/irish-football-fans-take-part-in-chant-battle-with-french-police/>

Instead, they chose a rarely seen approach of handling the situation by singing that the fans need to leave the tunnel and go home which resulted with success. The literature on policing talks a lot about the Japanese model of community policing singling it out as a success story. As Rake<sup>2</sup> puts it "They (The police and the citizens) are in fact full partners in a proactive program to prevent crime whenever possible and eradicate it whenever necessary". Rake describes that Japan's success is rooted in three areas: working with the method of deployment which means using bicycles to patrol different neighborhoods, police officers providing support

2 Douglas E. Rake "Crime Control and Police-Community Relations: A Cross-Cultural Comparison of Tokyo, Japan, and Santa Ana, California" *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 494, Sage Publications (Nov 1987) p.150, accessed at 23.07.2016, available at <http://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/1045715.pdf>

to civilian activists through very active interaction and last "nonenforcement activities" that deal with counseling, receiving complaints etc.

Both examples serve as a glimpse of how interaction between police and citizens can lead to success and what both have in common is the citizens' oriented approach exercised through community policing methods.

Macedonia's police in this context are not hundred percent oriented nor committed as a community police service. Over the past years, Macedonian police was often times criticized by civil society activists about the manner it handles certain police actions. Lately public had negative comments because of using excessive force towards protesters. The latest demonstration of police power was presented to the student protesters

one month ago<sup>3</sup>.

Macedonia's police would be much more effective if it changes its course to fully community policing. Still it is worth mentioning that community policing is something that its present in the projects of the Ministry of Interior. Analytica's research<sup>4</sup> on the topic shows that initiatives like Centers for Prevention, Citizens Advisory Groups, Clubs for Prevention and Local Prevention Councils do exist in some municipalities across country's capital Skopje. The problem is that these bodies hold meetings two to three times a year. This is far from enough in order to effectively tackle local security related issues. Another problem in establishing the community policing model in Macedonia is the citizens non-engagement in local security

3 "Специјалци ги исфрлија студентите од СПУКМ (Police officers expelled students out of SPUKM)", Radio Slobodna Evropa, accessed 25.07.2016, <http://www.slobodnaevropa.mk/a/27831418.html>

4 Selimi K. and Bogdanovski A. Community Policing Model in Skopje – From idea to reality 2015 Skopje available at [http://www.analyticamk.org/images/news/2015/11/Analitika\\_Web\\_Ang\\_f8c10.pdf](http://www.analyticamk.org/images/news/2015/11/Analitika_Web_Ang_f8c10.pdf)

affairs. For example Analytica's research reveals that 91% of the residents in Skopje don't know their regional police officer.

However, there are good signs of modernization. The Police Development Strategy<sup>5</sup> published in January 2016 is focused on a 4 year period where the police should modernize by using contemporary methods in their work. This strategy looks to strengthen the confidence citizens have by publishing local and regional crime data so that residents can have an oversight in the police work. Allocating budget for Community policing and promoting the police of-

ficer's activities are also one of the goals set to increase the public's awareness.

Macedonia can improve its policing if the community policing infrastructure that is somewhat present throughout the country gets a fresh boost. Hopefully the newly adopted police de-

velopment strategy can provide this. The current situation requires the role of the police officer to be visible, approachable and effective. A more engaging police officers – citizens relationship is definitely the key to community oriented police. ●



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<sup>5</sup> Business and Strategies Europe Consortium, Police Development Strategy 2016-2020, accessed 20.07.2016, [http://mvr.gov.mk/Upload/Editor\\_Upload/publikacii%20pdf/Police%20Development%20Strategy%202016-2020%20\(1\).pdf](http://mvr.gov.mk/Upload/Editor_Upload/publikacii%20pdf/Police%20Development%20Strategy%202016-2020%20(1).pdf)