Promoting public safety in rural communities of Romania

SWITZERLAND SUPPORTS ROMANIA'S POLICE REFORMS THROUGH COMMUNITY POLICING

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A resident of the Romanian municipality of Merișani asks a local policeman for help.

Switzerland supports the work of the police in Romania, helping to build trust in the police among the public and to fight crime. Special priority is given to improving understanding between the police and disadvantaged population groups, for example the Roma minority.

Switzerland's support is aimed at improving policing in Romania in 97 rural communities, building trust in the police among the population and reducing the crime rate. To this end, the community policing approach is used, which focuses on crime prevention and problem-solving.

The project covers three areas:

- strengthening community policing
- training police officers
- logistical and operational support for the police

STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY POLICING

Supervised by the Romanian police, an academic team carried out a study in the 97 selected municipalities on the socio-economic situation, crime and relations between the police and the public. The insights gained from that study on comparative community policing and past experience of the Romanian police and its Swiss partners served as a basis for the project.

TRAINING POLICE OFFICERS

A new training manual in community policing was designed with the assistance of Swiss experts. 2'500 officers from the targeted municipalities were trained in the new approach which emphasis communication skills and mediation – both of which are essential aspects of community policing. Another 240 police officers attended courses in Roma language and culture in a newly created training centre. The dedicated centre is part of the police school in Slatina, a town located about 150 km west of Bucharest. The aim is to enhance understanding and improve the relationship between the police and the Roma minority.

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Police officers taking courses in Roma language and culture in a newly created training centre at the police academy in Slatina.

LOGISTICAL SUPPORT FOR THE POLICE AND LOCAL SAFETY FORUMS

An important way of ensuring effective community policing is to improve the police's mobility. Police stations in the selected municipalities are therefore provided with vehicles and up-to-date equipment. A dedicated fund was also created to support policing micro-projects including renovation of local police stations, providing motor boats servicing the protected areas of the Danube Delta, or installing video surveillance devices. The 30 micro-projects are conceived through consultation with local community safety forums installed by the project.

TRIED-AND-TESTED COOPERATION WITH SWITZERLAND

Back in 2000, Switzerland began helping the Romanian government to introduce community policing in the towns and cities. This pilot scheme met with such success that the Romanian government decided to extend it to rural areas too. Here, as in the towns and cities, Swiss expertise has been instrumental in introducing community policing. The Romanian police force works closely with the police academy at Savatan in the Canton of Vaud and with the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies in Geneva under the constant supervision of the Swiss NGO Coginta.

Switzerland provides almost CHF 2 million of funding for the project. The project is part of the thematic fund security. Switzerland funds 20 different security-related projects in Romania for a total amount of CHF 18 million, supporting the country inter alia in the areas of the judiciary, the implementation of Schengen and the fight against corruption, human trafficking and organised crime.

Chief deputy sergeant Ionut Popa from the community police in Merișani village

The training helped me to better understand the habits, traditions and language of Roma people. The Roma community has increased its trust in me, which reinforces my ability to solve community issues.