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SUCCESS STORIES

Security Partnership “SECURITY.TOGETHER in Austria” – A national policing strategy

Police organisations are required to present sustainable security initiatives, on the one hand to reduce crime rates, and on the other hand to increase the sense of security among the population. “Community policing” is an internationally approved concept to build up citizen participation to successfully counteract the development of crime and support the feeling of security. In that context, the production of security must elaborate security concepts that involve citizens, government and private institutions in communal partnerships.

This principle is reflected in the security partnership of the initiative “SECURITY.TOGETHER in Austria”. Its main objective is to institutionalise the dialogue between citizens and the police on a local level, and to jointly shape public security in the immediate environment of citizens. In this sense, mutual trust and cooperation are fundamental in security partnerships to work out solutions for local and regional security problems.

In “community policing” daily police work must follow new work processes, and new internal and external police structures have to be adopted to guarantee problem-oriented police work (Goldstein 1990). In Austria, stakeholders take on the following roles in the so-called “Security Forum”:

- Security Officers
- Security Coordinators
- Security Partners and
- Security Municipal Councillors

Security Officers and Security Coordinators within the police:

Appointing clear roles in the “Security Forum” shall guarantee clear responsibilities of citizens, private and public organisations, and officers at local police stations in the routine of standardised processes. Within the police, so-called **Security Officers** are deployed at local police stations, and **Security Coordinators** are deployed at police command posts on a city- or district level. Together with the population and civil society they resolve regional security matters, which are not limited to the responsibility of the police. Security officers are confronted with security issues raised by **Security Partners** who are nominated in the civil society. With the guidance of the police they analyse security issues (such as insecurity in a park, where people are molested by youths under the influence of alcohol) and together plan a process to resolve the problem. For instance, working groups shall be initiated including **Security Partners** and representatives of respective private and public entities such as the local authorities or youth welfare institutions. The police

are responsible for coordinating the cooperation and exchange of all parties involved to arrive at results that are supported by all stakeholders and to be implemented according to expertise in the Security Forum. In addition to approved methods of communication such as panel discussions and personal meetings in thematic platforms, also social media such as Facebook shall be employed as a key element of community policing in Austria.

Security Coordinators function as the link between the police and the population. However, they also take responsibility within the police as coordinators and have to avert overlaps and guarantee synergy effects between Security Officers at local police stations. They also establish contact with people and local authorities, participate in public discussions and public events, and coordinate project-related activities in their district. Their regional expertise and their personal contacts with other stakeholders enable them to better coordinate and implement crime prevention measures on a local level. Employment of Security Coordinators and clear job descriptions for this area of activity are considered a commitment by the police to implement “community policing”.

Security Partners

Citizen participation means voluntary contribution by citizens in policy making and decision processes. The security partnership “SECURITY.TOGETHER in Austria” offers every citizen opportunities to voluntarily participate as so-called **Security Partner** in transparent and target-group related preventive activities. As “sensors” of security issues in the population, Security Partners are private individuals who are interested in developing security concepts in cooperation with the police. They act at the interface between the people and the police, and also reach out to other private or public organisations in the population. Regular contacts and exchange of information creates basic trust between the police and civil society. Security Partners can therefore serve as multipliers and point out security-related concerns to the Security Officer at the police and distribute information about preventive measures by the police to their fellow citizens. Security Partners must not receive orders from authorities, nor carry out any legal acts reserved to the police. The police are still in charge of “preventing dangerous attacks upon life, health, freedom and property”. Yet, the transfer of information at events for interested citizens is permitted. However, the principle of *ex officio crime* applies if Security Partners submit information about criminal offences to the police, as the police has a statutory monopoly on the use of force but no monopoly on public order management. No parallel structures such as establishing private group patrols are allowed.

Specific Security Municipal Councillors are appointed by the Mayor and the Municipal Council and act as interfaces between the local police stations and the municipalities.

Short-term and long-term training measures are in place to guarantee the sustainable implementation of the security partnership „SECURITY.TOGETHER in Austria“ in daily community-oriented police work. Next to the principles of prevention in “community policing”, the training covers legal education and provides police officers with skills in communication, moderation, conflict solving and prevention of corruption. Training sessions are integrated in all basic training programmes and continuous education measures offered by the Security Academy, the central educational facility of the Ministry of the Interior.

Literature:

Goldstein H. (1990): Problem-Oriented Policing. Temple University Press. Philadelphia.