

Code of Ethics of a Police Officer in the Context of Shaping the Security Environment of the Slovak Republic¹

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In recent years, society has been marked by the occurrence of several risk factors (the pandemic, the war conflict in Ukraine, the increase in hate speech and the subsequent social polarisation that has reached a violent outcome). These aspects lead to a rethinking of the use of tools to eliminate tensions in different areas. One of them is the area of police ethics.

The paper is devoted to selected content and structural elements used in the code of ethics of a police officer, which were aimed at strengthening the relationship between civil society and the police with the intention of positively shaping the security environment in the Slovak Republic.

The paper is based on a theoretical analysis of three planes of the updated code of ethics: 1. the functions of the incorporated elements; 2. the means of implementation in the application practice; 3. research as a prerequisite for updating and a means of verification of the processing of the code of ethics. The third level is demonstrated on the field of credibility of the Police Force using the theoretical basis of the dialectical method.

In 2022, the Slovak Regulation No. 41/2022 on the Code of Police Ethics of the Ministry of the Interior was adopted. The document is divided into several parts, which are complementary to each other and fulfil mutual functions (explicative and motivational).

The area of police ethics is significantly represented in the public perception of police work and ultimately has an impact on the overall shaping of the security environment in terms of forming the social consciousness of citizens and members of the Police Force.

Keywords: Police Force, code of ethics, Slovak Republic, security environment, civil society

¹ The paper was produced as part of the VEGA grant project No. 2/0028/24 of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport SR and SAS “Social Changes and Conflicts in Selected Contexts of the Development of Contemporary Capitalism”. The author has no declared other interest.

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Introduction

In recent years, society has been marked by the emergence of several risk factors (pandemic, war conflict in Ukraine, increase in hate speeches and subsequent social polarisation, which in the Slovak Republic has also reached a violent outcome). These aspects lead to a reassessment of the use of instruments to eliminate tensions in various areas. One of the areas that immediately reflects the current development tendencies towards deepening social tensions is the area of security theory and practice. In response also to the above social situation, it reassesses the tools for mitigating social tensions and strengthening the security environment. Security is a multidimensional social phenomenon – the state of the security situation is underpinned by a number of factors that the security forces cannot control (economic situation, social polarisation, discrepancy between social expectations and lived practice, etc.). Nevertheless, the state of the security situation is the indicator that influences the work of the security forces. And while the security forces cannot completely control the situation, they can, in response to practice, seek and use tools that contribute to the alleviation of social tensions and the formation of a security environment. The work of the security professional – in our case, the police officer – to some extent influences and shapes the security environment. Against the backdrop of the dialectic of freedom and necessity, the dialectic of the particular and the social, our focus is on the shaping of the particular, which consists of an emphasis on the particular situations in which the police officer acts and, therefore, on the citizen's immediate experience of police work. The above-mentioned area corresponds to issues of police ethics, which can thus play an important role in the formation of a security environment. They provide a basic orientation in the complex situations of security practice for the police officer on the one hand and stimulate the citizen's expectations of the police on the other.

In this context, the update of the Code of Ethics of a Police Officer in the Slovak Republic was also carried out in 2021, when a working group was established to update the Code of Ethics. After more than a year of intensive work, the Code of Ethics was issued by the Ministry of the Interior of the Slovak Republic in Regulation No. 41/2022 on the Code of Ethics of a Police Officer. Within the new form of the document, the intention was to bring innovative content and structure that would respond to the aforementioned current challenges of security practice with its implementation potential.

The present paper is devoted to selected content and structural elements used in the Code of Ethics of a Police Officer, which were aimed at strengthening the relationship between civil society and the police with the intention of positively shaping the security environment in the Slovak Republic. Through a theoretical analysis based on the dialectical basis of three planes of the updated ethical code: 1. the functions of the incorporated elements; 2. the means of implementation into the application practice; 3. research as a prerequisite for updating and a means of verification of the processing of the ethical code, it outlines the implementation potential of police ethics as a tool for the formation of a safe social environment, demonstrating the above in the area of the credibility of the Police Force.

Code of Ethics – Theoretical basis for updating the set of ethical standards of a police officer

In 2021, a working group for updating the Code of Ethics was established by a measure of the Minister of the Interior of the Slovak Republic. As a result of the cooperation of experts of the Police Force from several fields (ethicists, lawyers, psychologists, etc.), the Slovak Ministry of the Interior issued Regulation No. 41 of 24 February 2022 on the Code of Ethics of a Police Officer. The process of the aforementioned update pointed out the need to take into account three areas.

Harmonisation of the Code of Ethics of the Police Officer with European standards

In 2020, an international conference of representatives of the Ministries of the Interior of the Member States of the European Union was held at the Council of Europe in Strasbourg, entitled “The Role of the Police in a Democratic Society. Nearly 20 years of the European Code of Police Ethics” (20–21 October 2020). The anniversary of the adoption of the European Code of Police Ethics was an opportunity to reflect on the wording of the Code and to assess the extent of its practical application in the context of the current social situation. The content of the conference was concentrated in five thematic blocks: qualification, recruitment and provision of the police force; the role and place of women in the police; accountability and internal and external control of the police; research and international cooperation; institutional strengthening between the Council of Europe and the representatives of the Ministries of the Interior of the EU Member States. From the contributions of the participants, it was possible to compare the ways in which the European Code of Police Ethics has been incorporated in some Member States, but also to identify the challenges for updating police ethics and the wording of codes of ethics.

The previous version of the Code of Ethics of a Police Officer already took into account compliance with the normative regulation of the European Code of Police Ethics, but the update brought new issues: How to apply the European requirements to the national document? Which requirements need to be explicitly expressed and which are, for example, part of other documents (internal regulations, methodological manuals, etc.) regulating the activities of the Police Force? The previous version of the Code of Ethics, which consisted of eleven articles, was created after the adoption of the European Code of Police Ethics, but as Marta Thurzová points out, it did not show much continuity with it. Its small scope was out of proportion to the provisions of the European Code and its general wording sounds largely alibi-like.³ The European Code of Police Ethics has a different character than the Code of Ethics of a Police Officer. The two documents differ in scope, but also in the content of the standards. These differences stem, among other things, from the different purposes of the adopted documents. The European Code of Police Ethics itself is comprehensive and structured, going beyond the standard scope of a code of ethics in its content and scope. It is broad in content, as it introduces rules also in areas that are not

³ THURZOVÁ 2012: 134.

usually dealt with in codes of ethics. These include, for example, rules on police action/ intervention, recruitment and training, or international cooperation. The European Code of Police Ethics thus represents the broader rules of police organisation, its pillars and mechanisms, manifested at organisational level, but also in the individual key situations of the police service. This introduces a uniform ethical dimension to police activity, while leaving room for the national development of the Code of Ethics. Thus, for example, it is not necessary to specify the norms of official action in the national code of ethics (they are contained in legislation, regulations of the Ministry of the Interior, methodological manual, etc.), but by preserving the standards of the European Code of Police Ethics it is desirable to abstract the values, and to create a rule valid for other actions, so that at the same time it covers the specific needs of the implementation of police activity in a particular state.

Modification of the content of the code of ethics in relation to the current needs of police practice

The Code of Ethics is not a dogmatic document. Its form should not be subject to radical changes in cyclical periods, i.e. it should always contain something permanent – the values of the police profession, based on the needs of security and social practice. Its innovation is thus not a process of new construction, but of building on the permanent by modifying the changeable, which are the particulars that spring (also) from social development. More than twenty years have passed since the adoption of the European Code of Police Ethics and the Code of Ethics, which represents the time in which changes in society may have taken place. We notice that society is more divergent, more multicultural, and we are facing some types of crime (e.g. cybercrime, illegal migration, etc.) much more strongly in the security sphere than in the past. The security environment is also influenced by social polarisation, which has deepened considerably in recent years.⁴ It is accompanied by a low level of trust in public institutions, including the Police Force. In this sense, some values are expanding their normative scope – in the context of impartiality, we are talking about the integration of diversity in the workplace; in the context of sharing and rapid transmission of information, the need to define rules for handling sensitive data and to establish rules governing the confidentiality of the police profession are coming to the fore, or we are problematising the possibilities and limits of personal expressions on social networks. The challenge in updating was therefore to provide normative content that would respond to the current needs and social challenges affecting the police service.

Adopting innovations in the content and structure of the document that would strengthen its implementation potential

Until 2022, the Code of Ethics of a Police Officer consisted of 11 articles, while in 2020 the third article was amended, but no significant changes were made in terms of structure and content. However, the updating of the Code of Ethics, which started in 2021, brought

⁴ DINUŠ 2015.

the need to think more deeply about the structure and content of the document. It is in this area that the link between general ethics and police practice is evident. The Code of Ethics is traditionally a deontological document, i.e. it contains the rules that guide a police officer in the performance of his or her duties. Central to such deontological sets are norms – as regulations of a moral nature that regulate conduct – determining what a police officer should, may and may not do in his or her official activities. The nature of the document implies that the focus is on morally relevant circumstances. In the sense of emphasising deontology as the supporting ethical basis of police ethics, then, police ethics is primarily an ethics of duty. By deontology we mean the part of ethics that deals with the problems of duty, moral requirements and norms, and in general every kind of demanding and fulfilling of duties as a form of manifestation of social necessity, specific to morality. The central criterion of action is the duties of the moral subject, while the necessity of their general validity is emphasised.⁵ At the same time, police ethics is also an institutionalised ethics, i.e. regulated in generally binding legal norms. In our conditions, these are: the Constitution, laws, international conventions, binding acts of the European Union and the Council of Europe; regulations within European structures to which the Slovak Republic is bound; internal legal norms that regulate certain areas of official activities.⁶ With this in mind, however, the question of rethinking both the content and the structural elements always arises when ethical documents are updated. As Aristotle writes in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, the beginning seems to be more than half of the whole, and many of the things we seek are made clear by it. Here, too, Aristotle argues that it is fruitful to return to the origins of deontology as an ethics of duty in order to highlight a feature that has somehow remained in the background alongside the emphasis on the rules themselves, but which accompanies any deontological ethics.⁷ In his work *De Officiis*, Cicero stressed, in contrast to the individualistic ethics of virtue (prevalent in antiquity), the duty of consideration for the social context of action. Society, in his conception, is an association of citizens who are represented by law, which functions as a bond in society. In relation to man, law is the external regulator of his actions, and in Cicero's interpretation it needs philosophical justification. It is not enough to appeal to the external validity of the law in order to act rightly. The law itself needs its justification in order for man to have a duty to act in accordance with it. Cicero illustrates this requirement in *De legibus*, when Atticus asks Marcus: "In your opinion, then, it is not from the Praetorian Edict, as many jurists say, nor from the Laws of the Twelve Tables, as the ancients say, but from the fountain of the deepest philosophy that the doctrine of law is to be drawn?" Marcus answers: "We must elucidate the nature of law from human nature, we must reflect on what laws every state must be governed by, and only then deal with the principles and precepts imposed by the will of men themselves."⁸ Thus, from the depths of philosophy we learn what is for us the source of law. Although Cicero discusses laws, that is, legal norms, his reasoning is applicable to moral norms as prescribed rules of conduct, which are also contained in the code of ethics. Today we have regulations and guidelines, we have a set

⁵ DINUŠOVÁ 2024.

⁶ THURZOVÁ 2012.

⁷ ARISTOTLE 1979: 30/1098b.

⁸ CICERO 2009; KRŠKOVÁ 2011.

of moral requirements, but can we justify them? Can we clarify their nature or purpose? Perhaps this is where the potential for implementation opens up – if we do not understand the external regulation as divorced from the individual, in external relation to the police officer, but approach it through the prism of the need to understand the nature of the regulation, its rationale and its objective, its implementation potential will be greater.

In this context, there is especially the possibility of applying elements of general ethics that do not derive from deontology, but which can fulfil precisely the implementation dimension of the application of police ethics in practice. Paradoxically, or complementary to this, it can provide the means for such a grasp of the issue and the elaboration of a virtue ethics document. Virtue ethics orients human action to its presuppositions, i.e. to the personal qualities of the moral subject. It is not concerned with the question of how we ought to act, but focuses on the question of how we ought to be. Virtue as a fitness of character has played an important role in both idealist and materialist ethical conceptions. It manifested itself in some of the ethics of the Hellenistic period, and was central to the ethical theory of Thomas Aquinas, Benedict Baruch Spinoza, or Paul H. D. von Holbach. The interest in virtue ethics was strongly manifested in the twentieth century in the Anglo-Saxon ethical tradition as a manifestation of the demarcation against metaethical approaches in the attempt to rehabilitate normative ethics and also in connection with the revival of questions related to the possibility of the best way of life, value orientation, questions concerning the good life in relation to the character of the human being.⁹

Key tools for the implementation of ethical standards in police practice

The Code of Ethics of a Police Officer represents a set of moral principles, values, requirements and standards of integrity. It expresses the basic principles of ethical conduct and professional responsibility which guide the police officer during their service. It sets out the basic moral principles which are: 1. *Legality and Professionalism*. These principles are oriented to the initial and supporting areas of police ethics; professionalism is understood as a comprehensive equipment of a police officer, i.e. it is a requirement not only for physical readiness, professional preparedness, but also moral integrity. At the same time, this principle expresses the requirement for continuous education and improvement of a police officer, as well as the requirement for the stimulation of the quality preparedness of police officers by their superiors – the superior takes care of and supports the police officer in education and professional advancement. Legality frames all police activity. A police officer acts in accordance with the Constitution of the Slovak Republic, laws, legal regulations and internal regulations. This is the basic starting point for the other principles as well, and it permeates the entire activity of a police officer. 2. *Impartiality*, which expresses a requirement that police officers shall approach the performance of their duties without regard to race, gender, religion, class, political preference, sexual orientation and other factors. Every citizen has equal access to police services, and every police

⁹ DINUŠOVÁ 2021.

officer promotes this idea of an impartial approach to citizens. Impartiality in this sense is also a requirement governing workplace relations, where discrimination and its manifestations are not tolerated. 3. *Confidentiality* governs the requirements for the handling of information with which a police officer comes into contact. 4. *Professional responsibility and service discipline* establishes the requirements to enter the service mentally and physically prepared to perform the duties of the service. 5. *Credibility* is a prerequisite for the effective performance of official duties. The incorporation of the Code of Ethics focuses on cultivating the credibility of the Police Force through a respectful approach to citizens, a reliable and cultured demeanour. It is important that on an individual level, a police officer behaves in a trustworthy manner because this sends a message about the entire police organisation. It is in the interest of the effective performance of the tasks of the Police Force to maintain the highest possible credibility of the Police Force. Last but not least, on the contrary, a very strong emphasis is placed on the circumstances of 6. *integrity and conflict of interest*. The police officer promotes the public interest and needs of the whole of society over personal interests. The police officer shall not accept or solicit any gifts or other improper benefits for himself or any other police officer which may influence his conduct and decision-making. A police officer who reports a suspected violation of the Code of Ethics or points out unethical conduct shall not be disadvantaged or penalised in any way because of that fact.

It was not the only aim of the update of the Code of Ethics to bring innovative content, but to use other ethical tools to strengthen the implementation of the requirements of the Code of Ethics. These became elements of virtue ethics. They were inserted into a traditionally deontological document, manifested in particular in the structure of the document. The Code of Ethics contains the values and norms of the police profession. They are not set randomly, but work in cooperation with each other. The imperative expression of a value is a norm. The Code is divided into individual articles that represent the values – the principles of the police profession. Under each of these articles are subsumed norms – rules of conduct.

They fulfil two functions: the values in relation to the norms fulfil a motivational function: they convey the basic slogans expressing the moral needs for the exercise of the police profession; and the norms in relation to the values express an explicative function: the given content of the articles expressed in specific rules clarify, explain the content of the values of the police profession.

The aforementioned structure is intended to facilitate accessibility and thus more effective implementation of the Code of Conduct. Of course, this is not the end of the implementation. An important component is education and practice. In parallel to the aforementioned ethics of virtue, we could find a complementarity between the two approaches to the acquisition of virtue within the two great ancient systems. The emphasis on education and training that we find in Plato is manifested in the relatively strong presence of educational courses in the training of the police officer. At the Academy of the Police Force in Bratislava, police ethics is part of the courses at several levels of study. In the Bachelor's degree, students have the opportunity to choose from compulsory elective courses the subject of Professional Ethics, which introduces students to theoretical knowledge and its practical application in situations of police practice. Later in the

Impartiality (Article 3)

(1) When performing official duties, a police officer always acts and makes decisions objectively, impartially, without prejudice and bias, does not discriminate against anyone, including with regard to national, ethnic, religious, racial, class, gender, sexual, age, social, political and economic differences.

(2) A police officer performs official activities in such a way that his personal feelings, personal opinions, sympathies or antipathies do not influence their actions.

(3) The police officer expresses their civil attitudes and opinions in public, including their opinions on social networks and Internet forums, taking into account the moral content and principles of ethical behaviour established by this Code of Ethics.

(4) A police officer does not participate in political activities while performing official duties, does not connect his person with any political party or political movement, nor do they perform activities for the benefit or disadvantage of any political party or political movement.

VIRTUE/VALUE

motivation

NORMS

explanation

Figure 1: Functions of virtue ethics in the Code of Ethics of a Police Officer

Source: Ministerstvo vnútra SR 2023

Master's degree, the subject Philosophy and Ethics is included in the education, which is compulsory and is implemented in the highest possible time allocation. Within this subject, police ethics is discussed in a deeper theoretical-ethical and philosophical context. In addition to these, police officers are educated in specialised police studies, where the course Police Ethics is implemented as one of the compulsory courses. This study is intended for police officers who have been recruited into the Police Force with other higher education. Also, police officers in practice return repeatedly to the regulations of police ethics. And here we find a bridge, as it were, to the second plane of the acquisition of virtue, in the Aristotelian sense as a fitness of character that is acquired in action,

in practice. Police ethics is part of practical performance, and it is reinforced every six months through the retraining of police officers in the code of ethics.

Following the practical application of the regulations of the Code of Ethics, in 2023 the Ministry of the Interior issued the Handbook to Regulation No. 41 of 24 February 2022 on the Code of Ethics for Police Officers of the Ministry of the Interior of the Slovak Republic,¹⁰ which explains the Code, points out its practical application and provides a number of model examples explaining and solving relevant ethical problems. Both the Code of Ethics and the Handbook are publicly available on the website of the Ministry of the Interior.

Credibility of the Police Force – Research assumptions and results

One of the articles of the Code of Ethics of a Police Officer is credibility, which is an important principle stemming from the understanding of the position of the police in contemporary society. In the light of the foregoing, the impetus for reinterpreting trustworthiness–credibility can be found in the European Code of Police Ethics, where it is expressed in several articles through an emphasis on the importance of the relationship between the police and civil society. In this context, mention may be made of Article 1, which sets out as the main objectives of the police in a democratic society, regulated by law “the maintenance of public tranquillity, law and order in society”. Article 12 states: “The police shall be organised with a view to earning public respect as professional upholders of the law and providers of services to the public.” Subsequently, Article 18 specifies cooperation by stating: “The police shall be organised in a way that promotes good police–public relations and, where appropriate, effective co-operation with other agencies, local communities, non-governmental organisations and other representatives of the public, including ethnic minority groups.” Last but not least, Article 59 states: “The police shall be accountable to the state, the citizens and their representatives. They shall be subject to efficient external control.”¹¹ Subsequently, Article 18 specifies cooperation by stating: “The police shall be organised in a manner that promotes good police–public relations and, where desirable, effective cooperation with other agencies, local communities, non-governmental organisations and other representatives of the public, including ethnic minority groups.”¹² Not only is the relationship between the police and the public important to the performance of police functions in the state, this relationship is constitutive by virtue of the legitimacy that the police enjoy from the public. That premise is evidenced by Article 59, which states: “The police are accountable to the state, the citizens and their representatives. It shall be effectively subject to external control.”¹³

The incorporation of trustworthiness–credibility into the Code was based on indicators and research carried out in this area. Between 2020 and 2022, research on the

¹⁰ Ministerstvo vnútra SR 2023.

¹¹ Council of Europe 2002.

¹² Council of Europe 2002.

¹³ Council of Europe 2002.

theoretical basis of the investigation of the credibility of the Police Force (Research 251) was conducted at the Police Academy in Bratislava, which monitored not only the level of public trust in the police in Slovakia, but also the factors that may influence public trust. The findings in this area include the following conclusions, which were also reflected in the perception of trustworthiness within the Code of Ethics.

Firstly. The police force has experienced relatively low levels of trustworthiness over the long term. Although the trend is upwards, the level of trust in the police was not satisfactory.

Secondly. Public trust in the Police Force needs to be understood dialectically, not metaphysically, that is, it needs to be examined in the broader context and developmental tendencies of the problem. Thus, the low level of trust in the police in Slovakia is not an isolated phenomenon, but is related to an overall even lower level of trust in other components of the state apparatus. The credibility of the Police Force cannot be understood in isolation (metaphysically) but precisely in relation to other social phenomena, which should also be reflected in the handling of this concept and the interpretations of the measured indicators.

In the given case, for a more plastic picture of the level of public trust in the Police Force, it is necessary to notice the trust of the population in other institutions (public administration, other armed forces, parliament, government, courts). Although public trust in the Police Force was not high in the period under review (2021) (45% tended to trust the Police, 53% to distrust it), it showed higher parameters compared to trust in the Parliament, the Government and especially the courts. Public administration was trusted by 45%, distrusted by 52%; Parliament was trusted by 23%, distrusted by 75%; the Government was trusted by 24%, distrusted by 74% and the courts were trusted by 28%, distrusted by 69%.

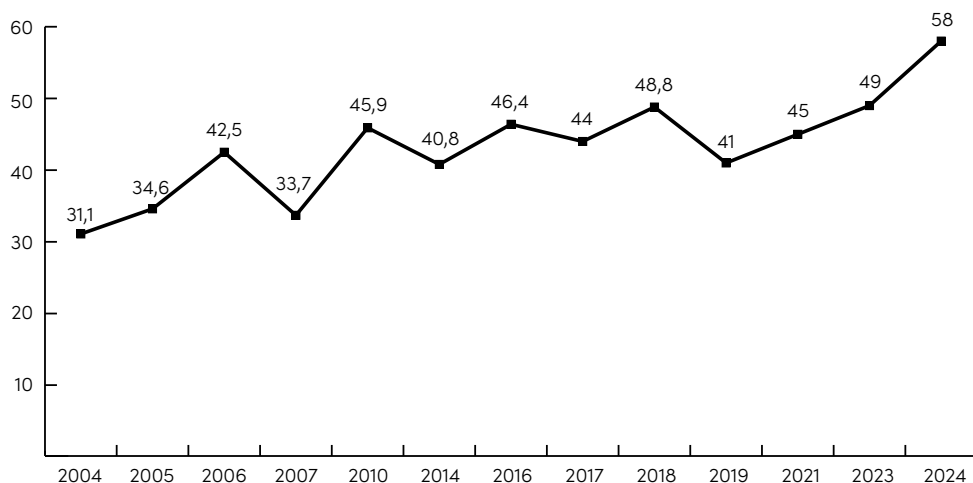


Figure 2: Development of police credibility in the Slovak Republic over the past 20 years

Source: compiled by the author

As Karol Murdza observes, people stop trusting institutions of social control, they lose their sense of security, faith in justice and enforceability of law. This is a persistent problem of the Slovak judiciary, which characterises a complex and long-term crisis of the entire judicial, legal or normative system. This crisis concerns not only the creators of social norms (Parliament, MPs), but also those who are supposed to enforce these norms and control their observance in practice (prosecutor's office, courts, police, etc.).¹⁴

Thirdly. Not all aspects underpinning public trust in the police can be influenced by the Police Force. The analysis of factors influencing the credibility of the Police Force, which was conducted at the Academy of the Police Force at the beginning of the 21st century, took into account the odiousness of the police profession, the ability to face organised crime, the results of work in protecting public order, securing property and the safety of persons and in reducing crime in the place of residence, the qualifications and ability to face new forms of crime, the behaviour of police officers, etc. as relevant factors with an impact on the credibility of the Police Force.¹⁵

From the above, the factors affecting the credibility of the Police Force could be classified into four categories. First of all, these are social factors, which include the general social climate, the security situation of the state, the economic situation, historical specifics of the development of society, political aspects, etc., which are not directly within the competence of the Police Force. The latter in interaction with them can modify their form (e.g. crime rate, cleared crime, etc.). The credibility of the Police Force may be underpinned by the international security situation, the social contradictions of modern capitalist societies, the general atmosphere in society, the legitimacy of the government and other

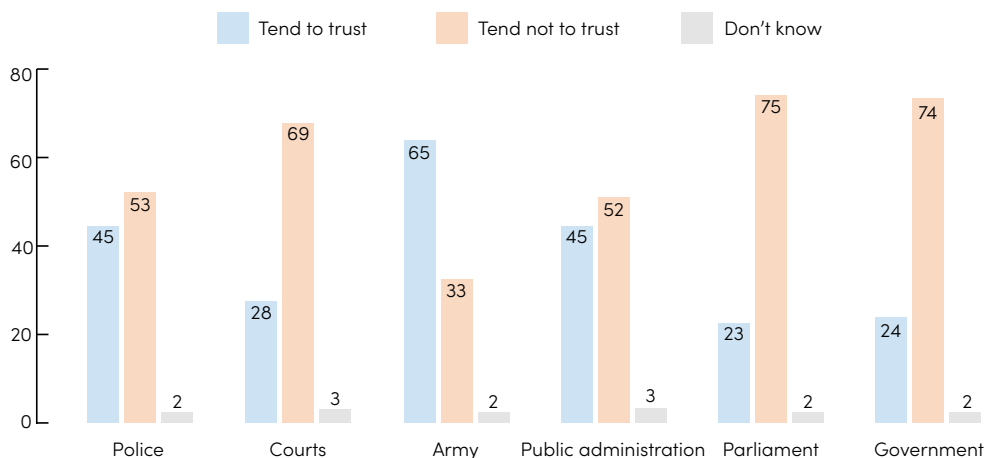


Figure 3: Credibility of selected institutions in the Slovak Republic in 2021

Source: Dinušová 2024

¹⁴ MURDZA 2021: 94.

¹⁵ BILSKÝ 2006.

macro-social indicators. Secondly, at a more specific level, we can talk about the social factors directly determining the activities of the Police Force. Among them we identify, for example, the wording of laws and regulations (their consensual or adversarial nature), the statutory competences of police officers, etc. The third group of factors consists of the organisational area of the Police Force or the management of the police organisation, management policies, self-presentation of the police, image and communication of its activities towards the public. At a special level we identify a group of individual factors, under which we understand professional, ethical, psychological and communication competences of a police officer and other competences resulting from the requirements for the personality of a member of the Police Force.

Fourthly. Ethics play an important role in shaping public confidence in the Police Force. The ethical area was also referred to by the research findings of complaints registered in the first half of 2021 at the Complaints Department of the Control Division of the Presidium of the Police Force in Bratislava to define the areas which citizens perceive as sensitive in the work of the police in relation to trust in the police organisation. The given analysis was based on the data contained in 1. the Report on the handling of complaints and petitions within the competence of the Ministry of the Interior of the Slovak Republic for the year 2021; 2. own research of complaints registered in the first half of 2021 at the Complaints Department of the Control Division of the Presidium of the Police Force in Bratislava.

The qualitative research consisted in a content analysis of citizens' complaints and the subjectively accentuated misconduct of police officers in the performance of their duties. The available files containing the complaints in question were divided and examined in terms of: 1. misconduct of an administrative nature; 2. the ethicality of the police officer's actions; 3. dissatisfaction with the services of the police force conditioned by technical possibilities. The inductive approach made it possible to identify problem areas of action that need to be addressed in order to enhance credibility and strengthen integrity in the Police Force.¹⁶

Of the complaints investigated, 32% fell within the area of ethical issues. Noting the areas that the citizen perceives as problematic, we find the complaints against the allegedly unethical behaviour of the police officers most often directed against the investigators, during the interventions and in connection with the traffic accident and against the investigators during the implementation of the interrogation.

Another often negatively perceived ethical aspect of police activity was the speech of police officers (superiority, arrogance, inappropriate verbal language are reported); citizens perceived empathy when conducting body searches as problematic, indicating "disrespect", "injury to honour and dignity", "out of place comments and questions". These impulses respond to consideration as a moral value of the police profession, with which the overall culture of the police officer's demeanour is closely related as an essential attribute of his/her personal equipment.¹⁷

¹⁶ DINUŠOVÁ-SABAYOVÁ 2024.

¹⁷ DINUŠOVÁ-SABAYOVÁ 2024: 260.

The indicators mentioned above helped to specify the content of the article dedicated to trustworthiness, which is now characterised by standards pointing to the areas mentioned. They are expressed in four rules:

1. A police officer shall act in such a way that his/her moral and honest behaviour, professionalism and responsibility contribute to increasing the credibility of his/her person and the credibility of the Police Force.
2. A police officer shall not misuse entrusted official financial resources and funds for private purposes in the performance of official activities.
3. A police officer shall show courtesy, decency, respect, tact and consideration in the performance of official activities.
4. A police officer shall, in the conduct of official business, treat colleagues fairly, in accordance with professional courtesy, and shall not disregard their professional competence. He/she shall also behave courteously and correctly towards colleagues holding opposing views. However, he/she shall not tolerate unethical behaviour on their part.¹⁸

Their implementation impact can only be examined with the passage of time since the adoption of the Code, and it will be interesting to observe both the level of public trust in the police in a quantitative and qualitative research framework, and the perception of the treatment of this aspect of policing by police officers themselves.

Conclusion

Police ethics is today an intensively developing applied social science discipline. It is formed in the interaction between general ethics, which provides theoretical frameworks and concepts, and police practice, which specifies and fleshes out general theoretical concepts with concrete content based on the practical experience of the police service. The most distinctive element of police ethics is the code of ethics, which fulfils several functions. Among them, it provides the police officer with a basic orientation in the complex situations of the police service and represents a summary of desirable ways of behaviour and action, which should be directed towards the effective performance of police tasks. In this context, there was a need to update the Code of Ethics, which was implemented in 2021 and resulted in the adoption of Regulation No. 41/2022 on the Code of Ethics of a Police Officer of the Ministry of the Interior of the Slovak Republic. The aim was to adopt a document that would respond to the tendencies of social development marked by social polarisation and civil society's mistrust of the police organisation. On the basis of several research findings, the content and structure of the document was innovated and the means of virtue ethics were used to increase the actual implementation potential of the document.

By definition of its scope and nature, the Code of Ethics cannot fully address and eliminate the risks of the present. Its impact is institutional, not societal. The factors that

¹⁸ Ministerstvo vnútra SR 2022.

give rise to today's security challenges (cybercrime, illegal migration, deepening social polarisation, etc.) do not fall within the scope of police ethics. Nevertheless, these phenomena also underpin public trust in the police and, even if their solution does not fall within the ethical domain, ethics can play an important role in strengthening citizens' trust in the Police Force and thus contribute to the alleviation of social tensions. The security environment is influenced by several elements. Also the tools of police ethics, its development in the field of adoption of normative documents, education and application in practice can have a positive effect on the formation of the security environment of the Slovak Republic.

Police ethics plays an important role in strengthening the credibility of the Police Force, which was evident from the research on complaints, where 32% of citizens' complaints were directed to the ethical area of police service performance. At the same time, due to the influence of several indicators, we are observing an increasing tendency of citizens' trust in the Police Force.

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