

Assessment of the Efficiency of Preventive Measures Undertaken by the Police in Poland

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Abstract— The Police are a uniformed formation intended to ensure security and public order. The formation plays an auxiliary role in relation to the society. The Police carries out assigned tasks of preventive, criminal and investigative nature. The purpose of this study is to assess the utilitarian effectiveness of the preventive anti-crime measures of the Polish Police forces. In order to achieve this goal, the authors used the method of examining relevant documents, statistics and literature. The main source of information were statistical data made publically available by the Polish Police and communications from surveys carried out by the Public Opinion Research Centre (CBOS). The period under examination included the years 2014-2017.

Index Terms— security, the Police, preventive measures, effectiveness, efficiency.

I. INTRODUCTION

Threats are a commonplace in everyday life of each society, most of them are everyday ills but there are also situations that disturb the sense of security for a longer periods of time. Threats appear unexpectedly and very often cannot be predicted (Kaczmarczyk 2014). When a particular threat is analysed, it is necessary to identify its level. It may or may not be acceptable (Kaczmarczyk 2016). Currently, the problem of widening the concept of security is frequently raised because the range of goods and values that must be protected by law is expanding. Accordingly, the law enforcement agencies must update their repertoire of means of protection. Moreover, the growing importance of non-governmental entities directly extends the catalogue of protected values as individuals and groups seek protection against threats that may undermine their functioning and freedom of activity. The multidimensionality of today's threats forces the modern state to constantly improve its forms and methods of recognizing and preventing various hazards. This improvement takes the form of 'specialization' of state bodies (Kaczmarczyk 2018) appointed to perform tasks in the field of public security. Therefore, new specialized agencies and units are created with the mission to recognize and

counteract a specific group of threats (Kaczmarczyk, Socha, Szwajca 2014) as well as to protect the lives and health of people, their property, the environment, and public safety and order (Kaczmarczyk 2015).

II. POLICE AS A PREVENTIVE FORCE

In Poland, the Police is a uniformed and armed formation appointed and intended to protect people's security and to maintain public safety and order (Wiśniewski, Piątek 2009). This institution is supervised by the minister competent for internal affairs whose tasks include, among others:

- protecting the lives and health of people and property against unlawful attacks affecting these values;
- protecting public safety and order;
- initiating and organizing activities aimed at preventing crimes and offenses and counteracting crime-related phenomena that are the source of criminal acts;
- detecting crimes and prosecuting their perpetrators (Act on the Police of 1990).

In praxeological terms, the above-mentioned tasks can be implemented through constructional, destructive, conservative and preventive actions among which the conservative ones are of particular significance, they are otherwise known as preventive measures (Kaczmarczyk, Wiśniewski, Gwardyński 2018). Preventive action contributes to the economization of activities undertaken by the Police for the sake of security, and is not, as a rule, accompanied by losses or these losses are reduced. Widely understood preventive activities are carried out by all agencies whose task is to fight crime by means of preventive, investigative and criminal measures. All of them, through effective action, can prevent the emergence of new threats in both quantity and quality aspects (Wiśniewski, Kogut 2016).

The Police activities which are strictly dedicated to crime prevention involve the efforts of district constables, patrol service officers and crime prevention specialists (employees of



social prevention cells). They are the functionaries of the first contact between the citizens and law enforcement. They are the first to learn about threats through direct contact with members of local communities and they are able to directly advert them (Wiśniewski, Kogut 2016).

The Police serve the society through their preventive service. It is therefore in the public interest that preventive activities are carried out efficiently. In a rapidly changing social environment, technological development and globalization, it is vital that the improvement of preventive actions would take the form of a process enriched by the effects of seeking new opportunities to improve operations (Wiśniewski 2014). The efficiency discussed in this paper is a positively understood feature of deliberate acts of a team of people equipped with apparatus to boost the effects of their activities. Therefore, the usability measure of such efficiency is the degree of achievement of the assumed goal. The action that leads to the intended effect can be called an effective action. Efficiency is gradual, as the goal can be achieved completely or, thanks to the action undertaken, one can approach the goal closer than in the situation in which the action did not occur at all. Inefficient action does not bring the goal closer, and when it leads away from the goal, it is counter-effective.

III. ASSESSMENT OF PREVENTIVE ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN BY THE POLICE

The utilitarian assessment of the preventive measures of the Police is limited to determining the implementation of its objectives through preventive measures as part of statutory tasks. The mission of the Police is, among others, to maintain public safety as part of the system of protection of life and health of people and property against unlawful attacks that violate these values through actions that should result in preventing the occurrence of criminal threats in both quantitative and qualitative terms. In pragmatic terms, it can be stated that preventive measures of the Police are effective when the number of offences is reduced or the crime is completely eliminated (Piątek & Wiśniewski 2007).

In the assessment of preventive activities of the Polish Police one should start with a list of the most socially burdensome criminal offences. These are: robbery related crimes (robbery, robbery with use of violence and robbery extortion), assault and battery, health damage, theft, car theft, burglary and damage to property. Moreover, in assessing the preventive effectiveness of the Polish Police one must consider the social effects that the preventive activities of the Police have on citizens. These effects impact the feeling of security and shape the social image of the Police as an institution. Effective preventive action must be reflected in the increased level of the feeling of security and in increasingly higher esteem this formation enjoys in the society.

The purpose of this study is to assess the utilitarian effectiveness of preventive measures of the Polish Police. The research question that the authors put forward is: *Was the Polish Police effective in the field of counteracting the most socially burdensome types of crime in the period 2014-2017?* In order

to find the answer to the research question it was necessary to answer the fundamental questions below:

- a. Do the actions undertaken by the Police effectively reduce the number of particularly burdensome crimes?
- b. Do the citizens of Poland feel safe?
- c. Do they appreciate the efforts of the Police in the field of providing security?

Then the authors adopted the main hypothesis: *The Police forces were efficient in counteracting the most socially burdensome crime in the period 2014-2017.* To check the correctness of the main hypothesis, three specific sub-hypotheses were adopted:

- a. the actions of the Police effectively reduce the number of particularly burdensome crimes;
- b. Polish citizens feel safe in the face of threat of crimes;
- c. Polish citizens appreciate the work the Police do in the field of providing security.

In their research, the authors used statistical data made publicly available by the Police and results of surveys carried out by the Public Opinion Research Centre (CBOS). The obtained data underwent basic statistical analysis.

In the analysed period (2014-2017), the total number of crimes particularly burdensome for the society amounted to:

- 344,015 crimes in 2014,
- 301,649 crimes in 2015,
- 269,214 crimes in 2016,
- 232,529 crimes in 2017 (<http://statystyka.policja.pl>).

The average number of particularly burdensome crimes for consecutive years was 286,851.8 and the average scale of threat in consecutive years amounted to 746.4 punishable acts per 100,000 residents. The actual dynamics of crime in consecutive years (as compared with the previous year) were:

- 87.7% in 2015;
- 89.2% in 2016;
- 86.4% in 2017.

The dynamics of the most socially burdensome crimes occurring between 2017 and 2014 amounted to 67.6%.

In the analysed period, the category 'robbery' (robbery, robbery with violence and robbery extortion) reached the following volumes:

- 9,435 crimes in 2014,
- 7,787 crimes in 2015,
- 7,444 crimes in 2016,
- 6,053 crimes in 2017 (<http://statystyka.policja.pl>).

The average number of reported robbery incidents per year was 7679.6 (2.7% of all socially burdensome crimes) and the average scale of threat in consecutive years was 20 criminal acts per 100,000 residents. The actual dynamics of crime in consecutive years (as compared with the previous year) amounted to:

- 82.5% in 2015,
- 95.6% in 2016,
- 81.3% in 2017.

The dynamics of the most socially burdensome crime occurring between 2017 and 2014 was 64.2%.

In the analysed period, in the category 'assault and battery', the

following numbers were received:

- 5,797 crimes in 2014,
- 4,708 crimes in 2015,
- 4,776 crimes in 2016,
- 4,385 crimes in 2017 (<http://statystyka.policja.pl>).

The average number of assault and battery incidents in consecutive years was 4,916.5 (1.7% of all socially burdensome crimes) and the average scale of threat in consecutive years was 12 criminal acts per 100,000 residents. The actual dynamics of crime in consecutive years (as compared with the previous year) amounted to:

- 81.2% in 2015,
- 101.4% in 2016,
- 91.8% in 2017.

The dynamics of the most socially burdensome crime occurring between 2017 and 2014 was 75.6%.

In the analysed period, in the category of 'damage to health', the following numbers were received:

- 11,644 crimes in 2014,
- 9,949 crimes in 2015,
- 11,034 crimes in 2016
- 11,402 crimes in 2017 (<http://statystyka.policja.pl>).

The average number of crimes in the 'damage to health' category in consecutive years amounted to 11007.3 (3.9% of all socially burdensome offenses) and the average scale of threat in consecutive years amounted to 28.6 punishable acts per 100,000 residents. The actual dynamics of crime in consecutive years (as compared with the previous year) amounted to:

- 45.4% in 2015,
- 110.9% in 2016,
- 103.3% in 2017.

The dynamics of the most socially burdensome crime occurring between 2017 and 2014 was 98%.

In the analysed period, in the category 'theft' including car theft, the following results were received:

- 169,034 crimes in 2014,
- 145,464 crimes in 2015,
- 127,801 crimes in 2016
- 108,248 crimes in 2017 (<http://statystyka.policja.pl>).

The average number of crimes in the theft category in consecutive years was 137636.8 (48% of all socially burdensome crimes) and the average scale of threat in individual years was 358.1 criminal acts per 100,000 residents. The actual dynamics of crime in consecutive years (as compared with the previous year) was:

- 86.1%, in 2015,
- 87.9% in 2016,
- 84.7% in 2017.

The dynamics of the most socially burdensome crime occurring between 2017 and 2014 was 64%. In the analysed period, in the category of 'theft' (excluding car theft) the following results were received:

- 155,243 crimes in 2014,
- 133,428 crimes in 2015,
- 116,353 crimes in 2016

- 98,201 crimes in 2017 (<http://statystyka.policja.pl>).

The average number of crimes in the 'theft' category (excluding car theft) per year amounted to 125,806.3 (43.9% of all socially burdensome crimes) and the average threat scale in individual years was 327.4 criminal acts per 100,000 residents. The actual dynamics of crime in consecutive years (as compared with the previous year) was:

- 85.9% in 2015,
- 87.2% in 2016,
- 84.4% in 2017.

The dynamics of the most socially burdensome crime occurring between 2017 and 2014 amounted to 63.3%.

In the analysed period, in the category 'car theft', the following results were received:

- 13,791 crimes in 2014,
- 12,036 crimes in 2015,
- 11,448 crimes in 2016
- 10,047 crimes in 2017 (<http://statystyka.policja.pl>).

The average number of crimes in the 'car theft' category in consecutive years was 11,830.5 (4.1% of all socially burdensome crimes) and the average scale of threat in individual years was 30.8 criminal acts per 100,000 residents. The actual dynamics of crime in particular years (as compared with the previous year) was:

- 87.3% in 2015,
- 95.1% in 2016,
- 87.8% in 2017.

The dynamics of the most socially burdensome crime occurring between 2017 and 2014 was 72.9%.

In the analysed period, in the category 'burglary', the following results were received:

- 102,817 crimes in 2014,
- 91,328 crimes in 2015,
- 77,190 crimes in 2016,
- 65,514 crimes in 2017 (<http://statystyka.policja.pl>).

The average number of detected crimes in the category 'burglary' in consecutive years amounted to 81212.3 (29.4% of all socially burdensome crimes) and the average scale of threat in individual years amounted to 219.1 criminal acts per 100,000 residents. The actual dynamics of crime in individual years (as compared with the previous year) amounted to:

- 88.8% in 2015,
- 84.5% in 2016,
- 84.9% in 2017.

The dynamics of the most socially burdensome crime occurring between 2017 and 2014 was 63.7%.

In the analysed period, in the 'damage to property' category the following results were received:

- 45,288 crimes in 2014,
- 42,413 crimes in 2015,
- 40,969 crimes in 2016,
- 36,927 crimes in 2017 (<http://statystyka.policja.pl>).

The average number of crimes in this category in consecutive years was 41399.3 (14.4% of all socially burdensome crimes) and the average scale of threat in individual years was 107.7

criminal acts per 100,000 residents. The actual dynamics of crime in individual years (as compared with the previous year) amounted to:

- 93.7% in 2015,
- 96.6% in 2016,
- 90.1% in 2017.

The dynamics of the most socially burdensome crime occurring between 2017 and 2014 was 81.5%.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

The actions undertaken by the Police have a direct impact on the feeling of security of Polish citizens and influence the level of regard and respect the Polish society has for this formation. The Public Opinion Research Centre (CBOS) conducts systematic research related to the feeling of security among Polish citizens (Bożewicz, 2018) and their attitude towards the Police (Feliński, 2018). The results of CBOS research show that in the years 2014-2017 the majority of Polish citizens were not afraid that they, or someone close to them, could become a victim of a crime.

In consecutive years of the analysed period, the following percentage of respondents was free from fear of becoming a victim of a crime:

- 2014 - 53% of respondents,
- 2015 - 49% of respondents,
- 2016 - 62% of respondents,
- 2017 - 60% of respondents.

In consecutive years of the analysed period, the following percentage of respondents was free from fear that someone close to them could become a victim of a crime:

- 2014 - 43% of respondents,
- 2015 - 40% of respondents,
- 2016 - 53% of respondents,
- 2017 - 52% of respondents.

In consecutive years of the analysed period, the fear of becoming a victim of crime was expressed by:

- 2014 - 45% of respondents (2% expressed considerable fear),
- 2015 - 48% of respondents (3% expressed considerable fear),
- 2016 - 37% of respondents (1% expressed considerable fear),
- 2017 - 38% of respondents (1% expressed considerable fear).

In consecutive years of the analysed period, the following number of respondents were afraid that someone close to them could become a victim of a crime:

- 2014 - 55% of respondents (10% expressed considerable concern),
- 2015 - 58% of respondents (12% expressed considerable concern),
- 2016 - 45% of respondents (6% expressed considerable concern),
- 2017 - 47% of respondents (7% expressed

considerable concern).

Research on the feeling of security and the threat of crime shows that people are more concerned about security of others than of their own. CBOS in their research on the citizens' assessment of the activities of public institutions revealed that in the years 2014-2017 the Police improved their ratings so that at the end of 2017 as many as 72% of Polish citizens had this formation in high regard, and in 2018 this figure rose to 74%. When it comes to negative reception of the Police activities in the field of providing security and public order, about one in seven citizens sees the efforts of the Police in a negative light. Those unsatisfied with the work of the Police are: the young (25%), the residents of large cities and agglomerations (23%), and the representatives of households with the highest income (24%).

In consecutive years of the analysed period, the following percentage of respondents rated the Police high:

- March 2014 - 67%,
- September 2014 - 66%,
- March 2015 - 65%,
- September 2015 - 69%,
- March and September 2016 - 72%,
- March 2017 - 70%,
- September 2017 - 72%.

In the corresponding period, the Police was rated negatively by the following percentage of respondents:

- 2014 in March and September - 22%,
- 2015 in March - 22%,
- 2015 in September - 18%,
- 2016 in March - 16%,
- 2016 in September - 17%,
- 2017 in March - 16%,
- 2017 in September - 17%.

Referring to the results obtained by means of statistical calculations, it can be stated that there is a significant improvement in the efficiency of the Police actions undertaken in the period 2014-2017, which is noticeable not only in the Police statistics but also in the growing sense of security of Polish citizens who have a positive outlook on the work of the Police. This is the result of proper management of the activities taken by the Police and accurate choice of priorities and priority tasks. There is also a continuous improvement in the internal cooperation between various Police cells and units as well as tightened collaboration with non-police entities (Gwardyński & Wiśniewski 2017). One programme worth noting here is a government program for combating crime and anti-social behaviour called *Safe Together*.

The fact that the Police is becoming more efficient in its crime prevention activities should not overshadow serious issues that constitute a challenge for this formation. The analysis of the number of detected crimes which were particularly burdensome for the society in 2014-2017, shows that the activities of the Police forces undertaken to combat the 'damage to health' phenomenon are, in fact, counter-effective. The authors assumed at the start of their study that if the number of crimes in any previously identified category of the socially

burdensome crimes classified as criminal offenses, is not reduced year by year, then the actions of the Police may be assessed as ineffective both in this particular category and in the whole block of criminal offenses. Certainly, the improvements in efficiency of the Police activities have been noticed by the general public but it should be recognized that further search for solutions to vital problems of the Police such as staff shortages or high absenteeism is absolutely necessary.

Referring to the adopted research hypothesis, it can be considered that the main hypothesis proved to be false. The efficiency of activities undertaken by the Polish Police cannot be regarded as satisfactory. Such an assumption is made because the specific hypothesis stipulating that the Police activities effectively reduce the number of the most socially burdensome crimes, was also proved wrong. The only specific hypotheses which found confirmation in the research are those claiming that the citizens of Poland feel safe in the face of threat of crime and that public opinion in Poland highly appreciates the work of the Police in the field of security.

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