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The function of the police:

Various visions



Summary

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Summary

Commissioned by the Scientific Research and Documentation Center (WODC) of the Ministry of Justice and Security, PLATO carried out a study into visions on the police function.

The research consisted of three sub-studies, a study of relevant policy and research documents, two focus group meetings with participants from various work and professional backgrounds, and a number of concise country studies supplemented with several interviews.

Four developments were central to the research:

1. International developments and their influence on the Netherlands:
Geopolitical and demographic developments: radicalization, terrorism and terrorist threats, internationalization of crime, undermining crime and its impact on the upper world.
2. Developments in science and technology, including digitization and social media.
3. Developments in the social domain, including isolation of the elderly, changes of norms and values, but also the processes of decentralization in (youth) care and welfare.
4. Developments in time use and way of life Growth of leisure, tourism, events and catering.

Literature study was conducted with regard to each of these developments, focus groups were consulted, and interviews were conducted with experts at home and abroad. In this project we deliberately were asked not only to involve the usual stakeholders. The directorate General of the Police explicitly asked to consult professionals from various backgrounds to respond to the results of the study of literature and the policy documents of the countries included in this project.

1 Developments in science and technology

New possibilities

The literature study shows that as a result of technological developments many new possibilities have arisen. New techniques, social media, Internet, 3d printing, sensors, and drones are amongst them. Besides possibilities, dangers have arisen. Much crime has become virtual and international. The developments in science and technology bring many analytical and research opportunities with regard to forensic research and intelligence. To identify developments, to anticipate and to use them or to cope with them where necessary, expertise is needed. This raises the question of what the police themselves have to do, or can do, and what may better be outsourced. It is of great importance that there is a reflection on the police's own information position in relation to that of the parties to whom tasks are outsourced. In order to function adequately in the midst of developments, professional development is required. This development is necessary to be a good discussion partner in collaboration with relevant organizations, and where necessary, also to play a directing role in this, and not to undermine the own information position.

Challenges

The focus group discussions made it clear that the technological and scientific developments brought new challenges in the field of citizen participation. Digitization of police work may affect negatively the visible presence on the street. Digitization brings more office work and keeps the agent behind the computer. It is important to find the right mix between digital and face to face communication. The

social media and the Internet also offer the police the opportunity to show themselves and to build a reputation. That is all the more necessary because the social media often portray the police in a decontextualized way with all the reputational damage that entails. In a sense, this is an example of a distortion of information that is also reflected in the rise of fake news and the reactions that come back to it. The police function thus increasingly enters the digital domain.

To actively and effectively use the technological possibilities, attention to privacy and data protection is important. ICT is a threat to privacy on the one hand, but solutions can also be found in that same technology. With the growth of means of communication, the task load increases due to, for example, an increase in the number of reports. Here too, technology is the cause and the solution. Technology increases the possibilities to work efficiently, to be service and customer-oriented, and to be efficient and effective in analyzing crime and in responding adequately and in time. This then requires compatibility of data systems, so that links of data can be made where necessary. The increased importance of ICT not only has instrumental technical consequences, but also organizational cultural consequences, because new competencies become important.

Interviewees point to the necessity of technological developments in order to be able to counter the criminal world. In the light of the Internet of Things, the protection of the vital infrastructure is also a matter that deserves attention, which is becoming increasingly complex and in which the police must seek support through cooperation with experts from outside their own organization. The same applies to the analytical possibilities that the Internet offers. Cooperation with scientists / researchers is essential in this.

In the country studies additional priorities are visible in the area of innovation and sustainable technology. The use of technological means (cameras, sensors, drones, etc.) in the management of masses at international and national concentrations of people at events and demonstrations is mentioned. Combating social and fiscal fraud is a point of attention, as is the police function in the field of traffic safety. Efficiency and service to the citizens is also clearly emphasized in the country documents. This concerns transparency and efficiency in the service provision, but also openness in the accountability of police action.

2 International developments and their influence on the Netherlands

Diversity

International developments have influenced the composition of the population in the Netherlands. As a result, the police are no longer a reflection of society. Attempts to change that are still insufficiently successful. Here and there, tensions arise between citizens and the police. Discussions are held about ethnic profiling, and other forms of unequal treatment. The arrival of people with a migrant background has increased forms of polarization in society with sometimes serious consequences such as radicalization and terror. In order to monitor and recognize such processes and to affect them, there is an increased need for working methods that emphasize early signaling, being proactive and preventive. To be able to make the contacts that make this possible, knowledge of languages and cultures is important. The pursuit of diversity within the police can also strengthen these competences within the police. Because the police cannot have everything in house, cooperation with organizations

outside the police is important in the field of social competences, cultural competences and language skills.

The focus groups emphasized the necessity of collaborating with other partners including international partners. They argued for the concept of diversity to be broadly understood, not only in the area of ethnicity, but also gender, social origin, expertise etc. Acquiring staff in the light of diversity is one thing, but at least as important is maintaining new people. This calls for addressing sensitive issues and making them negotiable. Integrity and loyalty and mutual interaction in various situations are important.

In the interviews, many emphasized the vulnerability of groups in society and how disruption and undermining of society takes its toll in those people. In order to trace disruptions of society in a timely manner, politicians must form and maintain networks at all levels (policy level and operational level), both among themselves and with citizens or groups in society. The developments require a mix of generalists and specialists who share their knowledge and competences intensively.

Broad approach

In the country studies it becomes clear that it is necessary to look at the deeper causes to combat problems in their own country. In that respect, involvement in development cooperation and matters of peace and security is important, in order to understand and influence the mechanisms that underlie developments in the Netherlands. The importance of national and international cooperation and combining forces is frequently emphasized. It also indicates that more diversity should be achieved in the recruitment and selection of police officers. This involves diversity by origin, but also expertise and subject background. Increasing the internal diversity within the police also occasionally leads to tensions and conflicts. A proactive approach is also important in this area. In many policy documents from countries studied, good employment practices are emphasized with attention to working conditions, respect, and employee well-being.

3 Developments in the social domain

Working together 24/7

Due to developments in the social domain, many tasks have been decentralized. The views on care have also changed, so that individuals who formerly resided in institutions now live independently, are on the street. There they experience, or sometimes cause problems. The police that is available 24/7 often has to deal with the consequences. The police feel insufficiently equipped in such cases. That is why collaboration with other (care) organizations is important in order to coordinate the work, and share knowledge. However, such collaboration requires clarity about responsibilities, privacy issues, and everyone's duties and roles. The situation of the police as a last resort is actually undesirable. Other organizations involved should also take their responsibility outside regular working hours, and provide 24-hour service. Only then may balanced cooperation be achieved.

Signaling and advising

Because the police are on the streets and are informed in various ways about matters, the police can play a signaling role. This is very essential in order to be able to intervene in time. For this reason knowledge of the social map and participation in networks are required. It is also important to be able

to put items that require attention on the agenda, even if they do not belong to your direct package of tasks. That is part of the advisory role of the police.

Care function

The focus groups emphasize that the police task is often also a care task. They see more benefits in timely care and good aftercare than in a repressive approach. The police must win the trust of the citizens regardless of their background or origin. The police depend to a large extent on the cooperation of citizens. Support among citizens therefor is of vital importance. Examples are available in the countries studied in which this support has been lost and even 'no go areas' have come to exist. In the policy intentions in all the countries studied, strengthening the ties with citizens in the community is high on the agenda. The Netherlands is assessed relatively high by interviewees in that respect. Moreover it was noted in the focus groups that functioning in the private equity firm requires a certain degree of self-reliance, which is generally available to higher educated people, but less well educated people to a lesser extent.

Trust and authority

The police function entails on the one hand the identification, detection and combating of crime, and on the other hand the protection of the population and vulnerable groups in society. The changes in the social domain also include the care for people who are threatening to radicalize or who develop antisocial behavior. Collaboration is also essential there. Collaboration between police and care institutions, education, youth institutions and the judiciary is necessary to be able to identify preferably timely and act (where necessary). Especially communication with citizens is important here. The police balances between support, trust and closeness on the one hand and authority and power to intervene on the other.

In the interviews it is also indicated that because the police are too often the last resort, the task load of officers becomes too heavy. That is why it makes sense to pursue citizen participation and to share some tasks with other partners, without the police withdrawing completely from these tasks. A balance must be sought between dividing tasks and sharing tasks.

4 Developments in time use and way of life

It is recognized that the changes in time spending and ways of life aggravate the police task, particularly the tasks in the area of safety. At the same time, the number of other organizations that perform safety tasks has increased. During sports events clubs take a part of the responsibility. Stewards and private security organizations play a role here. The municipality is increasingly using their own staff: BOA's. In short, the police are increasingly a player in a web of actors that all have mutual task divisions and common ground. In this dynamic setting it is important to share data where necessary and to share intelligence to serve safety, but also to trace criminal initiatives. The same applies to the detection of threats of radicalization and terror.

The question of the legitimacy of the police is at stake in this division of tasks with other players in the security and security domain. If too many tasks are delegated, the police will become insufficiently visible. This may negatively affect the perception of citizens of what the police stand for. If the police leave too many tasks to others, there is a risk that the police will end up with insufficient information and thus undermine its own directing role. Another consequence may be that due to insufficient

insight into the whole, the police can also insufficiently account for their work. The police function benefits if it is seen as important, with sufficient authority, transparency and democratic control.

The crowds in the public space, the large numbers of festivals and other events easily lead to capacity problems, and thus to reduced services. It is clear from the policy plans of the countries studied that much value is attached to a service-providing police, which is seen as respectful in its approach to citizens, who provides efficient services and according to clear procedures. Today citizens place high demands on that service. In that context, a permanent management of expectations is essential. Also in dealing with suspects, respect is required. Situations in which the police has faltered in this respect or has been displayed as such in media, have direct repercussions for the confidence in the police and thus for the proper performance of the police function.

Implications for the police function

General

The first chapter of this report uses a definition of the police function consisting of a number of task areas (enforcement, investigation, emergency assistance, signaling and advice), a number of phases (pro-action, prevention, preparation, repression and aftercare) and a number of aspects of police work (internal organization, information and communication, infrastructure, cooperation and human resources).

The research has shown that the police are confronted with the complexity of society, and the developments in it, and have come under increasing pressure. The emergency assistance tasks are increasing. As a result, the police had to delegate, or share more tasks. The result is that the role of the police as a network partner and often as a director, has increased. More tasks are carried out by others, and thus the signaling and advisory tasks increase.

In the research it becomes clear that literature, the focus groups, the interviewees and the foreign studies point to the need to identify crime patterns, to be proactive and preventive and not to tackle things, once they have already happened, but to find solutions at the source. If things go wrong, tracking and punishing are insufficient to prevent recidivism, and to promote reintegration. To this end, aftercare is important. This emphasis on being active in all phases has been emphasized in all parts of the research.

The developments in society have a profound influence on the way in which the police cooperate with citizens and with organizations outside the police. These changes, and the role of social media and the Internet require permanent reorientation, analysis and professional learning processes. The use of technology in work processes also sets such requirements.

In the light of developments and their influence, a reconsideration of recruitment and selection is also a point of continuous attention. This concerns the competence requirements for personnel, but also for the composition of the staff (diversity)

Country studies

In the comparison with countries studied, it becomes clear that The Netherlands is strong in maintaining close contacts in neighborhoods. Interviewees from the countries speak with appreciation about the situation in the Netherlands. Requested suggestions often concerned tips for not doing things, rather than suggestions on how things might be improved. Striking in the policy documents is

the strong emphasis on good employment practices with attention for the welfare and well-being of agents. The emphasis on cooperation is also a shared view. Interviews show that many people find ICT developments and the social media side difficult, but also important. The policy plans in the countries studied show many similarities. Internal organization and work processes are central to all sources that have been consulted. The necessity of a customer orientation, and efficiency as a means to do so are frequently mentioned, as is the public accounting for the police work.

In dealing with the public, in addition to the citizen as a source of information, the citizen is often mentioned as an audience whose trust the police must win and to whom an image must be conveyed.

In all countries the systematic use of data, the necessary compatibility of systems, is mentioned, but also the need for clear legislation and regulations regarding privacy and data protection. The availability of data creates new and better opportunities for analytical approaches to detection. In Germany, positive experiences with predictive policing are mentioned in this area.

Focus groups

The focus groups have shown their own view on the function of the police. The question of the representation of the police as a reflection of society is essential. There are still many challenges in recruitment and selection, but also in staff retention. Technological and data-analytical possibilities are strongly emphasized in the focus groups. The focus groups have also emphasized that there must be cooperation and that a reflection on the role of the police and the division of tasks in that light is important. Discussions such as those in the focus groups have proven to be a fruitful method for generating and calibrating ideas and making use of them when further developing a vision of the police function.

The image that emerges from the sub-studies is that of a police force that works:

- in conjunction with relevant partners,
- in connection with citizens, groups and organizations in society,
- to prevent, limit and combat insecurity,
- to protect the population and vulnerable groups within it,
- in a way that is transparent, respectful and serviceable and
- that is the subject of democratic control and public accountability.