

SUMMARY

Roundtable Discussion “Sharing Experiences in Police Reform”



November 24, 2023

11:00 – 13:00

Rogner Hotel

IDM Albania in cooperation with the Kosovo Center for Security Studies organized a roundtable discussion for sharing experiences and addressing issues related to reform and good governance within law enforcement institutions. Guaranteeing the independence of the police from politics, police integrity and ethics, the effectiveness of internal self-regulatory mechanisms, and the external oversight of the police were the main focus of this discussion. This bilateral discussion between Albania and Kosovo took place with the participation of Mr. Julian Hodaj, Deputy Minister of Interior in Albania, Mr. Mefail Bajqinovci, Member of the Assembly of Kosovo, as well as representatives of the Kosovo Police, the State Police, senior representatives of the relevant ministries, corruption prevention agencies, police oversight agencies, experts, journalists and independent organizations.

The discussion highlighted the following points:

Mechanisms for the selection of officials in security institutions should be based on competition (criteria and skills) rather than relying on political appointments.

The selection of police leadership should be based on competition, in a transparent and meritocratic process, where the candidates are able to present their vision, program, and the changes they propose to make in the institution. Doing so, the police officers get to know the candidates, along with their vision and program, and are more internalized and cooperative in carrying out the work during the implementation of the program of the winning candidate/police leader. Also, the director/office holder is accountable to the police officers in the event of failing to achieve the objectives of their program. The process of selecting senior level police officers could be improved. The good practice of selecting the Chief State Prosecutor in Kosovo, which represents a transparent process that gives citizens the opportunity to livestream it, can also be applied in the selection of police leaders or police oversight agencies. In the police institution, appointments should be made based on merit and professional qualifications, with an emphasis on avoiding exclusive reliance on a single political party for such appointments. The leadership of this institution must be elected through democratic, transparent elections that are based on meritocracy, as well as with the participation of the public. The election of the police leadership should be carried out in a similar procedure to the election of the director of the Police Oversight Agency. The general director of the police, along with other

leadership positions within the police force, should not be appointed; instead, they should be elected. If we demand change, then this is the way the change should be made, starting from the leadership positions within the institution so that they are not under pressure due to their appointment. If senior level police leaders demonstrate resilience and resistance to political interference, but also to individuals or criminal groups, this will be reflected within the police force as well.

The need for further improvement of internal police mechanisms for strengthening integrity was highlighted. The fact that there is a significant number of police officers prosecuted annually shows that the internal mechanisms of the State Police have not been effective enough to prevent these cases. Therefore, the mechanisms and institutions of internal and external control, which work in parallel with each other, should be revised. External mechanisms depend on effective internal control mechanisms to maintain standards of professionalism and transparency. Developing integrity plans as internal control mechanisms and subsequently implementing and monitoring their implementation at the police unit level, would foster an environment conducive to cultivating an ethical work culture within the police force. Internal control mechanisms are more effective in installing pro-integrity institutional work culture. In this context, IDM has assisted Police Station no. 1 in Tirana in developing the integrity plan for this police station.

Currently, the State Police is implementing the Integrity Plan for the State Police, for the period 2022-2024. This plan, drawn up by a working group at the level of the General Directorate of Police, addresses the problems and risks of the police organization but not the integrity risks and ethical dilemmas at the level of the police unit. The proactive engagement of all employees of the police unit (through focus groups and anonymous questionnaires) in the development of the integrity plan, as in the case of Police Station No. 1 in Tirana, makes the whole process comprehensive. Moreover, it increases their inclination and awareness of the importance of implementing measures and monitoring the integrity plan, given that they themselves are the subjects of its implementation.

It is not possible for an institution outside the police to recognize the problems of police officers and identify the corrupt within the police. Moreover, police practices in Europe overwhelmingly show that police oversight agencies are an internal part of the police. Foremost, it should be the institution itself that strengthens the discipline from within.

Monitoring the implementation of integrity plans should be a priority in order to ensure their effectiveness. Based on the experience so far, it is important to gradually invest in integrity plans at the police unit level. Their development would be necessary for three reasons: first, it contributes to changing the management culture of the institution towards an open and communicative management within the police unit; secondly, it provides an educational role for police officers at all levels. Integrity Plans have served as a process to deepen their knowledge of these acts, to internalize the values these plans



convey and to break down and actualize these values concretely through an action plan. Thirdly, it helps citizens to understand exactly what they can expect from the police unit. Although integrity plans are very valuable, they will not be effective unless implemented properly. Therefore, diligent monitoring of their implementation is crucial, whether conducted by the institution itself or other relevant stakeholders.

Strengthening external police oversight contributes to good governance. Democratic control of public services, including the police, requires executive control, parliamentary oversight, and civil society input. The general objective of all actors is for the police to be dependent on the executive, but not to be misused by it. It is widely accepted that the public should have control over government and public services, including the police. This is vital for ensuring that public services respond to citizens' needs, and that the police do not engage in harmful activities (such as corrupt practices). In democratic countries, the public controls the police (and other government agencies) indirectly, through their elected representatives (Parliament). A media representative contended that the internal vetting mechanisms within the State Police lack efficacy, citing evidence from SKY ECC interceptions that reveals the involvement of multiple police representatives in organized crime.

The reforming experience of the Kosovo Police makes this institution one of the most trusted in the country. The Kosovo Police was established by Kosovo's international partners based on good international practices. Kosovo Police officers have undergone training in best practices related to case investigation, the interactions with citizens, internal management, and various other aspects. Secondly, the Ministry of Internal Affairs in Kosovo was established six years after the establishment of the Kosovo Police, and during this period the police officials were not accustomed to having direct communication and connections with the political spectrum. Thirdly, police oversight, both within the police force and upon the establishment of the Kosovo Police Inspectorate, was instituted by international partners, mirroring the approach taken in the case of the police. Moreover, the legal basis was quite strong. Finally, the Kosovo Police has always been open to cooperation with civil society and the media.