

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

### *Reason and questions*

This research arises from the objective of the Ministry of Security and Justice to increase the number of National Police volunteers to ten percent of the force's operational strength. This will not happen without a lot of effort, and realizing this goal appears to be difficult in practice. This study should provide insights to help the police to achieve this objective. In consultation with the Research and Documentation Centre (WODC) of the Ministry of Security and Justice and the supervising committee, the decision has been made to focus on these research questions:

*"In light of social developments and practices in other sectors, what new forms of volunteerism and/or citizens are relevant to the police?"*

*"How can the police deal with new forms of voluntary compliance in a more innovative way within the legal framework and the 2012–2014 collective labor agreement?"*

We investigated new innovative forms of volunteer work in other sectors and domains outside the police to ascertain whether aspects or different approaches can be distinguished within these initiatives that could possibly help the police to increase the number of volunteers. On the basis of a few case studies, we examined whether the accumulated insights could possibly be taken as lessons for the police.

### *Methods used in the study*

Various research methods were used in this study. First, a desk study was undertaken, studying the literature to find relevant aspects of volunteering work. Subsequently, a number of cases were found and studied. These cases were selected on the basis of available documents. In addition, several interviews were held with authoritative experts and respondents working in the areas where innovative projects with volunteers are launched. After the analysis of the cases, the research team organized two focus groups, in which a number of experts and representatives of the National Police participated. These focus groups were designed to test the findings from the case studies and discuss the applicability of the accumulated knowledge to the police context. The key question was whether the findings from the case studies are relevant for the Dutch police.

### *Selected themes and case studies*

Given the wide theme, it proved necessary to create a closer focus. In consultation with the supervising committee, the decision has been made that, in the search for innovative examples relevant to volunteer work at the police, the focus will be on four specific themes:

- Mobilizing specific target groups;
- Matching the organization's and the volunteer's expectations regarding the needs of the volunteer;
- The manner in which, and the extent to, there is a certain formalization or institutionalization of volunteering work;

- The way to regulate how volunteers handle sensitive data.

Insights regarding these themes were collected through analysis of five case studies in various fields and sectors:

1. Neighborhood Team Children's Zone;
2. Students living in a nursing home;
3. The German National Voluntary Service;
4. The National Reserve Corps in the Dutch Army;
5. Stewards at football matches.

In the ensuing report, each of the cases are first described and later analyzed on the bases of the four selected themes. Besides giving a description of how aspects of volunteering work are dealt with outside the police context, the purpose of the case descriptions is also to see whether and how the cases can serve as inspiration for the police. In order to ensure useful and structure, we abstracted the insights from the case studies in the form of the (innovative) mechanisms observed in several cases. Because these mechanisms work in multiple domains and contexts, we expected that these insights are relevant for the police.

*Identification of innovative mechanisms from the case studies*

Table 8.1 provides a summary of the innovative mechanisms in the cases.

**Table 8.1: Innovative mechanisms by theme**

Theme	Mechanism
Mobilizing target groups	A. Focus attention on a specific target and define target groups. B. Frame the offer from the perspective of the volunteer.
Matching expectations	C. Think about volunteers' efforts in terms of the organizational–volunteer–professional triangle. D. Work with a clear and concrete vision (including the relationship between professionals and volunteers) and steer it necessary. E. Start with a careful selection process and outline a realistic picture of the work to be done by volunteers. F. Pay attention to volunteers' motives.
Formalization / institutionalization	G. Offering a contract alone is not enough, good embedding is also required. H. Ensure that volunteers develop pride in being part of the organization.
Dealing with sensitive information	I. Formal regulation in relation to volunteers handling sensitive information is important, but not sufficient.

*Suggestions for the police (based on the identified mechanisms)*

To get an idea about applicability, we discussed the findings from the case studies in two focus group sessions. This “test” has led to the suggestions that we now provide to the police. These are mainly meant to provide for ideas on what could be done on the basis of insights from practices in other domains and with other organizations and not to determine the conditions under which a certain mechanism may or may not be relevant for the police. The latter is outside the scope of this study.

Table 8.2 gives an indication of the suggestions. In the report itself, they are explained in more detail.

**Table 8.2: Relevance and significance for the police**

Suggestions	Inspired by mechanism(s)
<b>Mobilizing target groups</b>	
▪ Pay attention to different audiences and potential students; focus on a specific target group.	A
▪ Find connection between the desires of the organization and the needs of volunteers.	B
▪ Reason from the contributions that volunteers can deliver rather than from the structure of the organization.	B and F
<b>Matching expectations</b>	
▪ Improve the management of expectations of regular police officers and volunteers.	C and D
▪ Deal with volunteers as a fixed point of discussion in performance interviews with team leaders.	D
▪ Recognize the importance of developing a nuanced vision of volunteers within the police.	D
▪ Paint a realistic picture about the role of volunteers within the police organization.	E
▪ Mitigate the occurrence of problems arising from central recruiting by highlighting regional allegiance.	E
▪ Introduce more differentiation in types of volunteer work within the police.	E and F
<b>Formalization and institutionalization</b>	
▪ Set up fixed contact points for volunteers.	G
▪ Offer a broad education, even deployment is often narrow.	G and F
▪ Prevent possible 'abuse' of volunteers by professionals.	G, H, and D
▪ Learn from one another in relation to volunteer management.	G, C, and I
<b>Dealing with sensitive data</b>	
▪ Emphasize the advantage of having an official status.	I and G
▪ Screen professionals and volunteers carefully and equally.	I and D

*Conclusions and points of focus*

From research on volunteering work within the police, we can observe that the organization in general does not sufficiently realize the value of the volunteers. It is rarely recognized that volunteers have skills and might bring their own network or specific knowledge that may be of interest to the police. The generally appreciated fresh eyes is not something that is associated positively with the deployment of volunteers within the police. Influencing this image in a positive way brings opportunities for both the organization and for volunteers' self-esteem and perception. In the current discussion on the efforts of volunteers, the concept of "work displacement" plays an important role. This indicates a certain fear on the part of the professionals that their work will be taken over by volunteers. In the focus groups, the question was raised as to when exactly work displacement would take place. Many people do not approach this issue in the same manner and that makes the discussion difficult. An important aspect is that there is much to gain within the police provided there is greater investment in the relationship between professionals and volunteers. This implies providing insight to the added value that police volunteers can provide for professionals and the police organization. One of the ways to achieve this is to make this topic a regular point of discussion in various consultative

bodies and during performance appraisals. This can contribute to the image of the added value of volunteers to the police organization.

On the basis of the insights from the focus group sessions, it seems challenges exist within the police regarding the following factors in particular:

- i. The lack of a clear vision. The roles and tasks which can and cannot be undertaken by volunteers (in relation to professionals' tasks) remain unclear.
- ii. Managing expectations. During both recruitment and training, it seems as if the organization and the volunteers have different expectations on what volunteers should do.
- iii. Customization. Volunteers today expect an organization to take into account their personal circumstances and ambitions. Within the police organization this is increasingly difficult, partly because of the problems arising from the central recruitment of volunteers.
- iv. Furthering the education of police volunteers. The literature points out that it is important to sufficiently equip volunteers for the tasks they will encounter. Especially in the police, volunteers can be involved in very complex and difficult tasks. In practice however, the training of volunteers has been reduced considerably – from a fully-fledged police diploma to three certificates. Much has been deleted from the training program.
- v. Acceptance and support. The focus groups showed that volunteers within the organization are not always seen as equivalent colleagues by professionals and sometimes by managers.
- vi. Guidance and support. After their training time, the volunteers sometimes lack a fixed point in the organization, so the police volunteers can go "fish" and become "lost". This is not contributing to the binding of the volunteer to the police organization.
- vii. Recognition, appreciation, and reward. Firstly, volunteers are deployed on tasks that are not intrinsically stimulating, for example being a "living crush barrier". Furthermore, volunteers sometimes fall by the wayside when it comes to additional rewards to be given within a unit. The police hierarchy sometimes only considers the paid professionals and that does not contribute to the feeling of being appreciated.
- viii. More room for volunteers. Within the current police organization, police volunteers are used mainly to perform tasks that are defined by the organization itself. There is little to no room to respond to the needs and opportunities that volunteers see for themselves within police organization. These needs and opportunities are based on their own competencies, knowledge, and skills.