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Police Development Activities of the OSCE in Armenia

Introduction

The police are the most visible manifestation of government authority responsible for public security, and their performance will therefore directly influence perceptions of the government in question and how the country as a whole is run. This article, belatedly dedicated to the tenth anniversary of the OSCE Office in Yerevan, which was celebrated in 2010, strives to highlight one of the major objectives of the Office's activities during those years: helping Armenia to modernize its police service and transform it into a genuine service to the public that is run in a transparent and accountable manner.

Since independence, the Armenian police have suffered from many of the ills that plague all police structures in the former Soviet Union: a high degree of centralization and hierarchy, a deficiency in the application of human rights standards in all spheres, and a rigid educational structure that over-emphasized legal expertise while devoting little attention to practical skills and basic public order-management standards. The police also suffered from a lack of funding and access to international best practices and assistance. Far from being an impartial provider of safety and security to citizens, the police were regarded by many as an instrument and extension of governmental power. Actively and in close co-operation with the police, the OSCE has striven to address some of these problems in the knowledge that such processes take time. Changing the mentality of an entire organization is never easy and cannot be achieved overnight, especially in the field of law enforcement. In addition, it often meets with only limited success or indeed failure, even in more developed democracies, where the prerequisites for change are far more readily available in the form of a relatively well-paid, trained, and motivated workforce. In Armenia, there is the added difficulty of the continuing conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh which – if the worst comes to the worst – could lead to parts of the police force being deployed in a military role. This naturally influences the way the police see themselves and are regarded by others.

In Armenia, the activities of the OSCE and the Office in Yerevan have always been welcomed by the authorities and have over the years generated a high degree of mutual trust and co-operation between the OSCE and the police that bodes well for the future. As the Armenian police move from merely receiving police assistance, towards actively pursuing police reform, the Office believes that it is well-placed to carry on playing a key role in advocating positive change, in helping to draft policies, and in operational im-

plementation. At the same time, this article can probably serve as an example of how a small OSCE field presence has tried to fulfil its mandate in a challenging environment and with limited means at its disposal. It is up to the reader to appraise the level of success it has managed to achieve.

Laying the Groundwork, 2003-2004

Co-operation in the field of law enforcement has long been an OSCE task under the politico-military dimension and has been greatly enhanced at operational level since the establishment of the OSCE field missions. The OSCE Office in Yerevan was established by a decision of the OSCE Permanent Council in 1999 and commenced operations in February 2000. The Bucharest Ministerial Decision on Police Related Activities from December 2001 gave the OSCE the mandate to engage with participating States in improving democratic policing practices. The appointment in 2002 of a Politico-Military Officer to the Office in Yerevan and the founding of the Strategic Police Matters Unit (SPMU) at the OSCE Secretariat in Vienna also enhanced the Office's capacity for assisting the host country. In practical terms, the OSCE's police assistance activities started with the visit to Armenia by the OSCE Senior Police Adviser in June 2003 and the ensuing needs assessment that same year. The co-operation with Armenia on police matters by the SPMU and the Office began at a time of rapidly expanding OSCE involvement in law enforcement co-operation with many newly-independent countries of the former Soviet Union. In the course of 2003 and 2004, concurrently with Armenia, OSCE police assistance programmes were drafted for Azerbaijan and Georgia – on the basis of assessments that unsurprisingly revealed similar needs.

In Georgia, the Rose Revolution of November 2003 precipitated a complete and largely autonomous overhaul of the Georgian police by the government. The police were reorganized along the lines of a patrol police and the OSCE community-based approach to policing did not naturally comply with what the Georgian authorities had in mind. The presence of many donors and an abundance of material support for the Georgian police reform, notably from the US government, also resulted in a less visible role for OSCE police assistance, which came to a complete stop after the closure of the Mission to Georgia in June 2009. In Armenia and Azerbaijan, however, the OSCE was able to set the agenda jointly with their local counterparts and serve as the main international source of police assistance. In Armenia, the initial years of police assistance saw the SPMU as the brains and initiator of activities, drafting projects, having an important say in the hiring of experts, and overseeing project implementation. Until 2006, the SPMU was in charge strategically while the Office in Yerevan played more of a supporting role by

hiring staff, announcing tenders, concluding contracts, and handling the overall day-to-day running of the projects.

The Armenian Police Assistance Programme consisted of activities to launch the community-based policing model and to improve police education by incorporating human rights modules and renovating police training facilities. These elements were more or less common to all OSCE police assistance programmes and stemmed from the need for greater public involvement in policing, on the one hand, and the training of police officers to higher standards, on the other. A peculiarity of the Armenian programme was that the educational component was aimed at the police school (called the Training Centre in Armenia). In post-Soviet police education systems, police schools educate non-commissioned officers, while commissioned officers are trained at police academies. In Armenia's case, the reason for targeting the Police Training Centre rather than the Police Academy – which would presumably have been more effective, and therefore made more sense, because it would have influenced future decision-makers – was that the leadership of the Police Academy was not considered particularly reform-minded. This could not be said of the Head of the Police Training Centre, who embraced new ideas and approaches from the very beginning. The problems were similar at both institutions, however. The recruitment system did not fulfil its aim of recruiting the best candidates and was rife with corruption hazards. Most trainers at the police educational establishments, particularly those who train specific policing skills, either had no prior professional experience at all or what experience they had was outdated with little or no rotation of training staff. Practitioners called in to train received no training, and no proper selection method was used. There was very little contact with police training institutions abroad, apart from those in CIS countries, and – partly as a result of this – almost no research into practical problems faced by the police was conducted.

Both the community-based policing and the police education activities included elements of material support, which might have played a role in their swift acceptance by the Armenian police leadership. Police outreach stations were built to accompany the introduction of community policing. This policing philosophy advocates close working relations and physical proximity between the police and the public, and small police outreach stations also strike a familiar chord with all former Soviet police personnel because they are reminiscent of a previous equivalent called "*opornye punkty*" ("strong points"). These small police stations played an important role in Soviet policing doctrine, both in terms of keeping order and as a means of controlling the population. This view of their function would have to be changed, as outreach stations in the community-based policing model are used to foster co-operation, mutual respect and trust between the police and the population. If democratic standards and human rights are to be taught in a meaningful sense at the Police Training Centre, the physical premises will first have to be

upgraded in a major way. Most of the Centre's buildings, which dated back to the 1960s, were dilapidated, with dormitories that were unfit to accommodate cadets and classrooms that lacked heating and basic training materials.

In addition, the Police Assistance Programme featured a project to upgrade the police emergency call centre so that calls from the public could be responded to more quickly. The improvement in public order management techniques was not one of the components of the Police Assistance Programme, although with hindsight it should probably have been included. Public order management standards had not evolved much – if at all – since Soviet times, a fact that was underscored during political demonstrations in April 2004, when the police cracked down hard on what was a peaceful demonstration close to the Armenian parliament, resulting in injuries to dozens of people.

Starting Implementation, 2005-2007

Of the three planned police assistance activities – introduction of community-based policing, upgrading of the police school, and establishment of an emergency call centre – the renovation of the Police Training Centre was taken up first. The thinking behind this was that police education was a core issue to be tackled and having the police school renovated first and equipped with modern teaching aids would both showcase what adhering to international standards involved and establish the OSCE as a reliable player in the eyes of the Armenian police. The renovation of the Police Training Centre's six buildings started in October 2005, and the police school was re-opened by the Head of the Police and the Head of the OSCE Office in Yerevan in March 2007. All in all, some one million euros were spent on the renovation, equipping, and development of the new curriculum for the Training Centre. This has produced lasting results, and the Training Centre remains in excellent condition to this day, thanks to its dedicated management.

With the renovation of the school on course and preparations for modernizing its curriculum also under way, it was time to think about the other important element of the Police Assistance Programme, namely the introduction of community-based policing.

The concept of community-based policing is founded on the establishment of trust and partnership between the police and the community with the aim of reducing crime through prevention and detection. This policing philosophy involves daily contact with the population, which aims at providing high-quality services to the community by solving local problems at a local level. In turn, the community helps the police to solve crimes by actively cooperating with them. It presupposes a high level of transparency and accountability on the part of the police. A pilot project was developed, which focused on a multitude of awareness-raising activities aimed at police officers of all

ranks, schoolteachers and children, local business people, civil society organizations, and ordinary citizens in the pilot district. An important part of the project plan was the construction of several police outreach stations: small police stations that allow the police to have a decentralized presence in the district and to work in close proximity to the population they are supposed to serve. Two international community-policing experts were hired to raise awareness of the new policing philosophy among as many police officers as possible, both in the Arabkir district of Yerevan and in Yerevan as a whole. A conscious decision was made to attract a Russian speaker as well as a seasoned community-policing practitioner from Western Europe or North America. A Russian speaker has the advantage of being able to communicate with his or her Armenian counterparts and explain the basics of community-based policing to police officers and the target population without needing an interpreter. At the same time it was accepted that his or her practical experience with community-based policing might be more limited because of the shorter exposure that much of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union has had to this policing philosophy. The European or North American expert would be used for more detailed training on community-based policing and problem-solving methods. It was anticipated that positive results would be achieved by having them work together and thus taking advantage of the “best of both worlds”. It was believed that this would lead the police to embrace the new approach relatively quickly and work out a national, Armenian approach to community-based policing. At the same time, resources were invested in study trips for several mid- and high-ranking police officials responsible for the introduction of community policing, including the First Deputy Head of Police, the Head of Yerevan Police Department, and the Head of Arabkir Police District.

Ambition and Frustration, 2007-2008

In mid-2007, arguably the most far-reaching decision for the Office’s community-policing activities was taken. Whereas the project initially focused on awareness raising, the realization set in some six months into the project that awareness-raising activities would go only so far in getting the police leadership to see the merit of the new approach and to become actively involved in developing it further. The project would train tens of dozens of people, sometimes for several days at a time. They would sit through the training sessions, agree with the trainers and the philosophy, and sometimes participate actively and offer practical experiences and/or solutions. Then they would thank the trainers and the OSCE, fill in positive evaluation forms and return to their daily lives, leaving the project team guessing as to the impact of their work.

The conclusion reached was that in order to make the biggest possible impact with the limited resources available, a pilot community-policing unit would have to be set up in Arabkir Police District. Initially the unit would be responsible for a limited area within Arabkir. Trained by OSCE experts and working according to a shift schedule that would provide a 24-hour service, the members of this unit were expected to show in practice how the community-based policing model could work in Armenia. The experimental unit would work from one of the two police outreach stations that were to be constructed and co-operate with the population through Citizens' Advisory Groups (CAGs) among other means. The Arabkir Police leadership, it was hoped, would work actively with the OSCE and the experimental unit to improve its efficiency and adapt it to local needs. The police leadership could then take this experience, adapt it further if necessary and implement it throughout Yerevan and eventually throughout Armenia. The first pilot community-policing unit was set up in Arabkir on 1 April 2008 and was named "Local Police Unit" (LPU). It was fully answerable to Arabkir Police District with the OSCE in an advisory role.

The unit was initially comprised of eight police officers, including two women, and served a designated area in Arabkir containing 12,000 people. The timing could hardly have been worse, as one month previously, on 1 and 2 March 2008, the centre of Yerevan had seen deadly riots after prolonged protests following the disputed presidential elections of 18 February 2008. The police had been called in to disperse the protesters and ten people had died in the ensuing violence, including two police officers. The police's public order-management training and equipment had both proved to be inadequate and there were widespread reports of police officers overstepping their authority. As a result, the image of the police, already not stellar, suffered further, and the idea of having the police and population working together in mutual trust and as equals seemed outlandish. Because of the post-election violence, the first half of 2008 saw a considerable slowing of OSCE police activity, with only the pilot community-policing project in Arabkir and some work with the Police Training Centre continuing in a low-key fashion. The upgrading of the emergency call centre at Yerevan police headquarters, one of the pillars of the original Police Assistance Programme, was dispensed with entirely as the priorities were considered to lie elsewhere. No matter how modern this centre would have been, the population's trust in the police was further eroded and would first have to be rebuilt.

The OSCE deemed it very important that the members of the LPU should be trained extensively to prepare them to perform the duties of community-policing officers. During the inception phase of the pilot community-policing unit, a fundamental issue had to be addressed, one that continues to exist today and hampers the full implementation of community-based policing. In the Armenian police, as in all other post-Soviet police forces, a strict functional division exists within what in the West is con-

sidered the uniformed police (the normal uniformed police officers you would encounter on the street or in police stations, not undercover agents or investigators): There are neighbourhood inspectors, who do a large proportion of what is considered traditional police work; juvenile inspectors, who, as their job title suggests, work with minors; preliminary investigators, who perform basic investigative functions; the patrol service, who do auxiliary work and are non-commissioned officers; and the traffic police, in charge of safety on the roads.

These different police units each make up one piece of the policing “pie”. Of course, having officers from five different branches of the uniformed police do what in the West would be done by one police officer is not very efficient. In terms of management, this mosaic of units and responsibilities poses a big challenge. Having five different hierarchies in place means high overheads for the underfunded Armenian police force, as well as a lack of flexibility in training, assigning, or (temporarily) transferring staff. In addition, all the services apart from the traffic police (who only report to their branch’s command structure) fall under a dual command structure (accountable both to their branch and to the district commander of the territorial unit in which they serve). The police districts also tend to operate very hierarchically, with district commanders often dictating every priority and action of individual officers, which leaves officers on the beat with very little autonomy. Add to this the difference in status and powers between commissioned and non-commissioned officers (for instance those who serve in the patrol service) and the picture becomes even more complicated.

Another problem was that of culture. The OSCE had insisted that several positions in the LPU would be reserved for women, despite the scepticism of the police leadership both in Arabkir District and at police headquarters. With very few exceptions, the role of women in the police was and is restricted to administrative tasks, although they officially comprise more than half of the workforce. There is a deep-rooted conservatism and cultural prejudice in the police – but not only there – which holds that women are not capable of performing operational police tasks and should be protected from the burdens of patrolling the streets and dealing with crime. This, one should add, is the opinion of those who still regard the police as a force, rather than as a service to the population. In addition, we were told, for women to work night shifts is unheard of and frowned upon by their families. In any case, it would interfere with the household duties that continue for these same police-women. The OSCE project team, however, managed to include two women in the pilot LPU, who initially agreed to perform full police services and participate in the shift schedule, including night shifts. As soon as the first night shift came around in which female participation was foreseen, however, they had a change of heart and refused categorically. It turned out that the police leadership’s reservations had been proven correct and that traditions were

stronger than expected. The women did continue to function in the LPU but were excluded from night shifts for the time being.

From the very beginning, the OSCE experts wanted to have all the police officers in the LPU perform all the functions that are required from modern police personnel. The idea was to do away with the division of labour between the different police branches (juvenile and neighbourhood inspectors and patrol officers) and to make everybody well-rounded police officers. The only concession was to not include traffic work in their job descriptions, as the traffic police had just undergone a re-organization, and the idea of having them undergo more upheaval was unacceptable to the police leadership in 2008.

Although it was understood that patrol officers, non-commissioned and with less police education than the other police officers, could not perform investigative functions under the existing regulations, the OSCE insisted on having them represented in the LPU as well and given full powers, including powers of investigation. Given proper training, all LPU personnel should be able to perform the same tasks equally well. But again, the organizational culture proved resilient, and the non-commissioned patrol officers were not given the same tasks as the commissioned officers and were again confined mainly to auxiliary functions. Moreover, these auxiliary functions are not always directly related to police work. Police officers in former Soviet countries tend to have as part of their job descriptions a host of functions that are not usually associated with police work. For instance, beat officers spend a lot of time making routine calls on ex-convicts, searching for army draft dodgers, and must frequently attend hospitals because doctors are obliged to inform the police every time somebody is admitted with even the slightest of injuries so that a routine investigation into its cause can be carried out in case a criminal act might have occurred and gone unreported. In addition, LPU police officers would often get called away to perform public order management duties, even though they had had no special training. Even events which, by any reasonable yardstick, posed no public order risk had a sizeable police presence, disrupting officers' schedules and normal duties. Needless to say, this is all a considerable waste of time and resources and is acknowledged as such by most of the police officers who perform these duties.

All the aforementioned difficulties are compounded by the low rates of pay in the police. A middle-ranking uniformed police officer will typically earn around 250 euros per month, and this in a country where the cost of living, except for housing, is not much lower than in most other European countries. As can be imagined, this provides little incentive for police to perform their duties to the best of their ability.

All these initial – and current – challenges notwithstanding, the LPU started its operations and received constant on-the-job training from the OSCE experts on pro-active policing, problem-solving techniques including the SARA model (Scan, Analyze, Respond, and Assess), and how to com-

municate effectively. A CAG was set up in Arabkir a few months into the project in the summer of 2009 and police open days were organized. In order to measure progress, a baseline public opinion poll about public perceptions of the police had been carried out, showing that about half of those polled still trusted the police.

In the summer of 2009, the LPU was relocated to the two newly-constructed police outreach stations. As the unit's territorial responsibilities were expanded, the number of police officers was increased to 16. However, the quality and motivation of some of the officers left much to be desired, and leadership skills among the management of the unit also were lacking. In effect, the LPU was used as an auxiliary force to aid the regular police units, and many police officers not involved in the pilot project did not take it seriously. To some, the LPU was known as the "European Police Unit". All in all, the unit's start-up was challenging, and it took a lot of time and effort on the part of the OSCE project management team and the experts to get the LPU going and to make it function as a team and more or less perform some community-policing tasks with a limited degree of independence from Arabkir police headquarters.

Meanwhile, there were developments on the police education side. In early 2007, while renovation work on the police school was still ongoing, the OSCE Office launched a joint project with the school's management to modernize the curriculum and introduce new training methods. On this front, things went more smoothly, thanks in large part to the Head of the Police Training Centre, who had become an agent for change. Having been given the opportunity to study international experience extensively, the Head and his staff co-operated very well with the OSCE in designing a modern curriculum for the three-month induction course at the Training Centre, which involved the introduction of community-based policing topics, greater attention to human rights, and interactive student-centred teaching methods, including role-playing. In addition, the Office had visiting experts give training-of-trainers courses for the Centre's instructors.

Increased Ambition: From Police Assistance to Police Reform, 2009-2010

In late 2008, with the community policing project already underway for half a year, despite all its problems, and work on the Police Training Centre's curriculum progressing, it was time to think about the next steps. The success of the new community-based approach to policing was still far from certain, and even success in Arabkir would not automatically mean smooth implementation in the rest of Yerevan, let alone the country as a whole. The same was true for the police education system. The modernization of the Training Centre curriculum addressed only part of the educational challenge. The Police Academy remained "*terra incognita*" with trainers inadequately trained

and the curriculum unreformed and unsuited to modern policing needs. The OSCE police experts were and are still confronted with the functional irrelevance of what is being offered at the Academy. Basic policing techniques, report writing, and communication skills all have to be taught anew to LPU officers, even after four years of higher police education at the Academy.

In other words, the Office had scratched the surface of what needed to be done to achieve meaningful change and, in the process of doing so, had created expectations of further and deepened involvement with both the police and civil society.

Over a period of three years, the OSCE had succeeded in creating a small pool of mid-level officers in crucial positions who had begun to see that things could be done in a different way, despite the indifference or outright hostility of many of their colleagues – including those at the very top of the police hierarchy. Despite the many problems that would undoubtedly lie ahead, it was clear that the only way was forward. This sentiment was supported by political developments that were taking place at the same time. In May 2008, after President-elect Serzh Sargsyan was sworn in and had appointed a government, a reform drive ranging from economic liberalization to judicial reforms and police reform was announced. This meant that the discourse had finally moved from assistance to reform. Community-based policing and police education reform were to be important parts of the reform. In November 2008, a memorandum of understanding (MoU) was signed to establish two joint OSCE/police working groups: one dealing with the further development of a community-based policing model and the other with creating a modern and integrated police education sector.

The joint working groups started their deliberations in February 2009 and elaborated their plans in the course of the subsequent months. In June of that year, interim plans were presented to the Head of Police and the Head of the OSCE Office. The community-policing pilot was given a boost with the release of a second opinion poll in May 2009, which showed that public perception of the police had changed positively since the establishment of the LPU. A strategic plan and deployment model were drawn up to expand the community-policing pilot beyond its pilot area throughout Arabkir District. On the police education side, the working group had prepared an outline of a three-tier education structure in accordance with the Bologna international educational standards. The proposal encompassed basic training at the Training Centre with the curriculum to be increased from the prevailing three months to six months, with advanced training at the Police College (to be set up) and higher education at the Police Academy.

In June 2009, the interim plans were presented to the police leadership but did not meet with outright approval. In particular, the proposed overhaul of the recruitment system with the involvement of computerized tests and an independent commission met with resistance. It was clear that more time was needed to discuss things, to bring around the police leadership, and to engage

the government at a higher political level. The Office subsequently took time to discuss the ongoing police reform with the presidential administration, the government, and the National Security Council, and over time it succeeded in putting these issues back onto the agenda.

In September 2009, a new and young Deputy Head of Police from outside the service was appointed. He was specifically charged with devising a comprehensive police reform programme, and the Office set about helping him to elaborate the programme, especially the overarching elements related to building trust in the police and to police education reform. This was done mainly through the working groups on police education reform and community-based policing, which provided useful input, and the Police Reform Programme was adopted by the government in April 2010.

The events of 1 and 2 March 2008 and their aftermath, as well as the pilot community-based policing project in Arabkir, had exposed a sizeable divide between the police and the media, especially those areas of the media that are critical of the government. Both tended to regard each other with suspicion, with the police often convinced that the media deliberately misinterpreted information to cast them in a bad light. The media, on the other hand, often voiced complaints about the police system's lack of transparency, caused among other things by a very hierarchical way of providing information and lack of communication with media representatives. The Office therefore set out to support mutual co-operation aimed at informing the public objectively about police work and crime and at preventing and detecting crime. Both sides needed to be made aware of the challenges that each face in providing their respective services to the public.

The first phase of the project in early 2009 started with the assessment of current media and police relations in Armenia through a series of round tables in all the provinces. The main problem identified was the lack of co-operation and trust between the media and the police resulting from a lack of accessibility and accuracy in police-related information, a lack of knowledge on the part of the media regarding their rights and duties when reporting on police investigations, and the right of the police to withhold information in the interests of the investigation. Suggestions were made for improving the institutional set-up within the police by appointing spokespersons at regional level, rather than having everything go through the press and public information department at police headquarters. Training for police spokespersons and journalists in the area of national regulations and international tools regulating the freedom of information, as well as European Court of Human Rights case law, was also agreed on. The next step was the development of a guidebook for police officers to help them co-operate with representatives of the mass media. The Office is currently ascertaining whether co-operation has really improved, for example as a result of the activities of the newly-appointed public relations officers in the provincial police districts. Preliminary results indicate that the situation has indeed improved and that working

contacts and the exchange of information between police and media are now more frequent.

Another area in which assistance could now be provided was public order management. The March 2008 events opened the door for changes in this area and improved co-operation with the international community. Assistance in the area of public order management was part of the MoU signed in November 2008 between the OSCE and the police. Even though the police had themselves invested in protective gear and communication equipment for officers, an OSCE-commissioned assessment report highlighted not only shortcomings in public order management but also a lack of attention to the concept of public safety management in the broadest sense. The existing command and control doctrine, preparation for events, and tactics of dealing with crowd management issues were found to be outdated with their emphasis on the use of force, and insufficient attention was paid to officer safety issues and training. This comprehensive report was not followed up for quite some time. Only in early 2011 was a follow-up agreed, and in the summer, the Office invited an international expert on a three-month mission to elaborate a new doctrine.

A recent addition to the Office's police assistance activities concerns the issue of domestic violence. Ignored in Armenia until a few years ago, this is now high on the agenda of international organizations and is slowly being discussed in Armenian society. Although researched and surveyed, it has never been addressed from the viewpoint of police-public interactions. In 2010, the Office commissioned an analysis of the reporting rate and registration method used for cases of domestic violence, the training of police personnel, the role of the gender of police officers involved, and the solutions suggested by the police. Improvements can be made by identifying shortcomings in the police's activities and making recommendations.

Police Reform: From Theory to Practice, 2010-2011

The Police Reform Programme adopted by the government in April 2010 was formally drafted under the guidance of the National Security Council, which oversees many other areas of reform that have been drafted in the framework of Armenia's continuing co-operation with the EU. Originally more of an activity plan without a holistic approach, the OSCE helped to prepare a conceptual note to accompany the package. The programme contains eleven priority areas, including proposals for structural changes, traffic police reform, the introduction of biometric passports (a requirement for the Association Agreement being negotiated with the EU in the framework of Eastern Partnership) and other migration-related issues within the remit of the police, improved human rights protection, increasing the effectiveness of the fight against organized crime, and improving the social conditions for police per-

sonnel and public order management. At least on paper, the proposed measures will lead to new policing methods and a greatly improved structure that will provide an improved level of service to the population. The use of public opinion polls as a policy tool was also accepted. In terms of structural reform and increased efficiency, the change is still only on paper. Current thinking leads in the direction of merging several of the separate police structures, e.g., integrating the patrol police with the traffic police, but resistance is considerable and these plans have yet to be implemented. In some of the other areas of reform, implementation is still under way. The production of biometric passports has been tendered out and many legal documents related to the other areas of reform have been amended.

For the OSCE, the overarching priority in its assistance remained the introduction of the community-based policing approach, which profoundly influences and changes not only traditional uniformed police work but also how investigations are conducted, how officers are trained, and how the police organization is structured. This also involves an increased role of women in the police. A further step in consolidating the police reforms is the establishment of a Police Reform Unit within police headquarters. The unit will be tasked with overseeing the implementation of everything that has been agreed so far and will report directly to the Deputy Head of Police in charge of police reforms.

In July 2011, an implementation plan to expand community policing from Arabkir District to the whole of Yerevan as proposed by the joint OSCE/police working group on community-based policing was approved by the police leadership. It includes the finalization of job descriptions and a deployment model and shift schedule for community-policing officers, involving the introduction of performance appraisal reviews, an analysis of the current and future use of police outreach stations, the expanded use of CAGs, and finally a comprehensive training needs assessment.

In the police education field, the Police Reform Unit will have to direct the implementation of the work done by the joint OSCE/police working group on education. After the Police Educational Complex was established, a heated discussion followed as to how it should be structured and staffed. One school of thought proposes a centralized model with a strong administration in charge of staffing and curriculum development and the three educational institutions of Police School, Police College, and Police Academy as mere executors. Another group advocates a more decentralized model, with the educational institutions being given greater autonomy in devising curricula and staff training and the creation of a new institution to take charge of providing the Complex with methodological support by means of sociological research, studying good international practices, and conducting surveys.

One crucial question that seems to have been solved is that of admission. In the past, the application review and admission tests for the Police Academy were open to corruption, partly because those who were admitted

to the Academy would not have to serve in the army. As a result, the candidates commissioned as officers were not always the most appropriate. The current reform provides for a computerized, anonymous, random set of questions being answered. The tests, prepared by university specialists, will be reviewed by an independent admissions panel with a majority of non-police personnel – probably a first in the OSCE region. The same will apply for professional advancement. A police officer wishing to be promoted will have to receive the required training at the Police College or Academy and also have to pass a computerized test. This new approach means that the old system of attestation will very likely be abolished.

As the reforms take hold in the years ahead, the police will have to get five strategic issues right: maintain a service-oriented approach, focus on adequate training, inform and involve the population, appoint adequate staff to key positions, and improve salaries. The last factor is not entirely within the remit of the police because it is largely dependent on the overall health of the state's budget, which is likely to remain tight over the next few years. However, there are many efficiency gains to be had within the current police structure, and the Police Reform Programme mentions this. Apart from looking into ways of somehow merging the functions of neighbourhood and juvenile inspectors, patrol service, and traffic police, there is also a likely overlap in the departments responsible for criminal investigation, namely the Criminal Investigations Department and the Organized Crime Department. The police would also be wise to look at the anomaly of the Transport Police, a unit of 340 officers responsible for maintaining security on the railroad system even though the latter operates at only a fraction of its former capacity now that most of the border is closed and infrastructure is in a state of disrepair. Efficiency gains could also be made in the police regions and at headquarters. If this were to be done with vigour, the savings could be re-invested in training and higher salaries.

Lessons Learned

Many lessons have been learned and passed on by other OSCE field missions that were involved in the area of police assistance earlier than the Office in Yerevan. It has taken careful note of them (for instance by working on improving police-media relations, where very useful work had previously been done by the Mission to Serbia). In some cases, the specific conditions in Armenia led to the Office having to improvise its way through a challenging situation, and as Armenian police reform advances further and assumes more unique features in the process, the Office is less likely to be able to benefit from others' experience. The potential role of the OSCE Secretariat in all of this is great and should be encouraged. If managed properly, the SPMU could

be the link between field activities, providing them with guidance and practical support, especially in the initial stages of police assistance.

Looking back, it becomes clear that more time and effort should have been spent on preparing the ground at the very beginning of the process and explaining exactly what the projects proposed by the OSCE entailed. In particular, the concept of community-based policing, still a difficult sell even in countries with a better established tradition of democratic policing than Armenia, was not very well understood by the Armenian authorities from the outset. Both the Office in Yerevan and the SPMU assumed that the police knew exactly what they had signed up for after just a few introductory seminars. Having all the main Armenian players understand the concept and philosophy of community policing in greater detail and the changes it entails, both structurally and educationally, from the very beginning might have made for more rapid progress in the projects than turned out to be the case. Also, more and earlier study visits should have been undertaken. Often seen as an expensive junket or frivolity, they are actually well worth the money. These visits provide the opportunity to see other countries' experience at first hand and talk to foreign colleagues – an important consideration for practically-minded police officers. They have also been very useful in building personal rapport between the police and OSCE officers.

Launching the pilot community-policing project in Arabkir accelerated matters greatly because it instantly displayed the issues at hand, tested assumptions, and prioritized the areas for assistance. It also proved to be highly educational because what had been conveyed in theory was now being tested in practice. Having said that, there can never be too much emphasis on identifying proper international experts, as this is largely what determines the success of projects. Despite the devotion of considerable amounts of time to their recruitment, with SPMU assistance and consultations with other field operations involving invitations to the mission for interviews, the quality and effectiveness of the invited experts was hit and miss in the early stages. At times, their levels of knowledge and experience were not matched by equivalent communication skills.

The fact that OSCE police assistance began by providing some infrastructure and equipment was probably a good idea. As in many other cases and countries, hardware is readily requested and happily received by host authorities. Initiating police assistance in Armenia with the renovation of the Police Training Centre, moreover, lent credibility to the OSCE as a serious player that can put its money where its mouth is. This was literally a very tangible start to the Office's activities.

It goes without saying that it has been important to constantly share information with participating States, as well as with partner agencies in the host country, such as its parliament and presidential administration. This approach included inviting high-level host country officials to help raise awareness about projects and reforms in Vienna, and attracting visiting dele-

gations to project sites in Armenia. The National Assembly is the logical institution to exercise democratic control over the armed forces, and the Office has encouraged the Standing Committee on Defence, Security, and Internal Affairs to monitor the police reform, a task it shares with the National Security Council. The dialogue with international partners has also been very important not only because of the material support they provide but also – sometimes more importantly – because of political support for what is an endeavour to promote shared values.