

# Cooperation Between State Agencies and NGOs in Crisis Situations

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**Abstract — the Police, as the most numerous uniformed formation in the Republic of Poland (over one hundred thousand officers), with strictly hierarchical command structure, is responsible for maintaining internal and legal order in the country. The Police has been entrusted with many competences one of which is the possibility to enter into cooperation with external entities, including non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The term NGO refers to all entities that are not public administration bodies, and whose activity is not aimed at making a profit. A characteristic feature of non-governmental organizations is, as the very name implies, the lack of link to public authorities. In Poland, this notion is defined in the Act on Public Benefit and Volunteer Work of 2003 which introduces an extended definition of non-governmental organizations as entities conducting public benefit activities (ngo.pl, 2018). The purpose of this paper is to bring up the subjects related to the cooperation of the Police and other state bodies with non-governmental organizations in the implementation of statutory tasks related to security and crisis management. The authors determine the place of NGOs in the system of ensuring security, draw conclusions and provide possible recommendations regarding this cooperation.**

**Index terms — the Police, non-governmental organizations, state security, crisis management**

## I. INTRODUCTION

The Police is a uniformed and armed formation serving the public and protecting individual and public safety and order. These are the most important statutory tasks of the Police forces resulting from the first sentence of the Act on the Police of 6<sup>th</sup> April 1990. However, a single formation is not able to face all obligations and challenges in the area of security, therefore some of the duties may be entrusted to other entities which cooperate with the Police forces. The joint efforts of all responsible entities help to achieve greater potential, but also generate a necessity to combine different competences and capabilities of people and the means available to them. (Wróbel

and Chechelski, 2010). The rules and forms of cooperation are regulated by laws, statutes and regulations, as well as agreements. These acts are the legal and social grounds on which certain entities interact with each other. Co-operation often becomes an opportunity to fulfil the tasks set for the administration of public safety and order with higher efficiency. In crisis situations (e.g. catastrophes, natural disasters), the Police and other services undertake joint actions in a conscious, purposeful and organized manner in order to minimize the impact. Tasks related to ensuring public safety and order require extensive investments and up-to-date means of counteracting threats in order to protect the interests of the state and citizens.

## II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND SCOPE OF COOPERATION

Co-operation is nothing else but an action to achieve identical or consistent goals (Ura, 1998). Cooperation is defined as the joint action of at least two autonomous entities. The essence of cooperation is to strive to achieve the goals to which these entities were established, in an effective way, but through a joint effort. Interaction should be characterized by the following features:

- common goal of the participants,
- autonomy of participants - lack of subordination relation,
- voluntary reconciliation of tasks to be carried out,
- implementation of own tasks by co-operating entities, some of which consist in providing mutual assistance for achieving the main objective (Lidwa, 2002).

The concept of permanent cooperation also entered the legal language. In some legal acts which characterize the undertaking of joint actions by the Police and other services, the legislator uses the notion of cooperation (the Act on the Protection of Persons and Property). Of course, the sole declaration of



cooperation, even with the best will of the parties of the agreement, will not provide measurable results. One can talk about efficiency when the undertaken actions lead to the achievement of the intended goals at the lowest possible expenditure. Proper organization and management of cooperating bodies has a significant impact on the effectiveness of actions taken. For the proper course of cooperation, it is important to assure appropriate circulation of information between cooperating entities (Szafranski, 2004).

The recent flagship program of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Administration of the so called security maps raises considerable doubts concerning the systematic approach to this issue. Some specialists argue it is only an empty slogan, and in reality, putting all responsibility on the Police marginalises the remaining sphere of public safety and all entities operating in this field. The Ministry seems to have forgotten about the statutory scope of action prescribed by the legislator on the cooperation of state forces with non-governmental organizations (ngo.pl, 2018). Article 29 of the Act on Government Administration Departments stipulates that the scope of the Police activities covers the following areas:

- point. 1 - protection of public safety and order,
- point. 3 - crisis management,
- point. 5 - fire protection,
- point. 7 - supervision over mountain and water rescue.

While it is possible to refer point 1. to this scope in relation to the activities of the Police, when it comes to the remaining points, this scope is somewhat dispersed, because the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Administration has forgotten about its statutory task range. The Department of Crisis Management and Civil Protection which operates within the Ministry (ngo.pl, 2018), has a whole spectrum of tasks covering precisely those statutory internal affairs (points 3,5 and 7). The object of cooperation in the area of public safety and order protection is counteracting various types of threats including crime. Therefore, proper recognition of intentions, collection and rapid transmission of information is of a great importance for efficient reaction to any adverse phenomena. The scope of the state's tasks related to the protection of human security and maintaining public safety and order is extremely wide. The tasks also include fire protection, protection of the state borders, combating the effects of natural disasters and many other tasks related to various spheres of social life. In order to fulfil the aforementioned tasks, the Police and other state agencies must cooperate with other agencies and institutions.

### III. NGOS IN THE POLISH SYSTEM OF SECURITY

Non-governmental organizations are basic elements of the third sector, a sector made up of private entities with public objectives (Halamska, 2008). Their characteristic features include: voluntary participation, private nature of the initiative, independence, non-commercial activity, significant participation of volunteering, an important role in shaping human attitudes, integrating groups of citizens with a relatively mature social identity and a specific degree of structured form. Non-governmental organizations include:

- associations, including registered and ordinary

- associations and unions of associations;
- foundations;
- sports' clubs and student sports clubs;
- organizations operating pursuant to separate regulations, such as the Polish Red Cross, the Association of Volunteer Fire Brigades of the Republic of Poland, the Allotment Gardens Association, hunting clubs, social committees (e.g. social committees for the construction of roads and waterworks);
- associations of local government units;
- social cooperatives;
- non-profit companies;
- political parties;
- trade unions;
- trade self-governments;
- federations and confederations of employers;
- chambers of commerce;
- craft chambers;
- church organizations;
- farmer associations, farm circles and the village farmers wives' association;
- groups, such as neighbourhood clubs or support groups, self-help groups etc. (ngo.pl, 2018).

Engaging NGOs in the actions related to security and public benefit is very difficult due to the changing nature of the organizations whose headcount frequently fluctuates. The reasons for difficulties in the effective operation of NGOs should be sought in conflicts and interpersonal divisions which very often lead to dissolution of many organisations. According to the law, it is possible to obtain legal personality with only 15 members which contributes to the weakening of large organizations. This may be proved by the higher number of associations observed in recent years in Poland (Central Statistical Office, 2014).

Public administration bodies are characterized by a permanent form and operation on strictly defined legal framework. Efficient and good cooperation with public institutions requires a permanent structure and the instability of NGOs considerably hinders effective cooperation. Safety is an elementary human need (Maslow, 2006), and its optimal provision is one of the greatest challenges for the state. In order to participate in the activities of the security system, NGOs must demonstrate extensive professionalism and discipline. According to the data of the Polish Central Statistical Office for 2012, there are 69.5 thousand associations and 8.5 thousand foundations (Central Statistical Office, 2014). Only 29% of them operate in the areas closely related to security and crisis management (Central Statistical Office, 2014). The areas cover: rescue, social and humanitarian aid and health protection. Non-governmental entities authorized by the minister competent for internal affairs to take up security activities, undertake cooperation with state agencies (the Police, the State Fire Service etc.). The cooperation is written down in the form of individual agreements regulating the scope of operations. The most important non-governmental organisations functioning in the field of safety and crisis management are:

- the Volunteer Fire Brigade (OSP),
- the Mountain Volunteer Rescue Service (GOPR),
- the Tatra Volunteer Emergency Service (TOPR)
- the Water Volunteer Ambulance Service (WOPR).

The above mentioned organizations make a huge contribution to the fight against crisis situations which pose a threat to security in various dimensions. The largest of the four is the Volunteer Fire Brigade, which accounts for 19% of the total number of NGOs in Poland (the Central Statistical Office, 2014). The units of the Volunteer Fire Brigade operate mainly in rural or urban-rural areas participating in rescue and firefighting operations, fighting ecological threats, land accidents and natural disasters. Many OSP units are associated in the National Fire and Rescue System. Because of their size and long history, they are a reliable partner for state security agencies and formations. GOPR and TOPR are very special organizations as they are the only forces which deal with emergency situations in the mountain area. GOPR and TOPR rescuers are trained to provide first aid, evacuate victims and people at risk, and to transport the wounded to the units of the State Medical Emergency. The personnel, equipment and position potential of GOPR and TOPR rescue stations is a vital complement to the national crisis management system. WOPR is a social rescue organization that provides safety in the area of public bathing spots. Similarly to GOPR and TOPR, it deals with rescue operations, first aid and transport of casualties. WOPR disposes of specialized equipment necessary to perform the entrusted tasks. After the adoption of the Act on the Safety of People in Water Areas of 18<sup>th</sup> August 2011, the monopoly of WOPR was abolished. The Ministry of the Internal Affairs granted nearly 100 licences (the Ministry of the Internal Affairs and Administration, 2018) for performing water rescue activities to various organizations, including companies, natural persons conducting business activity, foundations and other associations. The remaining group of NGOs that engage in the fight with crisis situations includes: the Polish Red Cross, the OSW Riflemen's Association, and scout organisations.

As far as the role of non-governmental organizations in the security system is concerned, their participation should be distinguished in relation to particular management phases:

1. The prevention phase - involving preventive activities and education, a suitable area for activities carried out by civil society organizations. Those activities are undertaken as statutory social-educational tasks within associations. Organizations educate their members about the types of threats, correct behaviour patterns in crisis situations and first aid techniques. Moreover, experienced instructors of non-governmental organizations provide support to the teachers of local middle and secondary schools during lessons in safety education. The opportunity to make the lessons more attractive by practical training contributes to the increase in the interest in the subject and the issue of security. The implementation of the prevention phase is essential for crisis management, unfortunately it is often underestimated, and the importance of proper education of next generations in the basics of safety and rescue is frequently overlooked.
2. The preparation phase – is based on the implementation of crisis management plans in the event of a threat. It is

performed at every level of local government. Social rescue organizations participate in the process of creating plans at the commune and poviát level through their representatives, as members of permanent crisis management teams. Their task is to submit comments to projects at the development phase and to come up with the most appropriate plan to respond to possible dangers in the region. Moreover, in special cases, the legislator allowed the representatives of non-governmental organizations to participate in the work of the government and voivodship crisis management teams at the invitation of the chairman.

3. The reaction phase – actions directly counteracting the threat which are performed only by the forces with appropriate training and equipment such as the Volunteer Fire Brigade, GOPR, TOPR and WOPR. These civic agencies have repeatedly and successfully participated in combating crises and emergencies. Thanks to the optimal preparation and readiness, they significantly contribute to overcoming dangerous situations on daily bases. The best units of the Volunteer Fire Brigade also operate in the Rescue and Fire Fighting System, ensuring adequate coordination of rescue units.
4. The reconstruction phase - the process of reconstruction and restoring the original state of affairs. This is a stage of hard work for the majority of NGOs. Efficient cooperation between public administration and social institutions during this stage is very important. It is then that the NGOs staff reach affected people delivering humanitarian aid and distributing supplies for those in need. The staff also provide premedical, psychological and religious help, offer professional support for emergency services, and provide assistance and care for the injured.

The role of NGOs is well highlighted by their functions. It turns out that their significance is versatile, not limited to the third sector only. The activities undertaken by the NGOs contribute to the well-being of a society (Moroń, 2012). The priority role of non-governmental organizations in a democratic state is stimulating civic activities and being present when real threats to security arise and proper reaction is necessary.

#### IV. CONCLUSIONS

Non-governmental organizations constitute an important component of the state security system. Their staff and equipment constitute vital support for state institutions in crisis situations. Proven history of effective cooperation with the state agencies allows non-governmental organizations to apply for public funds to cover the costs related to their activity and to promote good image and reputation in the media. The NGOs which constitute a part of the national security system are required to remain in constant readiness to provide help to those in need. The public administration bodies are therefore required to conduct cyclical checks and audits of NGOs operating in the field of security and rescue. Important pieces of legislation with respect to civil protection are: the Act on the Safety of Persons Staying in Water Areas and the Act on Safety and Rescue in the Mountains and on Organized Ski Areas. Both legal regulations have eliminated the exclusivity of GOPR, TOPR and WOPR

and allowed other entities to provide services in the same area. Implementation of tasks in the field of water and mountain rescue by other organizations is possible after prior approval of the minister competent for internal affairs. This is a good step towards real improvement of the level of security in the areas of high risk level.

Due to volume restrictions, this paper does not fully cover all the issues related to the cooperation between non-governmental organisations and the law enforcement and crisis management agencies. The difficulty in developing the subject was also a large amount of material and the lack of detailed data from non-governmental organizations. In view of the above, this study is only an attempt to discuss in general terms one of the most important security issues regarding the activities of non-governmental organizations in the national system of ensuring security. NGOs are not a cure for the problems of the modern world, but they are a significant force because they come into play where the state is ailing, they act as a service provider, an advocate of interest and a forum for self-fulfilment of citizens. They are the foundations of civil society, and when the foundations are strong, the society is strong too. (Moroń, 2012).

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