

Managing Police Reform: Lessons Learned, Best Practices, and Remaining Challenges in Central, East, and Southeast Europe

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INTERIM REPORT:

Progress to Date

The first months of the fellowship period were dedicated to conducting broad research in the field of police reform, and to establishing contacts with relevant experts. This investment has been necessary in order to develop a thorough and thoughtful matrix of indicators that would inform each of the case studies, and the final policy paper.

Developing these indicators turned became a considerable challenge, however. There are no precise definitions of what, *specifically*, is meant by the phrase *democratic policing*, or rather, “modern/professional policing in a democratic society.” There is broad consensus that civilian oversight, accountability mechanisms, demilitarization, a more service-oriented approach are targets for reform. There are no specifically and clearly defined standards as to what level of reform towards these goals can be considered a “threshold.”

As this project seeks to examine progress toward “democratization” in Central and Eastern Europe, one would expect the European Union to set these benchmarks. Yet this is not the case. Certainly, all EU member states and accession candidates must fulfill standards, particularly Human Rights standards, set out in the *aquis communautaire* and other international human rights instruments. Standards relating to fighting crime are also framed as international conventions and mechanisms for cooperation. Yet for issues relating to the daily operations of police, the daily work that defines their relationship to the public and within democratic norms, there simply exist no harmonized standards for police organizations either within the EU or for candidate countries.

Moreover, certain accepted norms, like civil oversight institutions, do not have singular institutional solutions, and therefore an evaluation of their effectiveness is more complex than a set of specific indicators. Other imperatives, such as specific operational guidelines and protocols that limit, or rather *define* the scope of discretion of particular officers in performing their duties, are a matter of commonly accepted practice, rather than formalized standards. Research also points to the importance of transformation in the management style of police organizations, but evaluating management style extends far beyond policing into organizational and management studies. I note these issues in order to convey how challenging this inquiry has been.

In an effort to make “concrete” challenge of evaluating reform within specific police organization,

and as a project related to the IPF effort, I have also in the past months taken part in a Geneva Center for Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF) comparative review of police reform in a number of Central and East European states. While having taken additional time away from the IPF work, participation in this project was nevertheless worthwhile in exchanging view with a community of researchers engaged with the same line of inquiry and confirming that my findings, to date, were consistent with their knowledge and experience.

Change of Schedule

Despite considerable work accomplished, the initial project schedule has been delayed for several reasons.

First, the fellowship administrative schedule, compared to the calendar year (i.e. basically only 3 months work time, mid-March until mid-June until the holidays, when people are difficult to reach), objectively there was an inevitable summer-holiday gap in availability of persons and resources required to move the research forward.

Second, and more importantly, the scope of the research has turned out to be beyond expectations. The task of identifying and systematizing indicators from existing scholarship, and much more fruitfully, from the experiences of practitioners (which are largely undocumented and unformalized, but rather exist virtually as knowledge and experience) has proved quite a challenge. It is perhaps precisely the extent of the challenge that explains why a comprehensive compilation of such standards has not been done before.

Third and final reason for extending the project implementation timeline is that I have met with additional professional obligations that I could not have anticipated at the beginning of the fellowship period. As a result, I have had much less time to devote to this project than projected at the outset.

Next Steps/Revised Schedule:

Given the scope of the question posed in this inquiry, this may be a good time to review the work so far and revise the original set of goal to more reasonable proportions.

Consultations with mentors and advisors over the next weeks should help define more modest goals and parameters for further inquiry.

Consultations with IPF staff will likewise be necessary to agree on the proposed changes.