

## **Twenty Years Later: Community Policing and Its Impact on Local Safety in Bosnia and Herzegovina**

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### **Abstract**

Twenty years after the introduction of the first community policing projects in Bosnia and Herzegovina, there is a need to evaluate the results achieved. This paper aims to identify the key challenges in implementing community policing and analyze its impact on the safety of local communities. This study employed a qualitative research approach, including semi-structured in-depth interviews and secondary data analysis. Police officers from various agencies across Bosnia and Herzegovina were interviewed. International actors were pivotal in introducing the concept of community policing. Our findings highlight serious issues and the failure to adapt Western practices to the local cultural context. Despite the initial enthusiasm of international actors, community policing has not been fully integrated into the operational practices of local police forces, with only fragments of the concept being adopted. The decline of community policing, coupled with the erosion of effective policing practices in Bosnia and Herzegovina, has negatively impacted the efficiency of police work and, undoubtedly, the safety of local communities.

**Keywords:** community policing, Bosnia and Herzegovina, reform, international community, sectoral work.

### **Introduction**

Twenty years have passed since the first community policing projects began in various local communities in Bosnia and Herzegovina (hereafter BiH). During this period, international actors have played a significant role in the reform processes. They were the main proponents and donors of numerous reforms,

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including the introduction of the community policing concept. Community policing was presented to the public in BiH as a new model that would significantly improve police-citizen relations, contribute to the democratization of society, and increase public trust in the police. This process was accompanied by the narrative that community policing would be a catalyst for changing the police subculture in BiH, shaped by the authoritarian past of the previous socialist system and the militarization of police structures during the war in BiH (1992–1995). The initial enthusiasm of representatives from the international community and organizations was not adequately matched by an understanding of the local cultural context. The belief that models functional in Western democracies could be implanted into the local social environment proved unfounded. Police reform in post-conflict BiH has been a relevant research topic, focusing on the role of the international community in peacebuilding, police reform, and the democratization of policing in a post-conflict setting (Wisler, 2005; Aitchison, 2007; Hansen, 2008; Muehlmann, 2008; Juncos, 2011; Padurariu, 2014). In the academic discourse, community policing has been identified as a significant aspect of the democratization of police structures in BiH. Consequently, this topic has also been researched. Researchers have examined reform processes and the importance of community policing within the scope of reforms overseen by the United Nations International Police Task Force (IPTF) and later the European Union Police Mission (EUPM) (Vejnović & Lalić, 2005). The implementation of community policing, in which international actors played a crucial role, has also attracted researchers' interest (Hvidemose & Mellon, 2009; Deljkić & Lučić-Čatić, 2011; Blaustein, 2014). Community policing in a post-conflict, multi-ethnic environment has been studied as well (Lalić & Đurić, 2018).

This paper has two main objectives. First, it aims to explore the challenges in implementing the community policing concept in BiH. Second, it seeks to investigate the extent to which community policing impacts local community safety, twenty years after its initial integration into the operational practices of local police structures.

This study contributes to the theoretical understanding and practical implementation of police reforms in post-conflict regions, with a specific focus on community policing. By identifying key issues and challenges within this context, the research provides insights for policymakers and practitioners involved in reforming police forces in areas recovering from conflict. The broader impact of this research lies in its potential to inform and guide comparative studies on police reform and community policing in other post-conflict regions. It highlights the importance of international actors in these reform processes and points out the problems arising from insufficient understanding of the local cultural context and

the consequences of such an approach. This makes the findings not only relevant to the specific regions studied but also to the broader field of post-conflict reconstruction and international cooperation in police reform efforts.

### **Methodology**

This study presents the findings of a community policing research project aimed at examining the challenges in implementing the concept of community policing in BiH, including its impact on local community safety. A qualitative research approach was employed. To create a comprehensive evaluation of community policing programs and their impact on local community safety, triangulation was used, incorporating complementary data sources and collection methods. The primary qualitative approach involved semi-structured in-depth interviews and secondary data analysis.

The sample consisted of police officers working at various levels: senior management (chiefs or deputy chiefs of police departments, head of the Brčko District Police), middle management (station commanders, deputies, and assistants), and rank-and-file officers (sector leaders, patrol officers, and constables). The total number of respondents was 26, including A) senior management (7), B) middle management (8), and C) rank-and-file officers (11). Interviews were conducted at the Banja Luka Police Department, Trebinje Police Department, Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Herzegovina-Neretva Canton, East Sarajevo Police Department, and Brčko District Police.<sup>1</sup> The interviews were conducted during June and July 2024. All interviews were recorded, transcribed verbatim with consent, and anonymized.

We applied the method of secondary data analysis to reports on the work of police structures in BiH. The reports were analyzed to understand the activities related to community policing within individual police jurisdictions. Publicly available annual reports and other public data on community policing, available on the official websites of police organizations, were analyzed. Documents from the Ministry of Security BiH, Directorate for Coordination of Police Bodies BiH, Federal Police Administration of the Federation BiH, Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Sarajevo Canton, Brčko District Police, and Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republika Srpska were analyzed. We also analyzed available data on community policing from the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Herzegovina-Neretva Canton, as work reports are not available on their website. Additionally, we applied the method of secondary data analysis to existing databases on crime rates published by the Agency for Statistics BiH, as well as relevant literature on policing in BiH.

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### **Community Policing and the Legacy of the International Community**

The international community's efforts to reconstruct the police force in BiH were guided by the Dayton Peace Agreement and UN Security Council Resolution 1035, adopted on December 21, 1995. This resolution established the United Nations civilian police force, the International Police Task Force (IPTF). The IPTF mission in BiH concluded on December 31, 2002. The IPTF was responsible for monitoring and inspecting law enforcement activities, advising and training personnel, and facilitating improvements. It developed a comprehensive plan aimed at restructuring the police force in BiH. The plan focused on reforming the force through training, selection, certification, and de-certification. Additionally, it aimed to democratize the force to ensure it was depoliticized, impartial, accountable, and multi-ethnic.

The UN Mission in BiH made significant progress in peacebuilding. It established conditions for sustainable peace and aligned the police forces with international standards. Personnel reforms included compulsory and specialized training for all officers. A multi-ethnic police service was also established in Brčko District. Efforts were made to streamline minority recruitment and redeployment (see: Vejnović & Lalić, 2005; Wisler, 2005; Ivković Kutnjak & Shelley, 2005). The IPTF initiated the first steps in introducing community policing. In line with these initiatives, all police officers in BiH received basic training in community policing (Savjet Ministara BiH, 2007: 10). However, the IPTF's activities did not include implementing specific community policing programs in local communities.

On January 1, 2003, the European Union Police Mission (EUPM) replaced the UN's IPTF in BiH. The EUPM mission concluded in 2012. Since the Dayton Peace Agreement, foreign involvement in community policing programs in BiH has been marked by significant investment and support. Entities like the OSCE, the EUPM, and various UN programs played crucial roles. They focused on training, mentoring, and capacity building. It is important to note that no other international organization in BiH had such overarching mandates and capacities as the IPTF and EUPM. However, this support faced challenges related to coordination and sustainability.

According to police executives who participated in this research, community policing programs were funded through various projects. International entities played a central role in sponsoring and implementing these projects. Notable projects include: Pilot Projects in Prijedor and Žepče (2003–2005), sponsored by the United Kingdom Department for International Development (DFID); Pilot Project in Zenica-Doboj (2005–2007), sponsored by the Swiss

Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC); Creating Safer Communities in Novo Sarajevo (2005–2006), sponsored by Saferworld, UK, and implemented by the local think tank Center for Security Studies Sarajevo; and Supporting Community Policing through Safer Community Plans, implemented in Brčko District, Bijeljina, and Mostar in 2008. This project was sponsored by Saferworld, UK, and implemented by the Center for Security Studies Sarajevo (Deljkić & Lučić Ćatić, 2011: 177-178). These projects have been crucial in implementing community policing principles in BiH. They also provided a foundation for the state-level Community Policing Strategy in BiH (hereafter CPSBiH), which was adopted later in 2007 (Savjet Ministara BiH, 2007).

Respondents noted that numerous micro-projects were subsequently conducted by international donor organizations. These projects mainly focused on training police officers for community policing. The training covered various areas such as working with juveniles, addressing domestic violence, and improving communication with community members. Despite these substantial efforts, duplication of training efforts was noted, and there was a lack of cohesive strategy among donors. Each donor operated independently and was often unaware of the activities of others, which hampered overall effectiveness. The departure of major missions like EUPM has left a void, especially in maintaining reforms and institutionalizing practices like community policing.

Local adaptation has also been an issue. Many projects failed to integrate well into BiH's cultural and operational contexts. Donors frequently left BiH without consulting local communities, which undermined institutionalization efforts. Numerous initiatives faltered due to their inability to adapt to the local environment, including community policing models that disregarded local cultural nuances. Currently, there are no ongoing community policing projects supported by the international community in BiH. The absence of a current community policing program highlights the challenges in maintaining continuity and effectiveness in policing reforms. While significant strides were made, particularly in initial reforms, the legacy of international community efforts in community policing in BiH is one of incomplete institutionalization. Sustained, locally adapted strategies are needed to achieve lasting change.

### **Is the Western Concept of Community Policing New to Bosnia and Herzegovina?**

The literature on post-war reform activities in BiH frequently highlights several issues with the police structures. These issues include a lack of transparency, accountability, harmonization, and civic oversight (Wisler, 2005; Aitchison, 2007; Marijan & Guzina, 2014). The literature also recognizes a need

for external socialization in BiH's police structures. However, this effort has largely been unsuccessful (Juncos, 2011). These issues are often attributed to the authoritarian legacy of the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY). As a result, the prevalent view is that community policing in BiH faces significant challenges. These challenges are rooted in cultural and operational traditions that favor a reactive police approach. However, these perspectives require critical examination. The term "community policing" is often misunderstood in BiH. It is frequently seen as a Western concept that doesn't align with local contexts. In BiH, local police primarily operate under a model known as sectorial work. This model includes various activities that overlap with aspects of community policing. The security sector operates through micro-security units. These are specific territories within a police station's jurisdiction, led by a sector leader (Jovičić, 2020). According to most respondents, community policing has never fully integrated into the security culture of local police organizations or the communities. Over time, the coexistence of sectorial work and community policing has diminished. In some police organizations, sectorial work has even been entirely abandoned in practice. Respondents noted that this shift has created a significant security gap. This gap carries potential negative implications for community safety. Foreign donors introduced the concept of community policing as a model for democratic systems. Their goal was to transform BiH police structures from an authoritarian model to a democratic one. Respondents who attended community policing courses organized by foreign donors stated that sectorial work was implicitly portrayed as an outdated relic. It was seen as a coercive practice typical of socialist systems.

One sector leader explained:

"Over the years, I attended numerous courses organized by foreign entities, including the IPTF. We tried to explain that what they called community policing had been practiced here long before they arrived. We just didn't label it as such. However, discussions quickly ended when they insisted that this was not possible under communism. They viewed our police as repressive, which is certainly not true. Older colleagues told me that before the war, maintaining good cooperation with citizens was crucial. It was essential for preserving the reputation of the police, then known as the militia" (Interview C-4).

A respondent who began his police career before the war in BiH (1992-1995) believes sectorial work held particular significance in the socialist system. He also

sees many similarities between sectorial work and the modern concept of community policing:

"Sectorial work involved frequent contact with local community representatives, business organizations, tenant associations in residential buildings, sports clubs, and religious organizations. The aim of these contacts was to collaborate with citizens and identify their security-related problems and needs" (Interview B-8).

Functionally, sectorial work encompasses activities very similar to those described in the community policing literature (Trojanowicz & Bucqueroux, 1990; Skogan & Hartnett, 1999; Kappeler, Gaines, & Schaefer, 2020). Regular attendance by sector leaders at local community meetings demonstrates efforts to build trust. It also helps gather intelligence directly from community members. These meetings serve as crucial platforms for exchanging information and fostering cooperation between the police and the community. They illustrate elements of Intelligence-Led Policing and community engagement practices. The policing model in the former SFRY differed from those in other Eastern Bloc socialist countries. Yugoslav socialism was more liberal both economically and politically compared to other repressive socialist systems in Eastern Europe (Estrin, 1991; Dyker, 2013). During the war in BiH (1992–1995), police structures underwent significant militarization due to their involvement in combat operations on all sides (Vejnović & Lalić, 2005). Post-war reforms were necessary to adapt police work to peacetime conditions. To compare the common characteristics of these two different policing models, we will analyze the goals of the CPSBiH through the lens of the traditional policing model, i.e., sectorial work.

The first strategic goal of the CPSBiH broadly aims to increase the police's capacity for preventing crime and other deviant behaviors, giving priority to problems that cause insecurity among citizens and the community (Savjet Ministara BiH, 2007: 8). However, in the former SFRY, crime prevention played a significant role in crime control policies (Matić, 1986; Vuković, 1986), including police activities in crime prevention (Krivokapić, 1986; Simović, 1987). Thus, the first strategic goal of community policing is not new or unfamiliar to police structures in BiH.

The second strategic goal is to improve police leadership to manage change. This includes comprehensive and continuous training for police managers, improving existing police staff, and developing and implementing mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating the success of community policing programs (Savjet Ministara BiH, 2007: 8). In our research, respondents with extensive experience

noted that continuous training of police officers at all levels and the establishment of mechanisms to evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of police officers were largely integrated into the BiH police system, primarily through professional development and reporting systems to relevant civil structures, including local self-governments (Interviews A-1, A-3).

The third strategic goal envisages improving cooperation through the development of partnerships with all community members (Savjet Ministara BiH, 2007: 8). Cooperation with citizens is the essence of sectorial work in police organizations. Some managerial respondents (Interviews A-3, A-5) noted that the term "partnership" with community members introduced additional cultural ambiguities into the BiH police system. The term "partnership" is established in Anglo-Saxon systems and is central to the community policing philosophy (Thacher, 2001). In a partnership, each side contributes resources, knowledge, or skills and shares responsibilities, risks, and benefits. Citizens certainly play a role in contributing to the security of their local communities. However, according to the Constitution of BiH and entity constitutions, security is exclusively the responsibility of police structures and the state, not citizens. If we interpret "partnership" from the perspective of police-citizen cooperation, the third strategic goal of community policing is nothing new and is already contained in the principles of sectorial work.

The fourth strategic goal aims to strengthen citizens' trust in the police through cooperation, consultations, and communication. This goal includes improving police-public relations and standardizing mechanisms for exchanging information between the police and the public (Savjet Ministara BiH, 2007: 8). Daily interactions within the security sector exemplify joint cooperation, consultations, communication, and information exchange. The evidence suggests that the Western concept of community policing and the "traditional" sectorial approach in BiH, although stemming from different social and ideological contexts, have many functional similarities. Sectorial work fulfills essential roles of community policing under a different label.

### **Contemporary Challenges of Community Policing in BiH**

The community policing concept requires specific institutional, organizational, and personal capacities for its implementation. In the following text, we analyze each of these three capacities, which can also be presented as levels of analysis.

Regarding the institutional level, the CPSBiH was developed with financial and technical assistance from the UK Department for International Development (DFID) and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation



(SDC/DEZA). The strategy's duration is not specified in the document, and it stands as the sole strategic document addressing community policing in BiH. At the state level in BiH, there are strategies in the areas of migration and asylum, terrorism, and organized crime. These strategies are adopted for a period of five years. Considering that only one CPSBiH has been adopted, without a specified timeframe, it indicates that community policing is not a strategic priority for policymakers. The CPSBiH presents community policing as an organizational philosophy based on a partnership between the police and the community, with the goal of enhancing citizen safety. The development of the CPSBiH began in 2006, during a period when police reform in BiH was a highly topical political issue. The political aim of the CPSBiH was to help BiH prepare for accession to the EU (Savjet Ministara BiH, 2007: 10). The CPSBiH states that it recognizes experiences gained through community policing work in other countries while simultaneously developing an approach tailored to the context and needs of the police and citizens in BiH (Savjet Ministara BiH, 2007: 10). The implementation of the CPSBiH is the responsibility of the entity and cantonal Ministries of the Interior, as well as the Brčko District Police. However, there is no obligation to submit reports to the Ministry of Security of BiH on the activities implemented and the fulfillment of the goals set forth in the CPSBiH. Based on the practices of various police structures in BiH concerning community policing, it was discovered that none of the police agencies contacted during the interview process have a specific strategic document or action plan solely dedicated to community policing. Such a document would operationalize the strategic goals outlined in the CPSBiH. Despite the CPSBiH's existence, according to respondents, community policing is not recognized as a strategic opportunity for police organizations in the local environment. This is confirmed by the analysis of reports on the work of police agencies in BiH. Of all the analyzed annual reports, only the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Sarajevo Canton<sup>2</sup> and the Brčko District Police<sup>3</sup> briefly mention activities related to community policing. This approach indicates that community policing is not a strategic priority for police structures in BiH.

At the organizational level, each police structure addresses community policing according to its unique needs and priorities, leading to a lack of standardized approaches or minimum standards for planning and implementation. This results in a practical yet imbalanced approach, with no observed mechanisms for evaluating activities based on the CPSBiH. Middle management is typically overwhelmed with various security issues, making community policing a lower priority compared to reactive tasks such as interventions, crime control, and maintaining public order. Operationally, some police structures have designated community policing officers, but this is not common. Most community policing is

performed by officers as part of their regular duties, often as leaders of security sectors within police stations. In many police organizations, officers assigned to community policing also handle other duties, resulting in a negligible number of dedicated community policing officers. Almost all respondents agree that the 2007 CPSBiH is largely not implemented. However, some activities are still carried out. These include the school police officer program, which aims to prevent violence in schools and build student trust in the police. Additionally, the police participate in the work of Citizen Security Forums in local communities. In places where they exist, Citizen Security Forums hold occasional meetings on community security issues. Participants in Citizen Security Forums include representatives from local governments, emergency services, educational institutions, media, and other relevant stakeholders. However, these meetings are held infrequently and only in places where the forums remain active. Respondents from all police structures where the research was conducted indicated that standard operating procedures related to community policing were never established within their organizations. They also noted that very few police officers were engaged in community policing when the concept was operational. According to most respondents, when police officers are assigned duties, their job descriptions do not include tasks related to community policing, except in cases involving officers assigned to school police duties. Respondents from the Banja Luka Police Administration, East Sarajevo, and the Brčko District Police stated that their job classifications do not include a position for a community policing officer. In earlier classifications after 2007, such positions were included. Respondents from Banja Luka, East Sarajevo, Trebinje, and Brčko mentioned that the biggest problem in implementing the community policing concept is the lack of sufficient police officers in local stations who could perform community policing duties. This issue is not exclusive to community policing but reflects a broader, chronic shortage of police officers needed for the normal functioning and effective performance of other police duties. Similar findings were reported in other police structures across BiH. Respondents from Mostar (Herzegovina-Neretva Canton) reported that almost 60% of police officer positions are unfilled, seriously jeopardizing police work. Sectoral work is almost non-existent, as there are only four police officers on duty during a shift for the entire city of 105,000 inhabitants. These four officers are responsible for providing security services for the entire city of Mostar. For example, out of 10 security sectors in the Mostar Central Police Station, only three have sector leaders, while the other sectors do not. The foot patrol service has not existed for more than two years. There is no school police officer program in Mostar, and the Citizen Security Forum is not functioning. Analyzing respondents' statements in the investigated police organizations, it is evident that community

policing has remained in police structures only in a formal, bureaucratic sense. Police stations prepare monthly reports that mainly satisfy formality without detailed information on specific activities carried out, priorities and problems encountered, or results achieved. These reports often lack specific planning and monitoring details.

At the personal level, the findings of our research showed that police officers generally have a positive attitude toward the community policing model as a method of increasing police efficiency and strengthening public trust in the police. Most respondents stated that, during the time community policing was implemented, it positively impacted local community safety, contributed to better operational police work, enabled more effective preventive police work, and positively influenced the formation of favorable public perceptions of the police. The concept greatly improved communication between police officers and citizens in the security sector. A respondent from the Banja Luka Police Administration stated:

"The community policing officer was significant. During the performance of duties, they obtained a large amount of information and had many collaborators among the citizens." (Interview C-5).

However, a significant number of respondents criticized the way this concept was presented and implemented, rather than its essence. Criticism was particularly focused on the cultural differences between the local social environment in BiH and the implementation methods of the concept in Western countries, primarily Switzerland and the UK, whose models served as paradigms. Community policing was presented as something entirely different from sectoral work, which is traditionally characteristic of police organizations in BiH. Elements of sectoral work that significantly intersect with community policing were not considered, even though the CPSBiH stated that the community policing concept would be adapted to the local social context (Savjet Ministara BiH, 2007: 10). Respondents with long-standing work experience believe that the opportunity was missed to incorporate the Western community policing concept into existing traditional police practices, namely sectoral work (Interviews A-1, A-3, B-5, B-7, C-1). The findings of our research showed that the community policing concept was more readily accepted by experienced police officers, while the greatest resistance was encountered among younger officers. The reason is that young officers lack experience in sectoral work. Furthermore, during their education at police academies, most of them did not have instructional units related to community policing. Upon arriving at police stations, they entered an organizational culture where the traditional way of working was neglected, and the new concept of community policing did not take root in the local social environment.

Conversations with young police officers revealed that their understanding of community policing is very modest, including their motivation for such tasks (Interviews C-5, C-7, C-8). Young police officers largely perceive police work as a reactive activity centered around vehicle patrolling. However, foot patrolling is one of the most significant activities within sectoral work. With the abandonment of foot patrolling, sectoral work has been significantly neglected. As a result, according to most respondents, police officers spend less time in the security sector and more time in police station offices. Consequently, the sectoral way of working is considerably jeopardized, affecting contact with the community. All of this impacts the functionality, efficiency, and operability of police agencies in performing their duties at the local level, directly affecting the security of local communities.

### **Impact on Local Communities' Safety**

Community policing plays a significant role in preventing general crime and other forms of antisocial behavior (Cvrtila, 2010). Although conceptually different, community policing significantly contributes to the implementation of intelligence-led policing (Bullock, 2013; Carter & Fox, 2019), thus preventing other forms of crime and security threats, particularly extremism and terrorism (Dunn et al., 2016; Cherney & Hartley, 2017). Based on our research findings, most respondents believe that community policing does not currently have a significant positive impact on the safety of local communities in BiH. The reasons for this have already been mentioned, including the abandonment of this concept in the operational procedures of police organizations in BiH and the decline of good practices in sectoral work. In the Brčko District Police, sector leaders have taken over community policing duties (Interview B-9). Although this seems like a functional solution, their activities mainly involve giving lectures in schools. During the interviews, some respondents mentioned that, based on their experience, public trust in the police is not satisfactory.

A respondent from East Sarajevo stated regarding public trust in the police:

"Public trust in the police has significantly eroded, primarily due to the failure to solve serious crimes from the past" (Interview B-1).

Similarly, a respondent from Mostar highlighted the public's distrust of the police:

"The ineffective work of the police in preventing and detecting crimes, the lack of police officers, and ethnic tensions projected onto police officers of different nationalities have significantly contributed to the public's distrust of the police in Mostar" (Interview B-6).

The current state of police organizations is such that the role of the police is primarily reactive, focusing mainly on vehicle patrol activities and interventions.

When analyzing official crime statistics from January 1, 2017, to December 31, 2023, there has been no significant increase in criminal offenses in BiH (Agencija za statistiku BiH, n.d.). We cannot determine the extent to which the security gap caused by abandoning community policing and the decline of sectoral work affects public trust in the police and the safety of local communities. Our literature review and other relevant sources found no research in BiH on public trust in the police, citizens' satisfaction survey reports, or victimization surveys. The concept of community policing was introduced in BiH with the goal of enhancing the safety of local communities (Savjet Ministara BiH, 2007). Unfortunately, this goal has not been achieved. The failure of community policing in BiH can be attributed to cultural, political, and organizational challenges. Given the current situation and the pressing need to ensure citizens' safety, there is a strong need to re-evaluate past practices and implement changes. The question of whether these changes should be driven from the top-down (Moore, 2014) or from the bottom-up (Blaustein, 2016) remains a political issue, particularly within the complex political system of BiH. A bottom-up approach would involve altering police work methods at the local community level. By establishing better communication, trust, and cooperation with the community, it would be possible to more effectively meet local security needs. Therefore, changes should begin at the personal level, followed by organizational and institutional levels. At the personal level, it is essential to change police officers' perceptions of the importance of community work. Organizational changes would involve reviving effective sectoral work practices in community engagement. However, this revitalization must be accompanied by the integration of best practices from community policing, particularly those that have proven effective in the local social and cultural context. At the institutional level, strategic support for these activities is crucial. This includes strategic planning, monitoring methodologies, and public reporting. Ultimately, police-community relations are not merely an institutional or normative issue but, more importantly, an operational one. Trust between the police and the community is built through police work within local communities, not solely through institutional frameworks, laws, or strategies. Based on past experiences, these often yield limited practical results. Therefore, any changes must be implemented synergistically across all three levels. Despite the numerous problems at the institutional, organizational, and personal levels related to the implementation of community policing, some crime prevention activities are still being carried out. These include lectures in educational institutions by police representatives in BiH. Other promotional activities, such as summer police schools for youth in the Brčko District and open-door days organized by police agencies, are also intended to improve the police's image in the community. While

these activities can positively impact young people's trust in the police and contribute to long-term crime prevention and local community safety, community policing encompasses a much broader range of daily activities. According to our research findings, these broader activities are largely not being implemented.

### **Conclusion**

Twenty years after the first community policing projects were implemented in BiH, a thorough evaluation is essential. Our research highlights several key challenges that require in-depth analysis. The international community in BiH, particularly the IPTF and EUPM missions, along with other organizations involved in police reconstruction support programs, did not achieve the desired outcomes in their efforts to introduce community policing. There was a lack of coordination among international actors and insufficient adaptation of successful practices from developed Western countries to the local context. Despite initial enthusiasm and significant efforts, the legacy of the international community in community policing needs critical reevaluation. Two decades later, this concept has not been fully integrated into the operational practices of local police agencies as originally intended. The responsibility for this shortfall does not rest solely with international actors; local police agencies also share the blame. Our findings indicate that better integration of community policing into the security culture of local police agencies is necessary. This will help to reduce the security gap created by the abandonment of community policing and the erosion of sectoral work, a practice deeply rooted in local police traditions. To address these issues, there needs to be a reevaluation of sectoral work, acknowledging its similarities and functional relationship with community policing. Strategic approaches must be adapted to the local culture and existing police practices. Community policing requires specific institutional, organizational, and personal capacities for successful implementation. At the institutional level, the adoption of a single CPSBiH in 2007 without a defined timeframe suggests that community policing is not a strategic priority for policymakers. Organizationally, each police agency in BiH approaches community policing based on its own needs and priorities, resulting in a lack of standardized practices. Additionally, the shortage of police officers further complicates these challenges. On a positive note, at the personal level, police officers recognize the importance of community policing as a means to increase efficiency and strengthen public trust. However, significant criticism remains regarding how the concept has been presented and implemented, particularly due to cultural differences between the local context and Western models. This situation inevitably impacts the safety of local communities. The lack of research on public trust in the police and citizen satisfaction limits the

ability to draw deeper conclusions. The decline of community policing, along with the erosion of sectoral work – including foot patrols – has created a security gap that affects the safety of local communities. The police's predominantly reactive role, despite some positive practices like educational programs in schools, represents a significant setback for both citizen safety and trust in the police.

### **Recommendations**

- Consider the local cultural context: Recognize that each community is unique, requiring community policing approaches to vary accordingly.
- Adapt community policing principles: Align community policing practices in BiH with the traditional methods of local police.
- Revitalize sectoral work and effective practices: Reinforce and modernize sectoral work and other traditionally successful community engagement methods to achieve positive outcomes.
- Integrate international experiences: Incorporate valuable international practices while customizing them to fit local needs and cultural contexts.
- Implement changes at multiple levels: Ensure that necessary changes occur at the institutional, operational, and personal levels to achieve effective reform.

### **Endnotes**

1. The anticipated sample included police officers from the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Sarajevo Canton. However, this police agency did not respond to our requests for approval to conduct interviews with their officers.
2. See: <https://mup.ks.gov.ba/organizacija/izvjestajoradu>
3. See: <https://www.policijabdbih.gov.ba/index.php/bs/o-nama-bs/policija-br%C4%8Dko-distrikta-bih>

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