POINTPULSE
WESTERN BALKANS PULSE FOR POLICE INTEGRITY AND TRUST

TODAY AND TOMORROW: SOCIAL MEDIA AND POLICE SERVICES IN THE WESTERN BALKANS

DCAF
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TODAY AND TOMORROW: SOCIAL MEDIA AND POLICE SERVICES IN THE WESTERN BALKANS

Belgrade, 2018

About the POINTPULSE – Seven civil society organisations: Analytica from Skopje, Belgrade Centre for Security Policy (BCSP) and Balkan Investigative Reporting Network (BIRN) from Belgrade, Centre for Security Studies (CSS) from Sarajevo, Institute Alternativa (IA) from Podgorica, Institute for Democracy and Mediation (IDM) from Tirana, and the Kosovo Centre for Security Studies (KCSS) from Pristina formed the POINTPULSE network with the aim to oversee police integrity in the Western Balkans and contribute to increasing the trust and confidence in the police services in the region by fighting police corruption and promoting police integrity.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BiH	Bosnia and Herzegovina
GMP	Greater Manchester Police
MET	Metropolitan Police
MoI	Ministry of Interior
RS	Republic of Srpska
WB	Western Balkans

LIST OF BOXES, TABLES, AND CHARTS

SUMMARY

Police services in the Western Balkans (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia) are not substantially active on social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube) and are not sufficiently exploiting the advantages of online communication such as: flexibility (accessible 24/7), relevance (provides a place for real-life policing examples and the exchange of experiences), and community building (the police can develop a supportive, stimulating community that is held by participants in high regard).

There is a significant possibility for police services to use social media in the WB for strong community engagement and partnership with the aim of providing a crime-free and safe environment for citizens. Internet penetration in the region is 68.1% and there are 12.5 million internet users[1] as well as more than 8.5 million Facebook[2] account holders. The average Facebook consumer has more than 200 'friends'[3], which indicates a high potential for the community engagement and sharing of information.

The research analysed the level of police presence in the social media platforms during the period from 1 January to 31 July 2017. It shows that five out of seven police services in the WB that are subject to this analysis use at least one social medium as a communication tool. Four out of seven are present on Facebook and YouTube, while three have Twitter and Instagram accounts. Only the Albanian police are present on all four social networks. The Kosovo Police makes use of three networks, while the rest use two out of four. Montenegrin police and the MoI of the Federation of BiH, however, are not present on any social networks. Police services in the region predominantly use social media to share basic information, and for promotion. Efforts to engage citizens are lacking. The nature of these social networks, as two-way communication tools, is not recognised by police forces of the region.

The police in **Albania** are mostly active on Facebook, with more than 30,000 page-likes. Twitter and YouTube are used considerably less, Instagram not at all. Facebook is used primarily as a communication tool for sharing service information of the Albanian police, mostly through video posts. There is no interaction with the citizens. The language is formal and bureaucratic.

The MoI of the **Federation of BiH** is not actively using social media, while the **MoI of the Republic of Srpska** has a YouTube account and an official Facebook page with 18,123 page-likes. It is not however present on Twitter. Facebook is primarily a communication tool used for sharing service information, mostly by way of posting photographs. Citizens' engagement is low, but still better when compared to the practice in Albania and Kosovo.

1   Internet World Stats. "Internet Stats and Facebook Usage in Europe: June 2017 Statistics". Internet World Stats. 3 May 2017. Accessed on 15 August 2017. https://goo.gl/cCxXd.

2   Facebook Ad Manage – July 2017.

3   Smith, Aaron. "6 new facts about Facebook." Pew Research Centre. 3 February 2014. Accessed on 5 July 2017. https://goo.gl/DkyEHj.

The **Kosovo police** have Facebook, Twitter and YouTube accounts, but no Instagram. Facebook is their main online communication tool, with 34,345 page-likes. However, the Kosovo police are not regularly active on Facebook and mostly share links that lead to service information. Interaction with citizens is very low. Original Twitter content is not produced and a low level of activity on YouTube has been noted.

The MoI of **Macedonia** is active predominantly on YouTube, with more than 5,000 subscribers and almost 9.5 million views, which is the best result in the region. Its activity on Instagram is modest. The Facebook page was created in August 2017. There is no Twitter account. The Minister of Interior is not very active on Twitter, and tweets are not strictly related to policing.

The MoI of **Montenegro** is not present on any of the social networks.

The police in **Serbia** are active mainly on Instagram and YouTube.[4] Tweeting ceased in February 2010. Instagram is used in accordance with the rules of this social network, with the primary goal to promote the activities of the police and the Minister. The YouTube account of the Serbian MoI had more than 9 million views and boasts 6,483 subscribers, which is the record in the region.

Communication in the 21st century has been tremendously changed by new technologies. Social media now provide a completely new communication approach, with different potential and substance. Regardless of whether or not the police want to be present on social media, police issues are being discussed online. Due to this fact, if the police do not use social media many related information can be subjected to spinning and misuse, with no possibility of reacting through the same communication channel. Even though the facts regarding internet and social media users in the WB indicate that conditions for police use of social media do exist, law enforcement agencies of the region are not sufficiently active on social networks.

There is significant room for improvement of social media usage by police in the WB to increase effectiveness by engaging citizens, and to build trust in the police by presenting the human side through community policing. Social networks are not just another traditional media channel; they allow greater connectivity and interaction between the web users and encourage contributions and feedback from anyone who is a member of any virtual community.

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4   The official Facebook page of the MoI of Serbia was opened in February 2018, and therefore it's not subject to the research since the analysis covered the period of the level of police presence in the social media platforms from 1 January to 31 July 2017.

RECOMMENDATIONS

General

- Online communication of police services in the WB should be consistent with the mission, vision and values of the police. Thus, a strategic framework for police online communication should be developed as complementary and supplementary content or pillar to overall communication strategy of the police service.

- Each police service in the WB should form a working group and place it in charge of developing a communication strategy that will help the institution to effectively communicate and meet its core institutional objectives. A specific organisational unit within the police or MoI, dealing with communication, should be responsible for the implementation of the communication strategy.

- The working group in charge of developing the communication strategy should implement the following steps to design an effective strategy and a coherent implementation plan: (1) conducting the baseline analysis, both internal and external (SWOT and PEST analysis tools can be used); (2) defining the organisational and communication objectives, the stakeholder list and messages for each target group; (4) defining communication channels and methods. This should be followed by an action plan indicating the key communications activities, budget, and resources allocated to delivering the strategy outputs, as well as a proposed timeline and identified particular milestones within the strategy. This will allow for the measuring of clear steps towards the ultimate goals.

- Police services in the region should apply the following principles of effective social media use in order to fully exploit the advantages of online communication: (1) social networks are not just another traditional media channel; (2) social media allow greater connectivity and interaction between the web users; (3) social media encourage contributions and feedback from anyone who is a member of any virtual community.

- Police services in the region should develop the following procedures to make full use of the benefits of social media platforms: (1) identity procedures concerning online activity, having in mind that the police or MoIs are responsible for what they post or tweet; (2) procedure for creating and managing content based on ethics rules regarding policing; (3) procedure for leaving comments, to promote respect and professionalism; (4) privacy and confidentiality rules; (5) procedures for potential conflicts and communication in "red flag" situations.

- Police services in the region should develop rules and procedures for crisis communication carried out on a different social media platform.

- Police services in the WB should use social media not only for sharing information or for

promotion, but also for creating communities and engaging with citizens. In addition, social networks should be used for engaging citizens to help with investigations.

- The potential of social networks should be used for public education as a prevention method. Educational videos and infographics should be developed and shared.

- Social networks are two-way communication channels. In this context, police services should follow other accounts in order to hear what the public has to say. Not following anyone sends the wrong message: that police is not open for conversation.

- Questions asked by citizens through social networks should be answered, and comments should be provided with feedback.

- Each local police service (at least in the capital, and in the largest cities with the substantial mobility of citizens) should have its own social media account that will follow general guidelines developed by the MoI.

- Police officers should be educated to perform investigations on social media.

Specific

Albania

- The social media account of the Albanian MoI should have its own identity, representing no institution other than the police. Therefore, social media outputs should try to rely mainly on original output concerning the police, while sharing third-party content (other state institutions', bodies' or persons', e.g. police officials' social media accounts, the Minister's account, etc.) should be the exception.

- The MoI of Albania needs to refresh its approach to content format in order to maximise the value of the content itself, strengthen the search engine weight, and reach a broader audience using the following tools: infographics, slide share decks, quizzes, live streaming, video storytelling, instructographics, gamification and podcasts.

- The MoI of Albania should adopt a language on social media platforms that is in line with the needs of specific target groups. For example, the target audience of a press release (professional journalists, other ministries) is not the same as the target audience that uses social media (the general public). Therefore, it is necessary to avoid re-using the same format for all audiences - for example, the content of a press release should not be copied into a Facebook post.

- No more than three posts should be published on Facebook per day, as the increased number of posts does not ensure that they will all be equally visible. Publishing a large number of posts per day can force citizens who had 'liked' the official page of the police to mark it as spam or 'hide' it.

- The Albanian MoI should improve its engagement with the users of Facebook; questions posted by citizens on this platform should not remain without an official answer.

- Each video that is published online should be provided with subtitles.

- The Twitter account of the Albanian MoI should not automatically share content that has already appeared on the Facebook account; each social media platform has its own specifics, reflected in communication and language style.

- Each social media profile of the Albanian MoI should be unequivocally marked as an official account. Therefore, YouTube URL should be modified to clearly show that it is an official channel of the Albanian police.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

- The Federal MoI of Bosnia and Herzegovina should strategically decide to become active on social networks, especially Facebook and Twitter, since internet penetration in BiH is 69% and almost half the population has Facebook accounts.

- Communication style on the official Facebook page of the MoI of the Republic of Srpska should adjust to the nature of this network, as Facebook users prefer a communication tone that is less formal and bureaucratic, but still professional.

- The MoI of the Republic of Srpska should improve its engagement with the users of Facebook; questions posted by citizens on this platform should not remain without an official answer.

- To achieve higher post visibility, the MoI of the Republic of Srpska should update its status of Facebook whenever a link is shared.

- To ensure better performance on Facebook and improve reach and communication, the MoI of the Republic of Srpska needs to share not only basic information concerning certain actions. The content of the activity, and the answer to the question why a specific activity is important for citizens should also be included in the post.

- To achieve greater reach and better communication, videos on Facebook should be posted as original videos that are uploaded directly to Facebook instead of being shared from YouTube or a similar platform.

- Each video that is published online should be provided with subtitles.

- The MoI of the Republic of Srpska should open an official Twitter account to reach different target groups and a greater number of citizens.

Kosovo

- The Kosovo police should decrease the percentage of use of shared links on their Facebook page, while the percentage of original Facebook content (videos, photos and status updates), while citizen engagement should be increased in order to exploit the benefits of online com-

munication through Facebook, as this platfrom regulates the visibility of information posted on each page based on its own algorithms and characteristics.

- Whenever the Kosovo police share a certain link on their official Facebook page, they should follow it up with a commentary because each piece of content posted on Facebook should be treated as native Facebook content. This enables effective Facebook communication.

- To achieve better communication and greater reach and shareability, videos on Facebook should be posted as original videos that are directly uploaded to Facebook, instead of being shared from YouTube or a similar platform.

- Each video that is published online should be provided with subtitles.

- The Kosovo police should improve their engagement with the users of Facebook; questions posted by citizens on this platform should not remain without an official answer.

- For effective communication, no more than three posts should be published on Facebook per day, as the increased number of posts does not ensure that they will all be equally visible. Posting a large number of posts per day can force citizens who had 'liked' the official page of the Kosovo police to mark it as spam or 'hide' it.

- The Twitter account of the Kosovo police should not automatically share content that has already appeared on the Facebook account; each social media platform has its own specifics, reflected in communication and language style.

- Another way to attract the attention of a greater number of citizens is to adopt their language. The use of Twitter should be adjusted to reflect the characteristics of this network.

- The Kosovo police should improve and increase their activity on the YouTube channel by releasing new videos that are searchable and embedded on the official website.

- The Kosovo police should use bilingual communication on social media (both Albanian and Serbian).

Macedonia

- The Macedonian MoI needs to further develop its Facebook page, since from August 2017 posts that appeared on the Facebook page of the Minister of Interior have been mainly shared.

- The Macedonian MoI should strategically decide to become active on Twitter.

- The Macedonian MoI should add a description to each uploaded video that is on YouTube.

- To make use of all the benefits of Instagram, presence on this social photo-sharing network should be continuous, not *ad hoc*.

- Each social media profile of the Macedonian MoI should be unequivocally marked as an official account. Therefore, links to official social media accounts should be posted on the official website.

- Bilingual communication on social media is recommended, in both Albanian and Macedonian.

Montenegro

- The MoI of Montenegro should strategically decide to become active on social networks, especially Facebook and Twitter, since internet penetration in Montenegro is 61% and almost half the population uses Facebook.

- Police or MoI of Montenegro should open official YouTube accounts, as video materials are already being posted on the official website of the Ministry.

Serbia

- The police in Serbia should reactivate their presence on Twitter, basing it on clear rules and procedures established for the use of social media. The MoI of Serbia should strategically decide to become active on Facebook.

- Guidelines for Social Media Usage, developed by the Ministry for State Administration and Local Self-Government, should be taken to account in the process of developing social media policy, rules and procedures.

- The Serbian MoI should add a description for each video that is uploaded on YouTube.

- The Serbian MoI should improve its engagement with the users on Instagram; questions posted by citizens on this platform should not remain without an official answer.

INTRODUCTION

Social media are internet-based networking tools that allow individuals to access, engage and interact with others through the creation and sharing of content that is accessed through any internet-enabled device (which increasingly includes smart phones and mobile devices).[5] There are many different forms of social media, including: social networks such as Facebook, where users have public profiles and use them to network or connect with other users; microblogging sites such as Twitter, which enable public sharing of short updates; and photo or video sharing sites, such as Instagram or YouTube, which enable the public dissemination of photos and videos.[6]

In the era when newspapers, radio and television were the only existing media, public institutions were forced to use mediators to send their messages to the public. Today, in the 21st century, the situation is quite different. Public institutions such as the police service or ministries responsible for public safety and security no longer depend on traditional mediators, e.g. daily newspapers. The police can now use new, online and direct communication channels to send their messages. Regardless of whether or not the police want to be present on social media, police issues are being discussed online. Due to this fact, if the police do not use social media, many related information can be subjected to spinning and misuse, with no possibility of reacting through the same communication channel

If a public institution – police or other – wishes to reach a greater number of people, it must go where the people are gathered. And today's people spend time online, on social media platforms. Facebook, as the most popular of them, has two billion monthly users. In other words, more than 25% of the entire world's population uses Facebook every month.[7] Twitter, the micro-blogging service, has reached an average of 328 million active monthly users.[8] The total number of people who use YouTube (video-sharing social network) is 1,300,000,000; almost five billion videos are watched on YouTube every single day.[9] Instagram is growing faster than ever, with 700 million monthly users in 2017.[10]

Social networks provide the possibility to inform, educate, engage and persuade. Through social media, the police do not only have an opportunity to inform the public, but to also use it for education and as a preventive measure. The police can benefit from the use of social media in terms of building a community and improving the image of the police, which can consequently lead to increased public trust in this institution. Social networks can help in gathering intelligence and conducting

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5   Obar, Jonathan A. and Steve Wildman. "Social media definition and the governance challenge: An introduction to the special issue." Telecommunications Policy, 1 October 2015, pp. 745-750.

6   Police Foundation. "Police use of social media". Police Foundation Briefing. 1 June 2014. Accessed on 15 September 2017. https://goo.gl/7VkBLa.

7   Statista. "Number of monthly active Facebook users worldwide as of the 4th quarter 2017 (in millions)". Statista. Accessed on 2 October 2017. https://goo.gl/PT0dX2.

8   Statista. "Number of monthly active Twitter users worldwide from the 1st quarter 2010 to the 3rd quarter 2017 (in millions)". Statista. Accessed on 2 October 2017. https://goo.gl/d0NOj2.

9   See: https://goo.gl/IKnVFK.

10   Heath, Alex. "Instagram's user base has doubled in the last 2 years to 700 million". Business Insider. 26 April 2017. Accessed on 2 October 2017. https://goo.gl/6udU96.

investigations. Eight out of ten members of the American police force use social media as an investigative tool.[11]

Besides the fact that they can benefit investigations, the social media can also be useful as mechanisms for real-time monitoring and crime prevention. With no communication mediator in the form of traditional media, law enforcement agencies are better capable of managing rumours and misinformation if they use social media. Also, citizens are more willing to help police to gather intelligence if they can do so anonymously.[12] Social networks offer this possibility to citizens, since anyone can create a profile without revealing his or her real name and using a nickname. Social media help people to self-organise, and to obtain and share important, current and local information. This has been proven during the UK riots of 2011.[13] Also, nearly a million tweets helped to save lives and organise help in Serbia during the floods of 2014 (in six days, 517,300 tweets bearing a hashtag "#poplave", and 215,450 tweets were sent to #SerbiaFloods).[14] However, potential risks are also present (see: Box 1).

Box 1: Potential social media risks

Although social media do provide a wide range of possibilities to improve communication with the public, there are five potential risks of social media usage that should be taken into account. A well designed communication strategy and social media policy can reduce the following risks:

1. Lack of human resources and social media policy guidelines can cause poor handling of social media accounts or provoke crises. Effective use of social media for institutional purposes requires an on-going sustained effort and significant time commitment, as well as a dedicated team.

2. Social media do not allow institutions to control, or even see, everything that is said about them online. Unlike the traditional communication channels that allowed restriction of the amount of information that institutions allowed the public to access, in the era of social media this is no longer possible.

3. Human mistakes in posts can create significant communication crises. In the era of engaging directly with the public, in real time, mistakes are however bound to occur. A member of a social media platform can unintentionally post incorrect information on an official social media account. Due to the viral nature of these media, such information can quickly spread far and wide. Even though the unwanted post can be deleted from the official account, it cannot be deleted from other accounts that have copied, saved, re-uploaded and shared the content.

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11   LexisNexis. "Survey of Law Enforcement Personnel and Their Use of Social Media". LexisNexis. November 2014. Accessed on 2 October 2017. https://goo.gl/sX6vcL.

12   Police Foundation. "Police use of social media". Police Foundation Briefing. 1 June 2014. Accessed on 15 September 2017. https://goo.gl/7VkBLa.

13   Ball , James and Paul Lewis. "Twitter and the riots: how the news spread". The Guardian. 7 December 2011. Accessed on 3 October 2017. https://goo.gl/vsXSVc.

14   Milošević, Irina. "Poplava ujedinila tviteraše – Tokom vanredne situacije društvene mreže pokazale svoju snagu". Ekapija. 24 May 2014. Accessed on 3 November 2017. https://goo.gl/G4xR2D.

4. There is no way to verify what is being posted on social media, so today they consequently serve as main channels for fake news. This can be risky for police institutions, especially if the police engage citizens to provide information and require additional resources to check the reliability of this information.

5. There is always the risk of hacking, spyware, and bugs.

Given the facts concerning internet and social media users in the region, we can say that the prerequisites for police use of social media in the WB are in place. There are 12.5 million internet users and the average internet penetration is 68.1 percent (see: Table 1).[15]

Table 1: Number of internet users and the average internet penetration in the Western Balkans

Western Balkans	Internet users	Penetration (% of the population)
Albania	1,823,233	62.6 %
Bosnia and Herzegovina	2,628,846	69.3 %
Kosovo	1,523,373	80.4 %
Macedonia	1,439,089	69.1 %
Montenegro	379,480	61.0 %
Serbia	4,705,141	66.2 %

Furthermore, more than 8.5 million users in the region are active on Facebook[16], and the average Facebook user has more than 200 'friends'.[17] To conclude, There is a high potential for sharing information in the WB (see: Chart 1). [18]

Chart 1: Number of Facebook users in the Western Balkans

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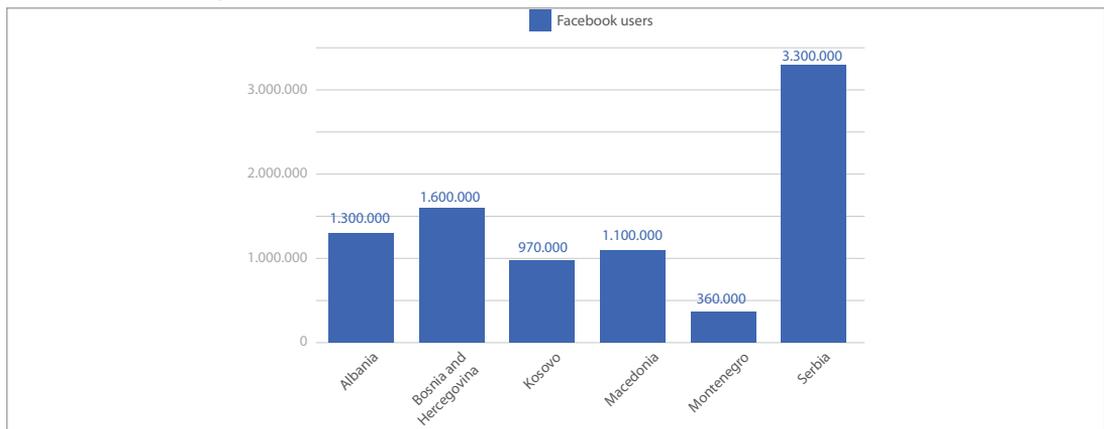
15   Internet World Stats. "Internet Stats and Facebook Usage in Europe: June 2017 Statistics". Internet World Stats. 3 May 2017. Accessed on 15 August 2017. https://goo.gl/cCxXd.

16   Facebook Ad Manage – July 2017

17   Smith, Aaron. "Six new facts about Facebook", Pew Research Centre. 3 February 2014. Accessed on 5 July 2017. https://goo.gl/DkyEHj.

18   Facebook Ad Manage – July 2017

The study investigates the use of social media by the police services or MoIs in the WB. The purpose of the study is to find out how law enforcement agencies in the region are using social media.

The study consists of two sections. The first section analyses the level of police presence in the social media, and the type of information that police services have provided online on social media platforms during the period from 1 January to 31 July 2017. Indicators for the social media presence analysis are: the number of followers, posting frequency, reach, and other statistical data. Furthermore, indicators for the type of information were grouped into the following categories:

1. Service information, including posts with content that informs the public about police actions, arrests, traffic accident reports, crisis management, data concerning criminal charges or solved cases;

2. Police promotion, including posts with content aimed to inform the public about the promotional activities of the police such as police results, police activities during the celebration of important dates, presentation of police work or equipment;

3. Promotion of the head of police or Minister of Interior as posts that highlight the activities of the Minister or police officers and their statements, as well as shared posts from personnel or the official pages of the Minister or other police officers;

4. Citizen engagement posts, which are posts that aim to invite citizens to assist in police investigations by sharing their knowledge, recognising suspects or uncovering criminal activities.

The second section identifies best practices used by police services around the world or other countries relevant for the WB. Special attention was paid to the local level, i.e. the fact that some police services have a good policy of having social media accounts based on smaller geographical units (cities or municipalities). Information concerning lessons that WB could learn from other countries' best practices is presented in the conclusion. Key recommendations are listed at the beginning of the study.

TODAY

Five out of seven police services in the region use at least one social media platform as a communication tool. Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Instagram are predominantly used for sharing service information and promotion of the police.

The study analyses the official use of Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Instagram by the police services or MoIs in the Western Balkans: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina (Federation of BiH and Republic of Srpska), Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia. A quantitative and qualitative analysis has been conducted for the period from 1 January to 31 July 2017.

Overview

Four out of seven police services in the region are present on Facebook and YouTube, while three have Twitter and Instagram accounts (see: Table 2). Only the Albanian police are present on all four social networks, the Kosovo Police on three, while most others use two out of four social media platforms. Montenegrin police and the MoI of the Federation of BiH do not use any social networks.

Table 2: Overview of the social media use in the Western Balkans

Police	Facebook	Twitter	YouTube	Instagram
Albanian State Police	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
The MoI of the Republic of Srpska	Yes	No	Yes	No
The MoI of the Federation of BiH	No	No	No	No
Kosovo Police	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
The MoI of Macedonia	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
The MoI of Montenegro	No	No	No	No
The MoI of Serbia	No	Yes	Yes	Yes

The Albanian police are the most active on Facebook, with 34,858 page-likes.

Table 3: Police services in the Western Balkans and Facebook

Police	Total number of Facebook profiles[19]	Page-likes	Ratio
Albanian State Police[20]	1,300,000	34.858	2.60
The MoI of Republic of Srpska[21]	1,600,000	18,123	1.13

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19   Facebook ads manager – July 2017
20   See: https://goo.gl/Jij4dJ.
21   See: https://goo.gl/ZKzYAL.
22   See: https://goo.gl/MqKqQD.

Kosovo Police [22]	970,000	34,345	3.54

As regards Twitter, the most active is again the Albanian police, with 3,577 tweets but only 97 followers.

Table 4: Police services in the Western Balkans and Twitter

Police	Twitter handle	Tweets	Followers	Following	Joined
Albanian State Police	@PoliciaeShtetit	3.577	97	38	October 2014
Kosovo Police	@Kosovo_Police	907	153	4	October 2014
The MoI of Serbia	@PolicijaSrbije	274	1.436	0	August 2009

Once again, the Albanian police are the most active on YouTube, with 575 videos that have been published during the referent time period. Since it opened its YouTube account, the police force published a total of 928 videos. The institution with the highest number of YouTube subscribers is the Serbian police, while the Macedonian police have the most views.

Table 5: Police services in the Western Balkans and YouTube (January – July 2017)

Police	Videos uploaded	Video views	Average number of views per video
Albanian State Police	575	172.879	301
The MoI of the Republic of Srpska	7	12.587	1.798
Kosovo Police	5	102.864	20.573
The MoI of Macedonia	23	192.464	8.368
The MoI of Serbia	11	58.711	5.337

Table 6: Police services in the Western Balkans and YouTube (total overview)

Police	Subscribers	Total views	Total number of videos
Albanian State Police[23]	397	33.788	928
The MoI of the Republic of Srpska[24]	1.727	1.022.000	78
Kosovo Police[25]	0	130.428	8
The MoI of Macedonia[26]	5.198	9.410.000	398
The MoI of Serbia[27]	6.483	9.390.000	583

The Serbian police are the most active on Instagram, with the highest number of followers.

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23   See: https://goo.gl/NcLWNv.
24   See: https://goo.gl/wk8Wec.
25   See: https://goo.gl/nfnbE6.
26   See: https://goo.gl/ADPMu8.
27   See: https://goo.gl/t8shmu.

Table 7: Police services in the Western Balkans and Instagram

Police	Posts	Followers	Following
Albanian State Police[28]	0	57	2.266
The MoI of Macedonia[29]	43	83	324
The MoI of Serbia[30]	283	5.384	50

Albania

Facebook, Twitter and YouTube platforms are the main social media tools used by the police in Albania. An Instagram account has been openened, but remains unused.

The Facebook page of the Albanian police has been 'liked' by 33, 836 persons, i.e. by 2.6% of all the Facebook users in the country. During the referent period the institution published 568 posts – approximately 2.7 posts per day. This is more than the usual number of posts published by public institutions, the ideal number being between 5 and 10 per week.[31] Since the Facebook algorithm frequently changes, as do the habits of social media users, metrics should be regularly observed and posting frequency adjusted accordingly. Videos were published predominantly (355), followed by photos (187), while status updates were used very rarely (only 26 times). The Albanian police did not post any links on Facebook in the first seven months of 2017. Live streaming was used five times during this period, while the photo gallery was used 115 times, for a total of 187 posted photographs. The 'share' option was used 141 times.

Chart 2: Facebook analytics of the Albanian police: Type of post

Albanian police

Status Update
4,6 %

Photo
32,9 %

Video
62,5 %

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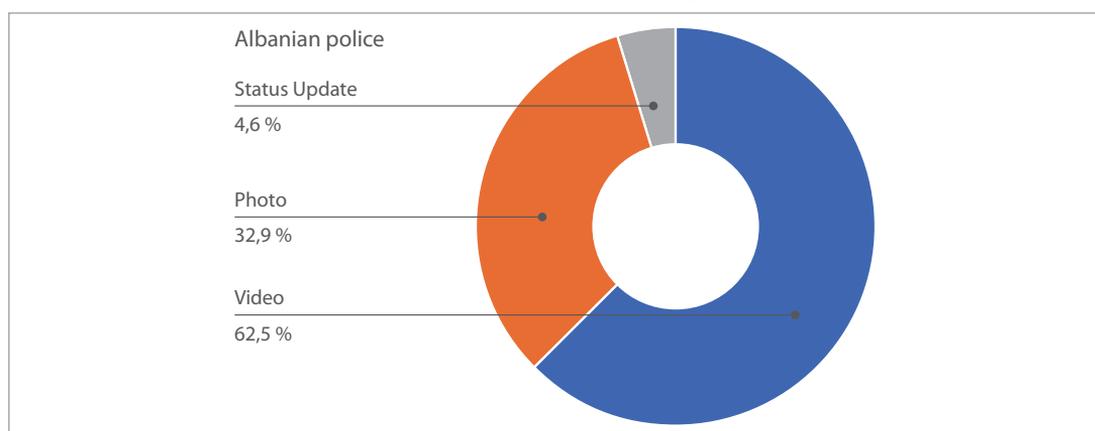
28   See: https://goo.gl/xkfKLg.
29   See: https://goo.gl/mn3Mz3.
30   See: https://goo.gl/mY9LQk.
31   Ellering, Nathan. "How Often To Post on Social Media? [Proven Research from 14 Studies]." CoSchedule Blog. 18 October 2017. Accessed on 9 February 2018. https://goo.gl/BpYec7.

The Albanian police use Facebook mainly as a communication tool for sharing service information (458 posts). It was used significantly fewer times for police promotion (49 posts) or promotion of the Minister of Interior (57 posts). Posts for citizen engagement are more of a statistical error, as only 4 posts were published with this aim.

Chart 3: Facebook analytics of Albanian police: Type of information
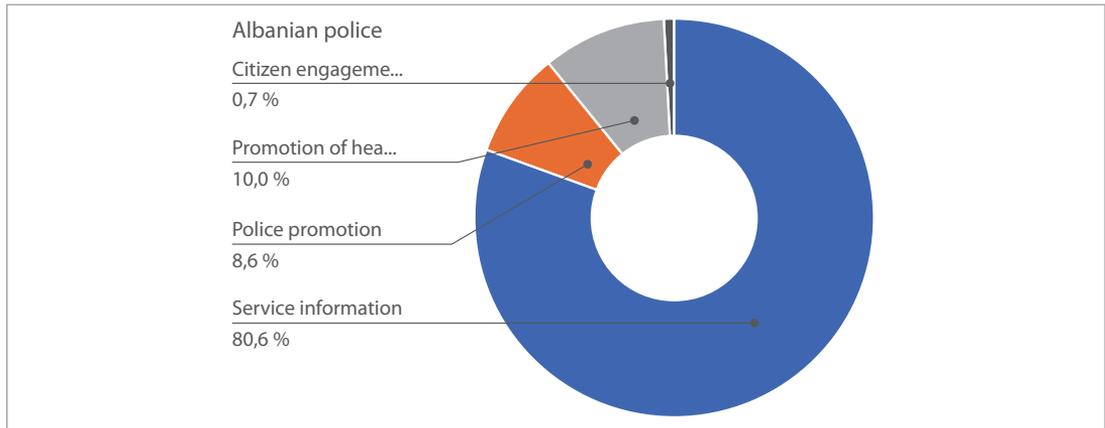
The Albanian police often use multiple posts with the same content a couple of times per day, which is not good practice. Also, it is obvious that the Albanian police do not interact with citizens on Facebook – no replays or feedback comments were provided, which is not good practice given the nature of Facebook as a two-way communication tool. The good aspect of their Facebook account management is the extensive use of video, which is currently the most engaging and popular form of content (https://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/state-of-video-marketing-new-data).

Posting press releases in the form of very long texts on Facebook is not recommended. The tone of communication is formal. The preferred tone should be less formal and bureaucratic, but it should also remain professional. Posts of the Minister of Interior or the Ministry spokesperson were frequently shared on the official Facebook page, which is not recommended either. The topic that was most represented during the relevant period was the seizure of weapons.

The Albanian police have been active on **Twitter** since October 2014, under the handle "@PoliciaeShtetit". They have a very low number of followers (only 97). During the referent period of time, 3.577 tweets were published. All the tweets served only to share Facebook posts from the official Facebook page, and no interaction with followers was ever noted. The low number of users that follow the Albanian police shows that this social network has not been accepted as a two-way communication tool.

The **YouTube** account of the Albanian police has existed since April 2014. There are 397 subscribers and the account had 33,788 views. During the period of this analysis 575 videos have been published, with the total number of 172.879 views (the average number of video views is 301).

The official **Instagram** account of the Albanian Ministry of Interior has been opened, but it is locked and devoid of posts or content.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Due to the complex political system in BiH, and consequently the organisational and functional structure of policing,[32] the study has actually analysed the police use of social media in two entities – the Republic of Srpska and the Federation of BiH.

The MoI of the Federation of BiH is not active on social media, while the MoI of the Republic of Srpska has an official Facebook and YouTube accounts, but is not present on Twitter. The **Facebook** page of the MoI of the Republic of Srpska has had 18.123 page-likes, and has regularly communicated with the public as it has published approximately 1.7 posts per day (for the total of 353 published posts) during the referent period from 1 January to 31 July 2017. This is in line with the usual number of public institutions' posts.[33] Photos are the dominant post type (332 posts) and any other types is rarely used – videos and status updates were posted three times, and links only 15 times.

Chart 4: Facebook analytics of the MoI of Republic of Srpska: Type of post

Post type structured of MUP RS Facebook presence
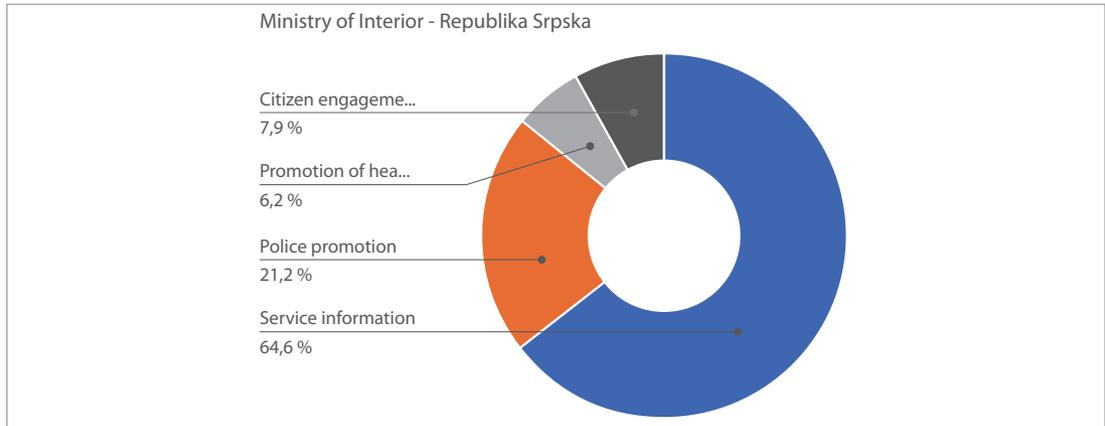
Video
0,8 %

Links
4,2 %

Status update
0,8 %

Photo
94,1 %
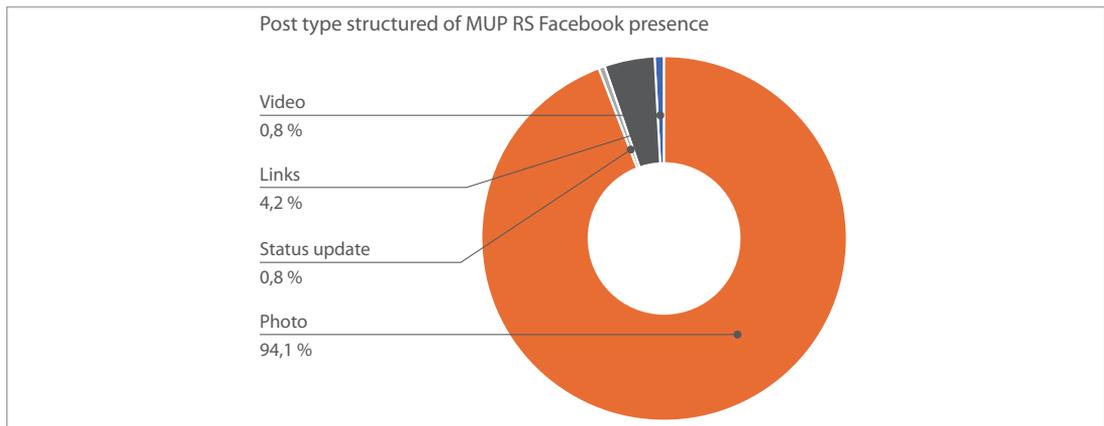
32 Kovačević, Alma, and Denis Hadžović. "Policing in Bosnia and Herzegovina." POINTPULSE. 13 August 2015. Accessed on 16 November 2017. https://goo.gl/BbxR8e.

33 Andrews, Catherine. "The Government's Guide to Use Facebook." GovLoop. May 2015. Accessed on 26 December 2017. https://goo.gl/LvVREt.

The MoI of the Republic of Srpska uses Facebook predominantly to share service information – 228 posts. The Facebook profile is significantly less used for police promotion (75 posts), and almost equally for promotion of the Minister of Interior (22 posts) and citizens engagement (28 posts). It is noticeable that the MoI of the Republic of Srpska used Facebook for citizen engagement seven times more than the Albanian police and four times more than the Kosovo Police. Although in total this is not a large number, it is good practice compared to other police services in the region.

Chart 5: Facebook analytics of the MoI of Republic of Srpska: Type of information

Ministry of Interior - Republika Srpska

Citizen engageme...
7,9 %

Promotion of hea...
6,2 %

Police promotion
21,2 %

Service information
64,6 %

The MoI of the Republic of Srpska had opened a **YouTube** account back in August 2008. It has 1,774 subscribers and has had 1,022,000 views. Seven videos have been published during the reference period, with a total number of 12,587 views.

Kosovo

The Kosovo Police has official Facebook, Twitter and YouTube accounts, while an Instagram account was never opened.

Facebook page of the Kosovo police is liked by 34.345 people, which is 3.5% of the total number of Facebook users in Kosovo. Analysis revealed that the Kosovo police did not use Facebook regularly in the reference period. They posted a total of 130 posts, which is less than one per day. Unlike the police in Albania, the Kosovo police use links the most (in 104 cases), while photos (14), videos (8) and status updates (4) are used only rarely. This practice is not good, given that photos and videos are one of the best ways to increase engagement and the number of page-likes. In fact, Facebook photos receive 50% more 'likes' than posts that do not include any photos.[34]

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34   Ibid.

Chart 6: Facebook analytics of the Kosovo Police: Type of post

Kosovo Police

Video
6,2 %

Photo
10,8 %

Status Update
3,1 %

Links
80,0 %
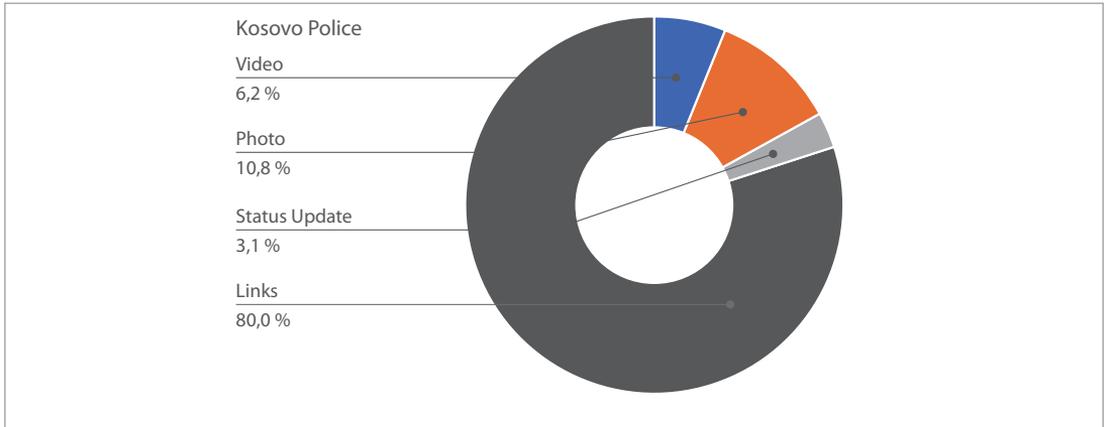
In the first seven months of 2017, Facebook was predominantly used for sharing service information (101 posts). A total of 17 posts were used for police promotion, 5 for the promotion of the Minister, while citizen's engagement was noted only in 7 posts.

Chart 7: Facebook analytics of the Kosovo Police: Type of information

Kosovo Police

Citizen engageme...
5,4 %

Promotion of hea...
3,8 %

Police promotion
13,1 %

Service information
77,7 %
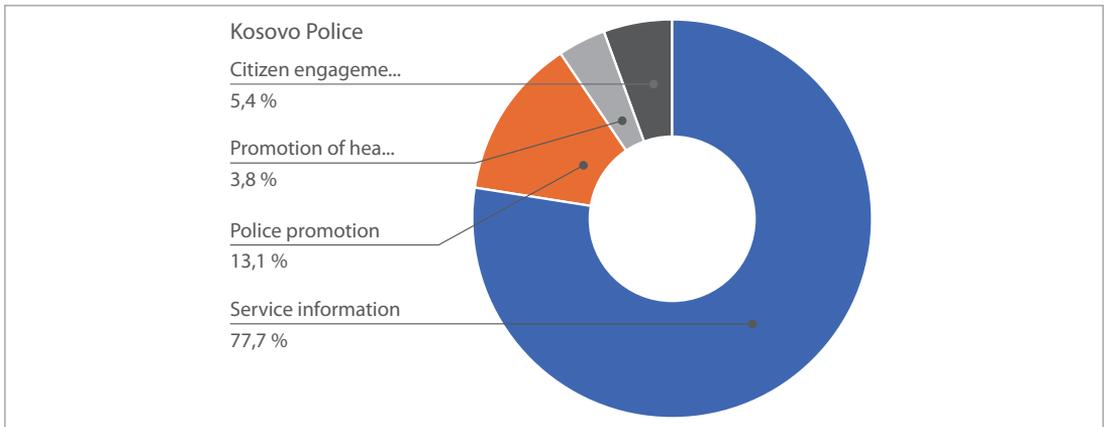
Most of the posts on Facebook were just shared links, with no additional descriptions. Video content consisted of shared YouTube videos, while the option to directly upload videos on Facebook (original video) was never used. Posts aimed to engage citizens mostly referred to the safety of traffic. The majority of the posts were in Albanian and only two were in Serbian.

The official **Twitter** account of the Kosovo police (@Kosovo_Police) was opened in October 2014. There are few followers (155), and the Kosovo Police follows only four accounts. A total of 926 tweets have been published. There is no native Twitter content produced and published, since all tweets are just shared Facebook posts. Twitter benefits have been taken advantage of.

Low activity has been noted on the official **YouTube** account of the Kosovo police even though this account became operational back in November 2015. Only 8 videos have been published since the account was opened, five of which were published during the referent time of this analysis. The videos were viewed 130,428 times (79 percent of the views took place in the period January-July 2017). The average number of video views is 20,573. The Kosovo police do not have any subscribers.

Macedonia

The Macedonian MoI is present on YouTube and Instagram, while its Facebook page was opened at the end of August 2017.[35] There is no Twitter account.

The **YouTube** account of the Macedonian MoI was opened in June 2010. It has 5,198 subscribers, 398 published videos and 9.41 million views. During the referent period of this analysis, 23 videos were published and viewed 192,464 times (the average number of video views is 8,368).

Even though the Macedonian MoI does have an official **Instagram** profile, it does not use it on a regular basis – it has only 83 followers and 43 posts. Most of the posts were published in August 2016, while only 11 were published in February and March 2017.

> ### Box 3: Social media activities of the Macedonian Minister of Interior
> The Macedonian Minister of Interior Oliver Spasovski became active on Twitter in June 2017 under the Twitter handle "@o_spasovski". He has 680 followers and follows 92 accounts. He has posted a total of 129 tweets of varied content.

Montenegro

The MoI of Montenegro has an official website but is not present on any social networks.

Serbia

The Serbian police do not have Facebook and Twitter accounts, but YouTube and Instagram are among their official communication channels.[36]

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35   The analysis of the Facebook page of the Macedonian MoI has not been taken into account because the referent time period of this analysis was 1 January – 31 July 2017.

36   Facebook page of the MoI of Serbia was opened in February 2018. The analysis of the Serbian MoI Facebook page has not been taken into account because the referent time period of this analysis was 1 January – 31 July 2017.

The MoI of Serbia had developed a Communication Strategy for the period 2012-2016. However, the use of social media is not specifically mentioned in this document, although internet is embedded on the official website as a channel of communication.

The Serbian police joined **Twitter** in August 2009 ("@Policijasrbije"), but this account ceased being active on 15 February 2010. During their six months of activity on Twitter, the Serbian police gained 1,437 followers and published 247 tweets. They do not follow anyone on Twitter.

The Serbian police have been active on **YouTube** since August 2008, with a total of 9,390,000 views and 6,483 subscribers. A total of 11 videos have published during the referent period of this analysis; the average number of views is 5.377 and the total number of views as 58,711.

The Serbian police started using **Instagram** as a communication tool for photo sharing in December 2016. The Serbian MoI uses Instagram in line with the characteristics and rules of this social network. During the reference period it published 226 posts, which is more than one post per day. This is not recommended because of Instagram's algorithm changes. Content analysis showed that posts primarily promote police and Minister's activities. As regards interaction with users, there is a lack of conversation with citizens; answers to posted questions are not provided, and the benefits of two-way communication are thus not exploited.

> **Box 4: Social media activities of the Serbian Minister of Interior**
>
> The Serbian Minister of Interior Nebojša Stefanović is very active on Twitter. His account "@NesaStefanovic" has 18,300 followers, while he follows 984 profiles. Tweets concern mostly Minister's and police activities and are usually accompanied by photos. Communication is not strictly formal.

TOMORROW

There is no uniform strategic approach that is accepted worldwide concerning the police services' use of social media platforms.[37] There are different purposes, depending on the goal the police want to achieve and their own human resources and technical capacities.[38] The purposes of social media used by police services can be divided into three major categories:

1. "Inform" in order to disseminate the message to the public or when critical incidents occur;

2. "Engage" with aim to accentuate the human side of the police and, by doing that, increase the level of trust and legitimacy the police enjoy within the community;

3. "Investigate" in order to collect intelligence and monitor suspicious individuals or gain insight into different communities and help police in their investigations.[39]

Box 5: Five YESs and NOs for police services on social media

Yes	No
1. Inform, educate and engage citizens;	1. Do not use social media just to tick off the box;
2. Develop communication and social media strategy;	2. Do not perceive social networks as traditional media and one-way communication platforms;
3. Respect the rules of social networking;	3. Do not use social media channels only for promoting policies and political officials;
4. Be proactive and timely;	4. Do not ignore questions and comments posted by citizens on social media;
5. Follow and give feedback on comments, rumours and misinformation.	5. Do not spam followers with unnecessary information.

Inform

Most of the police services in the world have started using social media as a communication tool, to inform the public and provide information. For example, the police forces in Belgium, the Neth-

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37 P. van den Brink et al. "Report on State of the Art Review." MEDI@4SEC. 2016. Accessed on 25 December 2017. https://goo.gl/5rzKCr.

38 Good practice shows that police services worldwide, those that have adopted the use of social media as part of their work, have social accounts not only at the national level, but also at lower organisational levels – local/city police.

39 P. van den Brink et al. "Report on State of the Art Review." MEDI@4SEC. 2016. Accessed on 25 December 2017. https://goo.gl/5rzKCr.

erlands, United Kingdom, Finland, Iceland and Ireland started disseminating information through them in 2009 and 2010. The situation later changed, and the police started to use social media for citizen's engagement and investigation purposes.

Sharing information through social media has proven to be very valuable at times of **crisis,** when citizens need to be informed on time and are looking for a credible source of information and advice. In 2011, during the riots that occurred in different cities in the United Kingdom and Vancouver, Canada, police services used Twitter to publish information on their operations and provide information updates to citizens. The public followed the information with great interest, which resulted in a significant increase in the number of followers –for the GMP, from about 20,000 (before the riots) to almost 100,000.[40]

After the deadly explosion of two bombs at the Boston Marathon in 2013, the police successfully used Twitter to keep the public informed about the status of the investigation, keep people calm and request assistance, correct inaccurate information reported by the press, and ask for public restraint in tweeting information gleaned from police scanners.

Engage

Social media have shown to be very useful for sharing information that helps the police. They allow the police to reach a greater number of citizens, enabling quick and easy sharing of information by citizens to their friends and contacts. Identifying suspects or issuing search warrants on social media has been highly successful. This however does not mean that feedback information from citizens must be handled digitally. It can also be done through common phone communication. Seeking helpful information, the police most often just leave contact phone numbers for citizens to use, and it is with this activity that the citizens' engagement had begun.

During the Barcelona terrorist attack of August 2017, when a man drove into the crowd in a pedestrian zone killing 15 people and injuring more than 100, the police asked citizens for help in locating the suspect by using Facebook and Twitter. The Spanish police also have more than 500,000 page-likes and 2.5 million followers on Twitter. The Facebook[41] post containing a picture of the suspect and a call for assistance was shared 60,000 times, whereas the tweet[42] of the same content was re-tweeted 17,000 times.

After the review of the effectiveness of search warrants, the Hannover police concluded that there is usually very little response to search warrants posted in newspapers or in public places, while search initiatives initiated by citizens on social media have proven to have a much wider impact. Also, they obtained useful information in eight criminal cases in which regular press announcements have

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40 Sebastian Denef et al. "Best Practice in Police Social Media Adaptation." Composite Project. 2012. Accessed on 6 January 2018. https://goo.gl/qYbhS.

41 See: https://goo.gl/L7XhYj

42 See: https://goo.gl/wX1F5q

failed to yield any useful responses.[43]

Crowd-sourcing has become a valuable tool to identifying suspects. For example, in the aftermath of the 2011 riots in the United Kingdom, the MET and GMP used Twitter extensively to support their investigations and seek information about the offenders. The general public was asked to help in their identification by posting messages:

- "New CCTV images of people the police need to identify are on our Flickr page";

- "Can you help identify these people? Check our Flickr gallery of wanted suspects and call 0800 092 0410".

Phone numbers or links to websites of both police services were provided so that members of the public could submit information, but people also actively submitted hints in the form of Twitter messages. While the GMP replied to such messages and provided short notices saying that the provided information had been taken into account, which were often accompanied by a personal thank you note, the MET did not leave any replies, which is not good practice in terms of the nature of the social media. Officers of both police agencies stressed that this type of communication has been extremely helpful for identifying suspects.

Social media can help the police **improve** their public image, engage people and create a community, especially due to the nature of communication on social networks which is less formal and thus has more potential for engagement. Curiosity is a part of human nature, and "behind the scene" stories and human story pieces are more appealing than formal police press announcements.

In order to provide more information to the public about police work, the Zurich City Police started a 'tweet-a-thon' – a campaign during which, in the course of a 24 hour period, they reported on Twitter and Facebook most of the police activities that took place on that particular day. They posted 400 messages in 24 hours and provided answers to 55% questions posed by the public. Citizens asked questions about the current police operations, but also general questions concerning police issues. They also provided comments regarding police work. Messages sent to the police were mainly neutral or positive, with only an insignificant number of messages (<0.1%) that contained negative content.[44]

Not only that social media communication calls for a different tone, it also allows police officers to talk about positive news, emotions, police culture and experiences from their daily lives. As a result, the public describes and welcomes the police as a human organisation that can be trusted.

A good example is the GMP, which promoted the anniversary of their Police Museum and other social events involving the police force. The post that went viral was the one that was posted in the aftermath of the riots of 2011: "It won't be long before Jack is helping out, he is training hard". At first, this post received many negative comments. The picture however revealed that "Jack" was a young

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43   Sebastian Denef et al. "Best Practice in Police Social Media Adaptation." Composite Project. 2012. Accessed on 6 January 2018. https://goo.gl/qYbhS.

44   Ibid.

police dog currently in training, after which the conversion went in a positive direction and became viral. People were curious about the dog's breed, age, and so on.[45]

The contribution of the use of social media to the concept of community policing represents an example of good practice. This concept makes the society feel safer, as an event becomes not just a matter of police but also involves joint collaboration of police forces, citizens and other organisations. This concept also contributes to raising citizens' trust in the police. Community policing requires officers at a local level to develop a close and personal connection with citizen groups. In order to do so, police officers use their own social media accounts, communicating with the community on their own behalf, independently of the communication provided by PR officers. Posting on their own, they still follow higher-level guidelines, and the headquarters usually monitor what their local officers post on social media. In some cases, headquarters have access to their officers' accounts and can independently change messages if necessary.

For example, Ed Rogerson is a community police officer with the North Yorkshire Police, UK. Using his personal Twitter account, he reports when he is out on patrol and what he is investigating. He posts crime appeals and offers crime prevention advice, tweets good news and engages in conversations with the public.[46]

Investigate

IT forensics, or work in the field of cyber-crime, is frequently organised in special departments, and officers working in such teams are highly trained for this type of work. However, as time goes by, simple use of social media for investigation will become a part of the work of all police officers, and policemen will be able to gather valuable data just by simple insight into the topics that are trending on social networks. For example, it is important to note that Facebook has a team that works with law enforcement agencies. Facebook collaborates with police forces across Europe in international operations, for instance those involving child abuse and child pornography.[47]

When the official website of the Avon and Somerset Constabulary police ceased working due to high peaks caused by the murder of Joanna Yeates at Christmas of 2010, they decided to keep the public informed through the social networks. They published CCTV footage on YouTube and asked the public for information. They also used Facebook and Twitter. The tweet "We have charged Vincent Tabak with the murder of Joanna Yeates #joyeates #yeates www.avonandsomerset.police.uk/jo" immediately went viral and spread across the Internet.[48]

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45   Ibid.
46   Ibid.
47   P. van den Brink et al. "Report on State of the Art Review." MEDI@4SEC. 2016. Accessed on 25 December 2017. https://goo.gl/5rzKCr.
48   Ibid.

PREREQUISITES

Although presence on social media can have multiple benefits for law enforcement, it is important to note that it can also cause some challenges. The hazard comes in the form of information being misused. To prevent unwanted situations and crises, it is necessary to develop a social media policy that will provide answers to questions on how to most effectively communicate and prevent communication crises. This document should provide guidelines about the types of messages that police forces will want to publish, which tone and form of address are to be used, how to respond to feedback from the public, and if and when public comments should be removed.

At the very beginning of the social media policy it is very important to define the main principle: that all officers, staff, and volunteers will be held accountable for whatever they place in the public domain, even when are using a privately held account, and that they must not behave in any way that is likely to discredit the police force or their work.[49] The social media policy should define the strict roles and responsibilities of social media team members. Usually, the communication department within the police force is charged with handling police force official social media accounts. It is also very important to define who is in charge of approving the posts, and who is in charge of implementation.

A good social media policy identifies the overall goal, the specific goals that are to be achieved by the use of social media, and the target groups. The tone of communication must also be defined. Using social media, the police can speak with the public informally while still remaining unprofessional. The use of humour can be an effective way of setting the right tone, but it must be used carefully. A list of what can and cannot be posted should be incorporated into this document. For example, restricted or sensitive information cannot be posted, while any information or material that is protected by copyright cannot be posted without the permission of the copyright owner. Also, the posting timetable for each social media network should be a part of social media policy, including tips and examples of preferable and successful posts (what they should contain and how they should look). Monitoring and evaluation, to be able to measure success and usefulness of social media usage, are also very important parts of the policy.

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49   Warwickshire Police and West Mercia Police. "Social Media Guidance: A Guide to Effective Social Media Use." Warwickshire Police. Accessed on 16 January 2018. https://goo.gl/GNiYL7.

POINTPULSE

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