

## PP14. DESIGN OF COMMUNITY POLICING APPLICATIONS

[Tags: Community policing, Crime detection & prevention, ICT]

When designing a community policing mobile application, keep in mind the following design features, which are considered important by citizens and police officers:

- ✓ build-in mechanisms to ensure the origin and integrity of submitted information by the users;
- ✓ include a "tip submissions" functionality and respective means for tip monitoring (e.g. follow-up, reminders) as well as timely alerts;
- ✓ avoid the usage of third-party services (or at least provide alternative to users) as they may result in privacy and personal data violations;
- ✓ limit the use of social media services to the provision of basic information to maintain control over the information shared;
- ✓ implement strong security and verification mechanisms that would act as a barrier against misuse of the application at stake;
- ✓ provide opportunities for bidirectional real-time communication as well as for precise geolocalisation, which is particularly important during emergencies;
- ✓ develop processing tools that are capable of distinguishing relevant from irrelevant information to avoid information overload;
- ✓ include an S.O.S. function. The S.O.S. function should be included in the promotion of the app in public awareness, media and social media campaigns. This function should be connected to the geolocation capability;
- ✓ include photo and video upload option;
- ✓ introduce ability to direct requests to the appropriate agency, thus reducing police workload.

In addition to this, consider that, in order, to be effective, information provided by online applications must be up-to-date and law enforcement officers have to be responsive, i.e. to respond timely and accurately to the reports received.

Any community policing application should also be in full compliance with privacy and data protection regulations. Consequently, the Data Protection Officer of the respective authority should be involved early and fully in the implementation and use of the IT application and system, together with the IT Security Officer, where such a position exists. After implementation and before running the system, authorities should conduct a comprehensive data protection impact assessment and privacy audit.

Examples:

- SecureU system
- Watch Over Me application
- Amber Alerts application
- bSafe – Personal Safety App
- Kenteken Opzoeken application
- Sinesp Cidadão application

Mode of implementation:

- Carry out focus groups and interviews with police officers and citizens to better understand what they expect from a community policing app;
- Carry out a benchmark analysis on existing community policing apps;
- Involve all category of stakeholders in the design of the community policing app.

Resources:

- Stevens, C. Appillionaires: Secrets from Developers Who Struck It Rich on the App Store, Wiley; 1 edition (September 30, 2011).
- Deliverable 2.2 - Report assessing success and failure stories of smartphone and tablet applications for crime reporting and other community policing activities; WP2 Functionality, success and failure in the market to date; CITYCoP project.