

PP4. INCREASING CITIZENS' PARTICIPATION IN COMMUNITY POLICING PROGRAMS

[Tags: Community policing, Public engagement, Citizens]

Increased citizens' participation in community policing programs increases their efficiency and efficacy. Because local communities are not homogenous units, increased participation in community policing is very important as it enables the inclusion of that different points of view, sensibilities, and problems. A wide participation also ensures a better pooling of resources among different types of actors.

The concrete ways in which citizens are invited to participate in community policing program should be tailored in accordance with the security needs for that local area to ensure the program's relevance and effectiveness.

Neighbourhood Watch Groups (NWGs) have been proven to be useful instruments for increasing citizens participation in community policing programs by assisting individuals, who may have previously felt isolated or unknown in their respective communities to form social relations. These increased interactions between residents of a certain community foster, in turn, social cohesion in communities previously characterized by alienation and community apathy.

It is important to remember that community actions connected to community policing should not solely focus on crime, as crime per se is not a major motivation for long-term collective actions. Research indicates that community organizations which have multiple goals, among which crime control, are more likely to be successful.

Examples:

- The Community Policing Model implemented in Portugal by the Lisbon Municipal Police since 2009, which was founded on the assumption that to be able to communicate with citizens and establish a trusting relationship in diverse cultural contexts, it is important to first implement a training-action strategy. The strategy focused on intercultural and mediation learning skills targeting jointly police officers, community mediators and local partners on intercultural competences and mediation skills, promoting an exchange of visions and perspectives.
- "The 'Vigilant Neighbours' platform, in France, is a community website supporting residents of a neighbourhood to join together in fighting against the dangers of burglaries.
- The NW Alert Notification System in the UK which allows co-ordinating bodies for the UK Neighbourhood Watch to send out email alerts to all of their registered contact persons, allowing national dissemination to potentially thousands of neighbourhood watch members in a very short period of time.
- The Community Speedwatch is a method of traffic speed control involves trained volunteers pointing a speed gun at vehicles driving through an area known in the past for speeding, and has generated mixed responses from the general public, both positive and negative.
- San Jose: CityConnect smartphone application – allowing the Police department to inform, connect and engage with the community.

Mode of implementation:

- Keep in mind that communities like to engage with police officers and police staff;
- Assist communities to create Neighbourhood Watch Groups in which residents watch out for suspicious behaviour in their neighbourhoods and transmit the information to the police;
- Provide training to the citizens who join Neighbourhood Watch Groups;
- Set-up an efficient reporting system between the NWGs and the police;
- Respond efficiently to the reports made by the NWGs;
- Be open and transparent about any expenses, fees and costs relating to Neighbourhood Watch matters;
- Have a good awareness of social needs and problems in that community;
- Use a mix of communicative approaches (face-to-face and online);
- Encourage the active involvement of local opinion leaders;
- Use adequate ICT equipment and access for citizens' participation as well as adequate apps;
- Use data collected in a confidential and careful manner;
- Re-organization of LEAs, especially at local level focusing on the way offices function, logistics and investment in human and material resources.

Resources:

- Wisler, D. and Onwudiwe, I. D. (eds.) (2009), *Community Policing: International Patterns and Comparative Perspectives* (Boca Raton, Florida: CRC Press).
- Williams, M. L., Edwards, A., Housley, W., Burnap, W., Rana, O., Avis, N., Morgan, J. and Sloan, L. (2013), "Policing cyber-neighbourhoods: tension monitoring and social media networks", *Policing & society*, 23(4): 461-481.
- Diniz M. and Santa Cruz C. (2015), *Lisbon Community Policing – The challenge of the intercultural and mediation approach*. Paper at the Conference "Evidence-based policing: New perspectives of cooperation between practice, education and police science". CEPOL, Escola de Policia Judiciaria, 5-8 October 2015, Lisboa.
- <https://www.voisinsvigilants.org/voisin>
- <http://www.hampshire.police.uk/internet/advice-and-information/crimeprevention/community-speedwatch>