

# Comparative Research on Factors Affecting the Credibility of the Police Force in the Slovak Republic<sup>1</sup>

Dominika DINUŠOVÁ,<sup>2</sup> Mária SABAYOVÁ<sup>3</sup>

**Introduction:** Public trust in the police is necessary for the effective functioning of the Police Force and for the fulfilment of its social tasks.

**Objective:** The aim of the research is to identify key areas of police work as perceived by citizens and to outline, among other things, the extent of the influence of general social aspects of the security environment on the relationship between the public and the police and on individual aspects of police work.

**Methods:** The research is based on 1. a content analysis of complaints made by citizens of the Slovak Republic in 2021 and 2023 and 2. a comparison of the analyses of complaints in the aforementioned period.

**Results:** The most significant proportion of complaints concerned the administrative conduct of police officers (in 2021: 45%; 2023: 53%), followed by police conduct (2021: 34%; 2023: 35%), complaints about the handling of complaints (2021: 18%, 2023: 11%) and technical systems (2021: 3%; 2023: 1%).

**Conclusions:** Between 2021 and 2023, there are no significant differences in the ratio of complaints directed at individual areas. Complaints about procedural practices prevail (e.g. failure to register a case as a criminal complaint, but as a misdemeanour in accordance with the complainant's expectations, etc.). The factor that citizens perceive as an important aspect of police work is the ethical dimension of police conduct. A large part of the claims made in the complaints correspond to the unfulfilled expectations of citizens.

<sup>1</sup> 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'.

<sup>2</sup> PhD, Associate Professor, Social Science Department of the Academy of the Police Force in Bratislava, e-mail: [dominika.dinusova@akademiapz.sk](mailto:dominika.dinusova@akademiapz.sk)

<sup>3</sup> PhD, Associate Professor, Social Science Department of the Academy of the Police Force in Bratislava, e-mail: [maria.sabayova@akademiapz.sk](mailto:maria.sabayova@akademiapz.sk)

**Keywords:** credibility, Police Force, complaints of citizens of the Slovak Republic, security situation

## Introduction

Often, the most precious aspects of everyday reality are those that we do not need to talk about every day. One of them is trust. It permeates our lives without us identifying and analysing it every time. Trust is an essential part of our being and the basis for all personal and social fulfillment. We perceive its necessity both on an individual level, in personal self-realisation and private interpersonal relationships, and on a societal level, represented by trust in social organisations and institutions. Trust is a prerequisite for the successful realisation of social goals and contributes to the creation of a creative social atmosphere. However, this social aspect cannot be understood as a metaphysical ideal. It is constituted in specific personal, social and historical relationships. It reflects the dynamics of life, the process of building, creating, maintaining, and perhaps even very simple loss.

The need for trust at the social level is even more pressing in light of today's globalised world, which is characterised by a complex structure of social relationships, where individuals tend to get lost in a web of constantly emerging and disappearing organisations, events and discourses. "Globalization, as a highly dynamic and complex process, fundamentally affects various spheres of modern human society, including politics, economy, culture, energy, technology and, of course, security" (IVANČÍK 2024: 32). This situation has its historical, social and economic indicators, which are also reflected in the position of individuals in society and their perception of their own position in relation to civil society, institutions and the state. P. Dinuš points to the development of Slovak society after 1990, noting that the fall of Eastern European socialism and the associated collapse of the USSR did not mean the mythical "end of history" in the form of the victory of peace, security and justice, but that this period is characterised by a new stage of social conflict. Although the American Cold War policy against "communism" officially ended, the struggle itself, which was characteristic of this policy, did not end. On the contrary, a new struggle against a new "danger", new tensions and new fears emerged (DINUŠ 2019). In the words of I. Švihlíková, who focuses on evaluating the economic sphere, "the current international division of labor is not particularly different from the colonial system. Only former colonial states have been replaced by multinational corporations, which systematically exert sophisticated pressure on the state, cleverly devising ways to avoid taxation, etc." (ŠVIHLÍKOVÁ 2015: 95). This situation is also reflected in people's social consciousness.

In an individualistic ideological climate, people are often left to their own devices, struggling to find social anchoring and collective support. Given the current situation, the issue of trust and credibility in social institutions is highly topical. It is important not only for individuals – citizens, to whom it provides a foundation and a sense of security and collective anchoring – but also for the effective functioning of social institutions themselves. Because if we want to talk about the effective functioning of any social institution, public trust in its activities is essential for the fulfillment of its specific tasks. This is no different in the case of the Police Force. At the same time, the credibility of the Police Force is one

of the essential aspects of its effective functioning. “Without the trust of citizens, the police cannot fulfill its social functions, because it would lack the necessary source of information and the necessary social acceptance and support” (BILSKÝ–PAJPACHOVÁ 2002: 9).

In connection with the emphasis placed on the credibility of public institutions, in our case the Police Force, several questions arise: What factors influence the credibility of the police (primarily represented by the Police Force of the Slovak Republic) in Slovakia? What aspects contribute to expressions of trust/distrust in the police organisation in Slovakia? What factors contribute to the building and loss of trust in the Police Force?

The contribution focuses on researching factors influencing the credibility of the Police Force based on 1. content analysis of complaints filed by citizens of the Slovak Republic in 2021 and 2023; and 2. comparison of complaint analyses in the given period. In order to formulate recommendations for security practice, it defines areas that citizens perceive as sensitive in relation to trust in the police organisation. A comparison of indicators in the periods mentioned allows for the identification of general and individual factors influencing public opinion about police work and, on this basis, the specification of a strategy for building the credibility of the Police Force.

The research is based on data contained in the Report on the Handling of Complaints and Petitions within the Competence of the Ministry of the Interior of the Slovak Republic for 2021 and 2023, and on our own research into complaints recorded in the first half of 2021 and the first half of 2023 at the Police Force Headquarters in Bratislava. Based on a study of complaint files at the control department as a representative research sample, it is possible to identify key areas of police work as perceived by citizens and to outline the extent of the influence of general social aspects of the security environment (the Covid-19 pandemic, military conflict in Ukraine, etc.) on the relationship between the public and the police and individual aspects of police work (ethical, social and professional competencies).

## Theoretical background for examining the credibility of the Police Force

Research into the credibility of the police force requires establishing a basic definition of this broader social science concept. In terms of the meaning of the word trust itself, this concept is understood as a disposition, a tendency to believe, in a figurative sense as the quality of having faith, trust in something/someone, considering it/them to be reliable, trustworthy. We assume that the credibility of the Police Force therefore reflects its reliability in the eyes of the public it serves.

The credibility of the Police Force is realised in the relationship between the police and the public. We understand this relationship to be complicated due to the complexity of current social relations, but also due to the nature of police work and the internally differentiated activities of the Police Force. At this point, we consider it important to emphasise that, like any other relationship, the relationship between the police and the public is not unilateral, and therefore, when examining it, it is not possible to take into account only the unilateral factors that shape it, but is bilateral and is thus shaped by factors resulting,

on the one hand, from the activities of the police, the quality of their work and their ability to fulfill their designated social functions, and, on the other hand, by general social moods, the security and economic situation, and the overall situation of citizens and the public, which contribute to the credibility of the Police Force. From this understanding, we conclude that the relationship between the police and the public is shaped by a number of diverse factors, which supports the need for a multidisciplinary social science analysis.

“Relationships of trust between citizens and the police are those in which the prevailing attitude is a willingness to believe that the police force reliably performs the tasks arising from its position in society. On the other hand, relationships of distrust between citizens and the police are those in which citizens predominantly believe that the police force performs its duties unreliably” (BILSKÝ et al. 2000: 24).

The motives for assessing the credibility of the Police Force by the public can be understood against the backdrop of a wide range of social relations, whereby social relations are understood as relations between people that arise in the process of their joint practical and spiritual activities. These influence the individual consciousness of the person as well as social consciousness (morals, values, culture, etc.) and are also reflected at the level of the category under examination. In the words of Herzogová:

“The relationship between the police and the public, built on cooperation, is based on trust. Trust is created or lost in a relationship, whether it is a relationship with others, with institutions, or even with oneself. Let us consider the question: what is the source of mistrust? Mistrust stems primarily from the unpredictability of the other party’s actions and the inability to influence their behavior. People lose trust in those who do not fulfill their promises or obligations, or whose actions cannot be predicted, and therefore cause uncertainty and fear” (HERZOGO VÁ 2003: 9).

The concepts of trust and credibility are closely related. From a sociological point of view, trust is understood as a certain social relationship. Simmel (1997) introduced a widely used classification of trust into sociology, dividing it into “interpersonal trust” and “trust in institutions”. According to Murdza (2023), this specific relationship is referred to in the literature as a relationship of particularity, and the above-mentioned type of trust is referred to as “particular trust”, which is based on evaluations and expectations. The term “trust” is found in numerous works by many other theorists, with the differences in the views of individual authors indicating that it is a multidimensional concept (e.g. SEKHON et al. 2012; SEPPÄNEN et al. 2007), while in some works we find elements of trust captured as specific abilities that also have an ethical dimension (HÖPPNER 2009). According to Lewis and Weigert (1985), trust has cognitive, emotional and behavioural aspects, which means that it depends on

- previous experiences
- the emotionality of individuals and their subjective criteria of (un)trustworthiness or (un)attractiveness
- moral criteria (e.g. assessment of the fairness of a situation)

- the status of the person assessing trustworthiness, their membership in a community
- the macro level (including the ubiquity of norms)
- the general attitude toward compliance with rules in society (CAMPBELL 2004)

In contrast, the concept of “credibility” is a characteristic or set of characteristics that make a person or organisation perceived as reliable, competent and honest, and the level of credibility is usually part of standard sociological public opinion polls. Credibility is therefore a quality that stems from a multidimensional understanding of trust, but because it relates to a specific object, its broader dimensions do not necessarily have to be included. This research conceptually focuses exclusively on the determinants of (un)credibility of the Police Force, based on the understanding of the Police Force’s credibility as reliability in terms of meeting the expectations of the population that arise from the tasks of the Police Force.

The effectiveness of police work is therefore also determined by the relationship between the police and citizens. The nature of this relationship is ultimately closely related to their willingness to cooperate with the police, so mistrust of the police and tension between them and citizens does not remain merely at the level of sociological findings, but results in real dysfunctions in the detection and investigation of crime. In such cases, citizens usually refuse to cooperate (they are unwilling to testify, report illegal activities, etc.).

In order for the Police Force to successfully fulfill its social tasks, it is essential to build and maintain a high level of public trust. There are several reasons for this:

- it contributes to building the authority and reliability of the Police Force in the eyes of citizens
- it supports more effective performance of professional activities within the Police Force
- it creates a favourable social climate at the level of contact between the police and the public
- it contributes to building a sense of security among citizens
- it enables the successful fulfilment of the goals and tasks of the Police Force
- it is an expression of the social stability of the state

We find several reasons for examining the credibility of the Police Force:

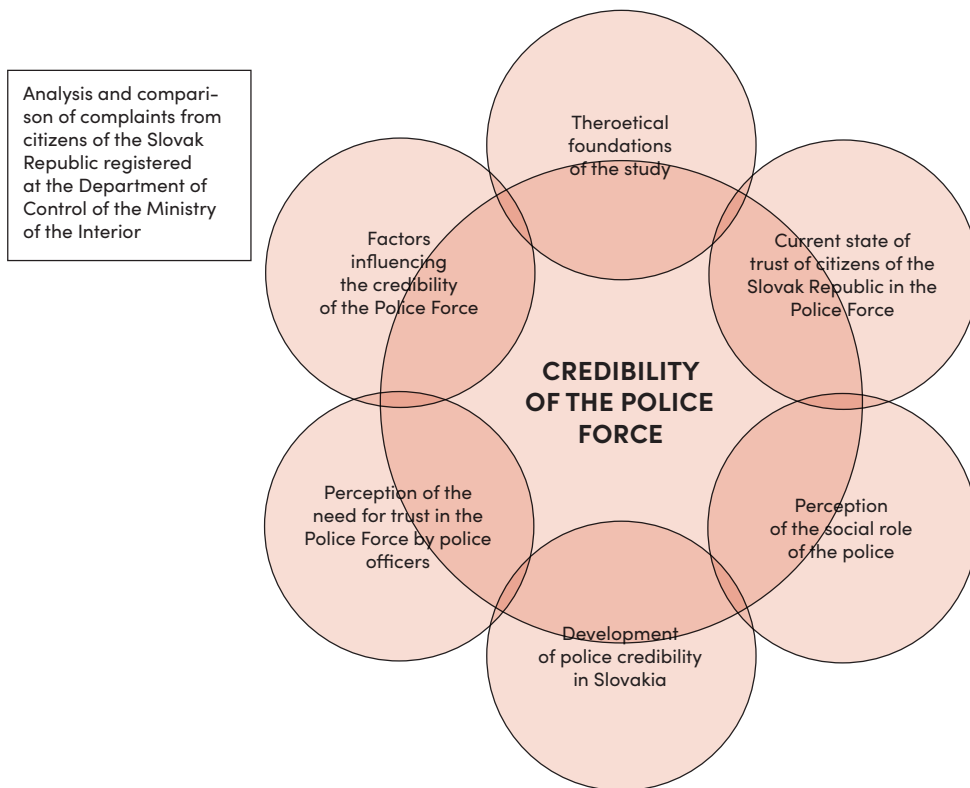
- the development of theoretical and methodological aspects of security sciences through the prism of applied social science research
- the social relevance of the topic
- the legitimacy of building and maintaining the credibility of a social institution
- addressing aspects and areas that influence the building of credibility of the Police Force
- formulating recommendations for practice based on the knowledge gained
- using the theoretical knowledge gained as a basis for further empirical research into the credibility of the Police Force

In terms of justifying the issue under investigation, it cannot be overlooked that research into the credibility of the Police Force and the factors that influence it has been discussed in a number of scientific research tasks and scientific projects. These materials provide us with a number of stimulating insights and facts that are important for the research in question and form the basis for continuing the research and developing the investigation of the issue. Of the aforementioned tasks and projects, we can list the following that have been implemented at the Academy of the Police Force:

- ERNEKER, J. – BILSKÝ, Peter – ČUŘÍK, P. (2000): *Analýza faktorov ovplyvňujúcich dôveryhodnosť Policajného zboru u občanov Slovenskej republiky*. Bratislava: Academy of the Police Force in Bratislava.
- BILSKÝ, P. – ERNEKER, J. (2000): *Prestíž povolania policajta v názoroch občanov Slovenskej republiky*. Bratislava: Academy of the Police Force in Bratislava.
- ERNEKER, J. – BILSKÝ, Peter – ČUŘÍK, P. (2000): *Spoločenské postavenie a úloha polície v názoroch občanov Slovenskej republiky*. Bratislava: Academy of the Police Force in Bratislava.
- BILSKÝ, Peter – ŠKODA, R. – LUKOVSKÁ, M. – PAJPAHOVÁ, Monika (2001): *Obsahová analýza príspevkov zaoberajúcich sa problematikou Policajného zboru odvysielaných v elektronických médiách v roku 2000*. Bratislava: Academy of the Police Force in Bratislava.
- BILSKÝ, Peter – PAJPAHOVÁ, Monika (2002–2006): *Vývoj dôveryhodnosti Policajného zboru u občanov Slovenskej republiky a analýza faktorov, ktoré ju ovplyvňujú*. Bratislava: Academy of the Police Force in Bratislava.
- DINUŠOVÁ, Dominika et al. (2020–2022): *Teoretické východiská skúmania dôveryhodnosti Policajného zboru*. Bratislava: Academy of the Police Force in Bratislava.

We assume that issues related to the credibility of the Police Force encompass a wide range of social aspects that are the subject of social science research: philosophy, ethics, sociology, psychology, political science, economics and social communication. The spectrum of research areas related to this issue is equally broad and may include:

- theoretical foundations of the research itself (philosophical, ethical, sociological, psychological, economic, political, and other dimensions of the issue)
- the current state of trust in the Police Force among Slovak citizens
- the development of trust in the police in Slovakia
- the perception of the need for trust in the Police Force among police officers
- key factors contributing to indicators of trust in the Police Force, etc. (Figure 1)



*Figure 1: Research areas of credibility of the Police Force*

Source: compiled by the authors

Similarly, research into factors can focus on several aspects and may involve various methodological approaches. The presented research into the factors of credibility of the Police Force focused in its first phase on a content analysis of complaints from citizens of the Slovak Republic. Its aim was to use this analysis to identify areas that citizens perceive as sensitive in relation to trust in the police organisation. The analysis was based on data contained in the Report on the Handling of Complaints and Petitions within the Competence of the Ministry of the Interior of the Slovak Republic for 2021 in the first phase of the research (DINUŠOVÁ–SABAYOVÁ 2024); and subsequently for 2023 in the second stage of the research, and on our own research of complaints recorded in the first half of 2021 and the first half of 2023 at the Police Force Headquarters in Bratislava. Based on a study of complaint files at the control department as a representative research sample, it was possible to identify areas of friction in police work and its perception by the public in both qualitative and quantitative terms.

## Comparative research of complaints

### *Assumptions and methods*

Trust in general is both a prerequisite and a consequence of actions/behaviour, and in the context of police work, it is an important prerequisite for the acceptance of police procedures in the exercise of their powers. Public opinion about police work determines its credibility and is influenced by both general and individual factors that have a positive or negative impact on overall credibility. Although it is necessary to assess the actions/behaviour of police officers differently according to the type of service (riot police, traffic police, criminal police, etc.), the degree of subjectivity that characterises the perception and assessment of police work ultimately distorts the overall picture of police work.

The research in question does not focus on the quantitative aspect of citizens' complaints and does not take into account the validity or invalidity of complaints, i.e. it does not evaluate the category of trust in the Police Force based on the quantity of complaints filed. Based on a content analysis of the subjects of the complaints, it categorises possible determinants of trust in the Police Force, which ultimately also influence its credibility (measured, for example, by Eurobarometer<sup>4</sup>). The research sample represented the same number of complaints in both years, regardless of the total number of complaints received, and the research itself focused exclusively on identifying the areas that motivated Slovak citizens to file complaints.

For the purposes of the presented research, we were inspired by Boateng's integrated model of trust in police organisations, supplemented by Junková and Kný (JUNKOVÁ–KNÝ 2021), from which we sorted out individual factors in line with this premise. The factors included in this model can influence the credibility of the police either positively (i.e. they increase credibility) or negatively (i.e. they cause a decline in credibility). In terms of the possibility of direct influence by the police, they can be divided into internal factors (e.g. overall police service, corruption in the police) and external factors (corruption in government, fear of crime and others). The lines indicate mutual links, with plus signs representing a positive effect and minus signs representing a negative effect. However, since the subject of the analysed complaints was not always clearly and unambiguously stated, we decided to simplify the determinants for the purposes of the research and generalise them into four areas that reflect the indicated subject, without evaluating their positive or negative impact, but only their impact as such. At the same time, we were interested in whether and to what extent the order of determinants changed in individual years.

The representative research sample consisted of data from files kept by the complaints department of the internal control division of the Police Force Headquarters in Bratislava in connection with the handling of complaints<sup>5</sup> about alleged misconducts/shortcomings

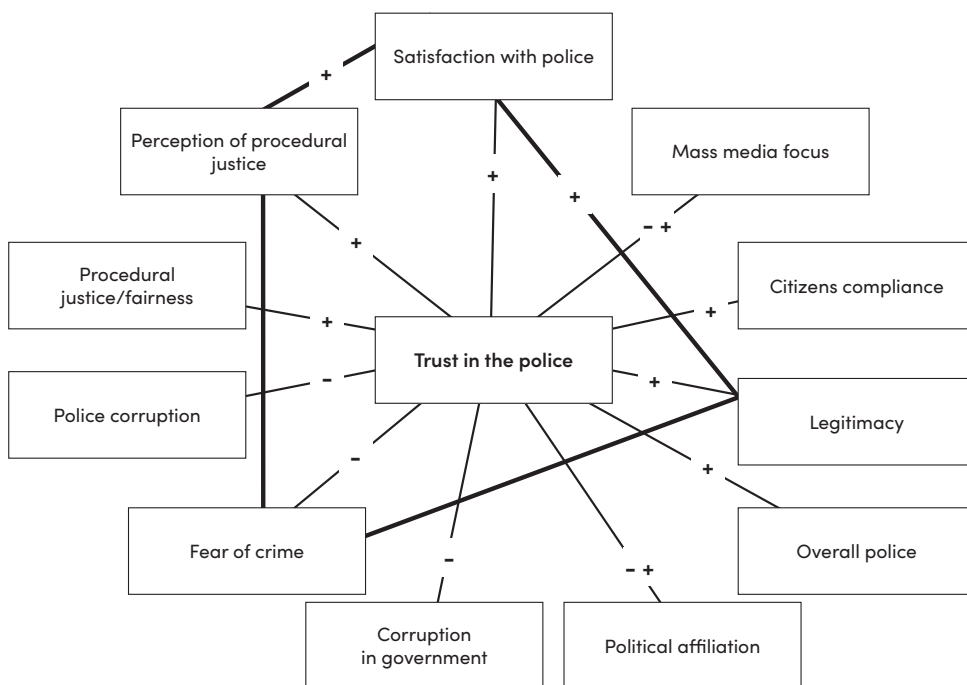
---

<sup>4</sup> During the years of the research, the level of trust fluctuated as follows: in 2021, 45% of the population tended to trust the police, 53% tended not to trust them, and 2% were unable to express an opinion (European Union 2021); in 2023, 46% tended to trust the police, 48% tended not to trust the police, and 6% of the population did not know how to express their opinion (European Union 2023).

<sup>5</sup> Complaint handling is a set of activities, such as receiving, recording, analysing content, investigating, deciding on the method of handling or further action, processing notifications of investigation results or other methods of handling, as well as checking the correctness of the handling of previous complaints (Decree No. 48/2019).

(ignorance and misinterpretation of legal regulations; negligence; procedure in proceedings for misdemeanours; receiving, verifying, and documenting reports; procedures in criminal proceedings; delays or inaction, etc.) and complaints indicating unethical behaviour or conduct by police officers (rude, humiliating treatment; inappropriate conduct and behaviour; abuse of official position; arbitrariness; intolerance, etc.).

The second phase of the research consisted of a separate comparison of the research findings from the first and second stages, i.e. the areas examined in the first phase of the research. The aim was to compare the research findings based on the results of the first and second stages of the research in order to specify the factors influencing the credibility of the Police Force and to outline the prospects for implementing the findings into police practice.



*Figure 2: Factors affecting trust in the police*

Source: compiled by the authors based on BOATENG 2013; JUNKOVÁ-KNÝ 2021; ŠABAYOVÁ-JUNKOVÁ 2022

It is precisely subjective views and emotions that are often reflected in the grounds for complaints, in which citizens assert their right to judicial and other legal protection, guaranteed, inter alia, by Article 46(1) of the Constitution of the Slovak Republic. The basic generally binding legal regulation governing the procedural aspects of the submission of complaints by natural and legal persons, their handling, and the monitoring of their handling is the Complaints Act, which defines a complaint as a submission by a natural or legal person in

which these persons assert the protection of their rights or legally protected interests which they believe have been violated by the action or inaction of a public administration body, while also pointing out specific shortcomings in their activities, in particular violations of legal regulations, the elimination of which falls within the competence of the public administration body, including the police. The control departments within the competence of the Ministry of the Interior are the competent departments for handling such complaints. The nature of complaints within the competence of the Ministry and designated departments is diverse. As revealed by a qualitative analysis of the content of complaints handled specifically against the Police Force, which was carried out as part of a professional internship at the Control Department of the Police Force Presidium, these were primarily complaints from citizens (natural persons), including anonymous complaints.

## Results

The subject of the research was the content of complaints filed and/or investigated in 2021 and 2023. For the purposes of this research, we distinguish between four reasons: administrative procedure of a police officer; behaviour of a police officer; complaint against the handling of a previous complaint; technical system. Approximately 2% of the complaints examined were repeat complaints from the same complainant on the same matter, but without providing any new facts, and since the investigation of repeated complaints did not find any justification in any of the cases examined, we were more interested in the subject of complaints concerning administrative procedures and personal experiences. Empirical research into the content of complaints identified the following factors, which corresponded to the two categories mentioned above (Table 1).

A large proportion of complaints were directed at the manner in which a previous complaint had been handled, where the complainant was dissatisfied with the outcome – these were complaints about the handling of complaints.

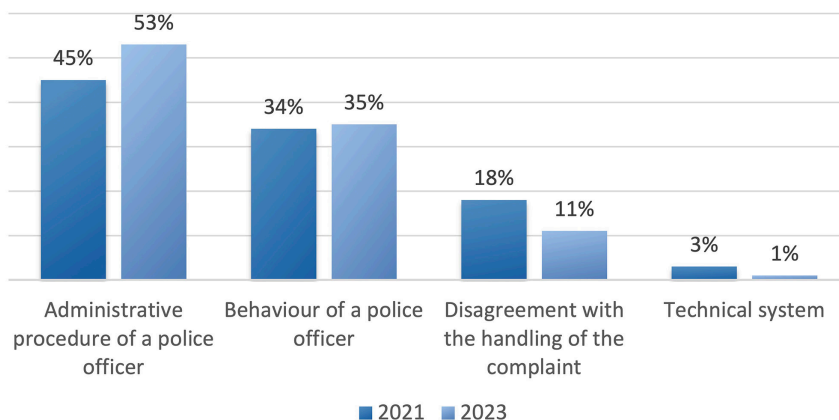
Citizens are relatively sensitive when it comes to contact with police officers, but the arguments cited in the complaints do not correspond to the final conclusions of the resolved requests. This indicates that the public is sceptical of the work of police officers a priori, or evaluates it more critically than objectively under the influence of general factors (e.g. media influence) and personal expectations. An interesting element in many complaints is the criminalisation of police officers themselves, coloured by emotion but without any evidence (MURDZA 2025). A comparison of the subjects of complaints in 2021 and 2023 shows that the ranking has not changed in terms of the subject matter:

1. The administrative procedure of a police officer
2. The conduct of a police officer
3. Complaint against the handling of a previous complaint
4. Technical system, and at the same time, the percentage differences are negligible (Figure 3)

*Table 1: The most common arguments in complaints about administrative procedures and personal experiences*

Administrative procedures	Experiences
proceedings in misdemeanour cases	use of coercive measures
proceedings in misdemeanour cases	use of coercive measures
delays or inaction	restriction of personal freedom
failure to process a previous submission	abuse of authority
proceedings in administrative affairs	inappropriate conduct and behaviour
acceptance of applications (for residence, inspection of files, etc.)	inhumane treatment – specific motive
search for persons and property	abuse of official position, arbitrariness
general procedure of the police authority	protection of personal data
procedure of the investigator	interference in civil law matters
method of securing property	confinement in locked premises
performance of tasks arising from special regulations	official interventions against persons under 18 years of age
conclusions of the investigated complaint	intolerance – discrimination, xenophobia, racism, etc.

Source: compiled by the authors



*Figure 3: Comparison of selected subjects of complaints in 2021 and 2023*

Source: compiled by the authors

As indicated by the results of the analysis and conclusions from the annual reports (Ministerstvo vnútra SR 2021; 2023), a large proportion of the allegations in the complaints are more or less unfulfilled expectations of the complainants. Taking into account the above facts and the low percentage of justified complaints, we believe that the negative image of the work of police officers in the non-criminal sphere is unjustified.

Based on a comparison and repetition of the research survey in 2023, it was also identified that external circumstances affecting state security, which in 2021 were mainly the Covid-19 pandemic and in 2023 the war in Ukraine, are not key to building the credibility of the Police Force. Citizens perceive their own experiences and problems related to their immediate security more intensely than the geopolitical risks they observe but have no personal experience with. If in 2021, approximately 6% of complaints reflected the situation surrounding the pandemic, they resulted from citizens' experiences, restrictions, and regulations that had a negative impact on the lives of citizens, which were supervised by members of the Police Force. In 2023, we did not observe any external political, geopolitical or other motives in the complaints, so it can be concluded that external circumstances do not represent a key area in building the credibility of the Police Force.

### Use of research results in security education and practice

In particular, the identified indicators of the importance of ethical aspects of police work clearly show that public trust in the police and public perception of the police are related to the formation of police ethics (DINUŠOVÁ 2025). Police ethics is a dynamically developing applied social science discipline of security sciences, which evolves in interaction with general ethics and specific police practice. The above research findings point to the importance of correctly communicating general ethical concepts and standards in the context of police work, not least because of their impact on the overall image and credibility of the police force. Among other things, this research contributed to the implementation of ethical aspects in police work, as the findings were reflected in the 2022 update of the Code of Ethics of a Police Officer. The updated version of the code of ethics incorporated, both in terms of its structure and content, the social requirement to build and increase the credibility of the Police Force (Regulation of the Ministry of the Interior No. 41 of 24 February 2022). This was reflected in the form of a specific article and standards, the monitoring of which is intended to strengthen citizens' trust in the police organisation. An explanation of these aspects was provided to police officers in the Code of Ethics Handbook, which was published in 2023 following the update of the Code of Ethics of a Police Officer (Guide to the Code of Ethics for Members of the Police Force issued by Regulation No. 41/2022).

The aforementioned update to the code of ethics is one of several elements that can be observed in the current strengthening of ethical culture within the Police Force. In this context, the appointment of police integrity managers, who will provide consulting services in resolving ethical issues within the police service, comes to the fore. The ongoing training of police integrity managers also focuses on the credibility of the Police Force in connection with the ethical aspects of police work. Other areas that touch on

the communication skills of police officers and optimal methods of conflict resolution (KOVÁČ–BELKO 2025), which are discussed in several social science dimensions, may also be mentioned in passing.

The application of these findings in practice is implemented at the level of continuing education for police officers (for example, in ongoing courses focused on women's leadership, the above-mentioned courses for police integrity managers), as well as at the level of professional training for police officers at the Police Academy in Bratislava. The research results have been implemented in the syllabi of the subjects Philosophy and Ethics, Professional Ethics and Police Ethics.

In summary, we see three dimensions of the implementation of the research: 1. integration of the findings into the update of the code of ethics for members of the Police Force; 2. incorporating the results into the focus of police training courses in the continuing education system; 3. incorporating the results into the knowledge base of selected subjects taught at the Police Academy in Bratislava.

## Conclusion

A comparison of both phases of the research shows that 1. between 2021 and 2023, there are no significant differences in the ratio of complaints directed at individual areas. At the same time, 2. complaints about procedural practices prevail (e.g. failure to register a case as a criminal complaint, but as a misdemeanour in line with the complainant's expectations, etc.). Another factor that citizens perceive as an important aspect of police work is the ethical dimension of police conduct. 3. In both research phases, approximately one-third (34% in 2021 and 35% in 2023) of complaints focused on the ethical dimension – for example, in specific police activities such as interrogation, investigation, official intervention, etc. Citizens considered the communication skills of police officers, their overall understanding of the situation, and their ability to conduct conversations empathetically to be essential. Relatively frequent terms that are part of complaints include bias or insufficient impartiality of police officers (allegedly manifested during interrogations, in dispute resolution (e.g. in Roma settlements, police officers favouring Roma; in cases of non-payment of alimony, where a citizen claims that the police officer is personally acquainted with the person being prosecuted, and so on), or alleged harassment by a police officer.

However, the nature of the complaints often suggests that the situation has been misperceived and that 4. a large part of the allegations made in the complaints correspond to the unfulfilled expectations of citizens. In this context, these are situations that the Police Force cannot influence and which result from a misunderstanding of the role of the police in today's society or from ignorance of legal procedures (e.g. the complainant claimed the right to a video recording of the interrogation, etc.).

The empirical research presented also built on the findings summarised in the interdisciplinary scientific research project Theoretical Foundations for Examining the Credibility of the Police Force (RES. 251) carried out at the Police Academy in Bratislava between 2020 and 2022, with the aim of clarifying citizens' sensitivity to the work of police officers, which could have an immediate negative impact on the credibility of the

Police Force as a whole. In order to increase the credibility of the Police Force, the above findings were used as a basis for updating the code of ethics for members of the Police Force. Its adoption in 2022 refers, among other things, to the functional link between security theory and practice. Repeating the research in 2023 and comparing the results helped to confirm the findings and clarify the trends in the development of the credibility of the Police Force, which also point to prospects for further research.

## References

- BILSKÝ, Peter – PAJPACHOVÁ, Monika (2002): *Vývoj dôveryhodnosti Policajného zboru u občanov*. Projekt výskumnej úlohy. Bratislava: Akadémia PZ v Bratislave.
- BILSKÝ, Peter – ČUŘÍK, P. – ERNEKER, J. (2000): Náčrt faktorov, ktoré ovplyvňujú dôveryhodnosť Policajného zboru. *Policajná teória a prax*, 7(3–4), 23–40.
- BOATENG, Francis D. (2013): Restoring the Lost Hope: A Multidimensional Approach for Building Public Trust in the Police. *Journal of the Institute of Justice & International Studies*, (13), 48–60.
- CAMPBELL, William R. (2004): The Sources of Institutional Trust in East and West Germany: Civic Culture or Economic Performance? *German Politics*, 13(3), 401–419. Online: <https://doi.org/10.1080/0964400042000287437>
- DINUŠ, Peter (2019): O niektorých formách triedneho boja buržoázie v rámci bipolarity a nástupu unipolarity. In *Svet v bode obratu. O protirečivosti vývoja civilizácie v 20. a na začiatku 21. storočia*. Bratislava: VEDA, 63–91.
- DINUŠOVÁ, Dominika (2025): Code of Ethics of a Police Officer in the Context of Shaping the Security Environment of the Slovak Republic. *Magyar Rendészet*, 25(Special issue), 36–47. Online: <https://doi.org/10.32577/MR.2025.KSZ.1.2>
- DINUŠOVÁ, Dominika – SABAYOVÁ, Mária (2024): Determinants of the Credibility of the Police Force from the Perspective of Citizen's Complaints about the Police Service. *Policija i sigurnost*, 33(3), 247–264. Online: <https://doi.org/10.59245/ps.33.3.2>
- European Union (2021): *Standard Eurobarometer 94 – Winter 2020–2021*. Online: <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2355>
- European Union (2023): *Standard Eurobarometer 98 – Winter 2022–2023*. Online: <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2872>
- HERZOGOVÁ, Zuzana (2003): *Policejní etika*. Praha: vlastním nákladem [published by the author].
- HÖPPNER, Corina (2009): Trust – A Monolithic Panacea in Land Use Planning? *Land Use Policy*, 26(4), 1046–1054. Online: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.landusepol.2008.12.007>
- IVANČÍK, Radoslav (2024): Bezpečnostné implikácie globalizácie vo vybraných sférach modernej ľudskej spoločnosti. *Vojenské reflexie*, 19(2), 32–53. Online: <https://doi.org/10.52651/vr.a.2024.2.32-53>
- JUNKOVÁ, Dana – KNÝ, M. (2021): Interakce znalostní teorie a policejní praxe se zaměřením na oblast důveryhodnosti policejního sboru. In DINUŠOVÁ, Dominika (ed.): *Dôveryhodnosť Policajného zboru na pozadí aktuálnych otázok policajnej teórie a praxe: zborník vedeckých prác*. Bratislava: Akadémia PZ v Bratislave, 145–157.
- KOVÁČ, Ernest – BELKO, Jozef (2025): Utilization of Mediation in Resolving Complex B2B Controversies from the Perspective of Strategic Conflict Management. In TARTARAJ, Azeta – BELKO, Jozef (eds.): *Dialogue on Mediation. Inspiration for Conflict Resolution*. Modra: Inštitút vzdelávania a osobnostného rozvoja, 159–169.

- LEWIS, J. David – WEIGERT, Andrew (1985): Trust as a Social Reality. *Social Forces*, 63(4), 967–985. Online: <https://dx.doi.org/10.1093/sf/63.4.967>
- Ministerstvo vnútra SR (2021): *Správa o vybavovaní sťažností a petícií v pôsobnosti Ministerstva vnútra Slovenskej republiky za rok 2021*. Online: <https://www.minv.sk/?urad-inspekcnej-sluzby&subor=516370>
- Ministerstvo vnútra SR (2023): *Správa o vybavovaní sťažností a petícií v pôsobnosti Ministerstva vnútra Slovenskej republiky za rok 2023*. Online: <https://www.minv.sk/?urad-inspekcnej-sluzby&subor=516370>
- MURDZA, Karol (2023): Sociologické aspekty skúmania dôveryhodnosti Policajného zboru. In SABAYOVÁ, Mária – DINUŠOVÁ, Dominika – CIPRO, Ivana (eds.): *Dôveryhodnosť Policajného zboru – teoretické východiská a praktické perspektívy*. Bratislava: Akadémia PZ v Bratislave. 15–37.
- MURDZA, Karol (2025): Sociologická reflexia vybraných problémov policajnej kriminality a kriminalizácie policajtov. In *Spoločnosť v (ne)bezpečí? Sociologické reflexie súčasného vývoja obrany a bezpečnosti*. Bratislava: Sekcia sociológie armády SSS pre SAV a DEKK Inštitút, 105–123.
- SABAYOVÁ, Mária – JUNKOVÁ, Dana (2022): Trust in the Police. In Müller, Michal – Slavičková, Pavla (eds.): *KNOWCON 2022. Knowledge on Economics and Management*. Conference Proceedings. Olomouc: Palacký university, 155–161. <https://doi.org/10.5507/ff.22.24462325>
- SEKHON, Harjit – ENNEW, Christine – KHAROUF, Husni – DEVLIN, James (2014): Trustworthiness and Trust: Influences and Implications. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 30(3–4), 409–430. Online: <https://doi.org/10.1080/0267257X.2013.842609>
- SEPPÄNEN, Risto – BLOMQUIST, Kirsimarja – SUNDQUIST, Sanna (2007): Measuring Inter-Organizational Trust – A Critical Review of the Empirical Research in 1990–2003. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 36(2), 249–265. Online: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.indmarman.2005.09.003>
- SIMMEL, Georg (1997): *Peníze v moderní kultuře a jiné eseje*. Praha: SLON.
- ŠVIHLÍKOVÁ, Ilona (2015): *Jak jsme se stali kolonií*. Praha: Rybka Publishers.

## Legal sources

- Nariadenie Ministerstva vnútra Slovenskej republiky č. 48/2019 o sťažnostiach [Decree No. 48/2019 of the Ministry of the Interior of the Slovak Republic on complaints]
- Nariadenie ministerstva vnútra č 41 z 24. februára 2022 o etickom kódexe príslušníka Policajného zboru [Regulation of the Ministry of the Interior No. 41 of February 24, 2022, on the Code of Ethics for Members of the Police Force]
- Príručka k etickému kódexu príslušníka Policajného zboru vydaného nariadením Ministerstva vnútra Slovenskej republiky č. 41/2022 o etickom kódexu príslušníka Policajného zboru [Guide to the Code of Ethics for Members of the Police Force issued by Regulation No. 41/2022 of the Ministry of the Interior of the Slovak Republic on the Code of Ethics for Members of the Police Force]
- Zákon č. 9/2010 Z. z. o sťažnostiach. Online: [https://www.slov-lex.sk/ezbierky/pravne-predpisy/SK/ZZ/2010/9/vyhlasene\\_znenie](https://www.slov-lex.sk/ezbierky/pravne-predpisy/SK/ZZ/2010/9/vyhlasene_znenie)