Intercultural Human Resources Management for Police Cooperation in Europe

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Abstract
This paper addresses the challenges of the intercultural human resources management to the internal security of Europe. Two issues should be addressed: how do cultural differences influence cross-border cooperation amongst police agencies? What kind of management can be applied to the effects, with a view to preventing conflicts and, on the opposite, drawing the advantages from cultural differences?

Theories underpin that the management of an intercultural police is useful in the improvement of police strategies in particular in the fight against international organized crimes. We present below two elements of such an intercultural concept: a joint police training process and the establishment of decentralized working groups, either bilateral or international (operational groups, investigation groups).

Keywords: intercultural approach, human resources management, internal security, cross-border cooperation

Introduction

Culture is an orientation system that is typical for a nation, a society, an organization or a group. The orientation system consists in fundamental, unconscious attitudes, in values and appropriate cultural legacies. Culture influences the behaviour, the actions and the judgments of the values of the members of a group in a specific social situation.

Police as an organization has a specific culture; it has its own set of values, its rules of conduct etc. On the one hand, this professional culture of police is similar in most countries, since the missions of the police and the situation in which they perform their activity are similar. On the other hand, just as the culture in areas such as justice, politics and administration, police culture is deeply influenced by the respective national culture. That is why police cultures of the developed countries differ a lot from those of developing countries.

Even the title of this chapter suggests that, throughout Europe, there are different police cultures. In principal, the idea addressed here is that
police in the Central and Eastern area of Europe seems to have a sound base of practical knowledge and relations with citizens in the day-to-day activity conducted on the street, as opposed to the Western police, which is the adept of a more theoretical orientation and a more scientific experience. Anyway, one could consider that communist experience from the Central and Eastern Europe has led, obviously, to a certain police culture and, of course, of the public safety, which currently still differs a lot from the Western one.

Until the fall of the Iron Curtain, there were not too many opportunities to speak about the intercultural aspects of the police work. There have been only certain occasional contacts with police organizations from the neighbouring friend countries. Yet, currently, in the context of globalization, not only of economy and administration, but also of crime and police activity one takes action in situations that are frequently intercultural. These are social interactions in which the behaviour is influenced by the fact that evaluations, values and habits of a person are projected on the background of different evaluations, values and habits, more or less known of another person, who belongs to a different cultural environment.

This is the point where human resources management should intervene. The intercultural human resources management attempts to provide both theoretical and practical answers to the following questions: how do cultural differences influence the cooperation between the two organizations? How can their effects represent the object of the management activity for the purpose of conflict prevention and, rather, of drawing on certain advantages from cultural differences?

In so far as police cooperation in Europe is concerned, one should consider, in particular, the unconscious differences between the values, the experiences, the habits and the traditions governing the law enforcement. It appears that the so-called legal approximation or harmonisation is not always a useful one, since this action often faces cultural obstacles. Even if the European countries formulated police laws based on identical texts, their concrete application by police officers on a daily basis would surely differ from a country to another. The inertia of the Schengen process is a good example. Just as in other areas, police cooperation makes slower progress than the progress made by the cooperation of criminals. That is why, in order to combat international organized crime, it is extremely necessary to develop cooperation between the police organizations from Europe. Considering that solely the legal instruments do not seem to be able to cope with the new challenges, the intercultural human resources management should apply. It could serve as an additional instrument that comes to support the orientation of cross-border police cooperation and its effectiveness.
1 The diversity of police cultures in Europe

From this perspective, a more attentive observation of the staff from police authorities is needed. Their cultural background, that is their core values and ways of thinking, form behaviours at individual level and determine the composition of structures and strategies from each police agency. At the same time, the staff efficiency depends at least partially on the cultural background. Different ideas on law enforcement in the respective cultural context are equally important.

Out of many reasons, police cultures from Europe are not homogeneous and the attempt to entirely homogenize them may not be a very good idea. On the opposite, one has to analyse the gaps between specific behaviours in the law enforcement caused by cultural diversity. Here the action of intercultural human resources management is needed, too. Intercultural skills for an effective work in a team spirit can be derived from the richness and diversity of police cultures from European countries and hence a creative cooperation within the European Union and neighbouring countries becomes possible. That is why, the objective of intercultural human resources management for administering European security should be an immersion into the cultural backgrounds of the actions and behaviours of officers in the area of public security, rather than a gap filling.

To put it differently, the attempt to develop an intercultural human resources management is governed by the intention to transcend the simple legal forms of cooperation and to provide the cooperation management with new working instruments. This concept requires an analysis of reciprocity and differences of cultural influences delimiting the area of public safety from the respective countries. In this way, the possibilities, the deficiencies and the access of the police officers to the training that is necessary for the international cooperation become more visible. Out of these reasons, managerial concepts can be elaborated to ensure the compatibility of different organizational structures and behavioural patterns, as well as of divergent strategic concepts. An intercultural human resources management for police cooperation aims at developing and coordinating the existing capacities and current methodology with a view to improving cross-border cooperation. Surely, practical cooperation and mutual understanding capacities should also be improved by an adequate communication process, in which the knowledge of the technical vocabulary, as a first base of the respective process is very important.

The creation of personal relations amongst police officers from various countries by the organization of common training courses coupled with the consolidation and development of common values and motivations
may lead in the long run, to a set of behavioural patterns generally accepted in the law enforcement. A European police culture sits at the core of cooperation, yet it does not oblige to homogenize national police cultures.

2 The effects of police cooperation on national police culture and strategy

In this context, intercultural human resources management is a concept that perceives cultural differences as advantages rather than obstacles. The purpose is not only to overcome the difficulties of cooperation and to avoid misunderstandings, but also to give the possibility to improve their own strategies by means of intercultural cooperation. Hence, the powers and advantages, as well as the weaknesses and shortcomings of the administrative culture from its own police agency become concrete elements. The cooperation with police officers from other countries, therefore having a different cultural background, provides the chance to admit the limits of their own methods and to consider the models of their partners and their potential use in their own activity.

This type of influence is very important for Western European countries. The police activity from the European Union has become somehow static, since in the perception on policing there have been no major changes. Whenever crime rate rises, which reportedly happens almost each year, one calls for more harsh legislation, for an enhancement of police powers and police staff. The new skills of the international organized crime, which takes advantage of the latest technical means, as well as of the traditional networks of ethnical solidarity, are frequently underestimated. For this purpose, the jointly adopted strategy might not cope with the new challenges which succeed, inter alia, in threatening both civil rights and domestic security from the affected countries.

In the Central and Eastern Europe the situation is quite different. Hence, police faces radical political changes that deeply affect the socio-economic background as well. In their endeavour to seek for a new orientation and understanding of their new condition, police officers from post-communist countries have asked for guidance and support from Western countries, and Western countries have been willing to provide the requested assistance. Yet, the leaders of police structures from these countries note that the West attempts to export its own policing models and to gain influence by means of financial assistance, which has resulted in certain critiques according to which these intentions do not correspond to the wish of the West to allow its countries to participate in police
cooperation institutions from the European Union, *i.e.* Schengen and Europol.

In reality, the problem appears to be a different one. Being taken into consideration prior to the background of inevitable cultural differences, a unified and homogenous European domestic security area is not just what Europeans can and must wish in particular. Moreover, at present, police organizations from the young democracies of Central and Eastern Europe seem to be more confident in their own forces without displaying an interest to imitate Western models. At least some of these countries are a step ahead those from the West in terms of policing: they have created organizational structures that distribute responsibilities to police officers from all hierarchical levels, have established a decentralized police force that takes action in close relation with the needs of the citizens, and have introduced new forms of community police and so on. Other ex-communist countries still struggle with the shortcomings of the military traditions from their police culture.

That is why there is a need for police officers to be able to meet their colleagues from the EU countries to collaborate closely and efficiently alike. There are two fields of police cooperation in which the intercultural human resources management may be extremely useful: the joint training of police officers from various countries and cross-border cooperation of the working groups and operative groups. In these fields, the managerial orientation, in conjunction with the raise of awareness in terms of cultural differences can improve strategies by the creation of intercultural synergies. The elements of change can be introduced at police agencies in the East and West alike, in particular in those cases where they have to fight the inertia of a static police culture.

3 Joint international training

The joint international training aims in particular at the training of police officers, especially of those in management positions, for the international cooperation. They have the opportunity to learn foreign languages, the improvement of the knowledge on special vocabulary being very important. At the same time, they get into contact with new information regarding various legal regulations, recent specific procedures and working methods of other police organizations. Another purpose of the international training of police forces is the introduction of new technologies.
A frequent and very useful effect of joint programmes is that it offers the opportunity to establish personal relations amongst the participants. Cross-border cooperation is considerably facilitated when the partners met on a personal basis. Sometimes a quick telephone call is sufficient for finding out certain useful information, for instance on local and regional methods for dismantling criminal gangs when they are about to expand their territory of action in the neighbouring country. Even when they get to take action beyond their own borders, the organization and working methods are often based on a regional, national and ethnical solidarity network. The methods for the crime prevention and suppression have to take into account this cultural background.

In the future, the joint training should ensure the training of police officers for the international police cooperation by increasing the understanding of cultural differences and by improving intercultural communication skills. The sessions of joint international training have to train police officers for the intercultural dimension of crime and for its prevention as well. The cultural background of crime organized on ethnical criteria must be known in detail. The purpose of the training should be to make known at local and regional level the strategies applied in the fight against organized crime to the participants from all countries. Just as crime develops at international level, police activity should develop its international dimension as well.

This means that all police officers deal with intercultural issues when the suspect is a foreigner. The intercultural communication skills are needed during hearings, when working with an interpreter, in the investigations conducted in cases of organized crime groups based on nationality or ethnical background. Moreover, even the basic forms of communication risk to fail, which leads to resuming and strengthening the prejudices that exist on both parties of the dialogue.

In the urban areas of France, Great Britain and Germany, the day-to-day police activity is getting more complicated by the fact that police officers who are not properly trained get into contact with immigrants and other foreign citizens. From this reason, heated public debates occurred, whilst police officers must often defend the exaggerated allegations of xenophobia and racism.

The Central and Eastern European countries have become aware of the intercultural dimension of the police activity. The ever-growing international immigration, even in very distant countries, either from a geographical or cultural viewpoint, offers the first signals that in these countries international problems in police activity emerge. From this reason too, international training programmes should include adequate topics.
4 Bilateral working groups and operative groups

The most advanced forms of police cooperation (Schengen and Europol) are currently confined to the European Union framework; police chiefs from the Central and Eastern Europe area complain, probably not by chance, about the feature of this exclusive Western “club” and they warn with respect to the danger of the emergence of new separation amongst European countries.

However, new forms of cooperation can be established. The proposal that presents a special interest is to establish several working groups, investigation groups or operative groups on a less formal basis. Cooperation could be limited in terms of competencies, of the needed timeframes or geographical borders. This fact would present two advantages: first, this cooperation type at lower level does not come into conflict with the principle of national sovereignty; second, it enhances direct personal interaction amongst police officers from these countries, as it is backed by different cultural backgrounds. In this way, bilateral or multinational groups can develop their own new strategies.

5 International police cooperation in training matters

The opening of the borders, the diversification of travel facilities, as well as the speed of communication have been accepted long time ago as being basic features of modern life. The advantages are obvious. At the same time, they bring, however, huge opportunities for criminal activities. Police services all over the world should make ever-growing efforts and collaborate more closely to combat threats to economic and democratic stability brought by international crime. Based on the experience that has been acquired so far, one may deem that a better understanding of international police cooperation is also useful from the viewpoint of the improvement of the quality of citizens’ life.

Police activity is one of the most complexes from contemporary democratic societies. It entails much receptivity, self possession, braveness, a high intellectual capacity and, beyond all these, a real desire to serve community in the general interest. The ultimate purpose of police is to improve the quality of citizens’ life by a correct, honest, determined action, having, at the same time, a very well defined judgement, to enable them to identify the adequate option in the contact with criminals. Police action has to be accompanied by compassion and sympathy in compliance with the highest ethical standards.
Police training has a crucial importance in this complex process. It is not a purpose in itself; the training has to be not only a way by which the quality of police activities offered to the public has the highest possible standard. If it has not a direct, immediate, concrete impact on the interaction between the police and the public, it means that training is not relevant. The process in itself has to focus on what police officers do in a concrete way and on means to actually improve the respective procedures. In this context, one has to take into account the public’s expectations and the problems faced by the police. Some of these problems can benefit a lot from the international cooperation in training matters, which will be dealt with below.

The development of the free markets and the removal of the restrictions of circulation, in particular in Europe, have engendered big problems created by the international organized crime, aspect that demanded a determined and coordinated response. Being out of control, criminal activities may deeply affect even the future of democracy. Out of this reason, organized crime has to be one of the major priorities of the training. The development of Europol is one of the progresses that have offered great benefits at operative level for the member states. Yet, on a regular and well coordinated basis, one needs new opportunities for the investigation officers throughout Europe, who may get useful information from the exchange of experience as well. International criminals are clever and sophisticated, well supported by the organizations they belong to and very difficult to identify. The trafficking in drugs, art objects, antiques, firearms and forged goods, as well as money laundering and white collar crime are aspects that affect in various degrees all countries worldwide.

The link between various crimes widely spread at international level was established long time ago. In England, for instance, researches have established that 20% of the thefts and burglaries were committed by drug consumers so that they could pay for their addictions. The seizures of illegal drugs increasingly multiply each year, yet all indicators show that the drug abuse continues to inexorably rise. There is no country in this world that is able to solve on its own this vast problem, of a particular difficulty. The effective law enforcement has to be done in a unitary way at international scale. Only few countries have not been touched by terrorism. Even if some countries do not suffer directly from the atrocities of terrorism, they may be exploited by terrorist groups who purchase firearms from a particular country, launders their funds in another one or hide in various other countries willing to accept their presence. Even if some of these groups claim that they are defenders of justice, all they do is to commit punishable crimes that have to be brought to justice.
The human rights, the human dignity are features of a free society. Police training from all countries should adopt the essential standards and values for defending human rights. The great mobility of the workforce, the human migration, the increase of the travel opportunities for tourism purposes, without mentioning the expansion of criminal activities, demand the highest standards of conduct and respect for human beings from the part of police officers from police services of all countries.

The issues of racial discrimination and equal opportunities are in close connection with the set of human rights. The insurance that there is no discrimination against the minority groups is absolutely essential for a police service, police officers being the most visible part in a criminal justice system, as they have to be seen as entirely impartial and, irrespective of their origins; they have to be correct in relation with all citizens. That is why police organizations should prove unequivocally the equal opportunities for everybody.

Another field of interest is the entire concept of police leadership and management. It is a fact that police structures and organizations differ from a country to another, yet the basic principles of leadership and management theory are the same at international level. There are similarities that may be seen between the field of police and business and which are mutually transferable. This is a great gain for police leaders to observe and take up various organizations and operation patterns from the private sector. At the same time, there are specific needs for police officers who can considerably benefit from the merger of middle and upper rank police officers. The establishment of objectives, the work planning, the change management, the quality management and the performance measurement are now familiar terms for all upper level police officers or management police officers from most countries.

Another idea regarding the priorities and opportunities of cooperation refer to the fact that many countries are actively engaged in ensuring police training on an international basis, in particular in the Eastern Europe. It is a fact that there are notable differences between the criminal justice systems and the legislation in force in these countries, just as there is a certain diversity regarding police systems. These differences obstruct sometimes the cooperation and the desired level within the changes occurred in the European area. However, one notes the existence of a large availability to strengthen cooperation amongst law enforcement agencies throughout Europe. Police activity represents an important topic for each state in the area and it seems that this is a stable perception. Yet, although police representatives from these countries are aware of the considerable progress that has been already made by the joint efforts of tackling specific
international issues, they know that there are still many things to be done. The climate of cooperation encouraged by the Treaty of Maastricht was supported by the creation of the Association of European Police Colleges (AEPC), which is made already of 14 upper level police training colleges. The goal of this association is to expand by the inclusion of all police colleges from Europe. The Association was born thanks to the agreement on its establishment of 1995.

The objectives of this association focus on two aspects: first, to organize joint training courses for the upper level officers in issues of common interest; second, to ensure the exchange of information and to maintain the contact with the adequate fields of training and development. The establishment of AEPC can ensure a single contact point for all the problems that relate to the training of police officers from Europe. At the same time, it can contribute to the maximization of cooperation and coordination in terms of police training between the college members. The best practices and researches in this field can make the object of certain exchanges between the members, with a view to most effectively using the available resources. The focus on ensuring the assistance in the field of the training for the Eastern Europe by means of the joint training schemes is associated to the collaboration with the International Law Enforcement Academy (ILEA) from Budapest anytime it is necessary.

AEPC can focus on issues that are of international interest and it can identify the training needs that can be better met by a multi-national approach. A curriculum of courses and training opportunities is designed on a yearly basis and this demonstrates the value of the efforts made by the states involved in combating cross-border crime. One of the functioning principles is that the increased frequency of the contacts amongst upper rank officers may ensure a better level of understanding of the own systems of criminal justice and police. Cooperation in operative matters will be enhanced by having permanently in view the common objective of European police services, which is to improve the quality of police activity for the citizens of each state.

Another illustration of the way in which the training is seen as an opportunity to get together police officers worldwide is the Police Training Interpol Symposium, event which is held every two years and which is attended by the heads of police colleges. The implications of the training are identified within the discussions and debates, and one aims at ensuring high quality schemes to enable investigation officers to develop professional skills and their ability to respond to the threats against democracy and economic activities.
References

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