Concept Paper on
OSCE Western European Regional Police Experts Meeting on Community
Policing

Hofburg Congress Centre Heldenplatz
Vienna, Austria
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Many OSCE States have undertaken reforms with the goal of changing the way the police forces operate - from a control function to a service oriented approach. Community policing is part of this approach. While the importance of community policing is widely recognised, exactly what is meant by it is not always clear. The concept or framework also seems to vary from country to country.

One of the purposes of this meeting is to have a better understanding as to how community policing is implemented in the OSCE States and eventually to develop a common OSCE framework of community policing, which is a new format for policing in many OSCE participating States. Another goal is to discuss the best practices and lessons learned during the implementation of community policing programmes.

The aims of the meeting are the following:

- To discuss the concept and characteristics of community policing;
- To review country-related examples of how community policing can be and are implemented in practice;
- To focus on the role of community policing in building confidence in minority communities (Roma/Sinti/Travellers and others) with reference to previous experiences and lessons learned.

The intention is to develop a free-flowing discussion out of which recommendations to the OSCE and its participating States may emerge.

Session 1: Community Policing: The Concept And its Characteristics (Delivery of Service, Engaging With the Public, Accountability, Transparency, Benefits of Community Policing)

The first session of the meeting will explore the reason and rationale of changing policing ideology and including a discussion about the central ideas of community policing. Citizen input and public involvement, broad functional responsibilities of working in co-operation with other public administrations, and equitable service for all are some of the basic components of community policing. The discussion will highlight the benefits to be derived from community policing – such as increased transparency, accountability, confidence, trust and partnership.

The role of community policing as an integral part of policing in a democratic society ("democratic policing") will be explored. The particular experiences of transitional societies in introducing community policing could be discussed with this regard.

Possible discussion topics of this session could be:

- What is community policing: (There is no universally-applicable set of principles and elements but what are the common elements that can be identified regarding community policing?)
- What are the possible benefits derived from community policing?
- From mutual trust to increased transparency to accountability: safeguards for the public
- What lessons can be learned from the countries where community policing has been initiated?
- What are the perceived weaknesses and obstacles of community policing?
- Why is community policing not a panacea to all police-related issues?
- What are the role and responsibilities of the community in community policing?
- A comprehensive strategy: the concept of community policing as an integral part of a comprehensive police reform concept
- The importance of the support from political key actors

2. Implementing community policing in practice

The second session will examine the translation of the concept of community policing into action. Practical ways of implementing the policy will be explored taking into account one of the main characteristics of community policing – its problem solving approach. The session will emphasise the need for increased face-to-face interactions between police and (community) population, and the prevention of crime in co-operation with citizens. In order to promote the increase of mutual recognition, identification, responsibility and accountability, community policing as a concept demands establishing a stronger geographical focus – i.e. strong bonds between police officers and neighbourhoods.

This session could also include a discussion of how community policing tactics are different, stressing that police should engage in positive interactions whenever possible. The benefits of creating partnerships between police, other (state) agencies, civil society and citizens, who are critical in identifying and solving problems, will be demonstrated by way of example. The discussion could stress that the problem solving approach may also assist in prevention of future incidents.

The discussion on management practices will focus on the organisational culture and its values, training and mentoring of new employees, as well as performance appraisals, and how all of these factors influence the quality of service, which is essential to community policing.

Possible discussion topics for this session could be:
- What are the elements of translating community policing philosophy into action?
- What other tactics are needed to translate strategy into actions?
- What is meant by "problem solving approach"?
- What partnerships with other (State and civil) institutions are needed?

- How to introduce "face-to-face interactions" and "strong links between police and neighbourhoods" – what does this mean in practice?
- How do communities support community policing?
- How is NGO support for community policing captured?

3. Building confidence in minority communities: special focus on Roma/Sinti/Travellers, experiences, challenges and lessons learned

The particular challenges of community policing in multi-ethnic societies will be highlighted through sharing of experiences and lessons learned. While community policing is not a replacement or synonym with multi-ethnic policing, the need to increase the participation of minorities in the police forces and the need to ensure adequate gender balance remains important. Also, the need for police officers to speak the language of the communities and be aware of their needs.

Possible discussion topics for this session could be:
- The role of community policing in conflict/crime prevention
- The importance of the composition of the police forces with a view to creating trust and confidence in post-conflict and crisis situations
- Proper recruitment, education and continuous training for police officers: necessary policies