



RECOMMENDATIONS

14th session of Working Group 4,

"Justice, Freedom, and Security" (Chapter 24)

"Through professionalism and integrity to transparency
and accountability in the police"

8 July 2024, Panoramika Hotel, Skopje

1. The integrity of police officers is vital to providing public support, which is strengthened through their proper conduct towards citizens (use of limited force, fair and ethical conduct, use of force within permissible limits, equality in the administration of justice, avoidance of insults, humiliation, and discrimination). It is recommended that the Ministry of the Interior (MoI) monitor the ongoing efforts of the European Union to strengthen integrity policing mechanisms and ensure a high level of transparency.
2. It is recommended that the Ministry of Interior continue to implement the recommendations of the OSCE Mission regarding the implementation of [the STRATEGY FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATION 2024 - 2026](#), strengthening the work of the Prevention Department and establishing the long-term Department for Central Preventive Coordination.
3. A primary assumption that ensures the integrity of police officers is the manner in which new police officers are recruited and selected. An employment contract with the Ministry of Interior can be signed by the best candidates who have passed the complex selection procedures without any political intervention and have shown the highest results, considering their motivation to be police officers. The establishment of a fully integrated merit-based human resource management process ("merit system") should be a strategic objective of the Ministry of Interior and create conditions for reducing the pervasive, endemic levels of political interference in the police function in all areas.
4. Operational independence means that police have the authority and discretion to make decisions about day-to-day operations, including how to allocate resources and conduct investigations without interference from political actors. To strengthen operational independence, the government should consider an organizational solution. All leadership positions should be non-political and in compliance with all principles of merit-based hiring and promotion. Directors and other management staff, including assistant directors, should be in their positions irrespective of elections and changes in power.
5. In addition to the utmost importance of merit criteria in the recruitment of police officers (especially those in leadership positions), diversity and gender aspects should also be considered when recruiting at all levels. Gender equality and diversity are key to policing for a number of reasons. Different teams bring different perspectives and experiences, which can improve problem-solving and decision-making. A police force that reflects the diversity of a society is more likely to gain the trust of the community and build strong relationships with different groups in society.





6. The Ministry of Interior needs to improve the Police Officers' Integrity Measurement Test, which is a solid tool for assessing integrity in European terms. This test may offer positive results. However, given its invasive nature, other appropriate measures need to be taken prior to its application. This test must be used with the utmost caution and under professional guidance and control, i.e., institutional expertise and resources that the Ministry of Interior should provide are necessary. According to practice, integrity testing can be applied when there is a reason, and when there is no reason to perform a check taking the form of overt and covert testing. These four elements can be combined to create different integrity testing systems. The integrity test cannot be used as a broad-spectrum anti-corruption tool, but rather as a targeted mechanism for suspected serious misconduct by individuals or groups.
7. A vital prerequisite for proper oversight of the work of the police is access channels through which citizens can submit their complaints – directly to the police, as well as to other external mechanisms. To understand how the existing mechanisms work, it is recommended that the Ministry of Interior take the initiative for an open discussion on the effectiveness of existing tools for collecting, updating, managing and handling citizens' complaints. The participation of civic platforms, representatives from relevant institutions, as well as international police bodies is important in this dialogue. The need to set up a special complaints department in the Ministry of Interior is likely to be discussed.
8. Despite significant progress in ensuring public order and peace, as well as greater security of citizens, the Ministry of Interior with its leading role among the governing bodies should continue to improve the concept of community policing by finding solutions to the problems faced most by citizens. As an example: loud music at night and other types of loud communications for which there is regulation but is not enforced or does not affect the discouragement of offenders; seeking an effective solution to the problem of stray dogs on the street; seeking solutions to prevent the burning of pollutants or the burning of stubble; tougher penalties for drivers who exhibit violence and violate the safety of public spaces.
9. To achieve greater integrity of police officers, primary and continuing training programs (according to the annual training plan in the Ministry of Interior) should include topics that will offer in-depth knowledge of police integrity and professional police conduct. Content that will significantly contribute to increasing integrity relates to training on conflicts of interest in policing, the risks of such practices, and the indication of preventive actions. All forms of education should be conducted at all levels within the police organization (petty officers and all management levels). However, experts point out that a key aspect related to integrity is leadership and how it is practiced at different hierarchical levels.
10. Leading by example is a cornerstone of ethical leadership and preventing corruption in law enforcement. Through their actions and behavior, leaders set standards for ethical behavior, creating a culture that rejects corruption at all levels. Leaders are the first line of scrutiny and should be the first to go through training to gain knowledge of what a positive example means to other police officers.
11. The adoption of the [Ministry of Home Affairs' Integrity Plan 2023-2025](#) is a positive step. The preparation of the next Integrity Plan will have the benefit of involving representatives from the academic community, civil sector, other professional organizations, international partners, etc. To underscore the importance of the Integrity Plan, it should be communicated to all police officers.



- 12.** Community policing, as a concept and developed methodology, seeks to increase citizens' trust in the police which at the same time means greater credibility and legitimacy of community policing. The idea is based on local engagement, which assumes that decision-making and governance should be decentralized. In a decentralized decision-making system, there are better conditions for increasing the accountability of police officers, and thus increasing accountability to the community. When officials can independently seek solutions to problems and have a mandate to take risks, their responsibility will be greater.
- 13.** The Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia (and its competent committees), as the most important instance for control of the security sector, including the supervisory police mechanisms, should practice frequent discussions on the level of compliance and effectiveness in the supervision of the competent institutions: the Ministry of Interior, the Public Prosecutor's Office and the Ombudsman Office within whose framework the activities of civil society organizations are envisaged. Six years after the establishment of the Police External Oversight Body is a significant period that allows for an assessment of progress and weaknesses.
- 14.** Accelerating the adoption of the proposed amendments to the Law on the Ombudsman, which will extend the mandate of the elected three representatives of civil society organizations from 1 to 3 years, will strengthen the role of the External Oversight Mechanism known as the Ombudsman Plus.
- 15.** It is recommended to consider the possibility of creating a mechanism to establish a balance of accountability between the police, the political echelon and citizens. There is a need to preserve police operational independence and ensure democratic accountability to the political echelon and the public. The police cannot operate in an environment without political oversight.