



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
Mission to Montenegro

Main findings & summary only

**AN OSCE MISSION TO MONTENEGRO
REPORT ON
POLICE PERCEPTIONS AND POLICE REFORM
IN
MONTENEGRO 2010**

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MAIN FINDINGS

The police perception report published in 2004 and the findings from the OSCE assessment and recommendations report published in 2006 can be viewed as a baseline from which to judge the progress of police reform in Montenegro. These reports documented a police force that was structurally isolated from other agencies of law, from local government institutions and from civil society. It found an organization prone to claims of political interference that was seen to be ineffective, inefficient and ill-fitted for the purpose of shepherding Montenegro through to liberal democratic standards of governance. Moreover the police perception survey detailed a hierarchical police force populated by rank and file officers with low morale and job satisfaction that felt distant from middle and senior management.

The survey findings presented here attest to transformations have been implemented since 2006. Encountering the police in 2010 one cannot help but realise that police reform is immediately visible. Political affiliations are no longer on display on the walls of police stations. Police are constitutionally separate from the Ministry of Interior. The Ombudsman office and the Council for Civil Control of the Police have been created to support the work of Internal Affairs to hold police to account. Internal regulations and new working practices have been adopted to counter corruption, bribe taking and unethical behaviour. The police spokesperson operates a website, holds press conferences, provides training and works on police-media relations. In-service training has resulted in a more professional attitude and a deep knowledge among middle and senior management concerning the means and ends of the reform process. A high-tech call centre is being piloted in Podgorica. Community policing has been adopted as a means of reform. Montenegro's borders are secured by police officers. The experience of working with other police services and with international organizations has altered the mindset of police at all ranks to be more positive towards change. The construction of a forensics laboratory, the creation of a police academy and the presence of police officers imbued with liberal values are but a few of the manifestations of this change. Perceptions about reform have also changed dramatically. This was perhaps symbolised most potently by the Head of Human Resources who, at interview, described the architecture of the new Police HQ building in Podgorica in terms of it embodying the liberal principles aspired to by the Directorate.

On the other hand more engrained aspects of policing culture in Montenegro do not seem to have changed. While middle and senior ranking officers have become more adept at speaking the 'language of reform', rank and file morale remains low. It would appear that reform created expectations that have not been met by the reform process. Only a tiny percentage of police officers have been fully trained at the Academy – the majority of police remain products of short in-service training courses. The Police Directorate is, as its predecessor the Ministry was, a top-down organization where employees are expected to obey without question. The research found that the police trade union, established during the early reform period, has not gained the full confidence of its members. Media accusations of political interference and of police links with organized crime persist. Relations with marginalized ethnic groups such as Roma remain problematic. This was evident in the manner by which Roma and Gypsy communities were spoken about at interview as constituting a 'different' security problem from other inhabitants of Montenegro. Vestiges of institutional isolation are discernible between police and civil society and between police and local municipalities run by opposition parties. Furthermore, severe budgetary limitations pose a challenge for police management to comply with the expectations of the international community.

The most dominant perception found by this survey is that the Police Directorate considers itself to be a normatively reformed institution, working hard to limit *inefficiencies* that it has identified. As an institution, it perceives itself limited in its effectiveness merely by financial shortcomings. For the participants at interview, police reform is almost accomplished. Most interviewees agreed on a figure of 3 or 3+ when asked to place the progress of reform on a scale of one to five. This perception implies that if the public is shown to be not satisfied with police work it is due to the lack of political will to pass appropriate legislation or due to wider structural economic reasons. Among rank and file, the perception is that if police were adequately equipped, provided with more in-service training and better paid then reform would be complete. The perception among more senior managers is that that police reform will progress to point four on the scale once systemization is finalized and elements of the organizational re-structuring are completed.

In each of the reform areas under survey issues arose which provides insight into the attitudes of Police Directorate employees to reform. It was clear that the Montenegrin police have come to a crossroads of reform and that important decisions need to be taken regarding the future. At the heart of the Montenegrin Police Directorate is a struggle over ever diminishing resources. A sense of proprietorship was evincible when police spoke about resources they had won during the early period of reform. At the Forensics centre, a sense of proprietorship over the forensic facilities was found which limits inter agency cooperation. At the Police Academy the opposite perception was recorded. Here, there was a sense that in order to evolve, the Academy needed to look beyond the police and engage with other law enforcement agencies. Uniform police are aiming to build public relations by adopting community policing as a vanguard strategy externally but a lack of coherence between their goals and the work of criminal investigators creates an intelligence gap. This intelligence gap is, arguably wherein public dissatisfaction can be found and organized crime profits. Moreover uniform police appear to be highly selective when it comes to community policing, and have not engaged with all communities equally. Criminal police are wary of losing autonomy to the Prosecutors office. Administration departments consider that exact job descriptions, new terms of employment and tighter regulations will complete reform. This solution alienates rank and file police who feel that reform has resulted in an increased workload and a decrease in pay and conditions. As an outsider visiting the Police Directorate, one gets the sense of an organization rife with internal conflict. How this lack of coherence affects its relationship externally will only be discernible when the results presented here are compared and contrasted to public satisfaction surveys.

SUMMING UP POLICE PERCEPTIONS

In order to discuss the findings we shall return to the four main research questions concerning police reform: its purpose; its progress; its effectiveness; and its future.

A What is the purpose of police reform?

Police at all ranks perceive police reform to be a process that leads to a more effective, efficient and internationally acceptable police institution. All interviewees were willing to acknowledge the distinction between the old police and the new police. The new police is perceived to be coeval to the independence of Montenegro and an important element of the state's aspirations to become a member of the European Union. At interview participants did not exhibit negative opinions regarding the *normative* aspects of this quest. Everyone wanted to work in a liberal democratic police force. Everyone accepted the values associated with police reform and were confident that institutional structures erected to uphold these values were satisfactory. Further, when speaking about reform, there was an expectation that reform leads to an institution that is respected and that this respect in turns increases one's job satisfaction. Thus the normative aspects of reform are taken for granted and considered accomplished. Human rights, community policing, ethical standards of behaviour therefore did not emerge as issues during the survey. The assumption is that these matters are resolved. It was the *pragmatics* of reform that most concerned those at the employees of the Police Directorate.

Economic recession, 'downsizing' and systematization that have become the concepts most firmly associated with police reform. Reform therefore is now more about rationalization than with human rights, democratization and de-politicization. In all of the interviews held only once did any member of the Directorate mention the term human rights. The rule of law was only mentioned in terms of its applicability to systemization. Community policing was seen solely in the light of intelligence gathering and publicity and not as a long-term strategy of legitimacy and reciprocal trust with civil society. The independence of the Police Directorate from the Ministry of Interior and the fact that public buildings do not display political symbols is seen to mean that de-politicization has been accomplished.

All that's left are a few 'bad apples': officers who have not subsumed the new values and expectations. These (older) officers were invariably referred to as obstacles to reform that will be demoted or dismissed. Police can readily draw upon statistics to prove this point. The Ombudsman's office, for instance, received only 25 complaints about the police in 2009— all but

one of which were categorised as either frivolous or rectifiable internally. Systemization, it is believed, will institutionalize the transformation that has occurred over the last four years, and any shortcomings with regards to its relationship to the general public are due to budgetary shortcomings. The perception presented to the researcher was that the Police Directorate is a normatively reformed institution, working hard to limit inefficiencies that it has identified. It is limited in its effectiveness merely by financial shortcomings. For rank and file officers, who express positive views about the normative aspects of reform, systemization was seen in a negative light. For lower ranking employees it is perceived to be solidifying lower pay and conditions, job uncertainty and increased workload.

B *What is the progress of police reform? What is the future of reform?*

For the participants at interview, police reform is almost accomplished. Most interviewees agreed on a figure of 3 or 3+ when asked to place the progress of reform on a scale of one to five. However participants were either not willing or not able to speak about reform in its wider sense. All interviewees below senior managers only spoke about reform in functional terms, in terms of their own unit or department. This is either due to limitations imposed by senior personnel on what interviewees could say or due to the lack of consultation or education of employees on the direction and objectives of reform. There was a sense that interviewees were aggravated with the pace of reform. The fact that participants were not comfortable discussing these frustrations is evidence that the Police Directorate remains a hierarchical organization. No opinions of police reform *generally* were given, even when repeatedly asked for by the interviewer. In fact, such questions made interviewees visibly anxious.

Deleted: frustrated

All interviewees believed that for police reform to progress to a point four or higher on the scale they required more equipment, more in-service training, better uniforms, more vehicles and better pay. If the public were to exhibit dissatisfaction with police work, it was intimated, it would be due to the lack of political will to pass appropriate legislation or to wider structural economic reasons. Among rank and file, the perception is that if police were adequately equipped, provided with more in-service training and better paid then reform would be complete. The perception among more senior managers is that that police reform will progress to point four on the scale once systemization occurs and the final elements of the organizational restructuring are completed.

The perception amongst police officers is overwhelming affirmative when asked this question. Montenegrin police, it was explained to the researcher on numerous occasions, are now very close to considering themselves to be on par with their European Union counterparts. Corruption has been addressed. De-politicization has been accomplished. Structures have been put in place that address issues of transparency and accountability. Rank and file police claim to be much better at their job than they were prior to the initiation of reform. Middle management claim to be close to supervising committed, resourceful, community officers that are respectful of the needs of society. Border police claim to be familiar with border management and to be adept in so far as resources permit to prevent trafficking and illegal migration. All officers agree that the organization itself has become more acceptable to the general public and that cooperation with residents has quantitatively and qualitatively increased.

In particular, community police officers were quick to document how reform has provided a job satisfaction that did not exist prior to reform. But most officers at the beat level qualified their enthusiasm for reform and the added value it provided to their job with a keen sense of anxiety about the personal economic effects of reform. Many complained that reform meant twice as much work for much less remuneration. It remains to be seen whether such resentment is evincible in police-public relations.