

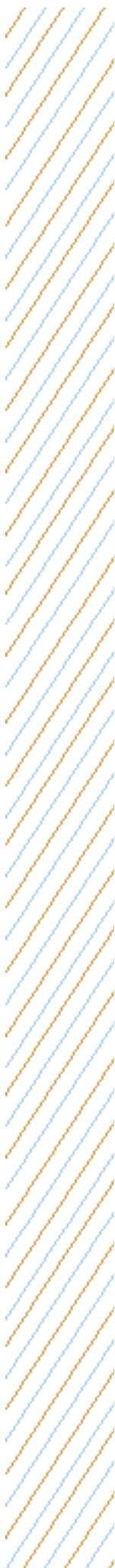
n°23 Bis
April 2009

**RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PRIVATE
AND PUBLIC SECURITY SECTORS –
FROM COEXISTENCE
TO PARTNERSHIP?**

ANDREJ SOTLAR

Within the framework of the Work-package 6 called Public Policies of Prevention, a workshop on the topic 'Private Policing and Security – Relationships between the Private and Public Sectors' took place at the Faculty of Criminal Justice and Security, University of Maribor, Slovenia, from 4th to 6th December, 2008, as part of the international project CRIMPREV – Assessing Deviance, Crime & Prevention in Europe. Relationships and cooperation in the form of partnerships have been the prime focus in this thematic package.

The ongoing situation in the field of private policing and security in Europe has become an interesting research topic, especially for criminologists, researchers, policy-makers and practitioners. It has



become more specific with the latest development in technology, especially as related to national security systems of countries across the world. The purpose of the meeting in Slovenia which is the subject of this Newsletter was to discuss current threats and insecurities that highlight the need for further research in this field. Participants discussed the relationships between the private and public policing sectors, as well as new challenges for private and public policing and private security in emerging democracies.

Different national views about the role of private policing and security with respect to crime, its consequences and social changes, were presented in the discussions. Relations between the private and public sectors, and the need for partnerships between these two sectors, were also discussed. An overview and assessment of research on these relationships was the main focus of the workshop : the evolution of the co-operation between the private and public sectors ; previous experiences and problems that have arisen ; challenges of governance and accountability in the field of policing ; public opinion, political influence, and implications of the further development of the collaboration between the public and private sectors.

The meeting was organised around four key themes :

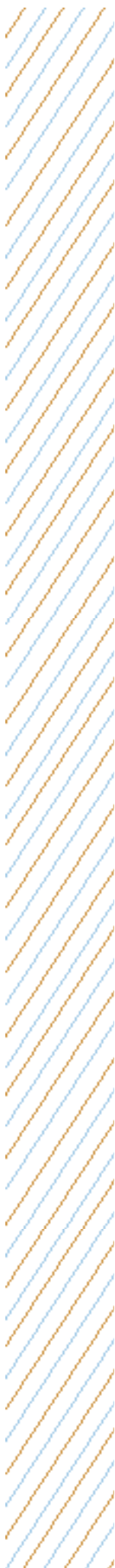
- Presentation of Security and Safety Services in Relation with (Public) Police – Varnost Maribor (visit to, and presentation by, the private security company Varnost Maribor) ;
- New Challenges for (Private and Public) Policing ;
- Private Security in Emerging Democracies – experiences in the Western Balkans ;
- Private-Public Partnerships : Security and Beyond.

23 participants from 5 countries (United Kingdom, Serbia, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Macedonia, and Slovenia) presented their papers. Along with presenters, each thematic part of the meeting included discussants who summarised the main points in the presentations and suggested specific issues for discussion and further research. The following overview will illustrate the presentations and discussions on the role of relationships between private and public sectors in the field of private policing and security during the workshop in Ljubljana.

I - PRIVATE POLICING AND SECURITY –

PART OF A “SECURITY SYSTEM”

The terms «private policing» and «private security» are nowadays often used interchangeably. To be more specific – private policing usually refers to “contract security” (security services provided to organisations by commercial providers under contract, to secure and protect their clients’ assets and personnel), while private security more often refers to “in-house security” (security services provided by a company or organisation to meet its own internal security needs).



Private policing and security constitute an integral part of overall security system in every country. Spaseski (2008) emphasised that the security system is a key element of the structure of state institutions organized on the basis of the state's Constitution. Organizationally and functionally this system involves rights, duties and responsibilities to build the security and stability essential for the successful functioning of the state (society). Worldwide, private security functions as a subsystem of this overall security system. Contradictions between legislative requirements on the one hand and the practicalities of security provision on the other can lead to unintended consequences. Nowadays the provision of effective security is regarded by citizens as a high priority, and countries are willing to invest heavily to meet this demand.

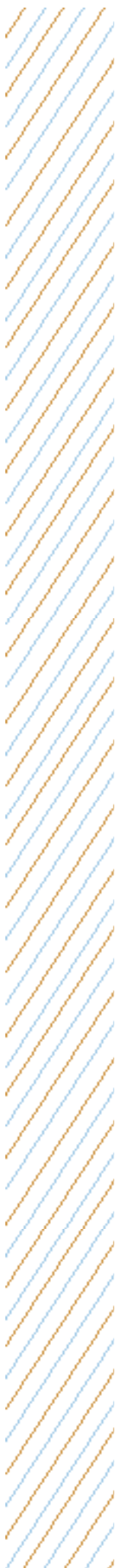
The discussion and analysis during the meeting led participants to conclude that there is a need for creating judicial norms and practice that could lead towards harmony in the functioning of the single security system. Furthermore, higher levels of supervision, inspection, and timely and efficient punishment of violations, are required. This inevitably raises the difficult and age-old question '*Quis custodiet ipsos custodes?*'. The line between the roles of the private and public sectors in the provision of security can be a fine one and is not always very clear, and state regulation of the two sectors in the broad public interest has not always been exemplary.

Experiences and perspectives of private security providers show that worldwide development of private security is being directly conditioned by the rise of liberal economies and by the processes of globalisation. Gerasimoski (2008) notes that these trends are contributing significantly to the continued growth of both private property and private security. New security threats require an adequate response by the security system generally, and the private security subsystem in particular, which is considered organizationally and functionally particularly well placed to meet the need for securing property and persons.

II - PRIVATE-PUBLIC PARTNERSHIPS

Everyday progress and the latest technology development are particularly relevant to the development of effective national security systems. From this point of view, discussions about current threats and insecurities which emphasise the need for further research in this field, and additional development of partnerships between the private and public sectors in the field of policing and security, are essential. Experience shows, however, that achieving these goals is rarely easy.

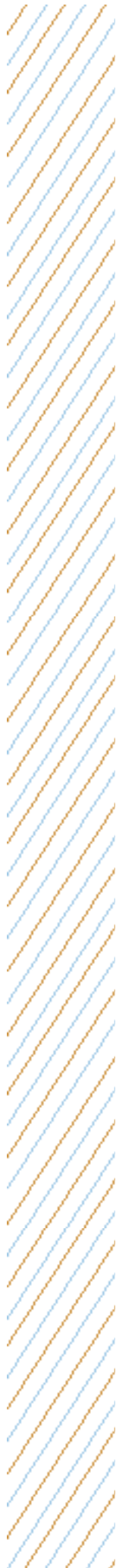
Sotlar and Meško (2008) described the relations between police and private security in Slovenia as involving conflict, competition, cooperation and partnership. In 2006 they conducted a survey of Slovenian police



and private security officers and their managers, asking them about the forms of relationships between the police and private security companies and their employees on both individual and institutional levels. Their findings showed that security officers believed (more than policemen) that they really cooperate with police officers in a process of enabling security and law enforcement. They assessed their mutual relationship as good, and described it as a partnership. The police respondents, however, were far more reserved on these relationships. Both groups believed that private security will play an increasingly important role in social control in the future, but they doubted that private security companies will ever be allowed to manage prisons and prisoners in Slovenia. Police respondents were not in favour of further broadening the scope of the powers of private security officers, including use of physical force (e.g. use of gas, tonfas, horses, etc.). Private security respondents were against allowing police officers to work as security officers in their off-duty hours. Police respondents were not surprisingly more in favour of this, despite being more sceptical than private security respondents about the possibility that in the future the police and private security companies will work well together. Police chiefs and private security managers thought that despite some occasional problems, co-operation between the police and private security industry is good. They indicated that such co-operation mostly involves common protection of public gatherings, transport and security of money, handing over suspected criminals to the police, information exchange and regulation of private security companies by the police. Cooperation was thus depicted as being at tactical and operational levels, while less common at the strategic level, and is achieved mainly through informal contacts between police officers and security officers. Both security managers and police chiefs believed that co-operation between both organisations must result in a synergy for Slovenian internal security.

Such cooperative partnerships have proved successful, especially in some Western European countries (for example the United Kingdom), but also to some extent in Slovenia. The situation, however, is rather different in South-Eastern European countries, especially those in transition. Conditions for such effective co-operation are not yet well developed, and needed changes are still in progress. Although some of their neighbour countries like Slovenia and Hungary have already experienced this transformation, these are new challenges for them and different cultures respond differently to similar situations.

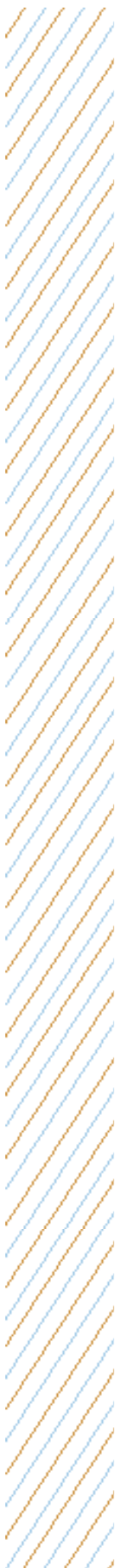
In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the relations between private security companies and the public security sector are more accurately described as rivalry than partnership. Kržalić and Mihajlović (2008) noted that three separate legislative regulations mandate the work and operation of ‘physical protection’ that is offered to people by private security



companies, and forms of ‘technical protection’ which are offered through static security systems such as burglary alarm systems, security camera systems, etc.. The increasing demand for private sector services is rooted in increased levels of crime in Bosnia and Herzegovina at the moment, at a time when levels of trust between citizens and state and province administration are extremely low – a situation which heightens public feelings insecurity in a post-conflict setting. Robberies and thefts are the main threats which influence increased demand for the services of private security companies. In this context, it is precisely this increase in serious criminal offences that should serve as a common motivation for the private and public security sectors to co-operate to increase levels of public safety. However, as the example of private security officers operating in public transport in Sarajevo indicates¹, this co-operation has so far not been based on best practices. A public poll taken shortly after this experiment showed that it did not have many positive results ; the poll showed that passengers still reported high levels of insecurity while not experiencing any higher sense of safety. The public police decided to withdraw from this idea, leaving the private sector to deal with all the consequences and problems. In this instance, the public and private security sector acted as rivals, with apparently only negative results.

The Macedonian case shows that links between private and public sectors exist and are rather more promising than in Bosnia and Herzegovina. A tendency to define ‘security’ in a new and increasingly many-faceted ways creates a whole range of new and sometimes very active interfaces between the relevant private and public sector players in the Republic of Macedonia. Miloševska and Bakreski (2008) analysed the existing situation in the Republic of Macedonia and noted that the relationship between the private and public security sectors can be problematic for various reasons, due especially to the variety of ways in which the two sectors interact. One reason is competition between private security companies and police employees for jobs in both public and private security provision. Conflict can arise between public police and private security companies when they compete for the same contract, or when they are both working in the same area or during the same event. The problem of competition and conflict between police and private security companies is aggravated when the police are the oversight institution which issues licences to private security sector operators and which monitors private security companies’ compliance with the law. The picture grows more complex when politicians are involved in these issues. A third area of conflict arises when many former police or military

¹ In February 2008 a 17-year-old boy was stabbed to death on the tram in the middle of Sarajevo. This violent crime caused considerable agitation among the citizens. Fear of crime increased and this crime released all the accumulated dissatisfaction and fear caused by vandalism and minor offences. For this reason security guards are now regularly present on tramways, and the authorities are considering providing similar protection on the city buses.



personnel work for private security companies. Provided that private security companies are well managed and functioning on the basis of a clear legal framework, this is not necessarily a problem. In those countries involved in post-conflict demobilisation and security sector reform, such as is the case in the Republic of Macedonia, private security companies are an attractive source of employment, and due to high unemployment rates this is sometimes the only job opportunity available to former military and police personnel. However, if laws are not enforced, there is a risk that the high incidence of former police and military personnel working in private security sector may lead to improper influence, favours and obligations between current policemen and their former colleagues working for private security companies.

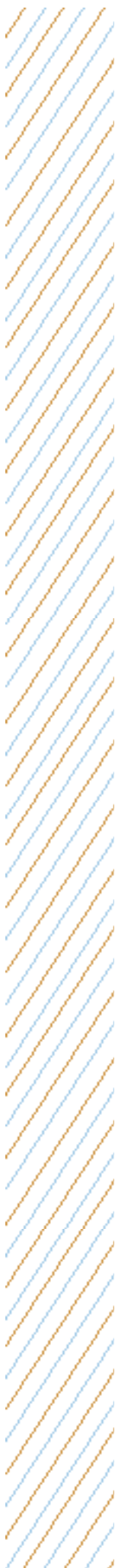
All this helped to appreciate the broad, and sometimes unexpected, variety of ways in which the private business sector has become involved with global, national and human security and safety in a globalised world exposed to multi-dimensional threats.

Private security in Serbia has thrown up some new challenges as a result of the strong influence of foreign private security companies on one hand, and stagnation of police reforms and realization of the '4D' project (depolitization, decentralization, decriminalization and demilitarization) on the other. Davidović (2008) describes public/private security partnerships as posing challenges and problems for future development. A concept of partnership between the public and private security sectors in Serbia is still developing. Even in the period when the Law on Social Self-Protection regulated the field of security in Serbia (such laws, based on socialist ideology existed in all other Yugoslav republics, nowadays independent states), that partnership was on very low level. That is why the new conception of relationships between these two sectors is seen in "policing" terms as a social concept of providing safety and security in society.

III - NEW CHALLENGES FOR (PRIVATE AND PUBLIC) POLICING

Globalisation and progress have brought many changes and challenges. In the field of private policing and security the challenges of governance and accountability are inescapable, especially when considering policing at an international level. More and more private security companies are operating transnationally. This phenomenon is particularly common in the European Union.

Johnston and Stenning (2008) highlighted three major developments which have significantly affected policing provision in the last three decades - globalisation, marketisation and pluralisation. At the domestic level, there has been a growing diversity of policing provision, and the new 'policing family' includes an increasing diversity of 'public' (state-sponsored) policing providers, as well as a host of 'private' and civil society providers, which collectively have posed



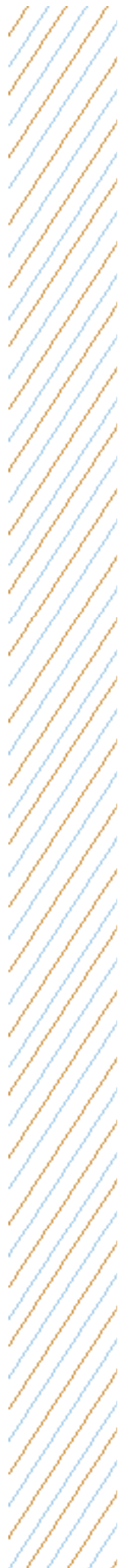
major challenges for effective and coherent regimes of governance and public accountability. With increasing globalisation and the ascendancy of transnational corporations and other relevant international organisations and institutions, this pluralisation of policing provision and the associated challenges of governance and accountability, have been increasingly replicated internationally in arenas which are beyond the reach of effective national regulation. Johnston and Stenning examine these developments at the international level, explore the challenges for effective governance and accountability that they pose, and consider some of the possibilities for meeting these challenges.

These are very important challenges and problems that need to be satisfactorily addressed. But countries in transition are facing a very different situation. Davidović (2008) described an example of Serbia. Internationalization of the private security sector in Serbia presents some new experience in achieving safety and security in society, introducing a degree of standardization in security activities. But the main tasks for this sector remain the same: true legalization through legislation; horizontal coordination and vertical integration among participants in the sector; and harmonization with European standards for private security provision. This last challenge is common to all other Western Balkan countries.

IV - CONCLUSION - WHAT COULD BE ACCOMPLISHED?

In the era of neo-liberalism and the polycentrism of security it is becoming more and more important to study the relationships between the public and private sectors. Participants discussed multiplex governance – community policing, private security, courts, etc. – leading to the issue of the accountabilities of the responsible organisations. The terms ‘policing’, ‘security’, ‘private’, ‘public’, ‘citizen’ and ‘state’ are all open to many different and sometime incompatible, interpretations. Different ideas, different conceptions, different attitudes and different comprehensions arose in the discussion about all of these terms, and especially over the issue of the respective responsibilities of the public and private sectors in the provision of policing and security in society.

The important distinction between public and private security has become blurred, and clearly defining the “public” and “private” spheres in society, as a basis for the allocation of state and civil society responsibilities for security, is not easy. And these conceptual and terminological difficulties are not unique to the field of policing and security. Further difficulties arise in discussions about the accountability of the public and private institutions involved in policing and security provision. Governmental organisations are publicly governed and are accountable to the public through established institutional mechanisms. But this is not so clear-cut for the private sector. The situation is complicated further by the fact that many

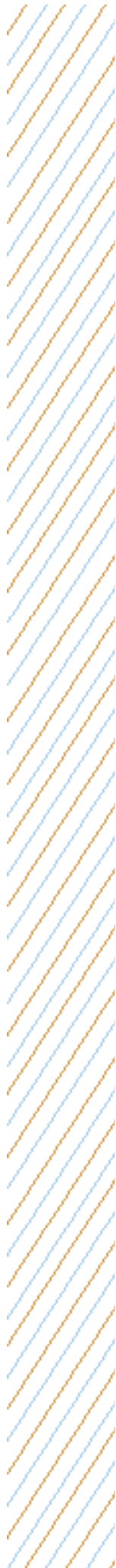


clients of private sector are governmental bodies and agencies, and the fact many private security providers are not based in the countries in which they operate. Private transnational policing provision poses particular challenges. Which law applies to such transnational operations? Which country has jurisdiction?

The private security sector continues to develop. Achieving some agreement about the appropriate connections and distinctions between the public and private policing sectors has become increasingly important. Private security companies are not guarding companies; they are just selling a concept of security. Marketisation has brought this ideology to the final limits and important changing in the ideology of this activity is happening. Meško (2008) is talking about a huge shift. Social and historical experiences have a very important role for the acceptance of all these changes. Problems of tradition (a cultural issue) can cause doubts in the people's beliefs and attitudes toward the partnership and cooperation between the private and public sector in the field of safety and security. Countries in transition are facing the European model of guarantying security that brings harmonisation of law, code of ethics and standardisation.

With such course of events the only rational conclusion is that we now have a hybrid system of governance, because a pluralistic environment requires pluralised security networks. One concern is the question of professionalization and ethical consideration. We have entered the 'plural policing' stage and we have to face non-police police organisations. We have become accustomed to think about private security as a carrier of public policing. People sometimes rely more on private security companies than on police. But, is it just security and not policing? Trying to distinguish the role of private security companies from public policing is bound to fail, because certain tasks and duties are simply impossible to distinguish.

Relationships between the state and private security are becoming more and more complex. There are a number of different ways of thinking about these relationships. Most obviously, we can talk about relations between the public police and the private security sector. The fact that the police are typically regulators of private security as well as potential competitors in the provision of policing services raises questions of conflict of interest. But in many circumstances police and private security have quite different policing responsibilities and are not really in competition with each other. But in cases where police organisations are corrupt, private security companies can offer effective alternatives. With the process of decentralisation, however, police are losing their traditional monopoly over the provision of policing services, and under these circumstances it is not surprising that they are reluctant, for instance, to share information with private security.



Representatives of both the public and the private sectors frequently talk of a synergy between them. But it is not clear whether this is something to be encouraged or something to be concerned about. Or whether it is realistic to talk about synergy in a ‘market’ for policing. Public opinion about such public/private co-operation should not be overlooked, because public trust is an essential pre-requisite for effective policing provision, whether such provision is by the public police, private security, or by both in partnership with each other.

Policing scholars need to be careful not to be misled by political interventions and tensions. It is important to approach these issues in a scientific way which takes account of different points of view. We can then aspire to policy that is evidence-based rather than just politically or ideologically driven. And we should not forget that experiences and research show that societal tolerance for policing is limited, and that ‘over-policing’ is just as unacceptable as ‘under-policing’. So it is important to try to ensure that cooperation between public and private police does not give rise to such concerns.

Although only parts of the CRIMPREV activities cover the private sector, this colloquium was an important contribution to the development of knowledge in the European Union. The research review made in the Work-package 6 showed how important it is to explore and research the field of partnership between private and public provision of policing services. Especially for future surveys and analysis. Insight in the operation of the private security company Varnost Maribor showed that these kinds of private companies can be just as well organised, equipped and qualified as the public police for the protection and security of people and property. Furthermore, nowadays the police are increasingly ceding the field of property protection to the private sector. The question of who is to determine the allocation of responsibilities for such policing between the public and private sectors is therefore increasingly important. In some countries, city mayors are now contracting out the policing of some public spaces (such as parks, etc.) to private security. The demands for such security differ significantly from one country to another, so the allocation of policing responsibilities between public and private providers necessarily varies. But processes of globalisation and marketisation may be having a distorting effect on such policy choices, which may be responding to the profit motive rather than to some sense of the general public interest.

The relationship between the state and the private sector with respect to the provision of policing and security is Janus-like and we still do not have a very good understanding of how, and why, one provider is preferred over another. But it seems that some kind of joint provision has now become accepted as the norm within most societies, and that such cooperation and partnership is considered both desirable and necessary. So progress may best be ensured if the two sectors can find ways to share their experience and learn from each other.

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Workshop participants (authors and discussants)

Oliver Bakreski, Institute of Defence and Peace Studies, Faculty of Philosophy, Ss.Cyril and Methodius University, Republic of Macedonia.

Dušan Davidović, Institute for Criminological and Sociological Research - Crime Prevention Center, Serbia.

Katja Eman, Faculty of Criminal Justice and Security, University of Maribor, Slovenia.

Jurij Ferme, Police Department Slovenj Gradec, General Police Directorate, Slovenia.

Sasho Gerasimoski, Faculty of Security, Ss.Cyril and Methodius University, Republic of Macedonia.

Jožek Hartman, Varnost Maribor, Slovenia.

Tim Hope, Institute of Law, Politics and Justice, Keele University, United Kingdom.

Les Johnston, Institute of Criminal Justice Studies, University of Portsmouth, United Kingdom.

Sonita Kahrimanović, Varnost Maribor, Slovenia.

Armin Kržalić Armin, Centre for Security Studies, Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Sebastijan Kunčnik, Varnost Maribor, Slovenia.

Gorazd Meško, Faculty of Criminal Justice and Security, University of Maribor, Slovenia.

Sanja Mihajlović, Centre for Security Studies, Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Tanja Miloševska, Institute of Defence and Peace Studies, Faculty of Philosophy, Ss.Cyril and Methodius University, Republic of Macedonia.

Marjan Pišek, Varnost Maribor, Slovenia.

Andrej Sotlar, Faculty of Criminal Justice and Security, University of Maribor, Slovenia.

Jordan Spaseski, Faculty of Security, Ss.Cyril and Methodius University, Republic of Macedonia.

Philip Stenning, School of Sociology and Criminology, Keele University, United Kingdom.

Boštjan Tancer, Varnost Maribor, Slovenia.

Bojan Tičar, Faculty of Criminal Justice and Security, University of Maribor, Slovenia.

Milan Vačovnik, Varnost Maribor, Slovenia.

Miran Vršec, Nova panorama d.d., Slovenia.

Darko Zarič, Varnost Maribor, Slovenia.



Contacts

Gorazd MEŠKO, PhD - University of Maribor - Faculty of Criminal Justice and Security - Kotnikova 8 - 1000 Ljubljana - Slovenia
Phone: + 386 1 300 83 11
Fax: + 386 1 230 26 87
gorazd.mesko@fvv.uni-mb.si

Andrej SOTLAR, PhD - University of Maribor - Faculty of Criminal Justice and Security - Kotnikova 8 - 1000 Ljubljana - Slovenia
Phone: + 386 1 300 83 05
Fax: + 386 1 230 26 87
andrej.sotlar@fvv.uni-mb.si

Katja EMAN, MA - University of Maribor - Faculty of Criminal Justice and Security - Kotnikova 8 - 1000 Ljubljana - Slovenia
Phone: + 386 40 598 077
Fax: + 386 1 230 26 87
katja.eman@fvv.uni-mb.si

Crimprev info n° 23^{Bis} - April 2009

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Design : CampingDesign