



## *What does Strategy of Community Policing bring to Roma in Serbia?*



Adoption of the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015 envisaged the role of the Ministry of Interior (MoI) in dealing with Roma community security issues, but MoI so far failed to develop any specific policy to deal with Roma security issues, within the concept of community policing. Recent Centre's research regarding Roma human security issues, underlines that fact and gives recommendations that MoI may find useful in developing its Action Plan for the application of Community Policing Strategy. The Plan is on its way and should be prepared during 2014.

In April 2013, the Government of the Republic of Serbia adopted the Strategy of Community Policing, 10 years after the Serbian police, constantly supported by donor agencies specialized in security sector reform area, has begun with pilot project of community policing at the local level. This document has confirmed principles of the

organization of policing which are conceptual and operational basis of modern police services.

The major principles are: police service should act in preventive and proactive manner and not in repressive and reactive way; police actions should focus on problem solving and work towards the causes of problems according to specific needs of citizens and communities which have formulated their priorities; it is necessary to establish relations of cooperation and trust between local communities and police.

The cooperation envisages involvement of set of actors such are local municipalities, other state authorities than MoI and civil societies in solving of security problems of citizens. The Strategy reads that „development of community policing is based on improvement of police preventive work, police organization and management, value system in police and ... stronger involvement of community in reaching higher level of safety“.

The aim is to bring police departments closer to citizens' and groups of citizens' priority security needs, as observed in their local communities i.e. - the concept of community policing is designed to help smaller societal groups whose security problems might differ from security priorities of majority of population.

### **Differences in perceptions**

The concept actually recognizes that neither the all communities and groups of citizens share the same security problems nor that priority in one community, such as the problem of drug abuse for example, is necessarily a priority problem in the other, which might face peer violence. That is why it was expected that the adequate implementation of the Strategy might improve security of vulnerable groups that often face different set of security threats and might have different experience with police than the majority of population. It should be noted that the implementation of the Strategy depends on the adoption of the Action plan which has to define duty holders, activities, time frame, expected results and necessary material resources.

As the recent public opinion, done for the MoI, reveals, trust in police and perceptions of citizens' key security problems showed stable trends in the last few years. According to the 2012 poll done by Cesid, 42% of polled citizens trust police, which is in line with the results obtained in 2011. This is a significant rise in comparison with 2008, results when only 28% of respondents said they have positive perception of police.

These surveys combined with other data such as socio-economic status, age, educational profile of respondents and other demographic characteristics give enough information to police to develop diversified approach to cater needs of different groups of citizens. However, have not offered a material to understand how members of minority groups, including national minorities, perceive their own security and contribution given by police for the improvement of their security. Research conducted by the Belgrade Centre

for Security Policy in 2012 has indicated that for example members of Bosniak and Hungarian national minorities differently perceive security threats for their groups compared to the perceptions of majority population, as they differently perceive security of majority of citizens then general population does.

### **The MoI and Security of Roma Community**

It was already noted that the MoI has a significant role in addressing security issues of Roma community during the adoption of Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015. However, the MoI has not yet developed any special policy addressing security issues of minority communities while implementing community policing concept. In the absence of any specially designed policies and measures for security issues of Roma community, it depends on regional police departments to identify needs of this population and adjust their actions in accordance to their findings. Namely, police departments have the option to include security needs of minority groups within local action plans, and are encouraged by the MoI to do so. As an illustration, the action plan for the city of Belgrade in 2012-2013 has declared as its priority to solve the problem of personal identification documents for Roma as their working priority.

The Centre for Public Policy Research has conducted a research with the aim to answer three main questions: 1. what are the main security threats for the Roma population in Serbia; 2. how Roma woman and man perceive the work of the Ministry of Interior (MoI) and the Ministry of Defense (MOD), and whether they have confidence in these institutions; and 3. what policies and measures, have these two institutions have adopted to address the specific security needs of the Roma population.

The answers to these issues were formulated based on the findings of filed work conducted in November 2013, until April 2014, in Vranje, Bujanovac, Nis, Kragujevac, Subotica and Belgrade municipality of Zemun (location Zemun Polje). There were 11 focus groups organized in all local areas, with a total of 124 participants - 57 women and 67 men. Also, there were 18 interviews conducted with representatives of the police and local stakeholders and certain information was obtained from the Ministry of Defense.

Based on the findings, recommendations are formulated for the Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Defense, particularly in terms of treatment, education, training, employment in these two key security sector institutions, as well as in relation to the establishment of measures for monitoring and reporting on Roma women and men in accordance with existing law obligations on minority representation in the state administration.

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