Chapter 14: Police Learning Strategies

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Abstract European police cooperation needs to be underpinned by mutual understanding between the numerous police organizations that operate across the Member States. However, the very diversity of these organisations is a major factor that hinders this process. The complexity of the police activity, the importance of the protection of civil liberties and Human Rights and the demands of the operational necessity for trans-national police cooperation result in a requirement for new integrated police learning strategies to be developed and implemented. These learning strategies will impact on European police culture, on agencies learning strategies and on the resources to be allocated, as well as on the use of the new information and communications technology (ICT).

Introduction

One of the most complex activities of in contemporary societies is, undoubtedly, the policing of that society. Police activity must actively develop communities, protect citizens and ensure their security. The protection of citizens’ fundamental rights must be central to the development of this activity. The policing activity needs also to fit within the scope of the development and acknowledgment of regional, national or supranational spaces. To this end the European Union has developed several policies to implement supranational policing to provide consistent freedom, security and justice.

Following the Lisbon Treaty, the European Union, through its European Council, approved the Stockholm Programme (see chapter 2). This established an EU security policy, which tries to balance freedom of movement, promotion of security and citizens’ protection. This programme is based on certain politically established pillars, which address:

- The promotion of citizenship and protection of citizens in all European space
- The defence of citizens’ fundamental rights
- The construction of a European space of justice supporting easier access to justice for all its citizens.
This chapter explores several issues and potential tools to address them that are vital to the implementation of this policy. The key ones being:

- Mutual trust among the various European actors. This trust needs to be based on the comprehension of the different legal systems
- A rapid adoption of the various policy tools focused on citizens’ and companies’ needs
- The definition of a systematic evaluation process to supervise the implementation of the defined policy tools of the programme whilst avoiding the duplication of processes
- The reinforcement of professional networks, the creation of common manuals as well as regional projects and the sharing of good practice
- The improvement of quality, coherence and an easier application of legislative acts that regulate matters such as freedom, security and justice. In the context of judicial cooperation, the principle of mutual recognition must be applied
- A better articulation and coordination among the various European agencies. These include: Europol, Eurojust, Frontex, the European Police College (CEPOL), the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA), the future European Asylum Support Office and (EASO) the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA).

As far as the implementation of the Stockholm Programme is concerned, the training of police personnel plays an important role for the construction of a European culture in the fields of justice and policing. For the European Union, it is essential to systematically encourage all professionals - who contribute for the construction of a space of freedom, security and justice - to receive continuous professional development (CPD) and training.

From the European perspective such training needs to systematically address the European dimension of relevant issues. It also needs to be implemented through the distribution of various training products such as: common curricula; exchange programmes; electronic platforms; sharing of good practice and the constitution of communities of practice.

Given the complexity of the European context, difficulties naturally arise when we try to move police training onto a European wide footing. Such European wide police training has to face national, regional, cultural, political, social, financial, legal and organizational differences that are hard to overcome. This chapter explores what should be the European strategy for the implementation of education and training programmes targeted to systematically overcome these challenges. Such a strategy should address training needs so as to support spirit enshrined in the Stockholm Programme.