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Selected Problems of Police Preventive Actions

Abstract

The article provides a synthetic presentation of issues in a demanding area of Polish Police activity, and namely preventive measures. These activities were discussed taking into account: the essence and scope of these activities, the implementation of official tasks by the district and other police officers performing patrol and intervention service. The study uses commonly available statistical data documenting Poles' opinions about the Police and the dynamics of changes regarding Poles' opinions about the Police. These data reflect statistical data from 2012–2017. The presented considerations relate to issues of public security, which were presented on the basis of legal provisions and organizational solutions applied in the Police

Keywords: public security, threats, system, preventive measures, police, police officer

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Wybrane problemy działań prewencyjnych Policji

Abstrakt

W artykule przedstawiono w sposób syntetyczny kwestie jednego z wymagających obszarów aktywności polskiej Policji, jakim są działania prewencyjne. Omówiono je przez pryzmat istoty i zakresu tychże działań, realizacji zadań służbowych przez dzielnicowych oraz innych funkcjonariuszy Policji pełniących służbę patroloво-interwencyjną. W pracy wykorzystano powszechnie dostępne dane statystyczne dokumentujące opinie Polaków na temat Policji oraz dynamiki zmian dotyczących opinii Polaków na temat formacji. Odzwierciedlają one dane statystyczne z lat 2012–2017. Przedstawione rozważania odnoszą się do zagadnień bezpieczeństwa

publicznego, które przedstawiono w oparciu o postanowienia przepisów prawa oraz stosowane w Policji rozwiązania organizacyjne.

Słowa kluczowe: bezpieczeństwo publiczne, zagrożenia, system, działania prewencyjne, Policja, funkcjonariusz Policji

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Вибрані проблеми профілактичних акцій поліції

Анотація

У статті за допомогою синтетичного методу представлено проблеми одного з найвибагливіших напрямків діяльності польської поліції – профілактичних заходів. Їх обговорено через призму сутності та масштабів цієї діяльності, виконання службових завдань районними та іншими працівниками поліції, які виконують патрульну та інтервенційну службу. У дослідженні використано загальнодоступні статистичні дані, що документують думки поляків на тему поліції та динаміку змін їх думок щодо цієї формації. Ці дані підтверджуються статистичними даними за 2012–2017 рр. Викладені міркування стосуються питань громадської безпеки, які представлено на основі правових положень та організаційних рішень застосованих в поліції.

Ключові слова: громадська безпека, загрози, система, профілактичні заходи, поліція, працівник поліції

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Introduction

The Police [1] are an important institution in the public security system [2], because it bears particular liability for the mission of protecting life, health and property of the people from lawless attacks that violate those goods [3]. It is an institution effective in the field of counteracting hazards to public security [4], which all the same keeps seeking new solutions of its advancement.

A particularly desired form of activities from the social viewpoint are preventive measures [5], including precautionary ones [6]. The preventive activity affects the economisation of the functioning of the Police (*Morbum evitare quam curare facilius est*). It helps prevent losses or human misery, and contributes to minimising their scale if they do occur.

The Police force is an element of the public security system [7], and that is why it can implement its tasks jointly with its other members. The time has long gone when a policeman was expected to execute on his own all sorts of tasks contributing to public security and order. Nowadays it is generally accepted that a policeman is not merely assigned with executing legally defined tasks, but needs also to be an effective organiser and an initiator of various concepts aimed at assuring security of the inhabitants, both in the individual and in the community dimension [8].

Given the particular importance of police preventive measures oriented at assuring public security and maintaining a high level of security of the citizens, the objective of the present paper is to point out selected problems and possibilities of their solving.

1. Essence and scope of preventive measures of the Police

The main part of police precautionary measures is maintaining a state of lack of hazard to a protected subject, and as an effect to hinder the occurrence of its feature which is relatively relevant and assessed negatively. If in the social environment of the entity being protected a person appears who could potentially be a perpetrator of an illegal act, a preventive measure is meant to impede the feasibility of such an offence. This is due to the fact that prevention contributes to situational and dispositional capability of the perpetrator, making his planned deed difficult to execute (unprofitable) or even quite unfeasible. As the objectives of the Police and the perpetrator of a crime are divergent, and those entities intentionally obstruct each other, prevention becomes one of the ways of struggles, in which each of the parties involved wants to make the implementation of his objective independent of further actions of the opponent.

Police measures in the field of protecting the security of the people and maintaining public security and order arise from three sources: commonly binding law, priority tasks of the chief Police commandant for the Police and an ongoing analysis of the status of the hazard [9].

Tasks resulting from currently binding legal regulations point to the necessity of:

- protecting the life and health of people and their property from illegal attacks that violate those goods (and in each case protection has a precautionary value);

- protecting public security and order;
- starting and organising actions aimed at preventing the commitment of crimes and offences and criminogenic phenomena (art. 1 par. 2 of the act *on the Police* [10]).

The last task is of particular importance, because it is not only related directly to the necessity of providing preventive measures, but also draws attention to the necessity of undertaking cooperation [11] with non-police entities. A flag example of preventive measures undertaken in cooperation with other entities was the implementation of the “Safer Together” Government Programme as part of three editions over several years. This programme has been initiated by Resolution of the Council of Ministers of 18 December 2006 *Government programme of limiting criminality and asocial behaviour “Safer Together”* [12]. It has been decided that implementing entities are government administration bodies acting under supervision of the minister of the interior.

Thanks to implementation of tasks, the programme was meant to allow: improvement of the actual security level in Poland and the feeling of security by the Poles, preventing crimes and asocial behaviour by adopting appropriately dynamic activities of an activated government administration, supported by self-government administration, non-government organisations and local societies; improvement of social image of the Police and increased trust in this institution (item 2 of the “Safer Together” programme) [13].

The Council of Ministers classified the following elements to fields of operation comprised by the above mentioned programme:

- security in public places and in the place of residence (to limit socially troublesome crimes, including: racketeering, fights and beatings, causing of bodily harm, theft, including theft of vehicles, burglary and damage or destruction of property);
- violence in the family (to protect and support victims of domestic aggression);
- safety in school (to limit peer violence and drug-related crime among school students);
- safety in public transport means (pertaining to the security of passenger traffic);
- safety in road traffic (to limit the number of road accidents and their victims);
- safety in business activity;
- protection of national heritage (to limit the seizure of monumental items [14, 15, 16] and their destruction) [13].

The first edition of the programme has fulfilled the hopes placed in it. It was found to contribute to improving the security of the Poles and enhancing the image of the Police in the opinion of the people. This has been done by joint actions of all entities of the public security system on a partnership basis.

In the years 2007–2017 the “Safer Together” Programme:

- was appraised positively as an undertaking that contributes to enhancing actual security and the feeling of security of the inhabitants;
- was recommended for continuation;
- improved the awareness of the Poles as to hazards, hazardous situations and antisocial behaviour;
- contributed to enhancing the confidence of inhabitants in the Police and to an improvement of its image, which has become very good;
- enabled cooperation between institutions of the central rank, as well as on the provincial and local level, which helped streamline precautionary measures;
- contributed to achieving the synergy effect as part of implementation of multi-entity measures;
- enabled the implementation of off-standard actions, which would not have been possible without additional financial outlays;
- made way for innovative local solutions in the sphere of public security (“Bank of good practices”) [17].

The first edition was later continued, and became transformed into the “Safer Together” Władysław Stasiak Programme of limiting criminality and asocial behaviour”. The third edition of the programme was launched by Resolution No. 6 of the Council of Ministers of 9 January 2018 on “*The “Safer Together” Władysław Stasiak Programme of limiting criminality and asocial behaviour for the years 2018–2020*” [18].

As regards the social image and confidence in the Police as an effect of implementation of the “Safer Together” programme, it should be emphasised that currently the level of social support for this institution is very high.

According to information contained in the “Survey report” of the Centrum Badań Opinii Społecznej (Public Opinion Research Centre) No. 4040/2018 entitled “Assessments of the operation of public institutions”, in 2017 62% of the respondents considered the activity of the Police as good (fig. 1).

A review of dynamics related to assessments in successive years of the period 2012–2017 suggests that as of 2015 the social acceptance of the Police has grown. This resulted from the improving feeling of security of the Poles and the growing feeling of real security in the sphere of public security starting as of 2012. In 2017 the trend was disrupted, yet positive opinions pertaining to the Police were shared by the large majority of the Poles.

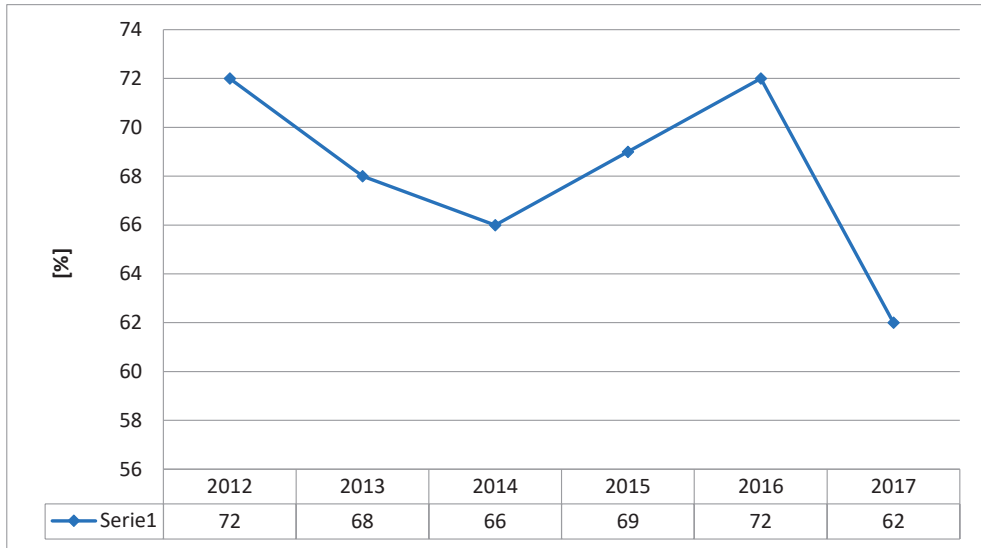


Fig. 1. Positive opinions of the Poles concerning the Police in the years 2012–2017

Source: developed on the basis of CBOS data [19]

An analysis of the dynamics of positive opinions of the Poles expressed in relation to the Police in the years 2012–2017 shows that its increase may be observed in the years 2012–2016 and a dynamic decrease in 2017 due to making negative behaviour of the policemen public (fig. 2).

Furthermore, in the years 2012–2017 there were changes in negative assessments of the Police expressed by the Poles. The downtrend of negative opinions concerning the Police, taking place successively in the years 2012–2016, was interrupted by a rapid increase in negative opinions in 2017. While in 2016 only 17% of the Poles had a bad opinion about the Police, already in 2017 every fourth Pole had a bad opinion of functioning of this formation (fig. 3).

A review of the dynamics of negative opinions expressed by the Poles as to the Police in the years 2013–2017 points to an advantageous downtrend in the years 2013–2016 and a dynamic increase in the in negative opinions pertaining to the Police in 2017 caused by publishing of information concerning socially unacceptable behaviour of the policemen (fig. 4).

Trust in the Police and its societal acceptance is of considerable importance for the effective functioning of this institution [20]. A sympathetic social environment

generates the situational capacity for acting, and also contributes to the possibility of collective actions, boosted by mutual trust and positive attitude.

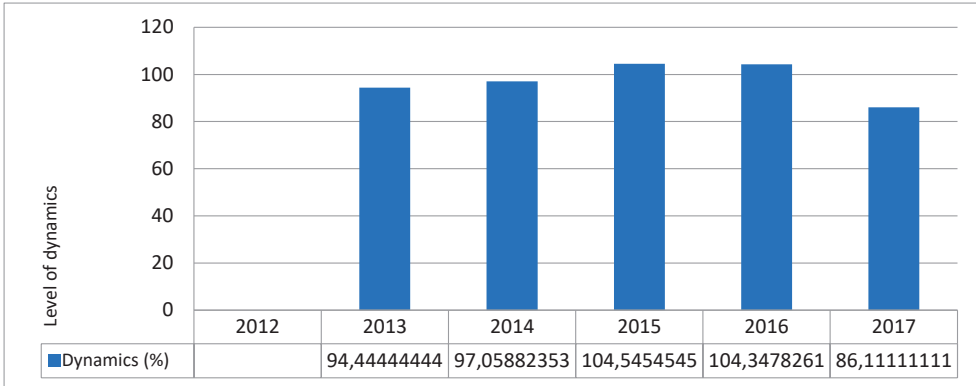


Fig. 2. Dynamics of positive opinions of the Poles concerning the Police in the years 2012–2017

Source: own study

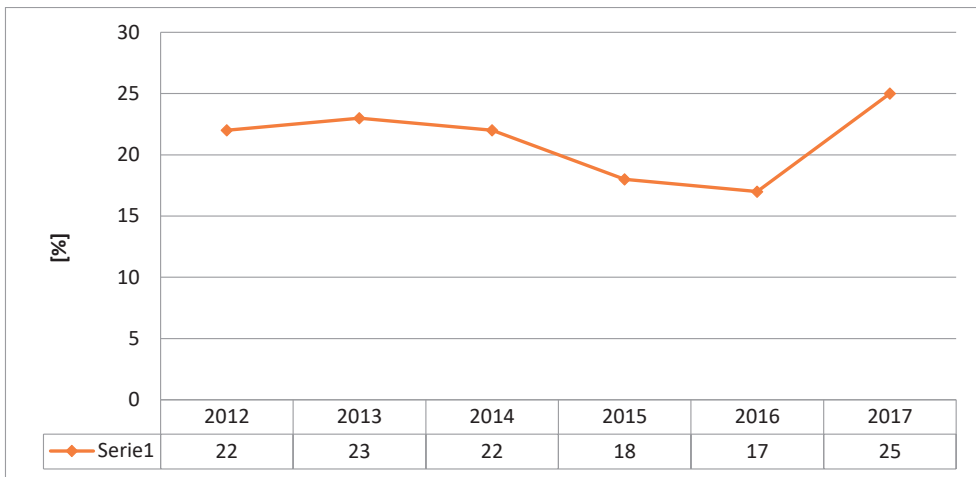


Fig. 3. Negative assessments of the Poles concerning the Police in the years 2012–2017

Source: developed based on CBOS data [19]

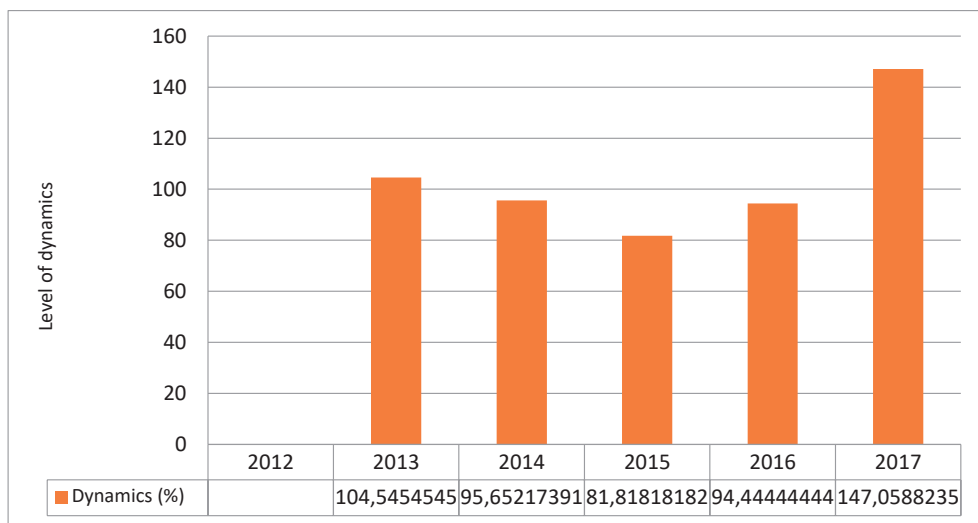


Fig. 4. Dynamics of negative opinions of the Poles concerning the Police in the years 2012–2017

Source: own study

The second source of preventive measures of the Police is constituted by priority tasks defined by the chief Police commandant. In the years 2016–2018 they comprised among others:

- enhancing the effectiveness of Police activities aimed at improving cooperation with the community – implemented as part of the following tasks:
 - a) adaptation of Police activity to identified needs in the scope of preventing of social hazards (including with respect to counteracting social pathologies, cybercrimes [21]),
 - b) intensification of cooperation with members of the local community by organising social debates, broadening cooperation with external entities, including with self-government authorities, in the sphere related to supporting and financing actions of the Police of a preventive nature,
 - c) adaptation of organisational structure of the Police with respect to social prevention on the county, municipal, regional levels to identified needs,
 - d) intensifying pro-social actions in cooperation of the Police with non-government organisations and associations,

- e) proceeding legislative changes and financial solutions concerning the Police social prevention,
- f) enhancing the image of a policeman and standards of interpersonal communication in contacts with the society,
- g) establishment of a Police Social Education Centre;
- increasing the effectiveness of Police measures in combatting crimes that are most onerous for the community – implemented by the following tasks:
 - a) enhancing the effectiveness of the Police in preventing crimes and offences (consisting in adapting the number of policemen on patrol and intervention duty, community policemen, intelligence gathering activities to identified needs),
 - b) activating police activities in combatting the so-called “7 categories of crimes” [22].

The third source of preventive measures of the Police comprises tasks that arise from ongoing analyses of the level of hazards to public security and order. The Police have at their disposal a lot of sources that enable making reviews of the review of the state of hazard on a national, regional or local scale. On the one hand it compiles data concerning the number and nature of crimes ascertained and detected, and on the other hand analyses information obtained from policemen executing their duties in the field (including in particular community support policemen). Information concerning hazards is also obtained from inhabitants making direct complaints to the policemen or making use of the Internet application “Krajowa mapa zagrożeń” [National map of hazards] [23].

Preventive measures of the Police are of a complex nature (consisting of their strands and strips) and a collective nature (based on positive cooperation of numerous entities) with features of:

- “public administration” – understood as satisfying collective and individual needs of the citizens arising from coexistence of people in communities, assumed by the state and implemented by its autonomous bodies, including also territorial self-government authorities” [24]. Those needs comprise among others needs of security, which if not satisfied may lead to deprivation of the people, and when transposed on collective behaviour, this could lead to social, political or economic crises [25];
- “state administration” – understood as “...activities implemented by entities established to exercise state administration” (subjective approach) or organisational activities (beyond competencies of the judiciary and state control) implemented on behalf of the state by an authorised body that represents the state power within a scope defined by the law (objective approach) [26].

Preventive measures must be appropriately organised, and in their phase of preparation they require planning and preparing people to make effective use of the equipping placed at their disposal. As regards preventive measures, particular executory importance is placed on community policemen and policemen of patrol and intervention units.

2. Community support policemen and preventive measures of the Police

The preventive dimension of police operation is visible in actions of community support policemen, policemen assigned with patrol and intervention duties and policemen specialised in social prophylaxis [27].

Community policemen are comprised by the Police preventive service. The legal basis for establishing of an operating zone (beat) of the community policeman is art. 8a of the Act *on the Police* [9] in the following wording: “The county (municipal) commandant of the Police may establish beats for community policemen and departments of the Police according to principles determined by the chief Police commandant”. The district beat unit employing at least three policemen may be established in the county (municipal) headquarters of the Police or in the Police station (§ 14 items 3 and 4 of the order of the chief Police commandant No. 1041/2007 [28]).

The tasks of a community policeman (policeman appointed to the post of a community policeman or a policeman entrusted with exercising duties on this post [29]) comprise the following:

- making reconnaissance of the assigned zone with respect to persons, area, phenomena and events that impact the state of public security and order;
- implementation of tasks in the scope of social prevention;
- execution of tasks in the scope of prosecuting perpetrators of crimes and offences.

The tasks of the community policeman comprise the execution of personal and field reconnaissance. Personal reconnaissance consists of compiling of information on [30]:

- persons with criminal record and on prison pass or a break from sentence;
- suspected of criminal activity;
- addicted to alcohol or other substances with similar action to alcohol, juveniles;
- at risk of demoralisation and endangered by perpetrators of punishable acts.

An important issue in the work of community policemen is field reconnaissance. It comprises compilation of information pertaining to the following [29]:

- areas requiring special supervision with view to:
 - a) intensification of criminogenic phenomena,

- b) gatherings of people posing a threat to public security and order, as well as facilities frequented by persons suspected of committing crimes and offences,
 - c) location of bazaars and markets as well as areas that surround entertainment venues,
 - d) gathering of juveniles who could endanger public security and order,
 - e) location of facilities endangered by criminal activity with view to situation, nature or production or provided services and the attractiveness of goods being sold or stored;
- streets, squares, access roads, yards, passages between streets and buildings, green areas, parks, forest areas, abandoned facilities and devices for the needs of civil defence;
 - seats of public administration bodies, institutions, political and social organisations, housing cooperatives and homeowner's association, as well as administrations of municipal buildings;
 - enterprises and work establishments, facilities and educational and day-care facilities, cultural and entertainment centres, gastronomic units, transport bases, construction programmes, banks and commercial facilities, including venues, areas and devices subject to obligatory protection pursuant to separate regulations;
 - routes of municipal and long distance transport routes, stations, stops, gas stations, seats of rescue and technical services, tourist information, hotels, health protection facilities and sport facilities.

The community policeman carries out on-going analyses of the security level in his zone based on information concerning the state of security and order and on a review of the state of security and order for needs of service deployment devised pursuant to separate regulations.

According to the reconnaissance, the community officer reports to his supervisor submitting recommendations and proposals for the time and method of implementing own tasks, as well as the quantity and distribution of police services and non-police entities, time needed for them to execute the task with recommendations pertaining to specific tasks.

In addition the community policemen also operate in the field of social prevention: [29]:

- by diagnosing and indicating local hazards and directions for further preventive measures;
- by inspiring and participating in undertakings in the scope of social prevention in cooperation with other policemen, entities of territorial self-governments and other non-police entities;

- by actions and by implementing preventive programmes in cooperation with other policemen and non-police entities;
- by informing residents about the hazards and by providing instructions on ways of becoming secured, behaviour to be adopted in various situations and becoming organised to improve security;
- by initiating assistance actions for victims of crimes, and also by organising advisory services for this group of people;
- by actively counteracting family violence.

3. Involvement of policemen in patrol and intervention duty under preventive measures

Policemen carry out preventive measures when on patrol and intervention duty pursuant to order No. 768 of the chief Police Commandant of 14 August 2007 *on forms and methods of executing actions by policemen on patrol duty and coordination of actions of a preventive nature* [31].

The patrol duty, which consists of executing tasks by a policeman in a given hazard area, assigned duty zone, on the given patrol route or in an endangered place, is entrusted to policemen working in patrol units, patrol and intervention units, intervention units and intelligence units (§ 3 item 1 of order No. 768/2007 of the chief Police commandant [31]).

Given § 35 par. 1 of order No. 1041 issued by the Chief Police Commandant of 28 September 2007 *on specific rules for the organisation and scope of organisation of police stations and headquarters and other organisational units of the Police* and pursuant to § 3 item 2 of Order No. 768 of the chief Police commandant of 14 August 2007 *on forms and methods of executing actions by policemen on patrol duty and coordination of actions of a preventive nature* [31], policemen from autonomous police prevention units may support Police units in patrol duties and patrol and intervention operations by implementing patrol duty.

Basic tasks of policemen on patrol duty comprise the following [30]:

- preventing all types of behaviour that could pose a hazard to the security of persons or property or violation of the public order;
- preventing the commitment of crimes and offences in public places;
- implementation of indispensable preventive measures;

- forging and keeping up ties with the local community to establish the feeling of security and co-responsibility for preventing hazards to public security.

Patrol duty is a form of precautionary measure that involves interfering in the surroundings (policemen on patrol affect the social environment) [32].

During patrol service and patrol and intervention duty, prevention may acquire the form of interference through interventions in situations when the course of events requires involvement of policemen to achieve its change. This is due to the fact that a police intervention means is immediate involvement of a policeman or policemen in an incident perceived as a crime, offence, hazard or a different factor of importance for the state of public security and order, aimed at identifying the nature, type and circumstances of the occurring event and undertakings oriented at restoring violated public security and order (§ 2 par. 1 item 12 of order of 23/2014 of the Chief Police Commandant [33]).

Preventive measures in the scope of social prevention are being executed as of 2015 on the basis of a concept entitled “Concept of Police activities in the scope of social prevention for the years 2015–2018” [34].

This concept caused a smaller differentiation in police structures functioning up to 2015, which were responsible for the implementation of one of the key statutory tasks of the Police, and namely initiating and organising tasks aimed at preventing committing of crimes and offences and also criminogenic phenomena. Consequently organisational and functional solutions had been deployed to assure the standardisation of structures in all organisational units of the Police responsible for implementing preventive measures by way of:

- enhancing preventive measures at the level of provincial, municipal and county headquarters and Police stations that contribute to better feeling of social security;
- initiating and execution of several of prophylactic measures according to needs and expectations of the local community;
- caring for the image of the Polish Police as a reliable and responsible partner of the citizens in prevention.

Summary

The Police not only care for the security of the people, public security and order; they also do their best to boost the feeling of security with the aim of forming the image of the police and establish an atmosphere of trust. The society should be able to trust

the people people working for them who frequently protect them even at the cost of endangering own life or health.

The Police do their best to maintain continuous of its potential of its preventive measure, but still a lot remains to be done. An assumption could be made that in the continuously changing world the search for new solutions is a never-ending task. The enhancing of preventive measures should be related to caring for forming of dispositional powers of Police officers, including their willingness to taking up joint actions and capacity for the execution of tasks in a way that the adopted methods of assuring security did not give rise to social dislike.

The police keep changing in response to challenges of the present and those anticipated in the near future. The chief Police commandant devises priorities, on the basis of which general tasks are formulated, which are then tailored to actual needs of security on a local scale. An important element in Police management is attempting to assure discipline of the officers, prevention of illegal actions, which is transposed on acceptance of that institution and building of its authority.

Trust in the Police contributes to the situational capacity of preventive measures, which in combination with development of dispositional traits of the policemen contributes to working out better effectiveness of that institution in the field of protecting the security of people and maintaining public security and order.

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