CEPOL

Special Conference Edition Nr. 5

EUROPEAN LAW ENFORCEMENT RESEARCH BULLETIN

Pandemic Effects on Law Enforcement Training & Practice:
Taking early stock from a research perspective

Online Conference in cooperation with Mykolas Romeris University, 5-7 May 2021

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Publications Office
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Under peculiar circumstances

Since its beginnings, the CEPOL Research & Science Conferences[1] aim to provide a stimulating European platform for a cross-professional, cross-disciplinary exchange of research findings and perspectives for inquisitive law enforcement practitioners, educators and academic scholars. The latest instance in the line of those regular events had been for a longer while the conference on "Innovations in Law Enforcement – Implications for practice, education and civil society", organised in late autumn 2017 in Budapest[2]. Since, a succession of unfavourable circumstances had hampered the realisation of the next rendition of the CEPOL conference. The major cause for the longer hiatus is, of course, to be attributed to the rise of the Corona-virus in winter 2019/20 and its fast spread around the globe.

It is an irrefutable fact that the ensuing pandemic has had a dramatic effect not only on the daily routines of citizens and societies in general, but specifically on the work of police and other law enforcement bodies and officials. As disruption hit manifold areas of social and business-life, those put in charge of upholding the law and security had to constantly adapt their institutional resources and practices to new and repeatedly changing regulations introduced to curb the spread of the pandemic disease. The policing of curfew orders, "social distancing" rules, or the compliance with the obligatory wearing of face-masks have become unfamiliar areas for law enforcement attention and were raised as a topic of public concern and debate in many European countries. At the very time when police and other law enforcement bodies had to quickly restructure and re-configure their resources in reaction to a rapidly evolving public health emergency, the opportunity structures for a broad spectrum of criminal offences changed as well and became even more inviting for deviant profiteers.

When the Call for Papers for the CEPOL Research & Science Conference went out in early 2021, the pandemic crisis had already been a challenging new reality for law enforcement bodies and officials across Europe in varying and fluctuating degrees for almost a full year. Decisions had had to be taken, experiences had been made institutionally, collectively and on the individual officer's level, and (first) lessons might have been learned on policing and enforcing the law during two pandemic waves. In parallel, researchers and scientists

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1 More about the CEPOL Research & Science Conferences are available at the CEPOL website.

2 Papers from the Innovation-Conference have been published in the previous Special Conference Edition of the Bulletin, see Nogala et al., 2019.

around the globe had not been idle to collect data and to offer first analyses of the developing pandemic situation and its ramifications[3].

Concerned specifically with the professional continuous learning of law enforcement officials in Europe and with the transfer of scientific evidence- and research-based insights and findings from the academic to the professional sphere, CEPOL had therefore invited contributions to its conference event, based on empirical studies on a variety of aspects and topics of policing and enforcing the law during the pandemic crisis and beyond, in view of the following topical tracks:

- *Training and Education during and after the Pandemic Crisis*
- *Health & Safety Issues for Law Enforcement Officials*
- *Lessons (to be) learnt for Management and Leadership*
- *Changing Crime Patterns during the COVID-19 Pandemic*
- *Innovation triggered by the Pandemic Crisis*
- *Police-Public Relations and Public Order*
- *Open Corner*

The Conference

CEPOL Research & Science Conferences have earned over the years a reputation of being one of the rather rare European occasions where law enforcement officials, scholars and academics could discuss, debate, and network in an intellectually stimulating, informal but structured environment. Seasoned conference participants are well aware that apart from listening and learning from presentations, a major positive conference-experience is down to the manifold bi- and multilateral coffee-break-, lunch-, and dinner conversations. Organising such an 'enriching' setting was not justifiably possible under the pandemic-induced regime of travel restrictions and social distancing rules. Hence, the conference had to be implemented as an online-event; not that it would have been the first time for the agency to organise a major event in a digital format[4], but it occurred as a particular challenge to coordinate and implement the organisational efforts on such a scale, open to a wider international audience. Fortunately, the Mykolas Romeris University (Lithuania), initially foreseen as the hosting institution for the 2020 edition of the conference, enabled with splendid

commitment and added organisational resources the realisation of the event.

Even launched on relatively short notice, the Call for Papers yielded a lush response: more than two-thirds of the overall 89 submitted proposals were accepted by the Programme Board, ranging from invited keynotes to brief "shouts"[5]. All accepted presentations were distributed over the three-day programme schedule according to the most fitting track[6].

Unsurprisingly, there was high interest in participating by our target audience, evidenced by the hitherto highest number of registrations to a CEPOL conference, obviously facilitated by the online-format. All online-sessions were moderated and supported by members of the CEPOL network of Research & Science Correspondents[7].

Finally, all presented were invited to submit a full paper of their presentations for publication in the Special Conference Edition of the European Law Enforcement Research Bulletin. Following peer-review by the editors of this issue, thirty papers were received in time and accepted for publication in this conference edition[8].

Insights, trends and topical clusters

The articles in this issue cover a wide range of topics associated with effects of the pandemic – and the reader will notice the papers also vary in length, depth and chosen methodological approach. It is the mix of professional and academic scientific perspectives taken, which hopefully makes this collection a worthwhile reading beyond the experience of the online conference in May: A specific European institutional view is provided by authors from **CEPOL, Europol** and **Frontex**; a specific national light is shone on experiences in

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3   As example for many see Mawby (2020), Frenkel et al. (2021) and the various references of this issue's contributions.

4   For many years, CEPOL has organised trainings and seminars in the format of webinars, and in summer 2020 an access-restricted first one-day online conference with support and participation of CEPOL Member States had been held.

5   The standard contribution was restricted to 20 minutes presentation; as a new element the "Shout", lasting 5-10 minutes, had been introduced, not at least to prevent 'zoom-fatigue' with the audience and as an offer for more concise, opinionated contributions.

6   As often, some presentations touch aspects of various tracks, only assigned to one for organisational needs.

7   The conference programme, abstracts, and speakers' profiles are still available online on the conference website at https://www.cepol.europa.eu/science-research/conferences (2021-online tab).

8   Not all presentations were meant for written publication, and not all authors could deliver in line with a set short deadline. More papers from the conference might appear in subsequent regular issues of the Bulletin.

Croatia, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia and, beyond EU boundaries, in **South Africa**, the **United Kingdom** and the **United States**. Moreover, articles cover **cyberspace** and insights from **H2020 research projects** – and, remarkably, some offer even insights from a **national and international comparative view**.

While there are always alternatives in sorting and presenting a collection of articles, the order chosen here tries to identify topical clusters in the variance of contributions which could reveal a feasible tacit logic in the development of the diverse pandemic effects. With some give and take, three main clusters can be identified, relating to pandemic effects on

- crime and deviance;
- managerial and institutional issues;
  - o health and wellbeing
  - o organisational alignment and innovative adaptation
  - o training and learning
- critical perceptions of enforcement policies.

Pandemic effects: focus on crime and deviance

A collection of papers, dealing with the various effects on law enforcement training and practice, could take off from a variety of angles. A manifest option chosen here is about how the pandemic has affected the very *raison d'être* of law enforcement institutions - the breach and violation of law and regulations, triggering the necessity of an institutional response in modern societies.

In a recent article in the *European Law Enforcement Research Bulletin*, Rob Mawby (2020) had painstakingly reconsidered the impact of the pandemic "rollercoaster" on crime and policing. With reference to mainstream criminological theories, like *routine activity theory* or *rational choice theory*, he acknowledges that the pandemic has significantly altered the opportunity structures for committing crimes successfully, as the pandemic disruption of normal life routines and taken countermeasures would "make a crime more or less likely" –that is, certain criminal behaviour and acts would flourish, while others would be in decline (p. 15, 17). For example, under lockdown, chances for pickpockets or burglaries would wither, because potential victims would not be out in the streets or in offices, but stay at their homes. In turn, for the same reason, instances of domestic abuse were expected to increase from the outset and deviant acts would move even fur-

ther into cyberspace. As the severity of the pandemic has changed over time, so did the restrictiveness and duration of the measures taken by the governments in order to curb the spread, and, obviously, the exact profile of the pandemic crime-curve will differ between the various European countries. However, early analysis for the year 2020 seems to indicate that there has been a reported general trend of a drop in the crime statistics, mainly due to lockdown effects on typical street crime – in terms of pandemic-induced development of deviance, some observers started to believe they are looking at "the largest criminological experiment in history" (Stickle & Felson 2020), and wonder if the COVID-19 pandemic is a "crisis that changed everything" (Baker 2020).

Insofar crime statistics can reflect (in limitations) social developments over time, they are usually aggregated on national level. For the whole of Europe, comprehensive and timely general crime statistics are not available, but Europol has been delivering trend analyses and reports from the onset of the pandemic crisis, in particular in view of serious and organised crime. Hence, this Special Conference Edition opens with a succinct overview by **Tamara Schotte** and **Mercedes Abdalla** from Europol's Analysis Unit, outlining the evolution of new and more familiar types of organised crime enterprises during the first Corona-year. Apparently, criminal networks have been quite imaginative in exploiting demands for specific pandemic goods, maximising their criminal profits in times of crises.

Next, three leading European experts explicate in detail the criminogenic effect of the pandemic on specific aspects of the organised crime landscape. Considering fraud as a "Cinderella-area of policing", University of Cardiff-based professor **Michael Levi** examines the favourable and less favourable conditions the disruption of usual business and life has had so far on deception, scams and counterfeiting, reminding the reader that it is yet not established that there has been a total increase due to the pandemic. Offering a typology of fraud during the reign of COVID, he also has some expert advice on best practice in preventing economic crimes. While the pandemic crisis has been wreaking havoc on various parts of the legitimate economy, it evenly opened up new loopholes for infiltration of businesses by organised crime actors – this is the initial observation of **Michele Riccardi**'s contribution. His paper aims to address the gap between frequently raised alerts by authorities and empirical evidence of infiltration activi-

ties by presenting cases and offering a classification of modi operandi, affected business sectors, and types of involved criminal actors. His approach might be more than useful in view of the subsidies to be distributed in the framework of the EU-COVID-recovery programme. Before Corona, "having caught a virus" quite often meant, somebody's computer had been compromised and has become subject to damage or misuse. The rise of something more sinister and potentially devastating is the subject of **David Wall**'s research-project based report on ransomware attack tactics and changes thereof over the initial period of the pandemic. His contribution demonstrates in detail the emergence of a cybercrime ecosystem where ransomware attacks are organised as a service and can therefore flourish. Interestingly, in his view, the COVID-19 lockdown shall not be seen as transformative for cybercrime, but accelerated already pre-existing trends.

The topic of the development of cybercrimes during the pandemic is continued in the paper by **Iulian Coman** and **Ioan-Cosmin Mihai,** who present a concise overview of cyberthreats of particular concern for the authorities since the begin of crisis and plea for enhanced training efforts for law enforcement officials.

Increase in cases of domestic abuse and violence has been a matter of anxious public concern from the moment quarantines and lockdowns were imposed on the population in an effort to curb further spread of the disease. Vienna-based researchers **Paul Luca Herbinger** and **Norbert Leonhardmeier** take the reader on an enlightening journey of dissecting the gap between widely held expectations of a unified international trend of incidences of domestic violence during the lockdowns does not fit exactly with statistical data collected from four European countries (Austria, Finland, Hungary and Portugal). Their comparative multi-source analysis reveals some discrepancies between the countries and in view of the expected general trend, which are attributed to the variation of how victims made use of support services and how responding institutions changed their modus of intervention in line with the pandemic situation.[9] Considering a necessary differentiation of types of intimate partner violence is proposed as one key to make sense of the heterogeneity of the available data on domestic abuse. Confirmation that deciphering the impact of the pandemic on crime figures is anything but a trivial scientific exercise is the message of the paper by **Gorazd**

Meško and *Vojko Urbas* who inform the reader about the measures taken in the first wave and examine thoroughly the crime statistics for the Slovenian case, a country, like others, that "(..) found itself at a crossroads of uncertainty, ignorance, limited information and the search for better solutions". While cautious about the conclusiveness of their statistical analysis, they as well attribute the variation in crime figures to change of routine activities and subsequently to the alteration of opportunities to commit crimes.

What has become clear from the papers in this section is that the emergence of the Coronavirus has had a significant impact on the structural opportunity to commit certain types of crime – while offenses related with (frequent) spatial-social movement ebbed away due to lockdowns, domestic abuse, and organised forms of fraud and cybercrime found fertile ground. In the next section, papers will reflect on what this extraordinary crisis meant for those who are supposed to keep law and order.[10]

Pandemic effects: focus on managerial and institutional issues

The second chapter clusters papers that are primarily concerned with empirical descriptions, assessments, and analyses taken from an intra-institutional perspective of police and other law enforcement institutions. Those articles again can be divided into examining three separable levels: a) effects on the individual level of the law enforcements officials, in relation to physical and mental well-being; b) reactions and initiatives to master the crisis on the operative level, as organisation or institution; c) initiatives and innovations with regard to training, education and learning even under difficult circumstances.

Health and well-being

The work of police and other law enforcements officers at the frontline of society *can* be affected by frequent stressful events, which often lead to higher-than-average work strain levels – there are few occupational hazards that come with the job, such as the risk of being injured or getting killed real – although there are some more deadly professions and the chances really depend on factors like actual task and country of service. Still, having to interact with members of the public, often in close contact, in times where a highly

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9   In this regard, see also the paper of Walklate et al. in the section on managing of the impact of the pandemic.

10 For an account of the COVID-pandemic on a broader systemic effect on the criminal justice system in Europe see Baker (2020) or Nogala (2021).

contagious and potentially deadly new virus is around, adds a significant additional danger to an officer's job. No reliable statistics are yet available for Europe, but figures from the USA, where more active-duty police officers are said to be killed by the Corona-virus than by the 9/11 terror attack and COVID has become the leading cause of death for them (Bump, 2021; Pegues, 2021), indicate that the pandemic is an additional serious occupational health problem. While a Corona-infection has becoming a life-risk for the global population, law enforcement frontline officers, like public health professional, are by job at the higher end of the risk scale.

Four articles in this volume present the results of small-to-midsize research projects which tried to identify and record the health-impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on officers and cadets. As part of a broader research project, **Krunoslav Borovec**, **Sanja Dela**č **Fabris** and **Alica Rosič-Jakupovič** have surveyed a sample of almost a thousand Croatian police officers about changes in their work and conduct, triggered by the pandemic emergency. They found that a fifth of the officers had reported moderate or severe symptoms of stress and wish, in consequence, that police management shall become more attentive to stress and burnouts as occupational health risks in major crisis situations. Sweden-based researchers **Teresa Silva** and **Hans O. Löfgren** inquired an even bigger sample (n=1639) of police officers in Portugal about the level of burnout, psychological distress and post-traumatic-syndrome in relation to their exposure to and experience in risk of infection. Curiously, two-thirds of their respondents said they were exposed to COVID-19 in their line of duty. The authors conclude that their research confirmed their initial hypothesis that the pandemic would add an additional load of stress on the officers and this would pose another risk factor for the occurrence mental health issues. While they acknowledge an increased need for supportive measures, police management should not fear for a major health crisis among the workforce. Another research from a Portuguese sample is reported by **Paulo Gomes**, **Rui Pereira**, and **Luis Malheiro**, who looked at the impact of the pandemic on the health and well-being of cadets of their military academy. In comparison to similar previous surveys, they noted a deterioration of the cadets' perceptions of the quality in delivering the education and, also, in the general grade of well-being and emotional health – a finding that was reported to the Command of the academy. **Zsuszanna Borbély** chips in with a result from a smaller scale sample involving police trainees in Hungary.

Asking them about their job-experience from the first wave of the pandemic, she finds that her respondents did not perceive the period as particularly stressful. However as there was no indication of differences in the status of mental health between male and female trainees; however, the female ones reported high levels of physical strain.

Organisational alignment and innovative adaptation

The chapter opens with a succinct summary of the challenges the COVID-19 crisis posed for law enforcement bodies and their leadership across Europe, written from the Europol perspective by **Julia Viedma** and **Mercedes Abdalla**. Their article notes the sudden demands and emerging stressors thrown up by the pandemic crisis, in particular the hampering of cross-border cooperation and concludes with the noteworthy insight that this pandemic shall not be longer seen as an emergency, as it will leave a long-lasting impression on the development of crime and policing in Europe. Based on their explorative pioneer international research, including survey data from senior executives from fifteen European countries, **Peter Neyroud**, **Jon Maskály**, and **Sanja Kutnjak Ivkovic** have teamed up to present results from their comparative study about organisational changes triggered by the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Taking a look into the "rear-view mirror", they found that police forces were immediately thrown into crisis mode as they had to quickly find a balance between the need for self-protection and the continuation of service-delivery. The figures they can present reveal first-hand indications about absolute changes in policing domains (more or less), the valence, and the anticipated consequences of those changes. To no big surprise, frontline policing – both in reactive and preventive style – has been found to be disrupted significantly (in contrast to internal processes) in the pandemic crisis; However, according to their figures, police administrators in the majority would think that the service quality of policing would not suffer in future, or would even improve as an outcome of the crisis.[11] Interviewing a small sample of German police officers, **Jonas Grutzpalk**, **Stephanos Anastasiadis**, and **Jens Bergmann** are painting in their short paper a slightly less optimistic picture of the capacity of police organisations to learn the necessary lessons from the crisis. Introducing the notion of "porous passivity", they think,

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11 In regard to complementing narratives about the resilience of police organisations during and post-crisis, see also the article by Kriegler et al. in the next chapter.

if a learning process for the organisation has been triggered, it could turn out to be a tacit one, hardly noticeable.

Beyond doubt, the imposition of measures to curb the spread of COVID-infections, like curfews, lockdowns or social distancing rules, has made for some none-too-pleasant lessons to be learnt by police organisations and police officers in unfamiliar encounters with members of the public. **Andreea Jantea** and **Mugurel Ghita** discuss by example of the Romanian case, how police authority was ignored, contested and challenged at incidents, when police officers were called out to enforce the adherence to pandemic restrictive rules. With reference to social conflict theory, they provide an analysis of what had happened and in what way management of policing could be improved in future. For sure, Romania is just one of several countries, where the policing of pandemic rules has led to confrontations on the streets with a, to date, unfamiliar composition of rabble-rousers[12].

When, like in crisis situations, the police and other law enforcement agencies are tested to deliver against fluctuating public expectations, innovative tools and ways of thinking could come in handy for tackling what is too often called euphemistically "challenges". This collection of conference papers has two articles highlighting innovative approaches for police management, emerging in context of the pandemic. **Carmen Castro, Joaquín Bresó, Patrick Kaleta** and others present technical and conceptual details of the H2020 STAMINA project, which aims at a "demonstration of intelligent decision support for pandemic crisis prediction and management" for the European domain. By means of combining several IT-tools, prediction of developments and optimal management of resources at the intersections of law enforcement and public health are meant to be optimised. **Sandra Walklate, Barry Godfrey** and **Jane C. Richardson** write about innovative practices in policing and handling cases of domestic abuse emerging during the pandemic in England and Wales. Their research highlights that, by agile and resilient thinking, police services for victims of domestic abuse had to be kept functional during the pandemic crisis (maximising protection of staff

while minimising loss of service quality) by figuring out new processes, which, in the author's opinion, could be seen as "entrepreneurial policing".

Training and learning

As all organisations depend on a special set of skills and competences of their members, police and other law enforcement bodies have to take particular care for specific education and training endeavours. The disruption of normal training routines provoked by the direct effects and indirect consequences of the spread of the Coronavirus has had created a problem on its own to be solved by police managers and administrators. In that sense, adaption to the sudden circumstances for training and education can be seen as a subitem of the general task of riding a major crisis wave. However, CEPOL being a training institution, it is justified to group the five dedicated papers in this separate section as they describe problems and solutions found for teaching and learning alike.

The first scrutiny is reserved for a trip across the Atlantic to a city whose's policing got notorious for its persistent policing problems: Baltimore[13]. **Gary Cordner**, an internationally acclaimed police scholar and a previous Senior Advisor at the National Institute of Justice, together with Major **Martin Bartness**, a serving officer of Baltimore Police, let the reader into the story of the Corona-induced impediments they had to deal with, and how the academy of a large city police in the U.S. managed during the first period of the pandemic. It is worth to take note that, prior to the onset of the pandemic, two major shifts were already changing the training philosophy for police in Baltimore: On the hand moving away from a trainer-centred, lecture-laden teaching style towards a more learner-focused, interactive mode (almost eliminating "death by Powerpoint") and, secondly that the design of police training has been made subject to external assessment and partly public comment. The list of observations and lessons the authors provide will probably ring a bell for many police educators from other countries and jurisdictions as well. A very similar account on the pressures of being Corona-forced to rearrange learning environments and methods under sudden circumstance, can be found in the paper by **Iwona Agnieszka Frankowska**, depicting the efforts to keep the basic training for the

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12 Typically, citizens who do not agree with the government-imposed restrictions of movement or behaviour, because they deny the existence of the SARS-COVID virus, do not buy in to the hazard of the infection for public health out of a believe that it is all a gigantic hoax of governments to suppress citizens' freedom.

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13 „The Wire" is an American crime drama series aired originally in the period 2002-2008, telling stories about street crime and police work in Baltimore over 60 episodes. It received praise for its authentic depiction of life on Baltimore's streets.

European Border and Coast Standing Corps under the auspices of Frontex on track. The specific difficulty here was to successfully convey the most important ethical values and the specific organisational culture in a learning environment, limited to online-tools only in the initial phase. By adapting and finetuning the available learning instruments to the given circumstances, the author believes, that achieving value-based learning outcomes is possible to a certain degree. In a similar optimistic and forward-looking spirit, **Micha Fuchs** from the Department of Police Training and Further Education at the Police of Bavaria, highlights the actual chances the Corona-crisis had accidentally created for developing police training towards the needs of modern generations. His paper reflects the impact of COVID-19 pandemic against the backdrop of already socially effective mighty maelstroms and rapid undercurrents: demographic change, the mindset of "Generation Z" entering the ranks, overarching digitalisation, the subtle transformation of police work, and the need to pay attention to the public image and reputation of the police. While he describes the impediments and setbacks to training and education efforts as described in the previous papers, he advocates for preserving the courage for flexible and open-minded decision-making, the pandemic crisis has forced upon the police educational institutions.

The abrupt, accelerating innovation drive for training and education in the law enforcement domain is exemplified and illustrated in two further papers in this section. **Mara Mignone** and **Valentina Scioneri** introduce the reader to the H2020 ANITA project, a European consortium that tries to develop a technical cooperation platform for facilitating the policing of illegal online trafficking, guided by a strict "knowledge-based approach". Besides informing about the aims of the ANITA project in general terms, the authors describe in detail how the pandemic forced them to restructure the co-operative development with the partner institutions and how they switch to remote training mode for being able to progress with the new tool. This papers, conclusion is that digitalised and remote training for law enforcement is feasible and innovative, and that such an approach needs to be framed by a similarly innovative didactic concept emphasizing the necessary equilibrium between exchanging, discussing and educating. Digitalising the formation of criminal law students in a multinational university environment has been the initial project objective of DIGICRIMJUS, presented by **Krisztina Karsai** and **Andras Lichtenstein**, from the

University of Szeged in Hungary. In their case, the disruption of the pre-pandemic teaching habits turned out to be the decisive catalyst for eventually implementing an idea, which had been breeding already for a while: students obviously like quizzes (who does not?). Hence, the concept of gamification has been put into practice by morphing a traditional classroom course on drafting legal documents in criminal law into an escape-room-style[14] online exercise.

What all five papers in this section about training and learning suggest is that it has been apparently a widely shared experience among law enforcement training facilities and institutions to be forced by the sudden introduction of measures for controlling the spread of the new COVID-disease to switch from traditional in-person and classroom formats of teaching and training to online and distance learning channels. The crisis, apparently, has spawned innovation and motivation to reconsider didactical tradition, while there seems to be as well a consensus that remote ways of training and education have been proven a potent and essential element, but not in themselves a sufficient condition for successful learning in the future – the joint full physical presence of trainers, educators on the one hand, students and learners on the other, seems to be an indispensable requirement for creating the sufficient magnitude of trust generating the level of "deep social learning" that drives good law enforcement.

Pandemic effects: focus on analyses and critical perceptions of enforcement policies

The articles presented in the two previous chapters examined pandemic effects from a mainly managerial, intra-organisational perspective. The next line-up of contributions are written from an external, essentially scholarly point of view, trying to make sense of empirical observations and offering analytical insights as well as theoretical contextualisation.

The first article in this chapter takes the reader out of Europe, almost to the other side of the globe: **Anine Kriegler**, **Kelley Moult** and **Elrena van der Spuy** had conducted interviews with more than two dozen senior police leaders of the South African Police about how they perceived the management of the pandemic crisis by their organisation in regard to preparedness

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14 Wikipedia has this explanation of escape room: "(it) is a game in which a team of players discover clues, solve puzzles, and accomplish tasks in one or more rooms in order to accomplish a specific goal in a limited amount of time".

and performance. By making illustrative use of quotations, they carve out two distinct narratives of their respondents, which are not unlikely to be identifiable in other geo-institutional settings as well: "the well-oiled police machine" *vs*. "the embattled machine". The first narrative is typically about the police institution to be in control of the crisis – the Corona-pandemic being just another calamity, the police has to tackle by invoking routine operational practices under seasoned, capable leadership. This narrative simply affirms the expectations of governments and publics alike of the police being a reliable and efficient problem-handler in any civil crisis situation. The other narrative the researchers encountered is more telling about the situation on the organisational "backstage": underprepared, hassled by changing and unclear regulations, constrained capacities and finally, yet importantly, – fear of infection-on-the-job. The stories the researchers heard in this regard were more about stress, strain and the struggle to cope with an unprecedented public health crisis – not exactly a "well-oiled machine". The authors assert that, while the two narratives appear to be contradictory, they found them to be rather complementing each other in the institutional reality: "certainty coexists with ambiguity"; for sure, a noteworthy generalisable approach to comprehend police organisations and their actions in times of crisis.

With an added pinch of conceptual and theoretical ambition, Vienna-based researchers **Paul Herbinger** and **Roger von Laufenberg** aim to decode the effects the pandemic have had on police-public relations and consider what their findings might reveal about "... the structural relationship between policing and democracy in moments of crisis" by example of the Austrian case. Noting hurried implementation of countermeasures, based on laws and regulations lacking clarity – an observation shared by commentators for other countries – the authors diagnose resulting insecurity and confusion among the (Austrian) citizens. They introduce a three-spheres methodological framework in order to reconstruct the development of policing in pandemic times, including the dimensions *Governance, Law & Law-Making, and Policing in Practice*. In the authors' view, an (arguable) externalisation of problem-solving from the sphere of governance to ground-level policing (and individual officers' discretion) is, what had happened and has led to a strain of public-police relations – possibly not only in the Austrian case. Such a critical perspective is taken in similar fashion in the contribution by Dutch authors **Monica den Boer**,

Eric Bervoets and **Linda Hak**. They also recognise a deteriorating effect of pandemic countermeasures on police-community relations and social legitimacy of police actions, as those interventions have been subject to a process of "crisification" and "securisation". By spelling out the variety of partially novel means of policing implemented and introduced during the COVID-pandemic, the authors stress that policing of the pandemic involves more controlling agents than the regular state police and they highlight, that the pandemic era has been "rife with protests", fuelled most likely by latent social tensions now surfacing in the second year. Inadequate and (internationally) uncoordinated communication is taken as a major problem of management, together with an insufficient variation of policing-styles during the changing tides of the pandemic wave. The critical article finishes in with a constructive lists of lessons learnt, which could be useful for pandemic policing in the future.

In relation to policing in face of underlying social tensions and potential discrimination, two articles look at specific effects of policing in pandemic times on (ethnic) minorities or the „usual suspects". Building on the research undergoing in the EU-funded COST grant on „Police Stops", a network of scholars which aims to better understand the effects of proactive police controls in Europe, **Mike Rowe**, **Megan O'Neill**, **Sofie de Kimpe**, and **István Hoffman** examine if the onset of the pandemic has triggered a shift in police officers' pattern of attention for stopping citizens while patrolling the streets. In the field, the researchers noticed „unfamiliar tasks" for police officers on the beat, when they needed to check on activities and behaviour that, under normal, pre-pandemic circumstances, would not attract any attention. In their view, not much has changed, as "(…) policing continued to act as a disciplinary instrument in particularly problematic and unruly communities". On the other hand, commentators had pointed out that the apart from individual suffering from the COVID-disease, the wider negative effects of the pandemic have not been socially evenly distributed, especially when it comes to socially or ethnically deprived populations. This point is raised and investigated in the paper by **Eszter Kovács Szitkay** and **Andras L. Pap**, which looks at the specific negative impacts of the pandemic on minorities and vulnerable social groups and subsequent potentially discriminatory policing practices. They identify specifically adverse scenarios that come down to biological, cultural, or social reasons or to over- or underperformance relat-

ed to actions of state. The point is illustrated in detail for the example of the Roma communities in various European countries and the authors state that a special vigilance and resilience against discriminatory populist tendencies is required from the police leadership.

Communication has been raised frequently as a central element of successful or failing management of the pandemic crisis. The two final contribution deal with this crucial category from two different, but equally critical perspectives. **Edina Kriskó**, insisting on established professional and scientific standards of modern international communication practice, takes issues with the manner the public has been informed and the role the police had taken in that during the pandemic crisis in Hungary. Analysing the format and framing of the official, government-led COVID-messaging, her contribution tries to emphasise the crucial importance of establishing the police as an independent, reliable and foremost credible source of information when it comes communication in critical situations. The final article in this Special Conference Edition by **José Pavia** and **Timothy Reno** is directing our attention to the sinister and disturbing side of communication in the pandemic times: the manufacturing of fake news and the spread of disinformation. The authors remind us that fake news and disinformation is with us since ancient times, but global social media networks have created immensely huge and effective distribution channels, making them attractive for those eager to grab power by manipulation. In the second year of Corona, there is plenty of evidence that intentionally spread false information has a fertile potential to create misunderstanding, mistrust, conflict, even open violence and riots. In that sense, this contribution links directly back to the first chapter on the criminogenic effect of the pandemic. At least, the author do inform us about policy-making in this regard on the European and Member States level – but they have opened another pandora box to be looked at and prepared for by law enforcement institutions.

…a bottom line for law enforcement?

The articles in this conference issue of the European Law Enforcement Research Bulletin collate contributions from researchers, scientists and law enforcement professionals, who inform us about the knowledge gained about the impact of a global pandemic, a good year after it emerged and hit European countries as

well. In this regard, the conference and the resulting papers published here are part of an ongoing worldwide conversation among academics and professionals, who have no choice but to first understand and secondly smartly cope with the new reality of the crisis – the domain of law enforcement is no exception in this regard. Times of crisis leave little room for a "dialogue of the deaf", but is calling for an interdisciplinary and interprofessional exchange of facts, figures and informed perspectives (see in detail Fyfe 2017).

The sorting order for this issue has been constructed along the topical clusters of "crime and deviance", "managerial and institutional issues, and "analyses and critical perceptions of enforcement policies". However, even a transient reading of the papers will reveal numerous empirical cross-links and mutual supplementation of research perspectives: additional insights might be on offer by pairing and comparing articles across sections[15].

Already now, law enforcement communities across Europe and beyond can draw relevant lessons learned from this pandemic. The lessons might be different from one national service to the other. However, as learning organisations we should take best advantages from a cooperation between academics and practitioners to sharpen conclusions and to better position law enforcement services for the benefit of the societies. As some say: never miss the opportunities of a crisis.

But we are still not out of the pandemic. Let all place our hope on our next year that we can get to what we call our normal life. The development with the new variant by the end of 2021 put some scepticism into our hopes for 2022.

CEPOL is entirely committed to get back to a fully-fledged conference setup by 2022!

We are grateful for the commitment of our Lithuanian partners to try this joint venture out for the third time in second semester 2022. We do all sincerely hope that we can meet many of you in the next face-to-face edition of our conference in Vilnius.

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15 Just as examples: Neyroud/Maskály/Kutjnak Ivkovic vs. Kriegler/Moult/van der Spuy, Fuchs vs. Den Boer/Bervoets/Hak or Jantea/Ghita vs. Kovacs Szitkay/Pap.

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Crime and deviance

The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on the Serious and Organised Crime Landscape:

Assessing the evolution of serious and organised crime during COVID-19 through the enterprise model

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Mercedes Abdalla

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Abstract

Organised crime not only did not stop during the pandemic: on the contrary, it leveraged the situation prompted by the crisis, including the high demand for certain good, the decreased mobility across and into the EU, as well as the increased social anxiety and reliance on digital solutions during the crisis. Criminals have quickly capitalised on these changes by shifting their market focus and adapting their illicit activities to the crisis context. The supply of counterfeit goods and the threat posed by different fraud schemes, financial and cybercrime activities have remained significant throughout the crisis. The prolonged COVID-19 situation and related lockdown measures have exposed victims of crimes revolving around persons as a commodity to an even more vulnerable position. Recently, newly emerging criminal trends and modi operandi have emerged that are specific to the current phase of the pandemic that revolves around the vaccination roll-out and the wider financial developments of the crisis. In parallel, already known pandemic-themed criminal activities continued or criminal narratives further adapted to the recent developments in the pandemic and the fight against it.

Keywords: COVID-19, serious and organised crime, criminal networks

Introduction

Recent developments have demonstrated that global crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic do not hamper serious and organised crime. Instead, criminals again demonstrated their ability to adapt to external challenges. On the contrary, it has evolved in the pandemic context and exploited the crisis situation. The obstacles or challenges that societies have been confronted with have become an opportunity for both for criminal networks and opportunistic criminals. Criminals have leveraged several crisis-induced developments in the wider environment, including the high demand for certain goods, the decreased mobility across and into the EU, the increased reliance on digital solutions and the widespread social anxiety and economic vulnerability (Europol, 2020a, p. 3). Criminals have quickly capitalised on these changes by shifting their market focus and adapting their illicit activities to the crisis context. This paper aims at providing an overview of the key findings that affected the serious and organised crime landscape since the outbreak of the pandemic, looking at the developments through the theoretical lens of the enterprise model.

Research design

Europol has been monitoring the impact of COVID-19 on crime since the outbreak of the pandemic and developed a series of strategic assessments informing Law Enforcement partners, the general public and decision makers on the developments pertaining to the serious and organised crime and COVID-19. These assessments provided a general overview of the most impacted crime areas and zoomed into focal topics.

The analysis relied on operational data and strategic information provided by EU Member States ad Third Partners to Europol, as well as on a set of dedicated monitoring indicators. Where needed and applicable, in-house intelligence was complemented with open source information providing context to law enforcement's understanding of the serious and organised crime scenery in the EU.

The enterprise model of organised crime

The notion of the enterprise model applied to the study of serious and organised crime started garnering significance from the 1970's onward; following insights gained into the organisation of Mafia groups, scholars drew up the hypothesis that legal and illegal businesses operate in a similar manner. The main principle of the enterprise model of organised crime emphasises the profit-oriented nature of organised crime (Halstead, 1998, p. 2). In this context, illicit marketplaces operate according to the same logic as a legitimate business would– they adapt to market forces and respond to the demands of customers, suppliers, regulators and competitors (Arsovska, 2014). Criminal markets emerge and/or flourish in vacuums and loopholes of legal markets, which are heavily exploited by criminal networks. Consequently, niche markets emerge where

> *"(...) buyers, sellers, perpetrators, and victims interact to exchange goods and services consensually, or through deception or force, and where the production, sale and consumption of these goods and services are forbidden or strictly regulated"* (Tusikov, 2010, p. 7).

Other markets, including those for sexual exploitation, migrant smuggling and drugs have always operated outside state regulatory procedures, and the persistent presence of criminal markets is motivated by their long-lasting profitability. In essence, organised crime is driven and shaped by profit; criminals and criminal

networks organise their activities around profitable opportunities and economic incentives. The COVID-19 pandemic underlined again how profit opportunities spark and drive unexpected shifts in criminal associations and reveal criminals' organic capability to adapt to their external environment (Europol 2021b).

Criminal business relies on processes to perpetrate crimes but and the parallel support infrastructure designed to ensure the success of illicit operations. The entire criminal infrastructures are built to enable, support and conceal the core crimes, or to expand resulting criminal profits. Examples of parallel services include money laundering, transportation services, document fraud, resource pooling, fencing, distribution of illicit commodities or provision of customized digital solutions, are examples of parallel services sustaining and shielding criminals' pipelines for profit (Europol 2021b).

Exploiting the increased demand for goods and information

Given the profit-oriented nature of organised crime, opportunistic criminals and criminal networks have evidently exploited the pandemic-induced shortages in the consumer market. Since the outbreak of the pandemic, counterfeiters have engaged in the production and supply of personal protective equipment, counterfeit pharmaceuticals, sanitary products taking advantage of the persistently high demand and occurring shortage in the supply of these goods. Offers have appeared on the Darknet, but mostly on the surface web, as the latter has more potential to maximise criminals' reach. Online non-delivery scams have persisted during the crisis, ranging from selling non-existent personal protective equipment or pharmaceuticals allegedly treating COVID-19. COVID 19-related changes have driven an increase in demand for other goods too; criminals leveraged additional market opportunities as well, offering more counterfeit or illicit COVID-19 test kits, test certificates and vaccines as well as orchestrating related scams (Europol 2020e, p. 15; Europol, 2020h). Fraudulent offers and/or offers for counterfeit or sub-standard commodities will likely also extend to other test- or vaccination-related material such as PCR tests.

Criminals also exploited the introduction of COVID-19 certificates and vaccination passes. As demand for those has sharply risen given their mandatory use for travelling and accessing certain facilities in some countries, the production and distribution of fraudulent test

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and vaccination certificates has similarly increased (Europol, 2020g).

Given that in today's global economy, information has become a key commodity, with the Internet at its epi-centre (Lengel, 2009), it comes as no surprise that criminals turn information and the need for it similarly into profit. Pandemic-themed cyber criminality persisted throughout the pandemic, partially exploiting people's increased need for information and the widespread reliance on digital means during the lockdown.

Different cybercrime schemes have been adapted to the pandemic narrative, including phishing attacks, the distribution of malware and business e-mail compromise schemes (Europol, 2020a, p. 4). Most recently, cyber criminals have capitalised on current headlines and have been using the vaccination and unemployment/financial aid narrative to lure victims. Online fraudsters have continued to defraud victims by distributing COVID-19 related spam e-mails and hosting scam campaigns on bogus websites and by offering speculative investments related to COVID-19 (Europol, 2020a, p. 7). Recently, fraudsters have adapted their known schemes to the vaccination roll-out often posing as health authorities and targeting individuals with false vaccine offers.

Capitalising on the vaccination roll-out and the high demand for the newly manufactured vaccines against COVID-19, new large-scale fraud typologies emerged. In a new criminal trend, fraudulent offers of vaccine deliveries were made by so-called intermediaries to public authorities responsible for the procurement of vaccines. Several Member States were impacted by this scheme (Europol information).

Continued profit from illicit markets for exploitation

Although trafficking activity for sexual exploitation has dropped as the demand for services with direct contact has decreased, traffickers proved to be resourceful with the aim of maintaining profit. As offers of virtual sexual encounters have become increasingly popular among clients, traffickers have also intensified the digitisation of sexual exploitation, moving several of their illicit activities to the online sphere (Europol, 2020e). During the COVID-19 pandemic, a considerable share of trafficking of human beings for sexual exploitation has moved to the online domain as the crisis generally facilitated increased online presence, also opening new opportunities for recruitment of victims online (Europol, 2021).

The production and online supply of child sexual abuse material has remained a grave threat during the pandemic. It has been observed that the production and circulation of child sexual abuse material (CSAM) has generally increased during periods of lockdown, taking advantage of more time spent at home, both by the victims and the offenders.

Despite an initial set back of migrant smuggling activities in the beginning of the crisis, no significant disruption of migratory flows has been noted. The market for smuggling services remains sustained due to its profitability and presents a key threat to the EU with some alterations in smugglers' activities emerging during the pandemic (Europol, 2020e, p. 12). Much of the crime area has moved to the online domain. Virtually all phases of migrant smuggling - including recruitment campaigns run on social media, selling maps to irregular migrants and providing indications via instant communication platforms – have moved online (Europol, 2021b). Taking advantage of the circumstances, where an illicit journey may be perceived as more dangerous compared to pre-pandemic times, migrant smugglers turned it into a business opportunity and have increased the prices for their illicit services (Europol, 2020e, p. 12).

Maximising profit in times of crises

Criminal networks strived to maximise their profit during the crisis, underlying once again the profit-oriented nature of organised crime.

During the pandemic, there was an increase noted in national COVID-19 subsidy schemes reported in several Member States (Europol information). With the release of the EU funds allocated under the Recovery and Resilience Facility, it is likely that criminal groups will attempt to siphon off EU funds through fraudulent procurement procedures.

Orchestrated theft of vaccines – supposedly with the aim of reselling them on the black market - in the different stages of distribution chain during the transportation process, at the storage facility or at hospitals presents an additional significant threat (UNODC, 2020). Unsuccessful attempts of burglary in vaccination centres have already been reported (Europol information).

With regards to cybercrime, healthcare organisations and institutions in the public sector continued to be targeted by ransomware and distributed denial of service (DDoS) attacks (Europol, 2020b, p. 6). Entities involved in COVID-19 research, testing, vaccine development and administration both the private and the public sector, have become also victims of different forms of cyber-attacks. In these schemes, criminals targeted critical infrastructure during the crisis. Due to their crucial role in the fight against the pandemic, victim of such attacks were more prone to pay ransomware in order to regain control over their systems. Such attacks included phishing, ransomware and DDoS attacks as well as data breach (Politico, 2020; ZDNet 2020; ZDNet 2021).

Conclusion

Criminal networks strive in times of crises. The COVID-19 pandemic has once again demonstrated that criminal networks are resourceful and operate for financial gains. Just as legal business entities, these illicit enterprises and entrepreneurs respond to market forces, maximise profit and leverage criminal business opportunities. It is essential to further the research on criminal networks and bring together different stakeholders in order to prevent them emerging stronger in the post-COVID-19 reality.

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Fraud, Pandemics and Policing Responses

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Abstract

The article identifies some novel crime types and methodologies arising during the current pandemic that were not seen in previous pandemics. These changes may result from public health measures taken in response to COVID-19, the current state of technologies and the activities of law enforcement and regulators. It shows that most frauds that we know about might have occurred anyway, but some specific – mainly online - frauds occur during pandemics, and because of large scale government assistance programmes to businesses and individuals, many more opportunities were created from Covid-19. In the UK and Australia (less clearly elsewhere), public-private partnerships between police and banks led to joint activities in the attempted prevention of public-facing frauds (though the success measures are unclear), and arrests of suspects were sometimes easier because they were at home more! However, responses to fraud against government loans and grants were weaker and it is likely that many of them will be unprosecuted. More frauds will come to light later. More rapid prevention is the key to reducing the impact of economic crimes, but we need better focused research on how to get people not to fall for scams, better technologies to make frauds harder, and better processes and political will to stop procurement frauds.

Keywords: Corruption, Covid-19, cybercrime, economic crime, fraud, pandemics, policing, prevention.

Introduction

It is too easy to assume that COVID-19 has led to more frauds. We must consider the full range of deceptions, some of which – like dubious or counterfeit products promoted by businesses and celebrity 'influencers' – have a larger market during pandemics; others (like romance frauds) are more effective during times of isolation; and others still like pandemic government grants and loans are created to cope with the pandemic. We need also to consider the attractiveness and ease with which organised crime and professional fraud networks can increase the supply of these frauds. What lessons have been learned, or not learned, from previous crises, and what can we plausibly learn from Covid-19? How likely are we to actually put these lessons into practice? Perhaps the answer depends on you, the readers!

Fraud or economic crime is the Cinderella area of policing. Most frauds are undetected or detected but unreported and unrecorded. This can vary from country to country and over time, but though its precise dimensions are unknowable or contestable, household

and business crime surveys can and in some European countries do measure some dimensions of it (Levi & Burrows, 2008; Levi, 2017; ONS, 2020). The elapsed time from a fraud beginning to its formal detection and successful bringing to justice can take many years or even never happen at all. Large internal frauds and corruption usually take longer to appear and also to investigate and prosecute than volume frauds like payment card frauds and romance scams. So we need to be aware that what we see in front of us only tells part of the story.

Changes in monitoring and policing or regulatory responses might be responsible for changes in official data, so we cannot assume that changes in reported or recorded 'fraud rates' are real reflections of underlying frauds. Likewise, the pandemic alters the shape of official responses. On the one hand, there may be less police investigation due to constraints on transport and face-to-face working: but some law enforcement agencies (e.g. the City of London police) have used the opportunity to make arrests, which have become more efficient since many suspects are at home during lockdown. The hacking (initially by the French) of encrypted criminal communications like Encrochat [1] or the planting (mainly by Australians and Americans) of pseudo-encrypted apps like ANOM might had more impact on fraud and other economic crimes if the hardware and software had been distributed beyond drug trafficking networks [2]. But these technological breakthroughs coincided with the pandemic - they were not caused by it. There also remain some contestable issues within and outside the EU: when do homeopathic and prescription 'cures' for which there is no good scientific evidence become 'criminal deceptions' under separate national legislation? Finally, the article reviews what can be learned from law enforcement and other responses to economic crimes during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Fraud during the coronavirus pandemic

The patterns and levels of fraud should be seen against the backdrop of the general economy and patterns of economic and social life. We know that many people find it difficult to distinguish between real and nominal interest rates, but when nominal interest rates are very low as they have been just before and during COVID-times, offers of higher returns from markets (including cryptocurrencies) become even more attractive, especially when fake reassurances are given about what the funds will be invested in and whether the firm is authorised.

The shift towards the use of online platforms and teleworking during the 2019-21 pandemic has underlined the opportunities to offenders (including 'undermining' opportunities) as well as to business and Working from Home provided by digital technologies. As was already the case before, access to such opportunities has varied substantially within and across countries. Eurostat data show large EU MS variations in rates of online access and e-commerce. [3] The rise in ransomware attacks has also generated more political, law enforcement and corporate concern, though their connection with the pandemic is only occasional, via Phishing or Business Email Compromise to freeze and lock up business IT systems, which has been growing fast during home working. Worldwide corporate spending on online security is expected to hit $150bn in 2021, compared with $113bn in 2018: [4] but data on the specific European dimensions of this are unavailable. [5]

Quantification of the scale is hampered by a number of factors. First there is the problem of what we count and in what area. ENISA has focussed on costs to SMEs and to Critical National Infrastructure, and so too will the new Joint Cyber Unit, established by the European Commission. In my judgment, a much broader range of and set of sources for economic crime data against individuals, business and government is available from the UK, the Netherlands and Sweden than elsewhere, but there is the problem of determining the causal relationship between the pandemic and those frauds that

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1   https://www.computerweekly.com/news/252499785/French-legal-challenge-over-EncroChat-cryptophone-hack-could-hit-UK-prosecutions; https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/the-encrochat-bust-how-police-hacked-the-secret-gangster-messaging-network-mjvh3xlxw.

2   Some network members would have been involved in economic crimes, and perhaps all in money laundering because all major crime groups require at least some proceeds to be laundered.

3   https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Digital_economy_and_society_statistics_-_households_and_individuals

4   https://www.gartner.com/en/newsroom/press-releases/2021-05-17-gartner-forecasts-worldwide-security-and-risk-managem

5   For a broader discussion of crime risks and threats, see Europol, 2021; and for a recent popular analysis, Reitano & Shaw, 2021. For early analyses of cybercrimes, see Buil-Gil et al., 2020; Vu et al., 2020; and Horgan et al., 2020.)

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are detected during or after it. The disruption caused to business operations often simply results in existing frauds being uncovered, so we need to look at when those frauds happened. During the pandemic, many companies that normally would have failed were artificially supported by government payments, resulting in numbers entering external administration declining. Once government support payments decline or end, we can expect that these numbers will increase considerably, but much depends on the staffing resources, competence and incentives to follow things up and classify them as 'crimes'. Even before the pandemic, concern was expressed in the United Kingdom about the potential abuse of pre-pack administration to enable directors (in their own names or in those of nominees) to repurchase the assets from their businesses cheaply and walk away from their corporate debts, rising again like a phoenix from the flames (Levi, 2008).

Typologies of fraud during the coronavirus pandemic

Consumer scams

As the coronavirus pandemic spread from 2019 and into 2021, social distancing measures required most working and non-working people to remain in their homes, leading to intense reliance on digital technologies to work, to save/invest/transfer funds and to communicate with families and friends outside their homes. This created substantial opportunities for individuals to commit online fraud and to be victimised on a widespread scale (Europol, 2020, 2021; Walker, 2020). Cybersecurity problems have also arisen due to home-based workers not adhering adequately to business cybersecurity policies, such as user authentication protocols, as well as improper sharing of sensitive corporate data with unauthorised family members and others.

As time went on, ongoing working from home and social restrictions led to a boom in pet ownership.[6] This stimulated a wave of frauds about the breeding histories of animals, and scams on those who had lost pets or had them stolen and advertised for their return. The UK National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC, 2020) has noted phishing and malware related to health advice, contact tracing, funds and rebates, and fake goods and services—from PPE to disinfecting driveways.

Bereavement scammers have targeted families organising funerals by purporting to be from their local authority's bereavement services team and asking for credit card details to pay the funeral director. Families are told that the funeral will be cancelled if they do not pay immediately. Some e-commerce sites that arose in 2020 offered a range of extraordinary products for sale (see Keller & Lorenz, 2020).

Consumer protection organisations across the globe began receiving complaints and notifications from victims of these scams, with substantial losses being suffered. In the UK, as early as 6 March 2020, the National Fraud Intelligence Bureau reported at least 21 confirmed cases of coronavirus-related fraud, with victims losing more than £800,000. Half of these reports were made by victims who tried to purchase large orders of surgical masks from fraudulent merchants who took their money but did not deliver product of the right quality. The others included victims of various fake website phishing attacks. In March 2020, Operation Pangea XIII was conducted by police, customs and health regulators from 90 countries, all aiming to prevent illicit online sales of medicines and medical products. Counterfeit face masks and unauthorised antiviral medications were all seized under the operation. Counterfeit medicines and vaccinations were sometimes investigated in collaboration with Europol[7] In 2020, the NCSC (2020) scanned more than 1.4m National Health Service IP endpoint addresses for vulnerabilities, leading to the detection of 51,000 indicators of compromise. It also worked with international allies in the Global North to raise awareness of the threat to vaccine research, particularly from Russian cyber actors with intelligence service connections (NCSC, 2020, p.20).

The range of adaptations of conventional scams to the pandemic environment has been extensive, with criminals developing scams involving PPE and fake cures, domestic pet scams, employment scams, investment frauds, travel refund and insurance scams, and a variety of phishing attacks, identity crimes and ransomware threats involving COVID-19 scenarios, sometimes impersonating contact tracing officials to obtain personal and banking information. There have also been reports of false charity scams and phishing emails claiming to provide important information regarding the latest

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6   e.g. https://www.pfma.org.uk/news/pfma-confirms-dramat-ic-rise-in-pet-acquisition-among-millennials.

7   see https://www.europol.europa.eu/activities-services/staying-safe-during-covid-19-what-you-need-to-know; https://www.europol.europa.eu/newsroom/news/how-criminals-profit-cov-id-19-pandemic

coronavirus updates, local testing stations, potential cures, cheap medical products or working from home. In addition to attempts by airlines themselves to disincentivise air ticket repayments, there have also been reports of ticket refund fraud due to travel restrictions, romance fraud, charity fraud and financial loan fraud (Action Fraud, 2020). Online loan sharking now has a higher success rate as unemployment and the global economic downturn caused by the pandemic has left many indebted and impoverished (Felbab-Brown, 2020).

Some COVID-19-related frauds have involved pure cyber-dependent activities. Many coronavirus-related domains have also been registered by cybercriminals, leading officials to warn users to not open attachments or click on links in emails coming from so-called informational websites. For example, a Twitter user, @dustyfresh, published a web tracker that found 3,600 coronavirus and COVID-19-related hostnames created in the preceding 24 hours (Ruiz, 2020). RiskIQ (2020), a US-based cybersecurity company, tracked more than 13,000 suspicious coronavirus-related domains over a weekend, with more than 35,000 new domains discovered the following day. Technology has also facilitated the sale of medical supplies and PPE during the coronavirus pandemic. A caveat is in order: data on fake availability tell us little about market size of fakes as a *proportion* of products purchased. The UK NCSC has identified CEO-simulating requests for remote staff to purchase Google Play cards and Microsoft-simulating requests to change office VPNs: these *could* have occurred before the pandemic, but were more credible to staff during it. It is not known how many people fell for this scam and what the impacts were. Business email compromise scams have become common throughout Europe.

Many Romance scams used Covid-19 as a rationale, but most fraud cases had nothing directly to do with the pandemic directly, though vulnerability might be increased by physical isolation from family and friends. In the year to April 2021, the City of London police stated that 5,039 investment fraud reports involving over £63m losses nationally referred to a social media platform as part of the medium for the scam, with 44.7 per cent of reports stating the fake commodity they had been scammed into investing in was a type of cryptocurrency. In the reports, Instagram was the most referenced platform (35.2 per cent), followed by Facebook (18.4 per cent). The national fraud reporting body Ac-

tion Fraud received over 500 investment fraud reports which made reference to a bogus celebrity endorsement, with losses reaching over £10m in 2020-21.[8]

The national reporting system for phishing emails which began April 2020 was used heavily and in a sustained way.[9] Though the longer-term prevention and deterrent effects of the 'whack-a-mole' approach are as yet unknown, as of 31 May 2021, the number of reports received by NCSC in just over a year stand at more than 6,100,000, and over 45,000 scams and 90,000 URLs were removed, including over 300,000 malicious URLs linking to faked celebrity-endorsed investment schemes which are not specifically linked to the pandemic.

The extent to which these are 'excess scams' (by analogy with 'excess deaths') is hard to identify, especially at this early stage. However, they demonstrate the rapidity with which at least some criminals are able to adapt the narratives on which to hang their deceptions. They also show the imperfect (and largely unresearched) impact that regular warnings in the media and policing interventions have had in stopping victims from falling for them (for which assessment we need to know what the counterfactuals would be).

Payment card fraud

At the beginning of the Pandemic, there were predictions of a boom in frauds of various types. How did that work out? We need first to distinguish between short term and longer term frauds, with differential rates of visibility. First among these are payment card frauds. Unfortunately, the most recent card fraud statistics for SEPA published by the European Central Bank are for 2018 (ECB, 2020), so they are not helpful at all for analysing the impact of Covid-19: they will not be until they are published in 2020 and 2023! We must therefore rely on private sector firms' data, of which the fullest and most recent are in the UK (UK Finance, 2021). In fact, the UK led in reducing card fraud losses in Europe[10], though its rate of card fraud per Euro spent is the highest, followed by France, Denmark, Sweden and Spain. Whilst Europe had a €62m reduction in payment card fraud losses for 2020, this was driven by the UK with a £46M (€69M) reduction and Denmark with a €20M reduction, mostly in card-not-present fraud. Only 5 of the 18 countries contained with-

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8   https://www.cityoflondon.police.uk/news/city-of-london/news/2021/may/new-figures-reveal-victims-lost-over-63m-to-investment-fraud-scams-on-social-media/

9   Author interviews.

10 https://www.fico.com/europeanfraud/

in the FICO study had card fraud reduced. At the other end of the scale, Norway posted the largest increase. France, Poland and Germany showed ongoing increases in losses, but these were not large figures in relation to the volume of business. Turkey, Spain and the Czech Republic all showed a relatively flat trend through 2020.

Throughout 2020, social engineering has been used to make use of the global pandemic to trick unsuspecting users into providing funds or information to criminals. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has led to a fall in contactless card and cheque fraud in 2020 as the lockdown restrictions reduced opportunities for criminals to commit these types of scams. Cases of fraud on lost and stolen cards have also fallen significantly due to the restrictions in movement as a result of the pandemic, though push payment scams in which criminals trick their victims into sending money directly from their account to an account which the criminal controls have increased (UK Finance 2021, pp. 12, 20). Whilst losses have been decreasing, the number of confirmed cases – accounts, not individuals - has increased during 2020, rising by four per cent to 2,835,622 cases after a five per cent rise the previous year. This demonstrates that cases are being spotted and stopped by card issuers more quickly, with a lower average loss per case (£381 in 2010 down to £226 in 2019 and £203 in 2020).

Cash use

In the first half of 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic led to reduced reliance on cash in order to limit the risk of contracting the virus by handling currency. To minimise these risks, the use of contactless payment cards has been promoted and increased limits on them before PIN has to be used. In the UK, contactless fraud on payment cards and devices remains low with £16m of losses during 2020, on spending of £9.46b over the same period (UK Finance, 2021). In less than a year since contactless limits increased across Europe to cope with the pandemic, Visa processed one billion additional PIN-free transactions.[11]

Economic stimulus fraud

Some types of fraud have a clear, causal relationship to the onset of the pandemic and the associated economic crisis. The clearest examples of this relate to dishonest attempts to obtain government economic stimulus funding, and payments made to support individuals who have lost jobs during the pandemic.

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11 https://www.visa.co.uk/about-visa/newsroom/press-releases.3088603.html

Stimulus payment fraud in the United Kingdom

At the time of writing, the United Kingdom has not published data on the extent of COVID-19 stimulus fraud. In the United Kingdom, stimulus programs include the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and Bounce Back Loan Scheme for businesses. Workers covered by the Job Retention (Furlough) Scheme were not permitted to work for their employer while on the scheme, but some did. The government created a fraud reporting line to detect cases of fraud and error, and by 11 August 2020, 7,791 reports of alleged fraud had been made to the government (Rodger 2020), rising later (National Audit Office, 2020a, b; 2021a, b). There continued to be potential for employers to pressure furloughed employees to work for them covertly without pay or for only partial payment, since the government was paying most of their salaries.

In addition to the Job Retention Scheme, which had paid £64 billion by May 2021, the UK government provided so-called Bounce Back Loans that enable eligible business to apply for a 100 percent, state-backed loan of up to £50,000 per business, with no interest charged or repayments due during the first 12 months. By end May 2021, the UK government had backed loans of nearly £80 billion to businesses (https://www.gov.uk/government/news/final-covid-loans-data-reveals-80-billion-of-government-support-through-the-pandemic).

It has been alleged that loans have been provided with inadequate due diligence by banks and that some businesses have used funds for non-business purposes. Loans are also thought to have been provided to dormant or illegitimate businesses that are likely never to make repayments, and multiple payments made to the same applicant. Fraudsters have taken over business premises which were or are unoccupied. The fraudster targets these empty properties using a recently set up company for the purpose of making a grant claim and provides false lease agreements (containing the correct landlord details), utility bills and bank statements.

Corruption in procurement

Risks of corruption arising from the pandemic are likely to be significant, but they will take time to emerge and may often be 'explained away' as merely short-circuiting procedural rules. Pressures were placed on public officials to undertake procurement on a wide scale at speed to ensure that essential supplies such as Per-

sonal Protection Equipment, ventilators, vaccines and IT supplies for remote working were provided quickly. Although some procurement has managed to follow conventional risk-management policies appropriately, weaknesses in some processes used to speed up purchasing have been revealed, allowing for fraud and corruption and VIP-preferential opportunities to be exploited. Crowd-funded legal action has led to some of these arrangements being heavily criticised by the English courts in 2021 (https://goodlawproject.org/); others may keep the new European Public Prosecutor's Office busy in 22 MS: Hungary, Poland and Sweden have decided not to join the EPPO. Denmark and Ireland have opted out of all measures.

Best practice in preventing economic crimes

How, then, can governments, police, business and the community take action to minimise the risks of economic crime and fraud during pandemics? Some solutions are well known, already in use, but not fully implemented, while others remain to be developed.

Establishing and maintaining public sector fraud controls

Ongoing reviews need to be undertaken of national fraud control systems to ensure that they remain fit-for-purpose during times of economic shocks and pandemics. The lessons for fraud control that have been learnt during previous pandemics need to be understood and taken into account as fraud risk assessments are undertaken and fraud control plans revised.

In the UK, the government released its functional standard on countering fraud in October 2018, which sets out the expectations for the management of fraud, bribery and corruption risk in government organisations. 123 public bodies have adopted the standard (Cabinet Office, 2020), though the standard needs to be translated into action to have any effects. Specific principles for effective fraud control in response to pandemic threats are outlined, including using fraud risk assessments, having consistent data management systems in place, ensuring that funds paid incorrectly can be recovered, identifying applicants effectively, using cross-entity data-matching tools, and developing post-event assurance processes (Government Counter Fraud Function, 2020).

In addition, ongoing national pandemic planning exercises by government disaster management entities need to include risks of economic crimes and fraud – and provisions for their policing - as part of the response measures needed to deal with pandemics. Too often, fraud risk assessments only occur after a disaster, once many incidents of fraud have been detected and assessed—sometimes long after the event.

Monitoring fraud risks

It is also important to have adequate fraud monitoring and testing programs in place that are detailed enough to detect new instances of fraud during a pandemic, *as soon as they arise.* In the United Kingdom, police recorded crime statistics show between April 2019 and April 2020, fraud and computer misuse crimes fell by 16 percent. A general public telephone survey showed comparisons between the United Kingdom's lockdown period of April and May 2020 and the preceding two months showed an eight percent decline in fraud and a 57 percent increase in computer misuse incidents (Office of National Statistics, 2020); but later comparisons of the years to December 2020 showed very modest fraud differences year on year (Office of National Statistics, 2021). Data from police-run Action Fraud (2020) showed a 38% increase in "online shopping and auctions" fraud in the latest year (86,984 offences), plausibly from the increase in online shopping because of shop closures and fears of shopping during national lockdowns. The data also showed a 68% decrease in "ticket" fraud (2,532 offences), plausibly attributable to cancellation of live music events. "Hacking – social media and email" saw a 26% increase from 11,101 to 14,004 offences and "computer viruses and malware" saw a 30% increase from 5,536 to 7,192 offences between the years ending December 2019-2020.

One of the features of the coronavirus pandemic was the quick action taken by fraudsters to exploit opportunities created by the pandemic. Consumer scams using COVID-19 scenarios were developed as soon as the virus became apparent and frauds targeting government relief and stimulus programs also began as soon as these programs were implemented. Having effective real-time monitoring of fraud trends is essential to limit the extent to which opportunities for fraud are exploited. Reducing the *scale* of frauds and the amount of time available to spend or hide the proceeds is important, even if the *number* of frauds is not reduced.

Enhancing technology

Technological 'solutions' also need to be developed and implemented prior to pandemics taking hold. The NCSC (2021) noted that more than 11,000 UK-government-themed phishing campaigns were taken down – more than double the 2019 figure. The Suspicious Email Reporting Service was launched in April 2020, and received nearly 4 million reports by year-end, leading to the removal of over 26,000 scams not previously identified by the Takedown Service. The most phished UK government brand was Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC). Equivalent data EU-wide are not yet collated or available, but many frauds are transnational and it would be surprising if the problems and their remedies were not universal.

Policing and prevention of frauds

Though there have been efforts during previous pandemics to discredit fake cures, the COVID-19 one is the first time that serious and systematic governmental and private sector efforts have been made to combat frauds, and the first occasion that large funds have been made available by governments to support businesses and people, though these have varied between Member States and beyond. These prevention efforts are connected to the risks to health and to savings, especially via the Web and social media apps, which provoked a more proactive response from governments and the private sector. (Though less is currently known about the reactions within the EU, beyond the efforts of Europol to communicate risks and engage in cross-border actions, than about the UK.)

Though the UK police have not received much extra funding for pandemic and government loan frauds, the UK tax agency HMRC has been given dedicated resources to pursue government loan frauds, and a range of UK bodies are actively engaged in fraud monitoring and prevention. Critical UK National Audit Office reports note the fraud implications of hasty government spending programs with inadequate due diligence on suppliers and borrowers, and apparent priority being given to those with government connections irrespective of their expertise (Public Accounts Committee, 2020, 2021). Reports to the HMRC fraud hotline rose to 121,300 in the year to March 2021 compared with 110,800 2019-20. The UK National Audit Office (2020b) found that 9 percent of people it surveyed admitted to working in lockdown at the request of their employer,

and against the rules of the scheme. HMRC planned to tackle fraud through whistleblowing and retrospective compliance work. Setting aside the difficulties of distinguishing fraud from mistakes, the eventual net losses in all European and other jurisdictions will depend upon the capacity of the revenue agencies, insolvency practitioners and the criminal justice systems to recuperate the gross losses via tax demands, civil claims and proceeds of crime confiscation. However, we should not be too optimistic, as fraudsters spend a lot of money as they go along and recovery often takes years.

Should the policing of fraud during and after the pandemic get special priority? There is a sense in which when times are particularly upsetting (as with pyramid schemes in post-communist times) the police need to demonstrate to opportunists and to organised criminals that they are taking pandemic frauds very seriously, and offer both criminal investigation and public (including business) reassurance and resilience (Levi et al., 2017) to reduce feelings of anger and vulnerability. The data that have emerged so far relate primarily to volume frauds, but there are broader issues of social legitimacy in alleged favouritism and/or corruption by those with high connections that may have a longer term corrosive effect. This needs to be planned for. Building fraud control into future pandemic planning policies and activities will go a long way to ensuring that communities, businesses and governments are not taken by surprise when the next pandemic takes hold. But more and better economic crime policing is needed in Europe anyway because of the rise in fraud relative to other crimes that preceded the pandemic, and this will continue long after it stops. In addition to criminal investigation and prosecution, part of that policing is cooperation with businesses and individuals in the private sector and with other public bodies as part of a drive to manage frauds down.

Acknowledgements

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Organised Crime Infiltration of the COVID-19 Economy:
Emerging schemes and possible prevention strategies

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic, and the recovery measures introduced by countries across the world to face the current economic crisis, have provided opportunities to organised crime (OC) networks to infiltrate the legitimate economy, take control of legitimate businesses and profiting from the current emergency situation. In particular, the following typologies of infiltration could be observed: (i) illicit lending and usury to entrepreneurs lacking liquidity; (ii) acquisition of firms in financial distress operating in sectors heavily affected by the crisis (e.g. hotels and restaurants); (iii) interest towards sectors pumped by the COVID-19 related lockdown (e.g. transport and logistics, cleaning services, trade of medical devices and pharmaceuticals); (iv) acquisition of recovery funds and public subsidies through fraud and accounting manipulations. By providing case studies and empirical data in selected countries, this paper will propose a classification of the infiltration strategies employed by OC networks as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic, of the most common targets and victims, and discuss potential prevention and investigation strategies to curb and mitigate this risk.

Keywords: Organised crime; Infiltration; Money Laundering; Fraud; COVID-19; Coronavirus.

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic, the related containment policies and recovery plans have provided new opportunities for expansion to organised crime (OC) – at least this is what has been advocated by public authorities and law enforcement worldwide. The pandemic events have dramatically transformed the environment in which criminals operate: targets and clients have changed their behaviors, resources have been reallocated to new areas and sectors, new regulatory loopholes have emerged and new countermeasures have been implemented.

Most of the studies published to date on the impact of COVID-19 focused on volume and urban crimes (e.g., Ashby 2020; Campedelli et al. 2020; Gerell et al. 2020; Lallie et al. 2021). Analysis of the influence posed by COVID-19 on OC is limited to few works of speculative nature, or based only on selected cases (see *Literature review* below). The timeframe available and the amount of data is yet too scarce for conducting proper empirical research on the relationship between OC groups and Coronavirus.

Among the ways through which OC groups may benefit from COVID-19 is the infiltration of legitimate businesses. Infiltration of the economy is a peculiar

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attribute of governance-type organised crime, and nowadays most SOC activities cannot be implemented without wide employment of legitimate firms (Levi and Soudijn 2020; Transcrime 2018; Savona et al. 2016; Europol 2021). According to the latest Europol's SOCTA, 2021, more than 80% of organised crime networks in Europe use legal businesses. The COVID-19 emergency, and the related recovery plans, risk to boost the infiltration strategy of OC groups – or at least this is what advocated by some public authorities and experts. Numerous alerts have been issued by law enforcement authorities (LEAs) and financial intelligence units (FIUs) worldwide, which stressed the risk that OC may pose to the economy suffering from the COVID-19 related crisis.

This paper would like to contribute to this debate. It provides some evidence of OC infiltration of legitimate businesses during and in the aftermath of COVID-19, and help to understand to what extent, and under which conditions, the alerts issued by public authorities are plausible and justifiable. In particular, the paper will try to provide a classification of frequent infiltration schemes, concealment techniques and typologies observed in these months; and shed light on the most affected sectors and firm-types. For doing so, it will analyse evidence of infiltration collected from intelligence reports issued by LEAs, FIUs, AML authorities across Europe; institutional reports; news and open sources. Most of the reported cases regard Italy, but references to other countries, and to OC groups different from Italian mafias, will be made. Some of these cases have been reported in previous papers and policy reports, first of all UNODC (2020) and Aziani et al. (2021), on which this paper is largely based. By employing a limited number of cases and episodes, this paper has roughly the same speculative nature of previous works published to date; but will help to try to classify typologies which have been observed in past months and which may be frequent in the near future.

The paper is structured as follows: Section 2 briefly recalls the notion of OC infiltration, and provides a brief review of studies on the relationship between (organised) crime and COVID-19; Section 3 describes the sources used to collect cases upon which the analysis is made; Section 4

Literature review

Infiltration of legitimate businesses by organised crime

The concept of *infiltration* is hard to define, to measure – and ultimately to prosecute (Riccardi & Berlusconi 2016; Transcrime 2018). In most European countries, criminal infiltration is not criminalised per se. As stressed by various scholars, infiltration may not be itself a crime, but rather it can be considered a *process* encompassing a variety of crimes. These may take the form of predicate offences, in the sense that they may constitute the crimes which generate the proceeds which are eventually employed by criminals, e.g., to incorporate a legitimate firm; or of sentinel crimes – like accounting manipulation or false invoicing - which highlight that an infiltration process is on-going. Building on Transcrime's project MORE, infiltration of a legitimate firm by organised crime may be defined as:

"Any case in which a natural person belonging to a criminal organisation, as defined by Art. 1 of the EU Framework Decision on the Fight against Organised Crime (2008/841/JHA), or involved in a serious crime as defined by Art. 83(1) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union,or an already infiltrated legal person, invests financial and/or human resources to participate in the decision-making process of a legitimate business" (Transcrime 2018, p. 5).

The vagueness of the concept of 'criminal organisation' adopted at the EU level (Calderoni 2008; Finckenauer 2005; Hagan 2006; von Lampe 2004) may risk hindering the identification of 'who exactly is infiltrating a legitimate business' (von Lampe, 2017, p. 224). This in turn may instill doubts about if studying infiltration requires adopting an 'actor-centred' or alternatively an 'activity-centred' approach (van Duyne & van Dijck, 2007; von Lampe, 2017). But it is not often easy to distinguish between the two perspectives, also because it is not always clear whether the infiltrated firm was established, or employed, as part of the OC scheme itself, or was instead infiltrated as a consequence of OC (for example, the investment in a restaurant of the proceeds stemming from drug-trafficking). Finally, it is increasingly difficult to draw a boundary between 'traditional' OC and financial crimes such as false invoicing and VAT fraud, as also stressed by the latest Europol's SOCTA (Europol, 2021). All these patterns are confirmed when looking at COVID-19 related infiltration, as will made clear in the *Analysis* and *Discussion* sections.

COVID-19 and (organised) crime

As mentioned, most of the studies published to date, which address the relationship between crime and COVID-19, analysed the impact of containment policies related to Coronavirus on violent and volume crimes (e.g., Ashby 2020; Campedelli et al. 2020; Gerell et al. 2020; Lallie et al. 2021). Those dealing with organised crime are much fewer and are based on anecdotal evidence (Bruce et al. 2020; e.g., Dellasega and Vorrath 2020; GITOC 2020a). More recently, a paper by UNODC, and a working paper of Aziani et al., have tried to look more closely into the way criminal organisations reacted to the medical crisis and the economic crisis exerted by COVID-19 (UNODC 2020; Aziani, Jofre, et al. 2021). To be noted that most of these studies have focused on the first wave of COVID-19 disease (March – October 2020), which is the one characterised by the harsher lockdown measures and the strongest impact on the economy. A recent report authored by Levi and Smith shed light on fraud related to COVID-19 policies and products – which could be observed also in previous pandemics, such as the Spanish flu (Levi & Smith 2021).

These works have, on the one side, analysed how COVID-19 has impacted on the activity of OC groups, e.g. in terms of reduced (or increased) drug-trafficking or kidnapping (Balmori de la Miyar et al. 2021; Bruce et al. 2020; Djordjević & Dobovšek 2020). On the other side, the studies analysed how OC has benefited from the pandemic crisis. Positive effects can be observed twofold: (i) in terms of increasing social consensus through the provision of social services to local communities; (ii) in terms of increasing profits through infiltration of the legal economy and the commission of financial crimes. As regards the first strategy, a variety of instances can be found in which governance-type OC groups (such as mafias or Mexican cartels) have started providing support to the local population in response of the crisis (and often in the absence and/or incapacity of official governments). Gomez (2020) illustrated how OC groups in Colombia and Mexico were able to distribute food, money, medicines, face masks, support checkpoints to the local population in the first wave of the pandemic. Similar episodes were observed in Italy by the Camorra and Cosa Nostra (Crimaldi 2020; Palazzolo 2020) and in South Africa by local gangs (Hyman 2020). OC groups were also active in ensuring social distancing within the population, as a way to get the favour of official governments which were unable to enforce this measure. This occurred for example in Brazil, El Sal-

vador and Colombia (Elfaro 2020; TuBarco 2020; Walsh 2020).

COVID-19 and organised crime infiltration: the knowledge gap

While information, analysis and evidence on the provision of illegal governance by OC groups is more abundant, the same cannot be said as regards the second OC strategy, i.e. the infiltration of the legal economy during and as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic. The lack of evidence contrasts with the numerous alerts issued by public authorities in this respect. Both UNODC (2020) and Aziani et al. (2021) report few cases of infiltration, but do not provide further analysis and interpretation.

Aim of this paper is to start filling this gap, not only by collecting and reporting cases of (attempted or suspicious) infiltration in legitimate firms, but by offering an analysis and a classification of: (i) the most frequent *modi operandi* and schemes of infiltration; (ii) the most frequently affected business sectors; (iii) the type of criminal actors (and sentinel crimes) involved. This paper is just an exploratory and preliminary analysis, based on a too limited and unrepresentative sample yet, which would deserve in-depth investigation as soon as more abundant empirical evidence (and more structured data) will be made available. However, it is an attempt to classify risk scenarios which may be observed by police, AML authorities, anti-fraud agencies, FIUs and prosecutors' offices currently or in the next future in most European countries.

Methodology

The cases analysed in this paper, and on which basis the classification of infiltration schemes is produced, are identified through a snowball approach, relying on a variety of sources which include: (i) academic papers; (ii) institutional reports (e.g. police or FIU reports and press releases); and (iii) media news. In particular, I make wide use of the cases are already collected and reported in Aziani et al. (2021), which employed a news aggregator (LexisNexis Metabase) to scan media sources in search for relevant instances. This set is enriched further with evidence taken from more recent media articles and institutional reports, not covered by the previous works. Among them, the latest Europol's SOCTA (Europol 2021) and the periodic reports of the new-born observatory of the Italian Ministry of Interior

to monitor OC infiltration of the legal economy.[2] Very useful have been also the 2020 annual reports of European FIUs, which provided some statistics on COVID-19 related suspicious activity/transaction reports. 'Cases' should not be intended merely as specific instances, involving one individual or firm, for which information on names, sector, geographic area was available. But more broadly as empirical evidence, reported by (or involving) some police authorities or FIU, of infiltration and misuse of firms in relation to COVID-19. For this reason, it is not easy to count the exact number of firms analysed.

Beyond actual cases, this paper takes into account also the results of an analysis, made by Transcrime, of anomalies related to changes of beneficial owners of firms in Italy during the pandemic (April to September 2020), which involved about 40,000 firms (Bosisio et al. 2021). These are not (all) corresponding to episodes of criminal infiltration of course; but the anomalies identified in some of them may red-flag possible infiltration risks. A paragraph of the next section will be devoted to summarising the main findings of this study.

While this paper did not want a priori to focus on Italy only, most of the cases and data collected and analysed regard Italian firms. This has not to be interpreted in the sense that most infiltration cases related to COVID-19 concentrate in Italy; but is the result of sampling biases and, as stressed by previous works, too (see e.g. Riccardi and Berlusconi, 2016), of the greater attention and awareness posed by Italian public authorities and media to the 'infiltration problem'.

Analysis

Four frequent schemes, or typologies using FATF terms, of criminal infiltration of firms in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic can be identified: (i) illicit lending and usury to entrepreneurs lacking liquidity; (ii) acquisition of firms in financial distress operating in sectors heavily affected by the crisis (e.g. hotels and restaurants); (iii) interest towards sectors pumped by the COVID-19 related lockdown (e.g. transport and logistics, cleaning ser-

vices, trade of medical devices and pharmaceuticals); (iv) acquisition of recovery funds and public subsidies through fraud and accounting manipulations. They are analysed in detail below (the first two schemes in the same paragraph).

Infiltration of firms in financial distress and in sectors affected by COVID-19

This category includes cases of infiltration of firms fallen in financial distress as a consequence of COVID-19 containment and economic crisis. The lockdown enforced in spring 2020 in most countries (and then repeated between fall 2020 and winter 2021) heavily impacted on the capacity of certain entrepreneurs to produce turnover and cover operational expenses, including personnel costs. This has happened in particular in those economic sectors which had to reduce substantially (and, in a first phase, literally interrupt) the activity due to the lockdown: bars, restaurants, hotels, organisation of events, travel agencies and renting agencies. Also retail shops were affected – especially non-food ones, as food retailers were among the categories of businesses exempted from lockdowns. The cash and liquidity problems of these firms have increased their vulnerability to the injection of external funding of illicit and dubious origin. This has happened in two ways: (i) in terms of lending (often at usurious rate) by individuals connected to criminal organisations; (ii) in terms of acquisition of firms' control through money of illicit origin. As stressed frequently by literature, often the first strategy may then lead to the second one, as soon as firm owners are not able to guarantee restitution of the credit and therefore are forced to pass on the management of the company. Loans shall not be interpreted exclusively as the provision of illicit cash 'off-the-records', but nowadays may take more sophisticated nature, sometimes concealed behind shell companies active in the financial service sector, or through the acquisition of non-performing loans (NPLs), carried out with the complicity of colluded banks or bank officials (Di Gennaro and Pastore 2021; Barone and Masciandaro 2019; Lavezzi 2014; Transcrime 2013). Eventually, these loans may take the accounting form of 'shareholders' credits', which indeed constitutes a red-flag in the financial reports of infiltrated firms, according to previous studies (Di Bono et al. 2015; Ravenda et al. 2015; Transcrime 2018).

A number of hotels on the *Riviera Romagnola* in Italy reported to the police to have been contacted by dubious investors, during the hardest time of the COV-

Figure 1 - Infiltration of firms in financial distress: frequent schemes/typologies
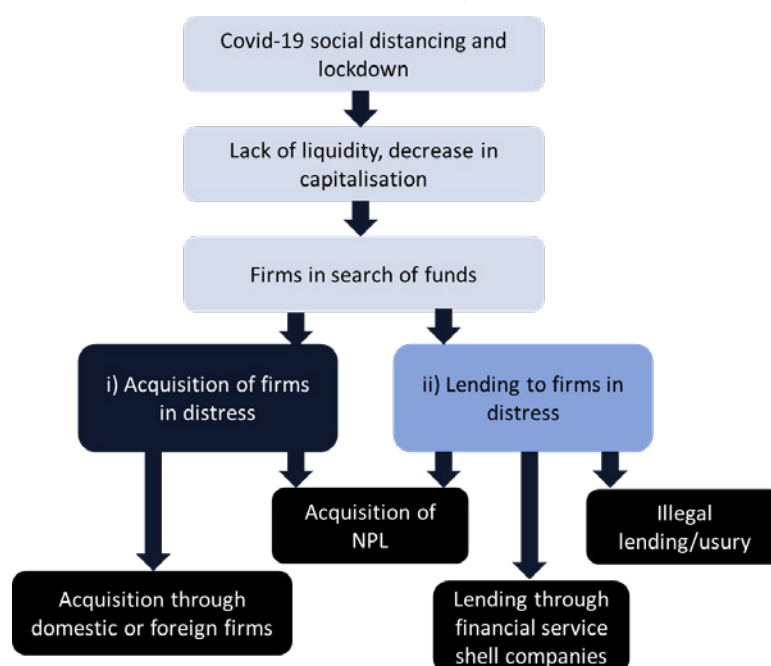
Source: Author's elaboration

ID-19 pandemic, with offers to acquire the business at a cheap price (Elli 2020). The local prefecture of Rimini has issued, between September 2020 and January 2021, 10 freezing measures (*interdittive*)[3] against hotels in the province due to suspicion of mafia infiltration (Conti 2021). Similar behaviours have been observed in Milan, where the 20% of restaurants, participating to a survey of a local association, declared to have received offers (in terms of acquisition or usury lending) by 'anomalous individuals' during the COVID-19 pandemic (Ticino Notizie 2020). Instances of 'anomalous acquisitions' outside the hotels & bars sector can also be found. For example, a construction company was acquired during the COVID-19 pandemic by a fiduciary company based in Malta, for which information on beneficial owners was not available; the professionals managing the trust had previous records for involvement in international corruption (Bosisio et al. 2021). A real estate/architecture firm active in renovating historical properties in Tuscany, suffering from the economic crisis, was refused renegotiation of its loan, which was instead ceased to a holding company, newly established, controlled by

a trust in Luxembourg, managed by individuals with previous OC records.

Infiltration of firms in sectors pumped by COVID-19

If some sectors were heavily affected by the containment policies, others have been favoured by the pandemic. The wholesale (and retail) trade of pharmaceuticals and medical devices (e.g. masks, breathing devices, sanification devices) have boomed, as well as sanification and cleaning services companies. But also waste disposal (especially the management of COVID-19 related hospital waste) and funeral services were favoured by the pandemic. The lockdown which obliged millions of people to stay and work from home has fostered the e-commerce, which in turn has pumped logistic and transportation services. The number of couriers dramatically increased, and bigger logistic firms have had to rely heavily on sub-contractors to satisfy the demand. Obviously, the success of these sectors induced by the pandemic did not attract only investments of dirty money; but also numerous entrepreneurs and firms unconnected with crime. However, abundant evidence of OC presence can be spotted.

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3   The *intedittiva antimafia* is a measure of administrative nature issued by Italian prefectures in the presence of signals of, among others, mafia infiltration and/or influence. The measure aims at freezing the activity of a firm, and avoid it can be involved in public works and be awarded public funding.

Numerous cases can be found in the provision of masks and medical devices, especially in the first wave of the pandemic (February-July 2020) which was characterised by a strong demand of these devices and lack of supply at international level, and also more relaxed controls and countermeasures. A company with unknown track-record exploiting false declarations was awarded, in Italy, a public procurement for providing masks, worth 24 million euro. Once awarded, the company was sold to a construction firm, then going bankrupt. Goods were not eventually provided (Ministero dell'Interno 2020a). In Romania, a firm linked to individuals with previous records of serious and organised offences, was investigated for bribing the director of a public company which was managing the purchase of masks, protective suits and other medical devices (Ministero dell'Interno 2020a). In Italy, again, three Chinese firms (one established 5 days before the procurement) were awarded the provision of 800 million masks (value 1.25 billion euro), facilitated by Italian intermediaries. The investigation revealed allegations of money laundering, fencing, embezzlement. Infiltration of mafia-groups was observed also in the sanification sector: the investigation *Criminal security* revealed investments of Camorra into firms active in the sanification of retail shops (Ministero dell'Interno 2020b), while *Dirty cleaning* highlighted again the

role of Camorra groups in companies involved in the sanification of hotels, restaurants, trucks and vehicles (Il Fatto Quotidiano 2020). Wiretaps revealed, in the first phase of the pandemic, attempts of the 'Ndrangheta to acquire/invest even funeral companies in Northern Italy where the rate of COVID-19 deaths was highest (Ministero dell'Interno 2020b).

Infiltration of firms to obtain COVID-19 public subsidies and recovery funds

The third typology of OC infiltration is the one which is and will be probably most frequently observed in the next future. It is related to the employment of legitimate businesses by organised criminals to obtain the wide variety of public subsidies, stimulus packages and recovery funds activated by most countries worldwide to sustain the economy impacted by the COVID-19 crisis. Here, infiltration may take various forms: for example, fraud with layoff schemes, such as those committed in France on «*chomage partiel*» (layoffs) through fictitious use and theft of IDs of existing firms (Ministero dell'Interno 2020a). Various cases of embezzlement of reimbursement and tax bonuses issued by government as a consequence of the pandemic are reported by media: in Italy, the investigation *Habanero* revealed the Infiltration by 'Ndrangheta of Italian firms, and the commission of tax crimes and bankruptcy fraud so as

Figure 2 - Infiltration of firms in sectors pumped by COVID-19
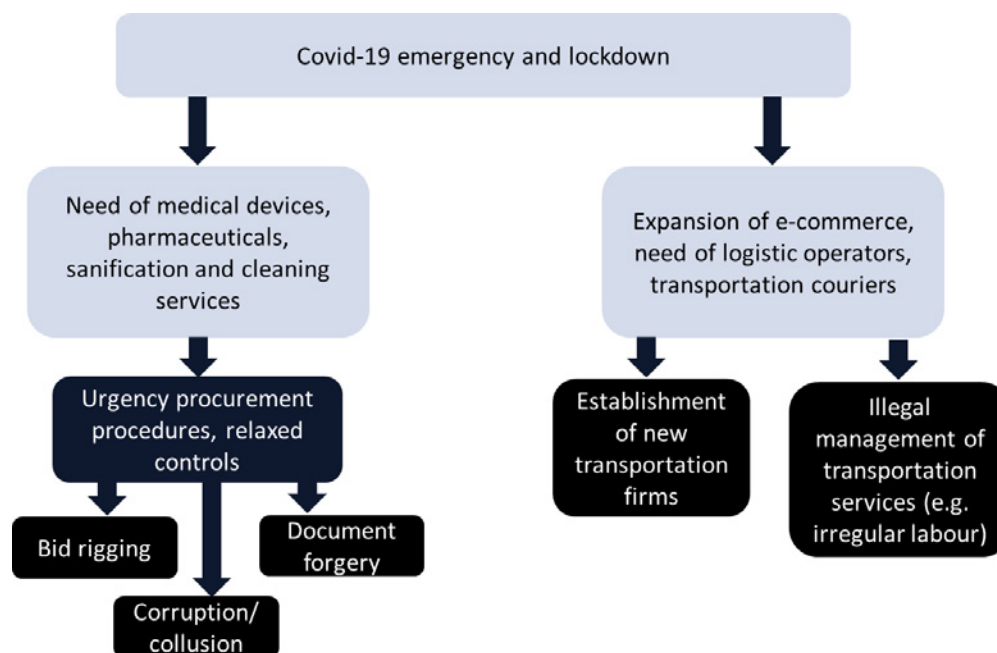
Source: Author's elaboration

Figure 3 - Infiltration of firms to obtain COVID-19 public subsidies and recovery plans
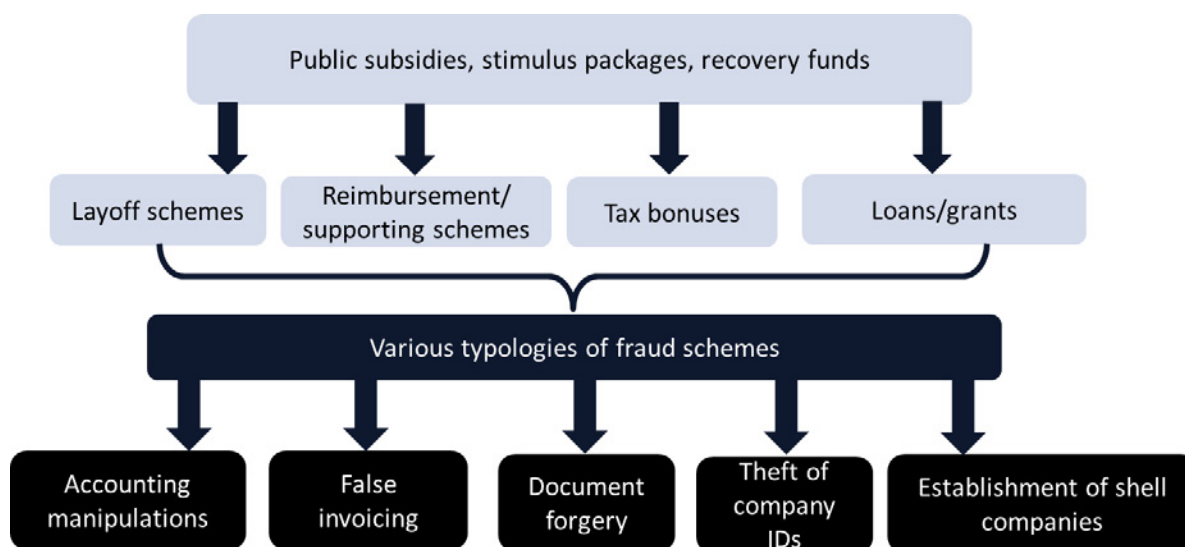
Source: Author's elaboration

to benefit from SME public subsidies enhanced with COVID-19 (Ministero dell'Interno 2020a). In the UK, fraud on "bounce back loans" schemes were committed through fictitious use and theft of IDs of existing firms (Ministero dell'Interno 2020a). Most of these fraud and infiltration schemes entailed systematic employment of accounting manipulations, false invoicing, document forgery, theft of firms' IDs or the establishment of shell companies only for the purpose of obtaining the funds. For example, in most countries, government compensantion schemes were designed in order to reimburse firms in affected sectors a certain percentage of the turnover of the previous year (i.e. 2019). If a firm were able to increase artificially the 2019 revenue, then it could obtain a higher compensation. For this reason, some criminal organisations acted as *illegal service providers* by providing entrepreneurs with false invoices so as to pump artificially their turnover. This scheme was observed in the investigation *Background* of the Italian police (Ministero dell'Interno 2020b), which further confirmed the specialisation of some Italian mafia groups (first of all, the 'Ndrangheta) in providing false invoicing services to complicit entrepreneurs (Transcrime, 2018).

Changes in firms' ownership during the COVID-19 pandemic

As mentioned, Transcrime carried out an analysis of the Italian firms which changed owners in the first wave of the pandemic, i.e. between April and September

2020 (Bosisio et al. 2021). The aim was to detect possible anomalies and red-flags among new owners which could signal risks of organised crime infiltration and money laundering. In the period under observation, 43,700 firms changed their beneficial owners (BOs) – a decrease of 38.7% with respect to the same period of the previous year. This is a sign of the economic crisis determined by COVID-19, which generated a downturn of mergers and acquisitions worldwide. However, despite the decrease in ownership changes, interesting patterns can be observed (see Bosisio et al. 2021 for full details):

- 7% of new beneficial owners are foreign, almost twice the number of foreign BOs of Italian firms;

- 1.3% of firms changing ownership have links with countries in AML and Tax blacklists and grey lists.[4] This percentage is five times higher than the Italian average;

- Among these firms, use of trusts, fiduciaries and other corporate vehicles is 10 times higher than the Italian average;

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4   Here, we took into account the FATF black- and grey-lists, the EU AML list of 'high-risk third countries', the EU list of non-cooperative tax jurisdictions. All lists were update das of February 2021, which means that they did not include Malta, grey listed by FATF in June, 2021; if Malta were included, a higher volume of links with blacklisted jurisdictions would have been observed.

- 1.5% of new beneficial owners are politically exposed persons (PEPs); but in some provices this percentage goes up to 12%.

While obviously these data shall not be interpreted necessarily as evidence of money laundering or criminal infiltration, they are symptomattic of the increasing secrecy and opacity of the investments occurred in Italian firms during the COVID-19 pandemic, which would deserve further investigation, especially in those areas and sectors with greatest concentration of anomalies.

Discussion and conclusion

The typologies of organised crime infiltration which have been reported here, while focusing mostly on Italy, show some common patterns which is worth highlighting. First, the employment of a mix of *modi operandi*, ranging from traditional methods (such as extortion, usury and 'extortive offering') to more sophisticated and concealed ones, such as the use of financial service companies as shells behind which to conceal usurious lending and economic support. Second, the overlap between governance-type OC (which Italian mafias typically belong to) and financial and white-collar offences. Most schemes of infiltration observed in the COVID-19 pandemic, either aimed at acquiring control of firms in 'pumped' sectors, or at defrauding public subsidies and recovery funds, see criminal organisations acting as *illicit financial services* providers, first of all of false invoicing and document forgery. Third, the role of facilitators played by intermediaries (like colluded entrepreneurs and PEPs), and the wide employment of trusts, fiduciaries and other opaque legal arrangements, often established in secrecy jurisdictions (also within the EU). In this sense, the cases of infiltration observed during and in the aftermath of the pandemic seem to confirm the same patterns which have been highlighted in recent years by scholars (Kruisbergen et al. 2015; Levi and Soudijn 2020; Transcrime 2018; Savona et al. 2016) and practitioners (see, above all, the new Europol's SOCTA report 2021). COVID-19 may only accelerate this process, and shift it towards different sectors - those which, for the variety of reasons above described, have become more vulnerable or more attractive to organised crime because of the pandemic.

The amount of cases and investigations identified to date is yet too limited to empirically demonstrate the numerous alerts issued by police, FIUs and other public authorities on the increased risk of organised crime infiltration of the economy as a consequence of COVID-19. However, the volume of recovery funds and public subsidies which are and will be distributed by governments (for example, in the framework of the 'NextGenerationEU' programme) is so exceptionally wide that it will undoubtedly attract fraudsters and organised criminals. What strategies can be implemented so as to prevent this to happen?

The question is to what extent the traditional AML countermeasures – centred around the 'gate-keeping' role of banks and other obliged entities, and the monitoring of FIUs - will be sufficient for this purpose; or alternatively whether a new monitoring system should be conceived. The amount of recovery funds, with the millions of requests which will be submitted by firms worldwide, will probably require an extensive screening which cannot be left only to obliged entities among their daily AML customer due diligence controls. Given the type of infiltration and fraud schemes observed to date, which entailed complex corporate structures and triangulations across firms and individuals from different countries, it seems necessary to have centralised watchtowers able to span across sectors and on the entire national (and supranational) domain. Dedicated governmental agencies, equipped with big data analytics capacities, and full access to police archives and business registers, may be a proper solution. Current technologies and algorithms are now able to process millions of transactions and entities, and early detect high-risk cases on the basis of accounting and financial red-flags (see e.g. Ravenda et al. 2015; Transcrime 2018) and ownership anomalies (Jofre et al. 2021; Aziani, Ferwerda, et al. 2021; Garcia-Bernardo et al. 2017). Given the interlinks between organised crime and financial offences, the new agencies should be able to dialogue, equally, with FIUs, anti-corruption authorities, tax agencies and anti-trust authorities; but act as clear reference authorities for the due diligence of COVID-19 related recovery funds.

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The Transnational Cybercrime Extortion Landscape and the Pandemic:

Changes in ransomware offender tactics, attack scalability and the organisation of offending

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Abstract

The sudden disruption of work, recreation and leisure practices caused by the COVID-19 lockdown caught many organisations and their employees unaware, especially during the move towards working from home. This led adaptive cybercriminals to shift their own focus towards home workers as a way into organisational networks. The upshot was a massive acceleration in major cyberattacks upon organisations and a noticeable shift in offender tactics which scale up levels of fear in victims to encourage payment of the ransom. Such tactics include a shift towards naming and shaming victims, the theft of commercially sensitive data and attacks targeting organisations which provide services to other organisations. These developments have also led to changes in the organisation of offenders online. Such attacks negatively impact upon national and international economies as they try to recover from lockdown. Drawing upon an analysis of 4000+ cases of ransomware attacks collected for the EPSRC EMPHASIS & CRITICAL research projects, this paper charts the evolution of ransomware as a modern cybercrime and also changes in the organisation of cyber-criminals as well as highlighting some of the implications for transnational policing.

Keywords: Cybercrime, Ransomware, Crime and the Pandemic, Organised Cybercrime, Policing cybercrime

Introduction[1]

The 2020 COVID-19 lockdown immediately disrupted the routine behaviour of billions of people globally by suddenly forcing them to stay indoors and, in many cases, work at home. In order to pass their time many took to their computer devices for leisure and pleasure and to communicate with others. Very often, workers had to use their personal computing equipment along with varying levels of personal security and risk awareness. These changes in routine behaviour were not lost on criminals who quickly adapted in order to defraud individuals and organisations or gain access to their networks to inflict more cybercrime. While there were no new patterns of cybercrime victimisation, other than pandemic specific scams, there was, however, a visible change in cybercrime attack vectors which accelerated the exposure of new pandemic related vulnerabilities and increased the overall scale and impact of cybercrime. These changes are best demonstrated by the case of ransomware, which seeks to encrypt the victim's data and de-encrypt it once a ransom payment

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has been made. Through a gradual process of evolution, ransomware has effectively become a sophisticated billion-dollar business and ransomware actors are now supported and facilitated, by a 'professional' ecosystem that is incentivised by the high crime yield. Not only does this high yield provide serious future career alternatives for hackers during a time when job market security is uncertain, but it also introduces serious new challenges for law and enforcement as well as hindering economic recovery from the lockdown.

The first part of this article looks at how lockdown disrupted routine behaviours and changed cybercrime attack vectors. The second part explores the evolution of ransomware tactics to show how changes in cybercrime have accelerated because of lockdown. The third part shows how cybercrime actors are now supported by a 'professional' ecosystem incentivised by the high yield which facilitates modern cybercrime. Before concluding, the fourth part will briefly outline some of the new challenges that modern cybercrimes are posing for law makers and law enforcement, not least the need to focus different resources upon the various stages of the ransomware attack so that they can more effectively respond co-productively with cybersecurity stakeholders.

Lockdown and the disruption of routine behaviours

Different national announcements of lockdown took place over a period of weeks in March 2020 (see BBC, 2020)[2]. As indicated above, the public were forced to stay indoors to prevent the spread of the virus and many took to their computers to pass the time, but very often used those same computers to also work from home. To illustrate the disruption of routine behaviours *Pornhub*, a site which enables pornographic materials to be uploaded and accessed by users, revealed in their 'insights' section[3] the changes in access to their web sites worldwide. Figure 1 plots these reworked access statistics to show the changes on three dates where various countries decided to lockdown (March

11, March 14, and March 23). The data show large spikes in access, which indicate marked changes in user's online behaviour and activities and also changes in their perceptions of risk, accepting more risk, either for gain or excitement or both, although not discussed here further, see the application of Katz's 'sneaky thrills' to cybercrime in Goldsmith & Wall (2019).

Pornographic videos and other accessed materials[4] are known vehicles for carrying malicious advertising (malvertising), malware (malicious software) or links to droppers which can launch botnets, trojans or ransomware and lead to further victimisations (Dashevsky, 2017). Please note, however, that this is not to suggest that pornographic materials are the only means of delivering malicious software. Computer Gaming, for example, is also known for making users vulnerable to victimisation. The key point here is that computer devices mainly used for leisure purposes were, after lockdown, often the same computers that were also used for working at home. Because of this many organisations were caught unawares and were forced to quickly improvise to improve their safety, although some were clearly not quick enough.

Changing cybercrime attack vectors
The increase in vulnerabilities arising from using personal computers for work and also any changes in perceptions of risk arising from working in an unsupervised setting did not go unnoticed by cyber offenders. Adaptive offenders exploited the new situation by, on the one hand, mounting arrange of COVID related scams and frauds, such as fake PPE materials, fake COVID medication through to fake COVID inoculation certificates and also Tax refund scams (Action Fraud, 2020). On the other hand, the changed situation also provoked an expansion in phishing expeditions, which send out provocative emails designed to 'engage' a public with more time on its hands. Phishers, who usually send spams out on behalf of clients (scammers or engagers[5]) as-a-service, deliberately "use human cognitive and behavioural attributes to design phishing attacks and to trick their victims into taking desired actions" (Abroshan et al., 2021). Using the COVID pretext, spam emails either sought to directly scam recipients, usual-

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2   This paper focusses upon the initial 2020 Q1 lockdown which occurred very quickly and caused the most disruption to established behaviours and practices. Adaptation to the change prepared the public and organisations for subsequent lockdowns and did not have such as sudden impact upon behaviours as Figure 2 indicates.

3   N.B. URL not supplied. I am grateful to Pornhub insights for supplying these statistics. Italy, Spain, Russia, UK, Australia chosen because of lockdown dates to visualise its impact.

4   This is meant as a statement of a general change in behaviour across the field and does not suggest that Pornhub specifically would be prone to these malicious downloads.

5   I am differentiating here between scammers who seek to trick recipients into parting with money and engagers who seek essential information about recipients to use against them in the future.

Figure 1 Disruption to normal flows of online behaviour: Access to Pornhub before and after the COVID-19 lockdown in 2020 – source: reworked Pornhub Insights Data ©David S. Wall 2021
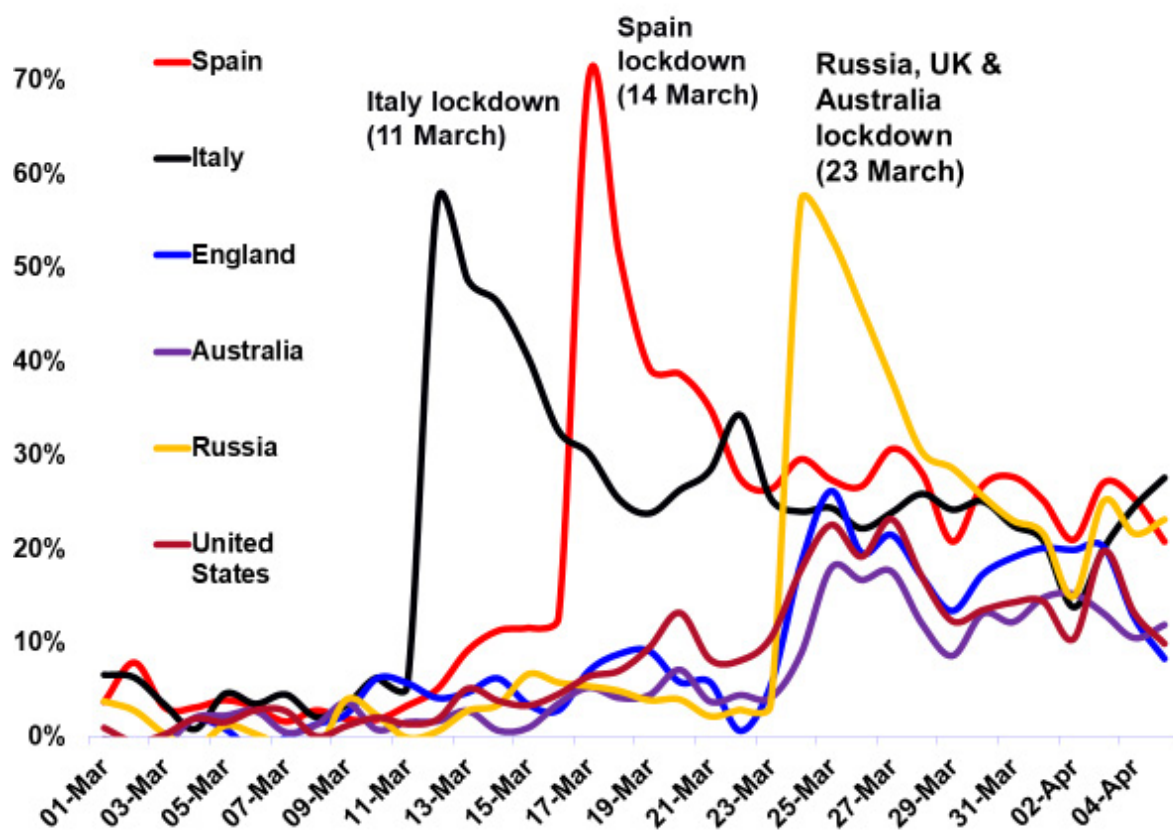
ly putting a COVID twist on the everyday scam emails (NCSC, 2020), or they sought to 'engage' recipients in other ways, if only to get them to respond. Sometimes simply by provoking recipients to elicit a rude response from them. In the latter case any response provides the engager with basic information that the email account is active and often some basic contact details also if the responder includes their signature. This information is particularly useful if the signature relates to the recipient's workplace as it indicates to the engager that the responder could be further pursued and provoked into providing more information that could be used to gain access to their work organisation[6].

The outcome of these phishing 'engagements' is that, on top of already existing low-level cybercrimes (bulk scams and minor hacks etc.), there was also an increase in higher-level keystone cybercrimes such as data theft, DDoS attacks, ransomware and cryptocrimes (and more). IBM found that ransomware and data theft were in the top three cyberthreats, with data theft having increased by 160% since 2019 (IBM, 2021: 7). They are called Keystone cybercrimes here because they support further cybercrimes. Data theft, for example, is an essential part of most modern cybercrimes and can be sold in dark markets (Hutchings & Holt, 2015) and used to launch low level cybercrimes (see further the discussion over cybercrime cascades in Porcedda & Wall, 2019; 2021).

There has also been a noticeable change in offender tactics, accelerated by the COVID lockdown vulnerabilities identified earlier, from attacking individuals towards attacking organisations - which are much more lucrative targets than individuals. Importantly, lower-level ransomware attacks on individuals appear to remain much as before, but what the data and cybersecurity literature indicates that either new sets of criminal actors have entered the field or existing actors have escalated their ambitions (see for example Accenture, 2021).

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6   See further Abroshan et al., (2021) for their useful discussion on the act of phishing.

In order to commit a cybercrime, offenders are increasingly using more blended tactics that combine more social action with scientific tactics. Encryption plus data exfiltration and naming and shaming victims, as well as using DDoS attacks create even more fear of business disruption and compliance (Abrams, 2021a). On the technical side, ransomware operators have also begun using affiliate business models in their crimeware-as-a-service market to distribute malware to victims (see Kivilevich, 2020). On the social side they are also using human-operators to infiltrate networks (explained later). Offenders are themselves using various facilitators or brokers to help them facilitate their crimes which constitute the cybercrime ecosystem. Finally, there has been a noticeable shift towards ransomware operators designing ephemeral business models around their cybercrime operations which plan-in a sudden obsolescence to frustrate law enforcement efforts (Connolly & Wall, 2019).

The *effect* of changing cybercrime attack vectors

The effects of changing cybercrime attack vectors are manyfold, to the point that they are now a serious threat to global economies and the post COVID economic revival. On the one hand the financial impact is crudely measured in billions of dollars. Emsisoft (2021) examined the impact on 10 western countries and estimated that $18 billion was paid in ransoms in 2020 and that the overall cost of repairing damage could be as much as $80 billion (Emsisoft, 2021). On the other hand, the financial impact is a direct result of the increase in the scalability and overall impact of cybercrime activities which is illustrated in Figures 2 and 3 which both show the sudden rise in Q2 2020 in the overall volume of attacks (against an already rising trendline) as these tactics become effective. The decline in Q4 2020 and Q1 2021 is due to various ransomware gangs, such as MAZE, stopping their practice. The rise in Q2 2020 is partly due to them rebranding and relaunching, but also could be related to lockdowns during the second or third wave of COVID.

Figure 2: Increase in attacks multiple service victims 2019-2021 (with trendlines) N.B. Q3* 2021 is estimated from 1 month of data (Source: Main EMPHASIS RWDb n=4500+, ©David S. Wall 2021
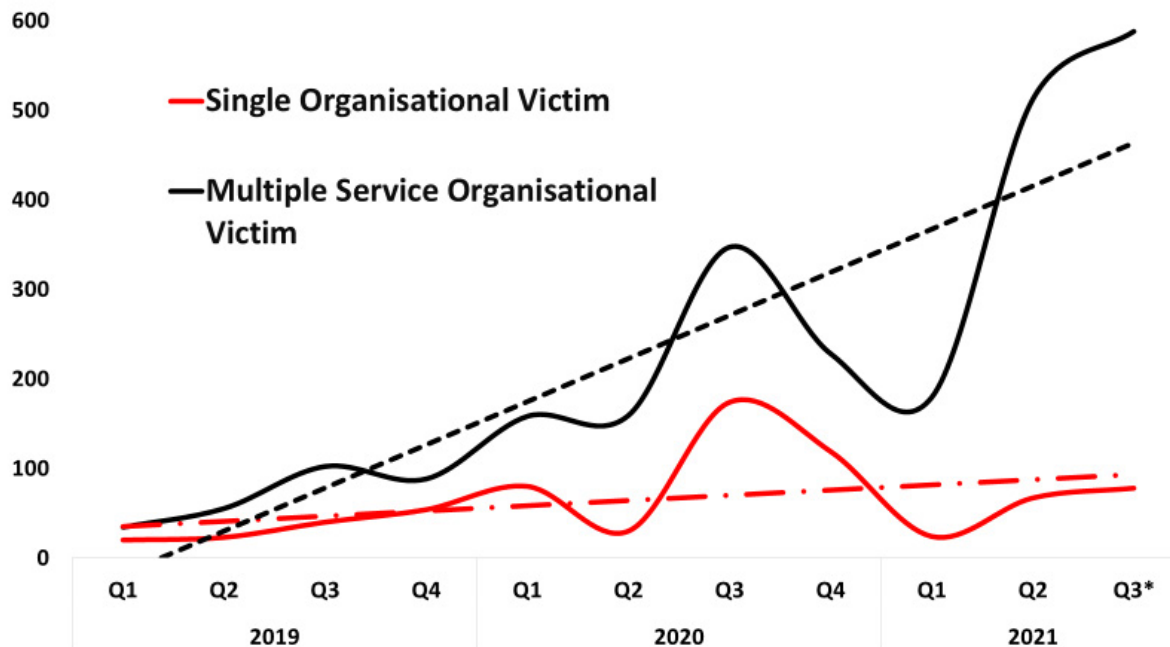
The high incidence of ransom payment, as indicated above in the Emsisoft (2021) research, is a major incentive to offenders. This figure is driven by the increased use of cyber-insurance by victims. Whilst cyber-insurance does help them recover from attacks, the insurance companies' tactic of tending to pay the ransom to get the business operating again as soon as possible is controversial as it inadvertently fuels the crime (Scroxton, 2021).

The growth in the economic yield from cybercrime not only increases the criminal appetite and encourages more cybercrime, especially the keystone cybercrimes which harvest data for use in further crime. As mentioned in the introduction, the high yield combined with the demands for skills created by the cybercrime ecosystem unfortunately provides serious future career alternatives and further training for hackers in an uncertain job market. Moreover, all these effects create serious new challenges for law and enforcement, making it harder to police.

The evolution of cybercrime demonstrated by the development of ransomware from RWv.1 to RWv.2 to RWv.3

Lockdown provided a fertile environment for accelerating trends in cybercrime that were already starting to take place and ransomware is a useful case study of a modern cybercrime which can illustrate this. The following findings are drawn from two EPSRC funded research projects into ransomware (EMPHASIS) and Cybercrime in the Cloud (CRITiCaL) and also informed by analysis of an open-source database of over 4500+ ransomware attacks compiled for these projects between 2011 and today[7].

Ransomware has always been a blended cybercrime as it *comprises more than one crime*, a computer misuse offence, and a crime of extortion, but the distribution of the blend has changed overtime as it has evolved. Figure 3 indicates three approximate phases of the evolution of ransomware which are related to the balance of

misuse and extortion and the ways it is organised and delivered.

In the RWv.1 era (approx. 2011-2018)[8], the main modus operandi was to send out ransomware as an attachment in a phishing expedition (spamming) and to use the text of the message to get the recipient to open the email and respond. When responded to, the attachment or link, infected the recipient's computer causing them to pay the ransom to obtain a decryptor. These were fairly unsophisticated low-yield operations which relied on bulk-victimisation.

The RWv.2 era, in contrast (2018-2021), stepped up attacks on businesses away from individuals, and from late 2019, introduced additional social and business pressures into the mix. Not only did the attackers steal essential data before encryption but they also named and shamed businesses via their web sites. Both, to force victims into paying the ransom.

The RWv.3 era began to creep in from late 2019 to overtake RWv.2. Using similar tactics on businesses to those in RW v.2, RWv.3 combines these with additional higher order hacking skills to enter networks and move laterally across them to make the attack more effective. Some attacks are also 'human operated' rather than use the 'spray and prey' (attack everybody and see who falls victim) approach. In addition, RWv.3 offenders increase the scalability of their attacks by tending to attack multiple service providers and their supply chains to make secondary victims of the primary victim's clients and increase their pain enough to pay the ransom. Collectively, these actions increased the overall scale of attacks. What was a simple automated crime has become industrialised, for want of a better expression, by combining more *science* related skills with more intense *social actions* ranging from socially engineering victims into responding and also human-operated ransomware.

There are two important aspects of a ransomware attack a) getting into the system (*infiltration*) and attacking it b) and (*exfiltration*) stealing key data and getting victims to pay the ransom by creating fear and furthering their pain.

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7 N.B. There is a long list of caveats with regard to the ransomware data that will be explained in future publications. It is open source, mainly gathered by keyword searches. Since 2018/19 the attackers have changed the nature of their attacks and also (since 2019) publicly named victims. This information has leaked out to the public by journalists writing in the public interest, but is itself controversial as it arguably adds another layer of victimisation (see Brian Kreb's 2021 article).

8 N.B. The dates are approximate. This describes the crypto-ransomware era and please note that there were pre-crypto ransomware eras (see further Connolly & Wall, 2019).

Figure 3: The evolution of ransomware that increase the scalability of attacks (*Source:* Main EMPHASIS RWDb n=4500+, ©David S. Wall 2021
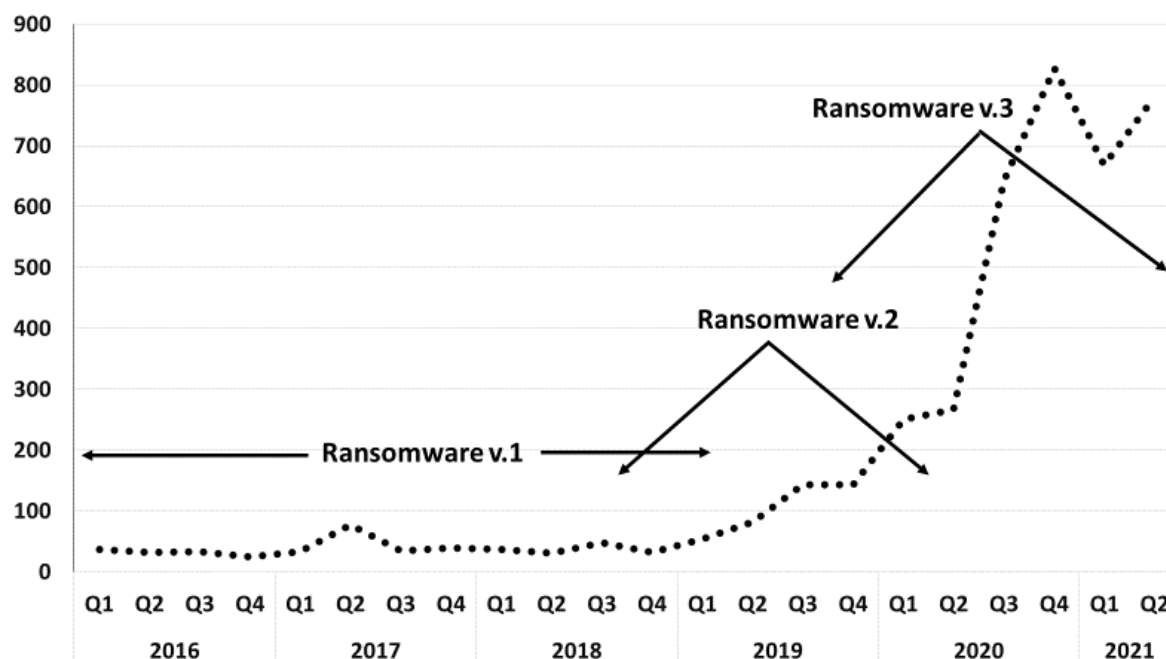
Infiltrating networks

As ransomware operators moved from RW1 to RW2 there was a noticeable shift in infiltration tactics away from 'spray and prey' tactics in phishing practices towards big game hunting. Big game hunting is a targeted phishing attack deliberately designed to ensnare specific groups. In the case of ransomware attacks, the focus is upon key managers in organisations who have access to the business network and often have higher user privileges. Big game hunting was accelerated by exploiting lockdown disruption and insecure work-from-home systems. Once in an organisation, hackers move laterally to find key data to steal and plant the encryption process. They may be in a network for anything from two weeks to over a year (Ilascu, 2020).

Attackers seem to activate the encryption process at vulnerable times for an organisation, especially at the start of public holidays when staffing tends to be at its lowest (Connolly & Wall, 2019; 10). The evidence is that ransomware gangs are increasingly attacking managed service providers and cloud-based-services, as described in RWv.3. Here, one attack hits between seven to ten of the victim's client organisations and their supply chains, and scales up the impact of the attack. In some cases, tens if not hundreds of secondary victims were involved also resulting in class actions and fines from information commissioners, which intensifies the pressure on the primary victim to resolve the situation quickly (Gatlan, 2020). The statistics and trendlines in Figure 2 & 3 show how attacks on multiple service organisations have markedly increased since mid-2019 as RWv.3 developed traction.

One rather surprising finding from the analysis of the data was that ransomware gangs tend to target SMEs (small & medium sized enterprises) ($2m-$10m-10-50 staff & $10m-$50m-50-250 staff) rather than very large business (see Figure 4). One reason for this may be that the cybersecurity of SMEs is less sophisticated, yet they can still afford cyber-insurance or to directly pay a relatively large ransom (see Figure 4). Very often these victims are part of a supply chain, so their own victimisation also impacts upon their clients. Repeat victimisation is becoming a new feature of ransomware following an increase in double attacks. This is either because the 'initial access brokers', who gain access to networks and then sell the access credentials to ransomware gangs sometimes install additional backdoors and also sell the details of these unpatched vulnerabilities to other ransomware groups (De Blasi, 2021). Or, sometimes ransomware attackers (affiliates) will use two types of ransomware, layering them on top of each other to 'net them the most money for the least amount of effort' (Callow cited by Newman, 2021).

**Figure 4 Ransomware type by Organisational size – Data snapshot of the top 8 ransomware groups, June-Oct 2020
n=500 cases *(Source:* N&S RWDB, ©David S. Wall 2021)**
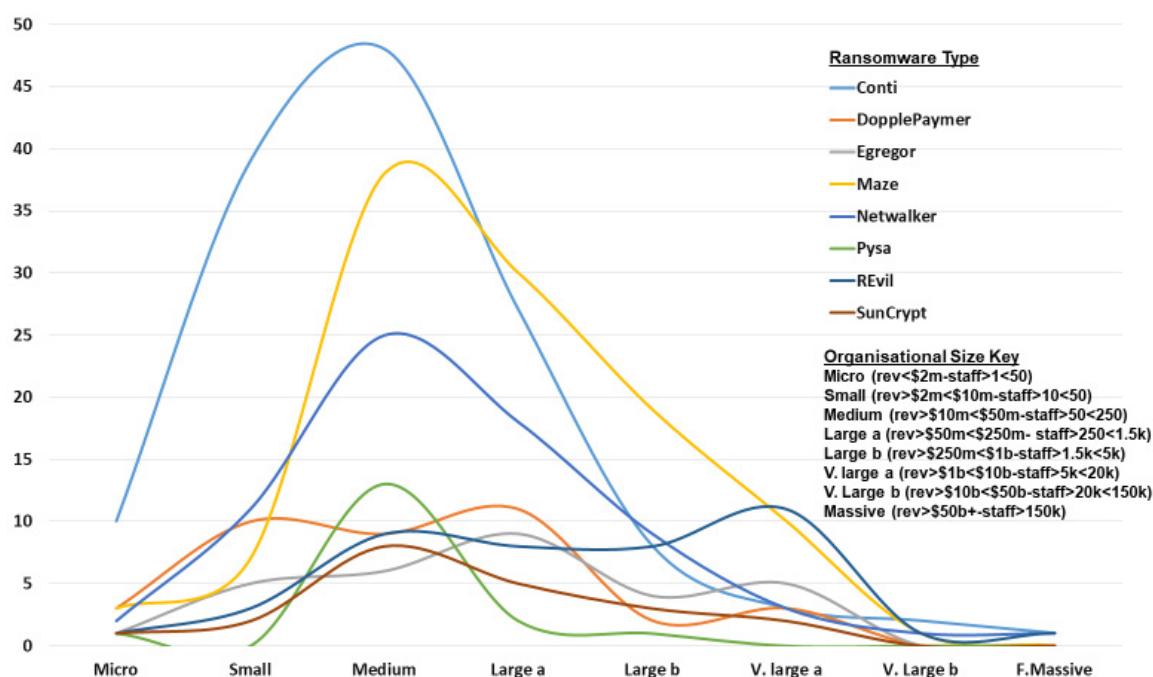
Exfiltration

Once the encryption process has taken place, the ransomware gangs seek to make victims pay the ransom by disrupting their business flow. New tactics are constantly being employed to increase victims' fear and discomfort. They do this by naming the victims on their own 'leak' sites, often publishing an example of confidential business information, sometimes including trade secrets exfiltrated. The ransom note usually states that if the ransom is not paid in cryptocurrency by a specific deadline, then further portions of the stolen data will be published on the leak site. To make their operations more effective and compete successfully in a competitive market for victims some ransomware operators such as MAZE have formed cartels, in which they shared resources (for a fee) such as their leak websites where they publicly humiliate victim organisations in to paying the ransom demand[9].

A further threat was to publicly auction off the stolen data if the ransom is not paid[10]. Others levy two ransoms, the first is for the decryption key and the sec-

ond to delete the copied data so that if cannot be re-used (Krebs, 2020). Because of the central importance of data in a ransomware attack, ransomware attacks should now be regarded as major data theft incidents, plus officially reported data losses helps the statistics. The next stage of ransomware Rv.4 will probably be characterised by data becoming the key focus of ransomware as it develops into data extortion (Acronis, 2020) and/or by statecraft and the deliberate targeting of specific infrastructures (NCST, 2021).

Figure 5 shows the major ransomware groups/ gangs currently operating or have operated since 2019 (those presently dormant are prefixed with a * - which could quickly change as they rebrand). Fig. 5 illustrates both the number of victimisations and also the volume of specific ransomware gang operations. Importantly, the number of victimisations is not an indication of their success. Some of the groups with smaller numbers of victims are primarily 'human operated' and focus upon infiltrating the larger organisations and have, as such, a much higher rate of victimisation to ransom payment.

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9   The MAZE group which ceased in late October 2020, affiliated various other ransomware gangs (Lockbit, Suncrypt, RagnarLocker) although they and also analysts have since stated that the MAZE cartel was not actually a cartel (DiMaggio, 2021).

10 One group (RagnarLocker) even took out Facebook ads to further shame their victims (Bracken, 2020), and some Ransomware groups now include DDoS attacks during demand period (Abrams, 2021).

Figure 5 The most prevalent Ransomware gangs in terms of organisational victimisation - Jan 2019 - May 2021
(2676 Orgs - 32 Groups (with over 4 victims) - *source* EMPHASIS/CONTRAILS Main RW Db). © David S. Wall 2021
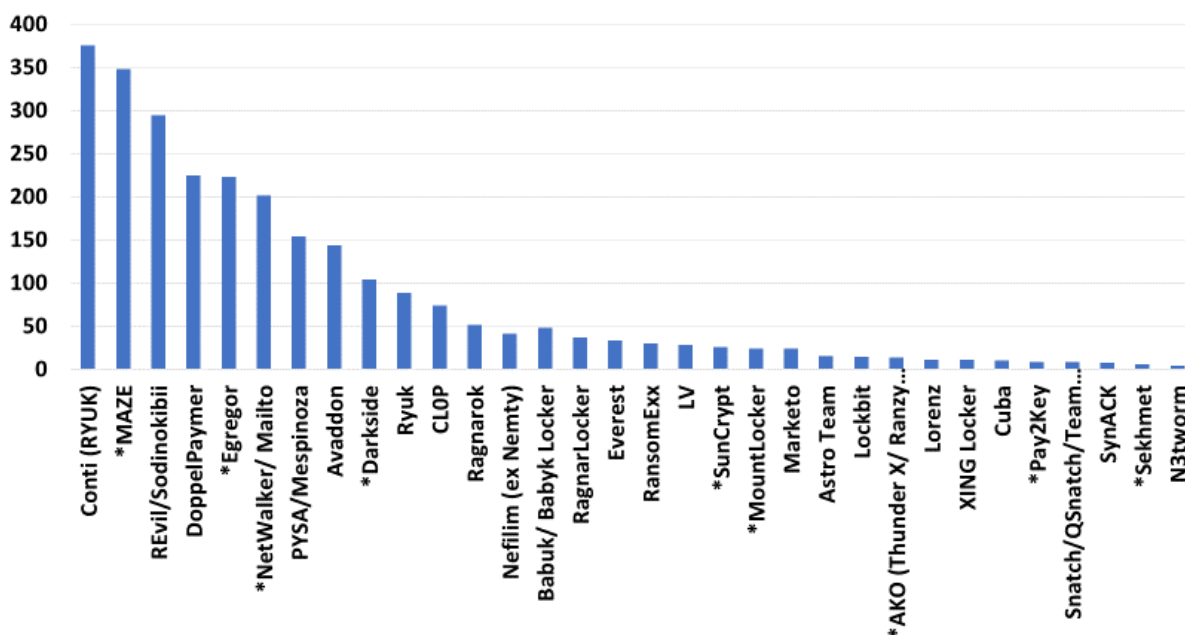
N.B. * denotes not functioning at time of writing in May 2021.

Support from a transnational organised 'professional' ecosystem

A deeper look at the infiltration and exfiltration of a ransomware attack process reveals *nine distinct stages* which each require the application of different specialised skill sets to make them successful. These stages illustrate how the attack process has become more specialised and even professionalised as ransomware has developed. The analysis also clearly illustrates that each stage is developing its own practices alongside detailed skill sets and tailored organisational forms and bespoke business models to make the services available to clients. This specialisation steps up scalability. In theory, an individual (the lone operator or single empowered agent - Pease, 2001) could carry out each of the functions needed to perform each stage of the attack such as phishing for credentials, exploiting vulnerabilities, infiltrating and exfiltrating and then monetizing the crime. The problem for the lone offender, however, is that these processes are not only laborious and time consuming, but the yield is low, and the risk of capture is high. In order to make cybercrime pay and turn it from a hobby to a career choice, primary offenders need to outsource some of the basic functions of the crime to organised specialists with highly devel-

oped skills sets and organisations in order to increase their crime yield and lower their risk of capture. Figure 6 shows this transition from hobby to career criminal.

The following nine stages of ransomware are ideal types as the organisation of ransomware groups can vary considerably, but this model identifies both the component stages and also the key skill sets needed to carry it out.

1. *Reconnaissance of potential victims and identification of access points to networks.*
Knowledge is gathered about whether a vulnerability such as a zero-day exploit can be applied to a particular organisation's network. This information is often identified by a specialist who compiles it and sells it to other offenders, for example, an 'initial access broker' via one of the forums or dark market sites.

2. *Gaining 'initial access' to the victim's network.*
The application of the vulnerabilities in stage 1 is often applied by an 'initial access broker', who is either commissioned to gain access, or sells on the access credentials directly via a forum or dark market site. If the latter, this data may be bought by an affiliate of a ransom-

Figure 6: From hobby to career cybercrime © David S. Wall 2021

Databrokers – Crimeware aas – Spammers – Darkmarket – Botherders – IT Services - Monetisers

Increased size = increased risk & complexity

Specialisation reduces risk & complexity

The division of labour divides as the scale of the operation grows

The Individual
Performs all functions
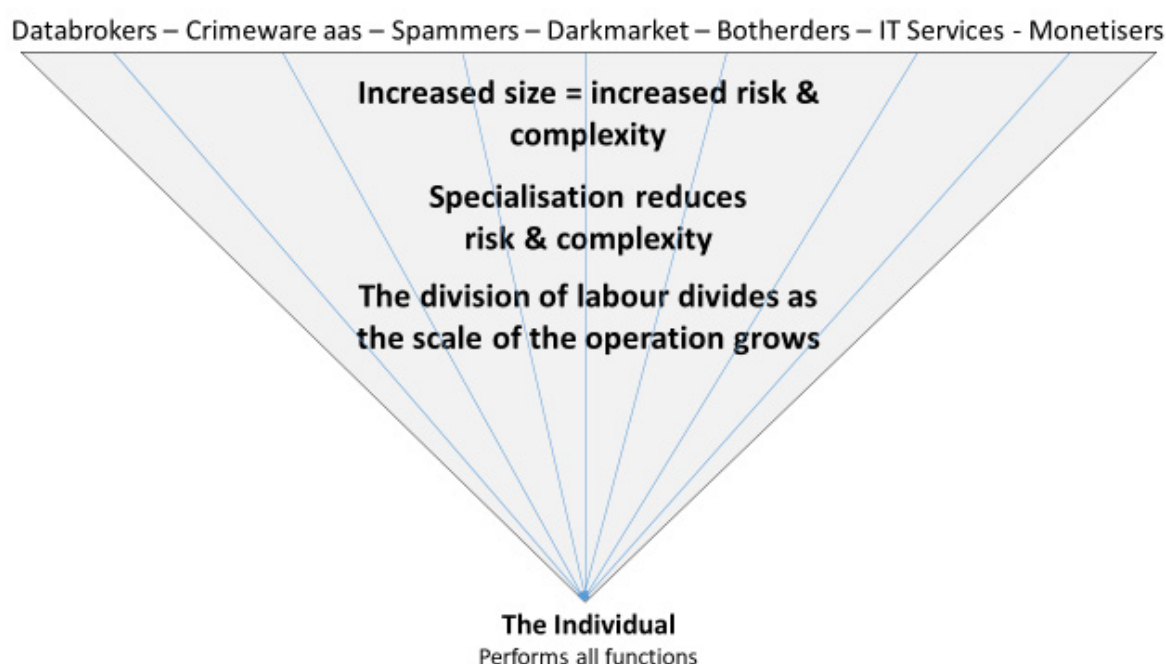
ware group who is trusted by the operators to use their ransomware for a fee.

3. *Escalating computing access privileges in the system.*
Once in a victim's network the 'affiliate' will seek to increase their user privileges and move laterally across it. As with information gained from earlier stages, these advanced credentials may also be sold on or developed by the attacker (the affiliate).

4. *Identifying key organisational data that will cause most pain when taken.*
During the process of lateral movement, the affiliate will seek out the victims most precious data, especially as commercially sensitive business data in the form of personal details of employees, suppliers, or clients.

5. *Exfiltrating the key data and installing ransomware.*
Attackers will copy the data and exfiltrate it before setting in place the brand of ransomware to which they are affiliated. Once exfiltration is completed, they will plan the activation of the encryption process, usually when the organisation is at its most vulnerable, for example at the beginning of a holiday period (Connolly & Wall, 2019; 10).

6. *Naming and shaming victims & levying the ransom demand.*
Once encryption has been activated, affiliates will use the ransomware brand's specific leak web site to name and shame the victim. Initially they will make public, evidence of the attack, then portions of the data if the payment deadlines are not met. After encryption, some ransomware groups also bombard their victims with DDoS attacks to hinder attempts to restore functionality to their systems. Other groups also use other media, such as Facebook advertisements (RagnarLocker).

7. *Payment of the ransom demand in cryptocurrency.*
Ransom payment amounts in cryptocurrency will have been set by a 'ransomware consultant' who based them on the victim's worth as estimated from information gathered during infiltration and lateral movement across the victim's network. Victims are usually given precise instructions by their attackers about their attack and how to pay the ransom, often including a third-party call centre hired to assist victims buying cryptocurrency to make the payments.

8. *Monetarising the crime.*
Once the ransom has been paid, it has to be converted from cryptocurrency into fiat (government-issued) money. To assist with this, the attackers hire in the

services of monetisers who will launder the cryptocurrency via various means (including an army of money mules) to turn it into untraceable cash.

9. *Post-crime "getting away" with it.*
Once the attackers have received their fiat money, they then have to invest it in such a way that it avoids the banks' suspicious transactions radar. Post-crime is possibly the stage which carries most risk for the offender. For this purpose, a different set of financial advice will be sought which locates the crime gains in the legitimate economy.

This brief summary of the stages of a ransomware attack suggests that the key attackers (usually affiliates of the operators) are not usually involved in all of the main stages of the attack and facilitate the attacks by either hiring in a range of skill sets, or outsourcing services, or buy access information (or all three). Identifying these specific stages is useful for the discussion over policing ransomware because they suggest and profile some 'pinch' points where law enforcement and cybersecurity could focus resources in order to interrupt the ransomware victimisation cycle. Importantly, they also suggest some useful principles for understanding the structure of the organisation of cybercrime.

The emergence of the cybercrime ecosystem
The success of ransomware has led to the creation of a cybercrime ecosystem. New forms of online organised crime groups are emerging to commercially deliver key skill sets and services to those wanting to launch ransomware attacks. Importantly, these organisational forms tend to be flat ephemeral structures, often with planned-in obsolescence. They are not hierarchical and sustained (like Mafias), in fact they are relatively disorganised by comparison.

The Cybercrime Ecosystem (see Figure 7) enables the various cybercrimes to be carried out more effectively whilst minimising risk and maximising the return to the offenders. It gives offenders without skill sets access to those who have them and the organisation to carry them out. The skill levels and resources required to launch such attacks are now much higher and greater than the lone operator - the single empowered agent - could ever muster. The modern ransomware process, in effect, symbolises the industrialisation of cybercrime. Functions that were once performed by an individual are now performed by other more specialised and skilled individuals who are highly organised, even

though this may be in a distributed, rather than hierarchical manner of the traditional organisation (Musotto & Wall, 2019). What is clear from the ransomware timelines illustrated earlier in Figures 2 & 3 is the upscale in both the volume and also the impact of the attacks. This upscale is the product of rationalisation (whether intentional or not) within the organisation of cybercrime and also changes in tactics to adapt to changing markets for victims for which offender groups fiercely compete. Recall, the shift outlined earlier, in targeting attacks from individuals towards organisations and latterly to Multiple Service Organisations (MSOs) which provide services for other organisations. On average a victimised MSO affects 10+ client organisations and in turn their thousands or even millions of their clients[11].

Ransomware as a service
Central to the cybercrime ecosystem as it applies to ransomware is the emergence of Ransomware as a service (RaaS) in which operators rent out their ransomware to attackers (as affiliates) for a fee or a percentage of the ransom. Some RaaS is *open* to anybody who will pay, other RaaS is *closed* and operators will only accept known and trusted individuals as affiliates in return for a percentage of the ransom (Coveware, 2021). There is also a division between 'spray and pray' and human operated RaaS which, respectively, map on to the 'open' and 'closed' models. The former is usually bulk delivered by phishing (spammed) emails which trick (socially engineer) victims into opening an attachment or URL link so as to infect their computer. The latter is operated by individuals who infiltrate networks and manipulate their way around them, rather like a virtual burglar.

Melandab and colleagues researched the sale of RaaS on popular web forums and dark markets prior to Q4 2019. They found that the impact of the earlier 'open' RaaS was much more limited than was often declared in the cybersecurity media (Melandab et al., 2020). They also found that ransomware becomes a serious threat when committed by experienced professional cybercriminals who use darknet forums as a recruitment ground for their operations. Both Melandab et al. (2020), Coveware, (2021) and other commentators have found that the ransomware operators, who own and operate the malware are different actors to the affiliates who rent the ransomware to use it to attack. So, ransomware operators not only spread their risk, ef-

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11 A calculation based upon the EMPHASIS research.

fectively hiding behind affiliates, but they also plan obsolescence into their business model. Groups such as MAZE, NEMTY and various others abruptly ceased operations when they were most successful and cashed out without giving any warning and abandoned anything left, thus leaving little trail to follow. Some operators, such as SHADE left the field and even posted decryption keys when they shut down (Abrams, 2020).

Further conceptualisation of the Cybercrime Ecosystem

The emergence of a cybercrime ecosystem to help facilitate all aspects of cybercrime is key to understanding the increase in cybercrime victimisation. Aspects of this ecosystem were illustrated earlier in the nine-stage analysis of a ransomware attack. At each stage various services, information or data are required to organise and facilitate the crime and enact it. There are eight key services that are required to achieve this.

- *Databrokers* trade in stolen datasets, potential victim profiles and also provide access to illegal data streaming. This data can be used in different ways by different offender groups in both the formation and the delivery of the services.
- *Crimeware-as-a-service (CaaS) operators* may develop and hire out, for example, Ransomware-as-a-service, DDoS (Stressers) or other malware (e.g., Zeus banking trojans). CaaS may also include spammers who hire out spamware-as-a-service for phishers, scammers and fraudsters, and bot-herders who rent out command and control botnets (robot networks) which send out emails in mass volumes. Often these services are automated via a dashboard for buyers to buy a specific service, choosing the size and type of attack and also the victim group which itself is the product of acquired data. Very often CaaS brokers will market their services with trial offers and run them as subscription services (see Musotto & Wall, 2020).
- The *Darkmarketeers* provide, sell, or trade services, usually via the ToR network (Onion Router) and notable dark markets have included Silk Road 1 & 2, Dream Market etc.
- *Bullet Proof Hosters*, as the title indicates, run 'Bullet Proof' hosting services that provide 'protected' networked services that for a price allow unrestricted content to be uploaded and disseminated. Such services could be used, for example, to host dark markets or a ransomware victim leak www site. They effectively reduce client risk and protect clients from being caught, which is covered by the premium paid for the service.
- *Monetisers* organise and manage a financial return to the attackers by laundering cryptocurrency and turning it into fiat currency (for a fee).

- *Bug (Crime IT) Brokers* support the various Crimeware as a Service by writing and selling code and vulnerabilities[12], also solving any additional coding problems attackers may have.
- The *Infiltration brokers* are '*Engagers*' who 'engage' with victims via their responses to phishing and obtain credentials and sell or pass this information on to 'Initial Access Brokers' who gain entry and sell the access details.
- The final group are *Negotiators* who negotiate the amount of the ransom payment. They comprise of 'Ransomware Consultants' on the offender side (Gemini, 2021) and 'Negotiators' on behalf of the victim. Both are crucial to ransomware operation (Murphy, 2021).

The services are not arranged in Figure 7 in any particular order because there is no set order, however, together they form the cybercriminal ecosystem that enables ransomware and, more specifically, modern cybercrime more generally.

These roles are in a constant state of flux as both technologies and crime practices evolve. They 'automate' roles once performed by lone offenders and help the attacker (primary offender) to reach the scalability and volume of crime needed to achieve a sizable return for their investment. Buying in a particular service from the cybercrime ecosystem not only saves the offender time but can also offset liability. Each service tends to be run by one or more kingpins in the more traditional organised crime parlance. They frequently recruit affiliates to distribute their service, usually for a percentage of the profit or a flat fee. In effect, this is the new face of transnational organised crime. It is distributed rather than hierarchical and appears disorganised by comparison.

The new challenges of cybercrime for law and enforcement

The developments described above are generating new challenges for law and its enforcement. They are also burdening policing services that are themselves struggling to maintain their own level of service during periods of lockdowns. One of the main challenges is that ransomware is a blended cybercrime, in fact, a collection of cybercrimes that once stood on their own and hard to conceptualise in law. In the UK ransomware is both a computer misuse crime and also a crime of extortion (and various other offences relating to

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12 This is part of the research completed for the CRITiCAL project and is forthcoming. An early outline is found in a paper 'Cybercrime Kingpins' delivered at the American Society of Criminology in San Francisco on 14 Nov. 2019.
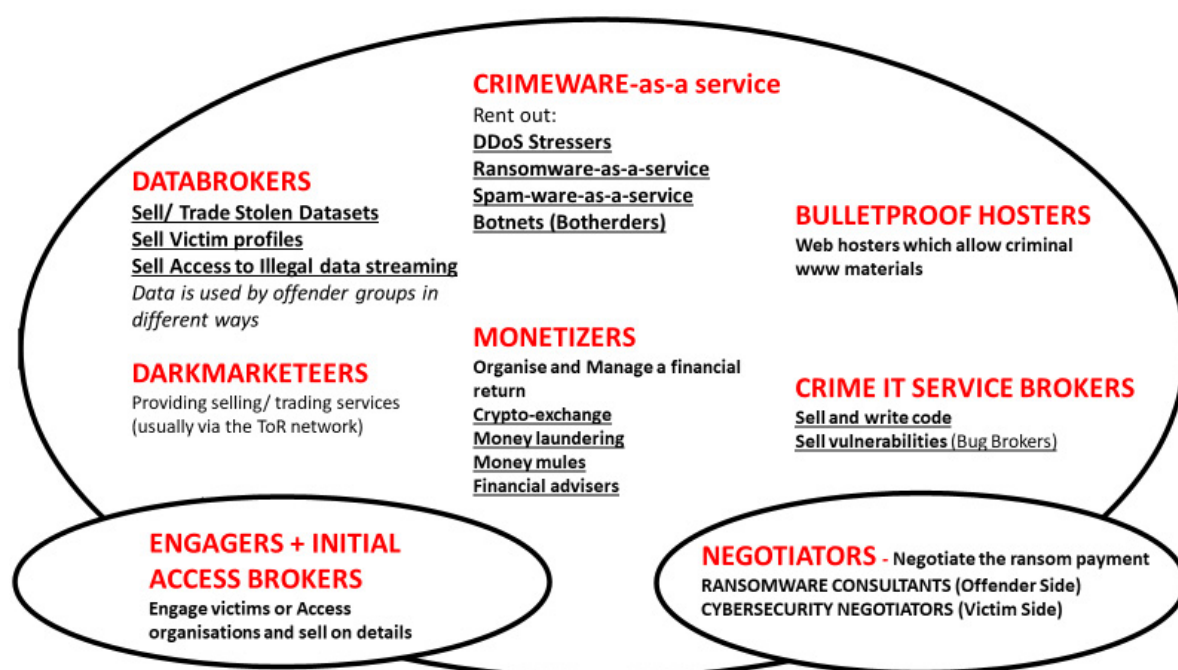
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phishing and the theft and abuse of personal information and even money laundering) - very different types of offending. Each component also falls under different bodies of law which not only makes ransomware statistically problematic and hard to record, because in the UK the 'ransom' and the 'ware' can be recorded in either the computer misuse or economic crime statistics. But it also means that the responsibility for policing them (technically) fall under different policing agencies[13]. Agencies, which often have untrusted relationships with industry, especially when victims pay the ransom because they do not want their victimisation to become public for commercial reasons and want to resolve the matter quickly and privately – which leads to under-reporting. Even though the data exfiltration tactic has made ransomware a data breach issue which has led to naming the breaches being considered as fair game for many journalists and commentators. This conflict between the public and private interest hinders the search for justice and is one area then needs to be resolved if intelligence and data is to be shared to resolve this common problem.

Because ransomware is under-reported, it is therefore under-prosecuted, which means little court experience across the criminal justice system. Its transnational nature is also problematic as many attack groups deliberately seek victims in other jurisdictions due to cumbersome cross-border legal and policing rules. The final problem for policing is that ransomware may be big globally, but is small locally, so local police get little experience of dealing with the crime. The UK ROCU (Regional Organised Crime Unit) model, however, connects local and national police forces regionally and it is fairly well regarded by police officers and also respected by industry (see Connolly & Wall, 2019).

Yet, despite these systemic hurdles, there have been a number of significant policing successes. The transnational interdisciplinary and cross-sector 'No More Ransomware' project has broadly been successful in galvanising 170 partners from the public and private sector. Its decryptors "have helped more than six million people to recover their files for free", allegedly saving at least €1billion in ransomware payments (Gatlan, 2021). There have also been a number of examples of cross sector interventions which have resulted in law enforcement taking down botnets that distribute ransomware across the networks prior to attacks (e.g., TrickBot in Oct 2020, Emotet in Jan 2021). Also, taken

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13 Different UK police forces can separately carry responsibilities for cybercrime and economic crimes. Overlying this, the National Crime Agency can carry responsibilities for offences which span arrange of regions. In practice, these differences are largely resolved by the Regional Organised Crime Units (ROCU) which interface the different agencies involved.

down have been bullet proof hosting services such as Maxided (Osborne, 2018) which hosted now defunct cryptomarkets such as Silk Road, Hansa etc. Furthermore, there have also been significant arrests of ransomware operators, for example, in July 2020 in Belarus the operators of GandCrab (RaaS) ransomware operators which ran between Jan 2018 and Mid-2019 were arrested. This was followed by the arrest of a GandCrab affiliate in March 2021 in South Korea. Furthermore, members of the Egregor (RaaS) ransomware group which ran between Sept. 2020 and Feb 2021 and which allegedly comprised of members of the MAZE group, were arrested in the Ukraine in Feb 2021 (Abrams, 2021b). Also helping the policing mission have been the ransomware groups by hindering each other's operations[14], which could either indicate the strength of competition between the various ransomware operators illustrated earlier or it could simply be sour grapes by rivals (Schwartz, 2021).

The main challenges for police forces lie in working out who the actual offenders are in complex cybercrimes like ransomware and to be able to apply the relevant bodies of law to prosecute them, especially as the organisation of the crime is so distributed and there are a number of different actors involved.

Conclusions

Rather than generate new cybercrime opportunities, the COVID-19 lockdown has led to the acceleration of cybercrime trends that were already in play. In this sense, the lockdown was not transformative for cybercrime, but it was an important enabler. Highly adaptive offender groups took advantage of new opportunities presented by the lockdown disruptions, as they so often tend to do. What these lockdown-accelerated trends have done is to illustrate that ransomware is not only a major form of modern transnational organised crime, but it has become a multi-billion-dollar industry which keeps on growing and will continue to grow (Ilascu, 2021). It is also changing the way that criminals organise themselves online. Modern cyber-offenders appear to be following a business manual rather than an organised crime playbook. The complex and specialised organisation of ransomware and other major

cybercrimes is not only developing a professional ecosystem to enable and support it, but it is also providing offenders with alternative career choices.

If ransomware is an example of cybercrime as industry, because its evolution bears the hallmarks of industrialisation, then it also creates a perfect storm for law enforcement by introducing a number of contradictions that frustrate its prevention, mitigation, and investigation. Central to the discussion over the policing (investigation), mitigation and prevention of ransomware is a decades-old divide between the public interest and the private interests. Even after three decades of cybercrime, it is still the case that whilst the various parties involved in policing cybercrime still all agree on the problem and end goal, they still disagree about how to achieve them. As a consequence, the various stakeholders, at a broader level, rarely work together and share data as they need to do if they are going to co-own the problem and work together to co-produce a solution by sharing data and expertise. At a more basic level, however, one way of beginning this process is to break down the attack process into the various stages and focus upon these in order to stop the attack. This includes also focusing upon the various components of the cybercrime ecosystem.

Recognising the different stages of the attacks will enable law enforcement and cybersecurity to more effectively apply the right skill sets and marshal the key agencies involved to achieve the correct and most effective and appropriate level of Policing. This analysis will hopefully augment some of the bigger governmental programmes that have been announced this past year, such as the multi-skilled and multi-agency Ransomware Task Force (IST, 2021). Also, the continuation of the anti-ransomware initiatives such as no more ransom.org. To paraphrase the World Economic Forum, cybercrime is much bigger than governments (Mee & Chandrasekhar, 2021). Everyone involved has to work together and co-own the problem in order to co-produce the solution, words that are easier to say than put into practice.

Funding

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14 The REvil (Sodinokibi) ransomware gang, for example, claimed to have identified the real identities of the persons behind the MAZE service, their rival, stating that they have direct connections with the Russian Government and comprise of eight individuals who are involved with the Russian FSB.

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The Impact of COVID-19 on Cybercrime and Cyberthreats

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Abstract:
The paper describes the evolution of cyber-attacks, based on different official reports from law enforcement agencies and cybersecurity companies. It focuses on the EMPACT priority 'cybercrime-attacks on information systems' and analyses the main types of malware (banking trojans, ransomware, cryptojacking and botnets malware) and their evolution during the COVID-19 Pandemic. The paper presents both online threats vectors (email-based attacks, web-based attacks, social media scams) and offline threats and their impact to the information systems. Disruptive technologies like artificial intelligence, quantum computing, 5G technology, Internet of Things (IoT) and social networks presents a lot of advantages, but also can be used by bad actors against us. The present article underlines the importance of education and training in this field and recommends measures to fight with the cybercrime phenomenon.

Keywords: cybercrime, cyber threats, cyber-attacks, social-media, COVID-19 patterns

Introduction

The measures taken by national governments starting with March 2020, increased the use of digital applications by more than 10 percent, and together with this the insecurity of the population. Coronavirus had made a clear path for cybercriminals, that through use of social media and messaging platforms gained easy access to potential victims with a significant increase in activity related to child sexual abuse and exploitation and medical related scams. According to Facebook's Government Requests for User Data, the social media platform (includes Instagram) saw more than 150,000 total law enforcement agency requests in the European Union in 2020 (first six months) — with over 40.000 requests more than in 2019. In the same period of 2020, Europol received from the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children and increasing number of referrals, compared with the same period in 2019.

The online distribution of counterfeit pharmaceutical and sanitary products, including coronavirus related test and vaccines, has been also demonstrated as a criminal opportunism during the COVID-19 pandemic. In August 2020, European customs agencies inter-

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cepted more than 8.5 million masks without CE certi-fication.

According to the latest statistics, the COVID-19 Pandemic has hastened the digital transformation process, with numerous services moving to the internet. The new technology offers many benefits, but it also poses certain hazards, as present flaws might be exploited by cybercriminals. The frequency of cyber-incidents and cyber-attacks has recently surged dramatically due to a lack of Cyber security awareness and training.

Cybercrime is currently taking advantage of people's insecurity and demand for information. The prevalence of security incidents in recent years has substantiated the continuous escalation of vulnerability exploitation within the virtual information environment, predominantly by organized groups and state actors. The complexity of cyber-attacks has also developed at an alarming rate, culminating with some being publicized as global epidemics due to their impact and spread momentum. Boosting the preparedness and advocating for a proactive approach in the design and creation stages of digital infrastructure are the key efforts for making cyber space a safe place for everyone.

The predominant types of cyber-attacks deployed today are carried out through malware applications, denial of service (DoS, DDoS), by disrupting and exploiting electronic mail and web applications, the last category being represented by APT attacks (Advanced Persistent Threats).

The data from the most used social media platforms indicate an increase in users over three year time, increasing year by year, because the access to internet and smart devices that people gain each year and an increase caused by the Pandemic.

Eurofund suggests that close to 40% of people working in EU, converted in full telework in 2020[2]. Having more than 80 percent of people worldwide encouraged to work remotely, further on, having as most increased cybercrimes on socials media phishing attacks, malware sent via chats, social media scams and child sexual abuse materials. Social engineering and phishing changed and evolved, having users thirst for information mainly on the subject of COVID-19.

Types of criminal acts

Malware attacks
As reported by the European Union Agency for Cyber-security (ENISA) in their most recent report, this is the most widespread type of cyber-attack. Malware, or malicious software, is any malicious code or program that is harmful to a computer system. These pieces of malicious code can be viruses, trojans, worms, and, based on their scope, ransomware, spyware, rogueware or scareware (ENISA, 2020).

According to ENISA, there are more than 230.000 new strains of malware released on internet every day. In addition, there is a 50% increase in malware designed to steal personal data and a 265% increase in file-less malware (ENISA, 2020). Traditional malware was inserted in files, so the users could infect their computer systems when they downloaded these infected files from websites or emails. Nowadays, the cybercriminals use malicious scripts that can compromise the targets when the users access the compromised websites and they do not have properly configured cybersecurity tools.

During the pandemic time, there was an increase of the malware designed for mobile devices. Most of the users do not protect enough their mobile devices, so the cybercriminals can easily compromise them in order to steal personal data or online banking credentials.

2   EUROFUND Report on Living, working and Covid-19, 28 September 2020

Figure 1: ENISA Top Threats 2019-2020

Computer viruses are applications with varying destructive capabilities, developed to infect one or more computer systems. *Viruses* have two main features: they attach to harmless software and self-multiply in the infected system. *Trojans* are software that obfuscate their true nature through legitimate operations, but in actuality, they attempt to expose system and application vulnerabilities and to open ports in the operating system, to provide attackers with an avenue of remote access. *Computer worms* are applications with destructive effects, which infect the computer system and then propagate through the Internet. (Mihai et al., 2018) Worms are designed to search for systems with vulnerabilities, infect them and perform harmful operations, and then try to proliferate further.

Adware is a class of software that, once installed on a system, aggressively displays ads to the user. *Spyware* is software that covertly captures various information about the user's activity, such as keystrokes, screenshots of their running applications or private details on their Internet usage. *Ransomware* is a type of malware that restricts access to the computer's data by encrypting files, and prompts the user to make a payment in order to remove the encryption. Some types of ransomware encrypt data on the system's hard drive, as well as any files it can access over the local network and in Cloud storage, to affect backups, while others may simply block the computer system and display messages to coerce the user into paying the ransom.

Rogueware are applications that mislead users about false infections detected in their operating system and request payment in order to remove them. Most often, these claim to remove malware found on computers, but in fact install additional software with increasingly detrimental effects. *Scareware* is software that induces anxiety and fear in users for the purpose of marketing fake applications. (Mihai et al., 2015)

Denial of service attacks

Compromising the operation of certain internet services is the explicit, intended consequence of a Denial of Service (DoS/DDoS) attack. One of the most common DDoS attacks is a packet flood, through which a disproportionate number of Internet packets are sent to the victim's system with the goal of blocking all available connections and slowing network traffic to a crawl, leading to a complete halt of the services provided by the attacked system.

Email attacks

Attacks that make use of or target email have increased exponentially lately. Based on the cyber criminals' ultimate purpose, email attacks can belong to one of several categories. *Email bombing* consists of sending a significant number of emails with large attachments to a specific email address. This leads to the exhaustion of free space on the server, making that email account inaccessible. (SRI, 2021) *Email spoofing* is the practice of sending emails with a modified, most often fake

sender's address, in order to hide the real identity of the sender and potentially extract confidential details or the data needed to access an account. *Spamming* is an attack comprised solely of sending unsolicited emails with commercial content. The purpose of these emails is to trick their recipients into accessing disreputable sites and buying services or products of a dubious nature. *Email phishing* is a rapidly-expanding attack type, in which specifically-crafted messages are sent to determine recipients to provide bank account information, credit card details, passwords, or other private data, (ENISA, 2020) or to make a payment seemingly on behalf of someone known to the victim.

Web application attacks

Attacks targeting Web applications are experiencing rapid growth, propelled by the explosive development of Web technologies that support and enhance the design of highly interactive, dynamic content platforms, with consistent user interaction. Such platforms inevitably contain vulnerabilities that can be leveraged by cybercriminals to bypass security measures and gain unauthorized access to user data. (ENISA, 2020) The most common forms of this attack are:

SQLi: SQL injection (Structured Query Language) is the practice of altering an SQL query that is transmitted to the database by inserting data, which changes the logic and purpose of the query. This enables the attacker to avoid authentication mechanisms.

XSS (Cross-Site Scripting) allows an attacker to modify or insert scripts into a site, which are then executed in the victim's browser when they access the infected site.

Cross-Site Request Forgery (CSRF): a malicious actor exploits an established trust relationship between authenticated users and a web application. Thus, they gain control over the victim's session, allowing them to impersonate a legitimate user and perform any action within their context.

Man in the Middle: Cyber criminals intercept communications between users and websites in order to retrieve unencrypted credentials.

Advanced Persistent Threats

Advanced Persistent Threats represent complex cyber-attacks performed over an extended period of time, aimed at a particular target, with a number of objectives, such as compromising the system, extracting information on / from the victim or, occasionally, planting misleading information. Targets can be governments, military installations, corporations, or even individuals. (Mihai et al., 2018) An APT is typically comprised of several complementary cyber-attacks. Generally, such an operation encompasses collecting data on the target, identifying a potential exploit and pursuing it, infecting the target and leveraging any extracted information, in accordance with the overarching scope. Conventionally, only terrorist organizations or nation states possess the technological capability and the requisite financial resources to manifest such elaborate cyber-attacks.

Child Sexual Abuse Material

During the pandemic, most of the schools converted into online learning. Non-stop access to internet, to social media platforms and messenger applications, have raised the danger for potential victims. During the 2020 pandemic start and governments' imposed lockdowns, more that 168 million children had to stay home because of the closed schools, says UNICEF United Nations Children's Emergency Fund[3].

Based on the available data[4] from the European Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation (Europol), an increased level of activity for distribution of CSAM has been identified between March and April 2020 (Fig. 2). The activity range from children who are being forced by criminals to produce material, or offenders that gain access through social media or messenger platforms using phishing methods. (Europol, 2020)

During the pandemic the modus operandi of cybercriminals in connection with CSAM, particularly happened via P2P network sharing, one to one distribution and mass sharing on social media platforms, using fake social media accounts, encryption (TOR, VPN), in the end materials ending up on dark web (Europol, 2020). Data from NCMEC, the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, and Europol indicated 106% increase of this type of activity.[5]

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3 https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/schools-more-168-million-children-globally-have-been-completely-closed

4 EUROPOL Report on Exploiting isolation: Offenders and victims of online child sexual abuse during the COVID-19 pandemic, June 2020

5 Europol report, Catching the virus- cybercrime, disinformation and the Covid-19 pandemic, 3 April 2020

Figure 2: NCMEC, May 2020
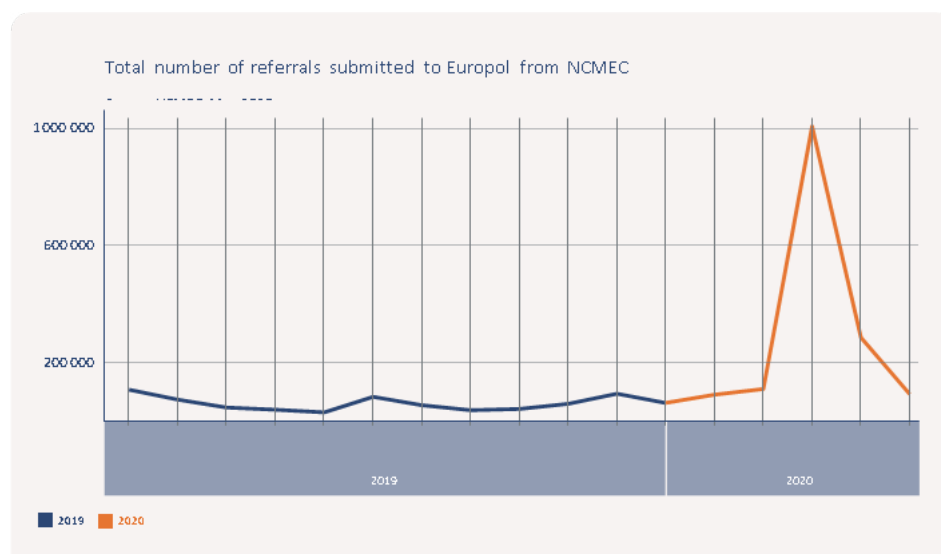
Another type of cyber-harassment that increased in 2020 was zoom bombing, when unwanted users gate-crash video meetings with malicious purposes, including sharing pornographic or hate images. (Interpol, 2020)

Regarding law enforcement training needs, based on the report[6] released by CEPOL, the European Agency for Law Enforcement Training, OSINT tools, methods of investigations, dark web as well as prevention and cooperation should be tackled further on by law enforcement training needs. (CEPOL, 2020)

Medical scams

Covid-19 related scams witness three waves of development, starting with the first and second wave related to cures, prevention and fake testing kits and finishing with fake pharmaceutical treatments. (Council of Europe, 2020)

The study[7] published by the Journal of Medical Internet Research Public Health and Surveillance, mentions that over 6 mil tweets and over 200.00 Instagram posts with suspect marketing sale of covid 19- health products from March to May 2020. The posts included fake covid products for sale, fake testing kits, prevention cures, effective vaccine or therapeutic treatments. (Tim et al., 2020)

Cyberbullying

The European Commission defines cyberbullying as repeated verbal or psychological harassment carried out by an individual or a group against others through online services and mobile phones and based on the recent reports, hate between kids and teens during online classes increased with 70%, especially during Zoom or other videoconferencing platforms, but also on gaming platforms as Discord, or other popular social media applications.

Conclusion

The COVID-19 pandemic altered the lives of billions of people in the world and due to governments' lockdowns, new-normal changed the way of living and working and more and more attention was directed to the internet-based activities.

While greater usage of digital solutions has helped to reduce the chance of getting the virus while also allowing individuals to continue working and studying, it has also raised cybersecurity concerns. Simply said, the more people who use digital platforms, the higher the strain on existing cybersecurity systems, and the greater the risk of possible breaches. With the rate of proliferation and complexity of cyber-attacks at all-time highs, steps must be taken to deploy safeguards that can effectively block the vast majority of these attacks, as well as promote a safety-first mindset that increases public preparedness and reduces the attack

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6   CEPOL report on Impact of COVID-19 on law enforcement operations and training needs, 1st of July 2020

7   Tim KM et al, Big Data, Natural Language Processing, and Deep Learning to Detect and Characterize Illicit COVID-19 Product Sales: Infoveillance Study on Twitter and Instagram, August 2020

surface of the human factor as an ever-present potential vulnerability.

In order to provide the opportune climate, implementing and maintaining proper cybersecurity regulations to equip the involved institutions with the means of preventing the escalation of ruthless attempts, and developing a cyber-defense culture, have to be done through active joint effort between public, private and research entities. Given the magnitude of the threat, many governments and corporations in emerging nations may lack the expertise and resources required to put in place sufficient measures. Law enforcement training, as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic patterns, should address new modi operandi in cyberspace and use of open source intelligence, in the long and short term. Law enforcement faces multiple

challenges and due to lack of capacities in training and gaps in legislation and jurisdictional issues, further on investigative capacities being assigned to other crimes during the pandemic, delays of information exchange and lack of in-time identification of criminals increased.

We can conclude that cybercrime is already a viable career choice and continuous cooperation training would keep LE up-to-date and aware of the challenge. Cyber-attacks and crimes can only be reduced to an acceptable level by increasing education, prevention, and as well as digital literacy programs to be strengthened. Further on and law enforcement agencies' resources to prevent and investigate cybercrime must be bolstered through targeted recruitment of young personnel.

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Domestic Abuse During the Pandemic:

Making sense of heterogeneous data

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Abstract

From the onset of lockdown measures in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, experts and frontline responders alike warned of the detrimental impact these measures may have on the prevalence and intensity of Domestic Abuse. Early statistics issued by police and social sector organisations did not always, however, paint a clear picture corroborating this assumption. Data collected during the early stages of the pandemic for a special report to the European Commission by the EU-IMPRODOVA project, indicated similar divergent trends in the effect of lockdown measures on Domestic Abuse. This paper compares data from four countries involved in the IMPRODOVA project (Austria, Finland, Hungary and Portugal) and develops three hypotheses to make sense of heterogeneous data on Domestic Abuse during the pandemic. After identifying possible statistical artefacts, as well as socio-legal and sector specific influences on detection and enumeration as probable causes, this paper discusses the centrality of differentiating among types of Intimate Partner Violence as the key to making sense of such heterogeneous data. Pointing to the structural analogies between lockdown-settings and *Coercive Controlling Violence*, we argue that divergence between the stagnation or decline in police data and the universal increase of calls to the social sector, must be understood as the strengthening of perceived control by perpetrators over victims of Domestic Abuse in the short-term during lockdown. By the same logic, service uptake in the medium and long-term can be explained by a perceived loss of control by perpetrators as lockdown measures are relaxed. Finally, we argue that identifying this dynamic of risk and delayed reporting is central to the development of adequate interventions and responses by frontline responders in the ongoing pandemic.

Keywords: Domestic Abuse, COVID-19 Pandemic, Coercive Controlling Violence, Lockdown, Domestic Violence Data

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Introduction[2]

From the onset of lockdown measures and shelter-in-place orders in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, academic scholars and expert practitioners alike, warned of the detrimental impact such measures were likely to have on the prevalence and intensity of Domestic Abuse. In early April of 2020, with over ninety countries worldwide in lockdown, first reports of sharp rises in Domestic Violence and Abuse began to emerge, prompting the Executive Director of UN Women to issue a statement on what was termed *the shadow pandemic* of violence against women and girls. (Mlambo-Ngcuka, 2020) Despite the urgency of the issue, particularly in the face of the spread of the Delta variant, the unequal distribution of vaccines, and their implications for the persistence of the pandemic on a global scale, large gaps remain in the empirical analysis of the effects of pandemic response measures on Domestic Abuse.

In an effort to contribute to addressing this gap, the IMPRODOVA project launched an impromptu investigation during the early stages of the pandemic, relying on established cooperation with frontline responder networks to compile the most recent publicly available, sector specific data. This investigation was submitted as a special report covering all eight IMPRODOVA consortium countries to the European Commission[3]. Mirroring the focus of the IMPRODOVA Project, this report covers data on Domestic Violence and Abuse in general, focusing mainly, however, on different types of Intimate Partner Violence within one household. While the term Domestic Violence (DV) covers a wide range of violent acts between any two people within the same household, its colloquial understanding mainly refers to acts of physical violence. In recognition of the detrimental effects and centrality of the non-physical forms of violence in abusive relationships, the term Domestic Abuse (DA) is often employed to emphasise the importance of power and control, as well as the use of tactics of subjugation such as "threats, intimidation, stalking, destruction of personal property, psychological abuse, economic oppression and restrictions on liberty" (Burman & Brooks-Hay, 2018, p. 68). The data

collected, as well as the analysis presented in this paper, predominantly concern physical violence and different forms of abuse occurring between intimate or romantic partners sharing the same household (Intimate Partner Violence - IPV).

Against the backdrop of the unanimous warning by frontline responders and experts in the field at the beginning of the pandemic, the data collected by the IMPRODOVA consortium yielded unexpected results: While the informed assumption (based on theoretical considerations, research on other epidemics and social crises, and early surveys) that lockdown measures would correlate with an increase in Domestic Abuse was broadly confirmed in our findings, the data collected using different indicators across eight countries encompassed several conflicting trends. Maintaining the assumption that the effects of lockdown are most likely to have a generally homogenous (negative) effect on Domestic Abuse (despite national differences and varying lockdown settings), the following paper explores the heterogeneous elements of the data on Domestic Abuse during early lockdown settings. The comparative exploration of four cases – Austria, Finland, Portugal and Hungary – will serve to develop three hypotheses that may be used to make sense of heterogeneous data on Domestic Abuse during the pandemic. The first two hypotheses, relating to heterogeneous data as statistical artefacts and the impact of socio-legal and sector specific organisational aspects, seek to explain divergences as issues of enumeration and detection. The third hypothesis posits, that in order to explain this heterogeneous data, it is necessary to differentiate between different types of Intimate Partner Violence and employ an analysis informed by the internal dynamics of abusive relationships.

Domestic Abuse in the context of the pandemic and lockdown measures

The expected effects of the pandemic and lockdown measures on Domestic Abuse

The informed assumption that the pandemic and lockdown measures will negatively affect the prevalence and intensity of Domestic Abuse is based, on the one hand, on risk factors that are shown to negatively affect perpetrator behaviour, and, on the other, the increased vulnerability of victims in the context of the pandemic. Factors negatively affecting perpetrator behaviour include increased economic insecurity, psychological

3   The IMPRODOVA report on Domestic Violence during the Pandemic will be available as an open-access publication (Springer) upon completion of editing.

stress, as well as increased alcohol and substance abuse. Simultaneously, the vulnerability of victims is increased through social isolation, the reduction of opportunities to report abuse or leave an abusive relationship, as well as the increased risk of violence against children.

A number of early studies and meta analyses of data from different countries (Piquero et al., 2021) support these assumptions. A study employing victimization surveys shortly after lockdown measures came into effect in Argentina, for example, showed a positive link between lockdown restrictions and Intimate Partner Violence. The study compared responses by women whose partners were exempt from complying with quarantine, with those whose partners were not, finding evidence that the impact quarantine measures have on the time couples spend together, as well as the stress on income, correlate with increases in intimate partner violence. (Perez-Vincent et al., 2020) Similar results were reported in Tunisia, where a study found a strong positive correlation ($p < 0.001$) between lockdown and an increased risk of violence for women who had experienced abuse before the onset of such measures. (Sediri et al., 2020)mental health concerns linked to the lockdown have quickly risen. This study aims to assess the effect of the COVID-19-related lockdown on Tunisian women's mental health and gender-based violence. An online survey was conducted, using the Depression Anxiety and Stress Scales (DASS-21 Alcohol and substance abuse, which number among the strongest predictors for increased violence, were also shown to increase as risk factors during lockdown. (Campbell, 2020) Indicating an increased vulnerability of victims, Sediri et al. (2020) reported that women experiencing abuse during lockdown, experienced more severe symptoms of depression, anxiety and stress than before such measures entered into force. A study conducted in Buenos Aires also reported an increase in psychological violence by 76% relative to pre-lockdown results (Perez-Vincent et al., 2020), findings that were corroborated in the Tunisian survey (Sediri et al., 2020)mental health concerns linked to the lockdown have quickly risen. This study aims to assess the effect of the COVID-19-related lockdown on Tunisian women's mental health and gender-based violence. An online survey was conducted, using the Depression Anxiety and Stress Scales (DASS-21.

The situation is likely to be exacerbated in most countries by a reduction in the availability of front-line responder services including restricted or limited access, strained resources, shifts in priorities by front-line responders and delays in processing. Equally, the inaccessibility of social infrastructure is likely to have decreased detection of Domestic Abuse, as well as interventions and support by the social environment of victims and perpetrators.

Expectations for Domestic Abuse data

These informed assumptions on the negative affect the pandemic and lockdown on Domestic Abuse go hand-in-hand with expectations for how these developments should present in corresponding data collected by different sectors. Understanding Domestic abuse as a crime of opportunity which increases in prevalence with a rise in exposure to perpetrators (Chin, 2012), and taking into account the exacerbation of risk-factors (Campbell et al., 2003; Walby et al., 2017; Campbell, 2020) during the pandemic, the expectation is, that corresponding indicators for Domestic Abuse would generally rise in a relatively homogenous way. An increase in Domestic Abuse prevalence should be mirrored by a general increase in restraining orders, arrests and emergency calls. The increased severity of violence and abuse should be mirrored in crime reports and emergency room admissions. At the same time, it can be expected that the barriers to accessing services may be artificially lowering the case numbers, presenting as disruptions to the detection of Domestic Abuse. Similarly, these statistics need to be analysed against the background of a general drop in reported crime across all countries during lockdown. Nevertheless, and particularly when measured proportionally to an overall drop in reported crime, the overall trend is expected to rise.

It is also important to note, that this expected rise in Domestic Abuse cases should present relatively homogeneously across data collected by different institutions, sectors, and countries. It is unlikely, that the effect of pandemic response measures on Domestic Abuse will vary dramatically between different countries employing comparable lockdown strategies, despite significant geographical or socio-economic differences. This assumption is supported by studies, systematic reviews, and meta-analyses comparing data from multiple countries such as Argentina, Australia, China, Cyprus, France, Greece, India, Singapore, South Africa, Tunisia, UK, and the USA. (Mittal & Singh, 2020; Pentaraki & Speake, 2020; Perez-Vincent et al., 2020; Roesch et al., 2020; Sediri et al., 2020; Piquero et al., 2021) Irritations to detection and enumeration, such as barriers to ac-

cessing services, may vary in the long-term between countries and individual institutions, depending on the availability and possibility to adapt infrastructure to overcome access issues. Particularly the data currently available, however, stemming from the early months of the pandemic, is most likely to reflect countries and institutions which were comparably unprepared for the immediate switch to service provision under lockdown settings. The assumption of a relatively uniform effect of the pandemic and lockdown on Domestic Abuse, therefore, is accompanied by the expectation of a relatively homogenous representation of this trend in the data stemming both from different countries and institutions.

Comparative Exploration of Domestic Violence Data: Austria, Finland, Hungary, Portugal

Types of data, sources and limitations
In order to explore the impact of COVID-19 measures on the prevalence and response to Domestic abuse, members of the IMPRODOVA Consortium collected publicly available data from organisations in different frontline responder sectors. The types of data available per sector vary between countries. Most commonly, Domestic abuse is counted and compared via the restraining orders issued by police. This often is complemented with crime reports linked to a domestic context (summary crimes). Here countries vary in their operationalisation of Domestic Abuse, whether via documenting the existing victim-perpetrator relationship status or their household status. In addition, Hungary, Portugal, and Scotland have Domestic Abuse as singular criminal offense in their Criminal Code (indicator crime). The strategies of estimating reported Domestic Abuse vary between countries whether they aggregate all relevant crime reports linked to a domestic context as summary crimes or establish a trend via a singular offence (indicator crime). In addition, some countries (such as Finland or Scotland) record the number of emergency calls linked to Domestic Abuse as a useful indicator.

These differences in operationalizing Domestic Abuse make cross-national comparisons of prevalence numbers only limitedly useful. However, trends of reporting crimes (not their prevalence) within the country over time can be traced.

Due to the different country traditions of which types of data are made available and usually referred to in the internal discourse on Domestic Abuse, as well as the urgency of a timely investigation (within the IMPRODOVA project), we had to rely on a scattered insight of sector-specific data, which allowed us partial glimpses and snapshots into the phenomenon within the emerging situation. Against this background, the interpretation of available data must be conducted carefully and contrasted with other studies and publications to ensure the reliability of trends observed. The exploration in this article focusses on the data for 2020 and, were possible, differentiates monthly or quarterly from the onset of lockdowns.

Austria
Any development of specific types of crime during the lockdown must to be analysed against the background of the overall decline in reported crime in this period: Comparing the lockdown (First lockdown in Austria: 18.03.-03.05.2020) with its corresponding period in 2019, a stark decline of 46,6% of all forms of reported crime can be observed (2019: 52.618; 2020: 28.208). (Rauth, 2020) Comparing the years 2019 and 2020 in total, this decline is reduced to 11,3% (2019: 488.912; 2020: 433.811). In this context, it is noteworthy that police-issued restraining orders do not follow the overall crime trend, but keep consistent over the first half of 2020. A comparison with the restraining orders issued in 2019 in the same period is not available for investigation, as the new *Protection Against Violence Act* (Gewaltschutzgesetz, 2019) changed the mode in which restraining orders are recorded by law enforcement. Prior to the law which entered into force on 01.01.2020, the indicator for Domestic Violence consisted of the number of restraining orders ('cases') issued. Since 2020, the statistic counts the number of 'victims' protected by the restraining order, rather than subsuming these under a single case. However, comparing months within 2020, the daily average number of restraining orders rises from 30 (Jan, Feb), to 36 (Apr), and declining to 34 (May). A 14% increase of victims effected by registered DV offences in the lockdown period (Mar-Jun) compared to the time pre-lockdown (Jan, Feb) can be observed, totalling 126 more cases within a mean-comparison.

Several media reports and press releases from social sector victim organisations reported an alarming increase of calls to services of 71% for the first lockdown period. Despite this increase in calls to Violence Protec-

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Table 1. Overview of available data per country

	Austria	Hungary	Finland	Portugal
Police sector				
Emergency calls	Not Available	Not Available	Available	Available
Crime reports	Available (summary)	Available (indicator/ summary)	Available (summary)	Available (summary)
Restraining orders	Available	Available	Available	Available
Social sector				
Calls to service	Available	Not Available	Not Available	Available
Shelter demand/referrals	Available	Not Available	Available	Available

tion Centres and Women's Shelters, the latter saw a decline of service uptake by women (-9,92%) and children (-9,16%) in 2020. (AÖF, 2021) The women's shelter organization AÖF (Autonome Österreichische Frauenhäuser) argues that the COVID-19 lockdown measures negatively affected the opportunities for women to leave their partner.

Hungary

In Hungary, Domestic Abuse is counted in two ways within the public crime statistics. First, it is represented as summary crime of Domestic Abuse related offences. Second, it is counted as singular Domestic Abuse offence according to the Criminal Code as indicator crime. Comparing the months of the first lockdown in 2020 with the respective time period of 2019, crime reports for Domestic Abuse related offences have declined drastically, making no exception to the overall decline of reported crime. Each month a decline of about 30% is observed for reported Domestic Abuse offences. Correspondingly, there is a decline of 32,2% of police measures in Domestic Abuse cases for the same period (2019: 10.337; 2020: 7010).

Figure 1: Restraining orders (Jan-Jun 2020), Source: Austrian Ministry of Interior (2020).
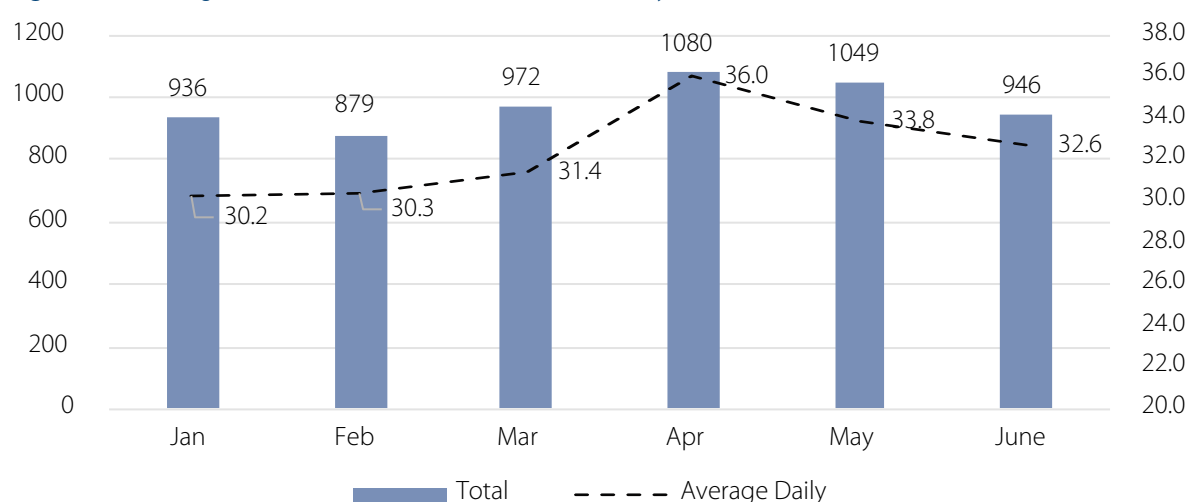
Figure 2: Domestic Abuse crime reports (Apr-Jun 2019/20), Source: Hungarian National Police Headquarters (2020).
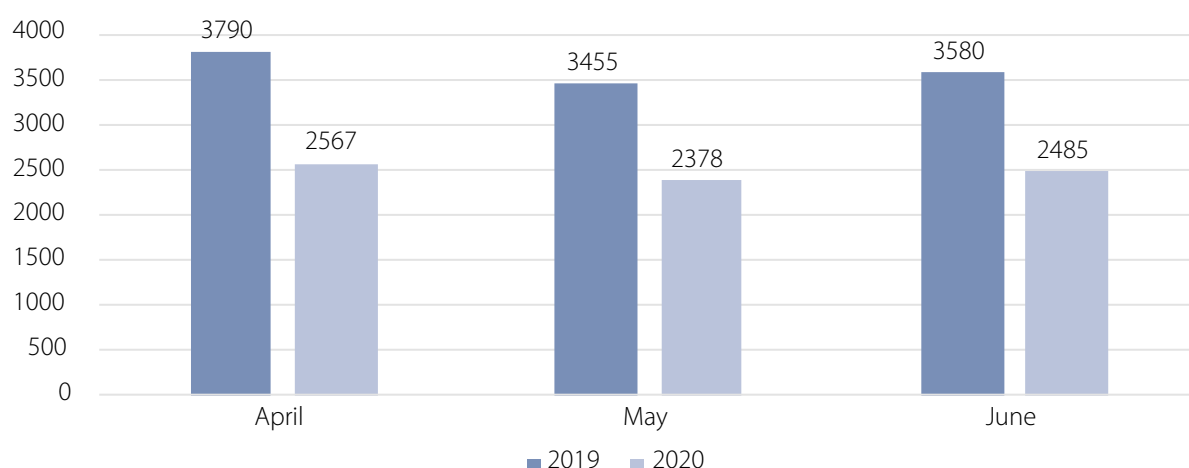
Table 2. Restraining orders (Jan-Aug 2020), Source: Hungarian Ministry of Interior (2020).

January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August
156	146	125	142	121	161	134	126

However, looking at Domestic Abuse as individual offence according to the Criminal Code[4], a difference to the aggregated number above can be observed. Between March and August 2019, a total of 201 Domestic Abuse cases were registered nationwide, while for the same period there are 330 cases in 2020. The discrepancy between the trends of Domestic Abuse related crime reports and Domestic Abuse cases is significant, however seem to stem from the ways data are included in the crime statistics. One the one hand, cases are only included after the investigation process has finished, rather than at the time of reporting. On the other hand, shortcomings in the legislative framework produce a high latency of Domestic Abuse cases. Only in cases of aggravated battery (Section 164 (3))[5] police act ex-officio. Otherwise, the victim is burdened with the task of filing a criminal complaint, regardless of whether it has been reported to the police or the police has mandated any measure. As such, the number of DV cases reported to the police and the number of police measures deviate drastically in the volume of Domestic Abuse cases from the registered crime statistics. Looking at police issued restraining orders, there is a slight increase in 2020 over the number issued in 2019. In 2019, there were a total of 1461 restraining orders issued (arith. mean = 121,75)[6], while in 2020 the monthly average is 138,9 tem-

porary preventive measures. The following table shows the monthly number of restraining orders in 2020 between January and August (total 1111).

While there are no exact numbers available of social sector frontline responder services, expert interviews and media reports (Kersten *et al.*, Forthcoming) indicated a doubling of phone calls to the National Crisis Telephone Information Service not for March, but April 2020, decreasing by the end of the first lockdown. Similarly, the demand for shelter places increased in the first weeks of the lockdown reportedly.

Finland

Finland presents an interesting discrepancy between reported Domestic Abuse crimes and emergency calls in a Domestic Abuse context. While reported crime decreased by 12% comparing the first half of 2019 and 2020 during the pandemic, calls to police which were classified as Domestic Abuse-related increased significantly by 30%. Whereas several other Member States observed a decrease in overall and street crimes, Finland shows the heightened attention of police to private residencies most starkly. (National Police Board, 2020)

Additionally, violence between married (20%) and unmarried (67%) couples increased during Jan to Jun of 2020, although the stark increases were reported

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4   Data provided by the Hungarian Ministry of Interior (2020).

5   Act C of 2012 on the Criminal Code, Section 164 (3).

6   For 2019, there is no monthly statistic available.

Table 3. Domestic Abuse crime reports and Emergency calls (Jan-Jun 2019/20), Source: Finish National Police Board (2020).

	01-06/2019	01-06/2020	Diff. N	Diff. %
DA crime reports	2493	2193	-300	-12%
Emergency calls (DA context)	34643	44864	+10221	+30%

before the COVID-19 lockdown measures were implemented. From Apr to Jun there was only an increase by 5.4% observed. On a positive note, the violence between ex-spouses reduced drastically by 70% during the first lockdown period. Finland recorded the number of cases of violence against children during the lockdown which increased by 21%.

Looking beyond reported crimes to police interventions, data of restraining orders have not yet been made available by the Ministry of Interior. Media reports suggested a decrease of restraining orders issued by the police in 2020, as they already dropped by 40% in 2019. However, this may not be due to COVID-19 or the lockdown measures, as the Finish Government introduced a fee for rejected restraining order applications in 2016. Subsequently, the number of applications has decreased annually deterring applicants from requesting the measure.

Within the social sector, data of women's shelter suggest that the uptake by women during the lockdown measures in 2020 decreased significantly from March to July 2020. While there is a slightly higher availability of shelter spaces in January 2020 compared to 2019, the numbers are matched in February until the first weeks of March. In 2019 the number of available spaces was consistently below 60 from March to end of May, with the beginning of the lockdown measures the number rose linearly in 2020 to over 100 spaces until mid-May. Only in July did the number of women in shelters level to the rate seen in 2019 again. The communication of the lockdown measures together with the limited access to different social welfare services which are crucial in referring women to shelters, seem to have impacted the ability to use women's shelters in Finland. (THL, 2020)

Portugal

Comparing reported Domestic Abuse crimes for the first three quarters of 2020 with the corresponding period in 2019, a decrease in crime reports can be observed, which is -10% for the first quarter, -6% for the second, and almost at the level of the 2019 com-

parative period with -1%. Looking beyond the annual comparison, overall Domestic Abuse offences had increased by 10% between 2018 and 2019. A general high fluctuation of crime reports limits a further reaching interpretation of the data available. In addition, the decrease of 10% is observed for the first quarter of 2020, predominately before the lockdown measures were implemented.

In Portugal, the number of reported Domestic Abuse crimes follow the general trend in reported crime which decreased by 5,22% overall. [7] Unlike other Member States, the trend for Domestic Abuse is not deviating from the general decline. However, comparing the numbers of restraining orders issued by police - police interventions, rather than reporting to police - the third quarter of 2020 (n=785) shows an increase by 26% compared the corresponding quarter of 2019 (n=570).

In line with trends in other countries, the number of support requests received by the Commission for Citizenship and Gender Equality (CIG) increased significantly in 2020, especially during the lockdown. Between March and June more than 200% of support requests were registered compared to 2019 (854 vs 253)[8]. Furthermore, during the lockdown a decrease of attendances by the specialised services under the National network for supporting victims of Domestic Abuse was observed (30th March - 12th April: 2789; 13th - 26th of April: 2080). The rise in numbers occurred delayed during lockdown (27th April - 10th May: 2192 and 11th - 24th of May: 4530). The significant increase towards the end of May, doubling the previously recorded bi-weekly numbers, suggests a high latency of service uptake by victims of Domestic Abuse.

Comparative outlook

Across all four countries overall decrease in crime reports and decrease of cases of Domestic Abuse could be observed within reported crime between 2019 and

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7   Source: data made available by the Portuguese Government (quarterly reports).

8   Source: Intervention of the Secretary of State for Citizenship and Equality in 15th of July.

Insert Table 4. Reported Domestic Abuse crimes (1.-3. Q 2019/20), Source: Portuguese Ministry of Justice (2020).

	2019	2020	Diff. N	Diff. %
1Q (Jan-Mar)	6980	6347	-633	-9%
2Q (Apr-Jun)	7382	6928	-454	-6%
3Q (Jul-Sep)	8228	8137	-91	-1%

2020, particularly in the period during the first lockdown measures. Discrepancies are evident in Hungary, where Domestic Abuse is also recorded as singular crime for which an increase was recorded compared to its corresponding period in 2019, not following the trend of overall reported crime.

While, with few exceptions, a decline in the reporting of Domestic Abuse cases to police can be observed, police interventions into Domestic Abuse cases with the preventive temporary restraining order have not followed the overall crime trend (with the exception of Finland). Restraining orders were issued at the same rate as the 2019 comparison period, and even increased during or after the first lockdown measures in three of the countries studied. However, Finland's exception seems to be linked rather to its changed policy of charging a fee to rejected restraining orders, which seems to deter victims from applying for it, rather than a direct link to the COVID-19 lockdown measures - a trend preceding the 2020 lockdown measures.

Emergency calls (data for the police sector only available for Finland) in the police or social sector increased, not following the downward trend of reported crime. While all countries experienced increases to Domestic Abuse service lines in the social sector or emergency calls to police linked to a Domestic Abuse setting (AT: +71%; HU: +100%; FI: +30%; PT: +100%) (Kersten *et al.*, Forthcoming), this increase is not matched with crime reports, though this increase *is* visible within in police interventions.

Available shelter places increased with lockdown measures in Austria and Finland. While the use of shelter places followed a similar trend pre-lockdown in 2020, there was a decline of shelter use of 9% in Austria for the whole year, and about a 50% increase of available shelter places in Finland for the months of the first lockdown. Only after some weeks after the lockdown measures had been lifted, the number of shelter places used by women rose to the levels of 2019.

The development of different types of data (emergency calls, crime reports, restraining orders, shelter uptake) for different types of frontline responder services (police, social sector) do not mirror the aforementioned expectations at the onset of the pandemic self-evidently. Increased risk factors for perpetrators and vulnerabilities of victims do not lead to an increase in reported crime. Calls to services increase across all countries within the social sector, however not to result in an increase in cases immediately or impacting crime reporting. Also, uptake of women's shelter reduces during lockdown and only increase again within the weeks after the lockdown. Against this background, however, police interventions into Domestic Abuse cases do not vanish during the pandemic with services struggling to cope with new and additional challenges of the lockdown measures, reducing face-to-face interventions, and resorting to virtual consultations. Police officers do make use of restraining orders, sometimes with increased frequency in the cases of Austria, Portugal, and Hungary.

These heterogeneous trends reveal that the different "snapshots" provided by the respective data types respond to crisis conditions dissimilarly. They do not present a clear link to an (unknown) "actual" prevalence of Domestic Abuse, but reveal how the use of existing services by victims, witnesses and modes of intervention by frontline responder organisations is changed in the pandemic situation.

Making Sense of heterogeneous data

In attempting to explain the heterogeneous trends visible in the data collected, three hypotheses will be developed below. The first two relate to detection and enumeration, discussing the divergence of trends as possible effects of socio-legal and sector specific aspects or statistical artefacts. The third hypothesis relates the heterogeneous data to the internal dynamics of Domestic Abuse itself, positing that differentiating among types of intimate partner violence, and analys-

ing the structural analogies to lockdown settings, are key to understanding the divergent trends in the available data.

Heterogeneous Data as a result of detection and enumeration: Statistical Artefacts, Socio-legal and sector specific aspects

In order to make sense of the in-year or year-to-year comparisons of trends across the different data types, countries, and sectors, it is important to exclude and correct for statistical artefacts, such as changes of practices in measuring and quantifying, as well as the surrounding policies guiding the documentation of cases to avoid biased conclusions. The limitations of comparing short periods are additionally problematic as they necessarily exclude long-term trends, and cannot be reduced to mono-causal explanations. Depending on the type of quantitative indicator selected, the "Law of small numbers" has to be taken into account where intuitive patterns and trends are a solely random product of small samples.

Within the country comparison, the following are examples of such statistical artifacts, which need to be differentiated from trends which do indicate a change of behaviour of victims, witnesses, or frontline responder organisations:

Reviewing the data such examples can be found in Austria, where a year-to-year comparison of restraining orders was not possible as the quantification of restraining orders (RO) had changed with the inception of the new Violence Protection Act 2019 on January 1, 2020. Shifting the count of restraining orders from cases (perpetrator and victim(s)), to the number of victims (not perpetrators) protected by the order.

In Hungary, crime reports are only included in the national crime statistics after the investigation has been concluded resulting in a high latency of cases to be represented with the bureaucratic documentation.

Finland has witnessed an increase of couples' violence before the onset of the lockdown measures, after which it still increased but at a much lower level. Portugal witnessed a 10% reduction of Domestic Abuse crime reports in the first quarter of 2020, however approaching the same level of 2018, after a 10% increase in 2019.

Similarly, the following are examples for changes to the socio-legal policy framework, which affect the inclusion of cases in documentation or the willingness-to-report or use-of-services by victims. As such, they influence reporting; however, they cannot be taken as indication of a change to Domestic Abuse prevalence or response.

In Hungary, the limitation of ex-officio crimes of requiring the police to act without the victims consent in cases of Domestic Abuse to cases of aggravated battery (Section 164 (3))[9] delays and reduces the inclusion of Domestic Abuse cases in the official statistic, putting the burden on the victim to file a criminal complaint.

Another example of changes to the legal framework of Domestic Abuse policy affecting the development of police interventions is Finland's introduction of a policy of feeing rejected applications of restraining orders in 2016, which has decreased the number of applications as well as restraining orders issued since then continuously. Such changes cannot be confused with changes to police activation or Domestic Abuse incidence rates.

Heterogeneous Data as a result of internal dynamics of Domestic Abuse: Coercive controlling violence in lockdown settings

Differentiating between types of Intimate Partner Violence

While the composition and availability of indicators, as well as socio-legal and sector specific aspects affecting detection, are likely to play a causal role in the heterogeneity of data, the most fundamental influence on such heterogeneity may lie in the internal dynamics of Domestic Abuse itself, rather than its enumeration. In order to understand divergent trends in Domestic Abuse data during Lockdown, it is imperative to distinguish between different types of intimate partner violence in general, and take into account the structural analogies between coercive controlling violence and lockdown setting in particular.

For the discussion of this third hypothesis it may suffice to briefly review the differentiation between four types of intimate partner violence as described, for example, by (Kelly & Johnson, 2008). Only in differentiating between these types, can appropriate screening instruments, processes, and responses, sensitive to the central dynamics, context and consequences of partner violence be developed. (ibid.) A central distinction, for example, must be made between *Situational Couple Violence* and *Coercive Controlling Violence*. While

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9   Act C of 2012: Criminal Code of Hungary, Section 164 (3).

the former describes "partner violence that does not have its basis in the dynamic of power and control […] [,but rather] results from situations or arguments between partners that escalate on occasion into physical violence" (ibid., 479), the latter describes "a pattern of emotionally abusive intimidation, coercion, and control coupled with physical violence against partners". (ibid., 478) Understanding the dynamics of *Coercive Controlling Violence* is not only central to understanding heterogeneous data during lockdown, but also imperative for the proper assessment of the threat to victims, as this type of Intimate Partner Violence correlates most strongly to high-risk cases of Domestic Abuse. In *Coercive Controlling Violence*, perpetrators employ intimidation; emotional abuse; isolation; minimizing, denying, and blaming; use of children; male privilege; economic abuse; and coercion and threats to exert power and control over their victims. (Pence, Paymar and Ritmeester, 1993). This is a fundamentally different dynamic than that found in *Situational Couple Violence*. Another central difference lies in the fact that *Situational Couple Violence* tends to be gender-symmetrical, while *Coercive Controlling Violence* is predominantly perpetrated by men against women (Frieze & Browne, 1989; Graham-Kevan & Archer, 2003; Johnson, 2006) male and female students (N=208. Gender-asymmetry is also found in *Violent Resistance*, where predominately female victims of abuse employ violence in an attempt at resistance against coercively controlling, physical violent partners in acts of self-defence. (ibid. 478) Finally, in the context of lockdown, it is important to identify *Separation-Instigated Violence* as "violence that first occurs in the relationship at separation". (ibid.) As the point of separation is one of the most high-risk moments for victims of abusive relationships, it is important to differentiate between violence that occurs for the first time in this context and violence that is exacerbated by it.

Structural analogies exacerbating Coercive Control in lockdown settings

One of the central divergences in the trends shown by our data, lies in the universal rise in calls to social sector organisations across all countries, while reporting and arrests in police data stagnate or drop in several cases. The strongest factor explaining this divergence may lie in the structural analogies between *Coercive Controlling Violence* and lockdown settings. The structure of lockdown and stay-at-home orders fundamentally privileges the opportunity to - and perception of - control by perpetrators over victims.

"It's not uncommon for domestic violence abusers to isolate their victims as an act of control or to reduce opportunity for disclosure of abuse, and the current societal conditions are likely furthering the impact of these actions" (Campbell, 2020).

The (almost) complete isolation of victims from wider social settings, the literal omnipresence of the controlling abuser, the increased financial insecurity, the permanent exposure of children to the abuser, and the overwhelming barriers to - and fear of – separation, all play into a sharp rise in the control abusers have over their victims in lockdown settings. (Bradbury-Jones & Isham, 2020; van Gelder et al., 2020) This privileging of control through the structural analogies of lockdown and *Coercive Control* is very likely to reduce the prevalence and intensity of physical violence in the short term. Violent acts largely detected by law enforcement, especially those occurring in the context of separation, are likely to drop in the early phases of lockdown where control over the victim is the most holistic. At the same time, the less easily detectable effects of this control, such as fear, anxiety, loss of self-esteem, depression, post-traumatic stress, are likely to intensify. Early studies have shown, that persons experiencing abuse during lockdown reported more severe symptoms of depression, anxiety and stress in the context of lockdown measures than before. Moreover, these studies report that the most frequent type of Abuse reported in this setting was psychological (96%). (Sediri et al., 2020)mental health concerns linked to the lockdown have quickly risen. This study aims to assess the effect of the COVID-19-related lockdown on Tunisian women's mental health and gender-based violence. An online survey was conducted, using the Depression Anxiety and Stress Scales (DASS-21

The probable effect on data

The hypothesis of a convergence of higher psychological (and other intangible forms of) violence with a drop in physical violence in the early stages of lockdown, may be the strongest factor explaining the heterogeneity of data. Other studies (Ashby, 2020; Bullinger, Carr & Packham, 2021)2021 found no notable increase of Domestic Violence in police data, interpreting that "concerns of a surge in domestic violence may have been unfounded." (Ashby, 2020)"properties":{"formattedCitation":"(Ashby, 2020 However, if data such as emergency room admissions are taking into consideration, or longer-term trends are observed, this interpretation may prove to be false. A study in Sicily (Di

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Franco et al., 2020)mostly coming from domestic violence. A good screening procedure in clinical practice is useful, but WHO does not advise universal screening, recommending further research.\n\nAim\n(i recorded a general decrease in emergency room admissions during early lockdown, but noted that the proportion of Domestic Violence cases within these admissions rose, 80% of which were female victims. Moreover, a study conducted by (Hsu & Henke, 2021) comparing official Domestic Violence police incidents, calls for services and Intimate Partner Violence-related crimes in 35 cities across the United States, shows a relative homogenous trend between the *average fraction of people at home all day* and a *standardized measure for Domestic Violence per Capita* before the first stay-at-home order came into effect. The 20th of March, when the first such order entered into force however, marks the beginning of divergent trends in these two indicators: With early April the *average fraction of people at home all day* reaches its preliminary peak, while the measure of *Domestic Violence per Capita* drops to its lowest mark since the beginning of March 2020. By mid-April however, these trends invert, with the number of Domestic Violence cases steadily increasing, while the *fraction of people at home all day* is in consistent decline.

The more plausible explanation for the divergence in police data and calls to social services lies in the probable delay of reporting and service uptake. Analysing this data through the lens of different types of Intimate Partner Violence, suggests that these heterogeneous trends are most likely to be expressions of a delay in reporting and service uptake during the early phases of lockdown. While the onset of stay-at-home orders and the resulting intensification of control over victims can be pinpointed to specific dates, the *normalisation* of life in lockdown settings, the *perceived* relaxation of measures in practice, and the resulting perception of lessening or loss of control by perpetrators over victims is highly subjective. In a recent study, (Campbell et al., 2021)(b showed, that while 78% of calls to police, reporting Domestic Violence, were calls from victims themselves, police officers only encountered the suspect when responding to the call in 7% of cases. Victims of Domestic Violence often report violent incidents only after the perpetrators have left the premises. Lockdown measures during the COVID pandemic often result in victims being trapped in their homes with the perpetrators over extended periods of time, limiting their opportunities to safely report incidents. (Campbell et al., 2021)(b This interpretation not only explains the universal rise in calls to social sector organisations within the IMPRODOVA data, but also phenomena such as the delayed uptake in social sector services (such as Women's Shelters) as shown by in the Finish data.

Conclusion

While the initial assumptions on the detrimental impact lockdown measures were likely to have on Domestic Abuse were shared almost unanimously be experts and frontline responders, early data collected by different sectors painted a more divergent picture. Particularly the short-term period at the onset of lockdown measures saw a stagnation, partially even a drop in data collected by law enforcement and service uptake in the social sector. Simultaneously, calls to social sector organisations surged in all eight of the countries studied by IMPRODOVA. Making sense of this heterogeneous data requires an informed analysis of the modes of enumeration of Domestic Abuse and the identification of statistical artefacts stemming therefrom. More importantly, the sound understanding of the socio-legal influences to, and sector specific mechanisms of, identification are key to explaining divergences in the case numbers reported. Above all, however, all data available on the effects of the pandemic must be analysed through the lens of the internal dynamics of Domestic Abuse. Understanding lockdown as the ideal setting for abusive partners to exert maximum control over their victims and identifying this increase of control as the cause for a reduction in identified cases of abuse is the key to making sense of the heterogeneous data being reported by different sectors. More importantly, however, recognizing the dynamics leading to delayed reporting and the increased risk developing as lockdown is relaxed, rather than implemented, is the condition for the development of appropriate interventions by all frontline responders to Domestic Violence and Abuse.

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Crime Investigation During the COVID-19 Pandemic in Slovenia:
Initial Reflections

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Abstract[1]

The article presents an introductory reflection on the COVID-19 epidemic, registered crime and police work in the field of crime investigation, especially during the first wave of the epidemic in the spring of 2020 in Slovenia as compared to the previous year. First, an analysis of recorded crime for the first nine months (January–September) of 2019 and 2020 is presented, followed by comparing the same period in the first wave of the epidemic from March to May 2020. Governmental measures for curbing the epidemic are also presented. The comparisons show that most recorded crimes decreased in Slovenia during the first wave of the epidemic in 2020 and the first nine months of 2020. We also present the insights of the heads of criminal investigation sectors at the Criminal Police Directorate on the incidence and nature of criminal offences during the epidemic and the criminal police responses. The findings indicate the need for additional victimisation and self-reporting studies of delinquency, which could be a qualitative supplement to the official statistical data on recorded crime during the COVID-19 epidemic in Slovenia.

Keywords: COVID-19, Crime, Investigation, Analysis, Slovenia

Introduction

The purpose of this article is to present certain trends in crime during the COVID-19 pandemic, how crime has evolved compared to the past years, and how law enforcement has functioned. Japelj (2018) and Urbas (2019) note that since 2015 Slovenia has seen a downward trend in crime rates and that this trend was expected to continue. After reviewing the selected literature on changes in crime and social control during the COVID-19 pandemic in the European environment (Peršak, 2020; Baker, 2020; Europol, 2020), the related aspects of the implementation of social control activities, and in particular the functioning of police and criminal justice, we will present the measures imposed by the Government of the Republic of Slovenia (hereinafter: the Government) during the first wave of the epidemic. Next, we will present data from police statistics databases to compare the number of criminal offences in the same periods before the epidemic (2019) and dur-

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ing the epidemic (2020). Based on the data obtained for the first nine months of 2020 for the purpose of this article and given that the data for the entire year 2020 will not be available until late spring 2021, a comparison of the number of criminal offences from the police database was made for the first nine months of 2019 and 2020. This article presents a partial picture of the problem associated with criminal offences before and during the COVID-19 epidemic.

The pandemic, caused by the novel coronavirus SARS-CoV-2, which causes COVID-19, has had consequences all over the world. In addition to the cultural, economic, environmental, political and social implications, the dynamics and nature of crime have changed as a result of changes in people's routines, relationship dynamics, restricted movement, restricted socialising and increased activity on the internet. During the pandemic, the functioning of formal social control institutions, in particular the police, prosecutors, courts and prisons, has also changed due to the new situation and the adaptation of social control practices to a more challenging environment where there is a risk for the supervisors and others involved in proceedings to become infected.

Baker (2020) notes that the COVID-19 pandemic/crisis has changed everything in the modern world and that the nature and dynamics of crime have changed significantly in Europe. However, she observes that it is not possible to speak of the same situation in all countries.

During the pandemic, all countries rapidly adopted new punitive legislation related to violations of movement or socialising in order to curb the spread of pandemic. These changes were perceived by some as interference with people's rights and freedoms, while others saw them as emergency measures. All this was accompanied by ideas that COVID-19 was a fabrication designed to create a new social order and discipline the population through various forms of authoritarian practices.

Despite the torrent of fake news, conspiracy theories, pseudo-scientific explanations and an "infodemic"[2], police criminal investigation work followed the same routine (Baker, 2020; Cinelli et al., 2020; Peršak, 2020), with the added burden of investigating suspicions of

corrupt acts in the procurement of protective equipment, in particular protective masks, disinfectants, rapid tests and modern medical equipment needed to treat patients with COVID-19. Other forms of crime investigations were conducted in a somewhat reduced form to ensure the normal functioning of the police. It should be noted that employees of formal social control and criminal justice institutions were exposed to and some were also infected with the virus. This was also an important aspect in terms of effectiveness in investigating and dealing with suspects and perpetrators in some formal social control systems (Baker, 2020).

Baker (2020) notes that we can talk about various burdens that are placed on the police when detecting, dealing with and investigating crimes during the COVID-19 pandemic. Research, which included the analyses of statistics of reported crime during COVID-19, has produced various findings, ranging from crime having increased or remained at the same level to the level of reported and dealt with crime having decreased significantly (Kokoravec & Meško, 2020). At this point, reference should also be made to the regional analysis of organised crime in the Balkans at the onset of the coronavirus pandemic (Djordjević & Dobovšek, 2020), which delved into the supply of and demand for personal protective equipment (PPE), disinfectants and medical alcohol and changes in other forms of crime. Media portrayals of the social reality of crime in Slovenia contained, in particular, reports about the increase in domestic violence as a result of distress and restrictions on movement, and inaccessibility to law enforcement authorities due to restrictions on movement. However, the first analysis of crime in Ljubljana during the first wave of COVID-19 does not confirm such portrayals (Kokoravec & Meško, 2020).

Presented below are measures to contain the epidemic and police statistics for the first nine months of 2019 and 2020. Our attention will be focused on the analysis of data on crimes committed in the spring during the measures imposed by the Government in the wake of the COVID-19 epidemic. In addition, we will also present data for selected crimes in the Slovenian capital during the first wave of the COVID-19 epidemic and compare the findings on the investigated crime trends with the statistical data for the whole of Slovenia.

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2   The term "infodemic" means an upsurge of excessive amount of misinformation, which spreads rapidly, making it more difficult to identify the solution to the problem, in this case the COVID-19 pandemic (Cinelli et al., 2020).

Measures adopted by the Government of the Republic of Slovenia to contain the epidemic in spring 2020 – the first wave of COVID-19

Before providing police statistics, we present the key findings and measures adopted by the Government during the spring 2020 epidemic wave in chronological order (IUS info, n.d.)[3]:

March	
4	The first COVID-19 case was confirmed in Slovenia
7	Ban on indoor public events for 500-plus visitors
9	Restrictions on all sporting and other events expecting 500-plus visitors
10	Ban on indoor public events for 100-plus visitors and ban on the landing of aircraft from risk areas
11	Suspension of the provision of preventive healthcare services (with exceptions) and control at the border with Italy, with border crossing allowed only at six checkpoints (IUS info, n.d)
12	**Declaring the epidemic**
13	Closure of cultural institutions across the country (including libraries), drafting of a financial incentive for businesses on favourable terms of EUR 115 million
14	Publication of a call to postpone all travel abroad
16	Publication of the Ordinance temporarily prohibiting gatherings of people in educational institutions and universities and independent higher education institutions (2020); suspension of public transport (except taxis) and the ban on freight transport through Italy (with exceptions); temporary prohibition on offering and selling goods and services (with exceptions); prohibition of operation and closure of bars and restaurants, hotels, wellness services, gambling services, fitness and other exercises, cinemas, museums and galleries, and hairdressing and beauty salons and allowing the performance of only the most urgent tasks and matters (courts and notarial offices, administrative units and veterinary clinics)
17	The Ordinance prohibiting the provision of air services (2020) and the Ordinance temporarily prohibiting roadworthiness tests and other procedures related to motor vehicle registration and tachograph workshop activities in the Republic of Slovenia (2020); the Ordinance on the National Security Council (2020) (the Council is transformed into the National Operations Staff due to the emergency situation); the introduction of distance selling and delivery services (in-home support services, "take away" or "drive-in" services were not allowed; the provision of online and delivery services was allowed); the provision of car tyre services, car mechanic and towing services was allowed; the provision of other emergency health and safety services (e.g. psychological assistance) was allowed (with the exception of physiotherapeutic and massage services); funeral and cemetery services were allowed; activities could be carried out by chimney sweeps, plumbers and ceramicists but not by real estate agents
18	Introduction of work from home (employers can organise work processes as work from home); crossing the border with Italy was permitted only at four checkpoints; closure of 27 local border crossings with Croatia
19	Adoption of the measure banning gatherings and movement in public areas (a fine of approx. EUR 400); change in the working hours of shops (open at least from 8:00 to 20:00; between 8:00 and 10:00 priority was given to vulnerable groups – people with disabilities, pensioners and pregnant women; all shops were closed on Sunday, with the exception of service stations and pharmacies)
20	Adoption of the Act Determining the Intervention Measures on Salaries and Contributions (ZIUPPP, 2020), the Fiscal Intervention Measures Act (ZIUJP, 2020), the Act Determining the Intervention Measure of Deferred Payment of Borrowers' Liabilities (ZIUOPOK, 2020), the Act Determining the Intervention Measures in Agriculture, Forestry and Food (ZIUPKGP, 2020) and the Ordinance on the temporary exemption from payment of charges for support for the production of electricity from high-efficiency cogeneration and renewable energy sources for end-users in the LV consumer group without measuring power and household electricity customers (2020) (for small business customers and household consumers of electricity); the minimum working hours of grocery stores was reduced to 18:00 (as a response to the demands of the trade union of shop workers, who threatened to go on strike); the Enterprise Fund published a tender for bank loan guarantees with a reduced interest rate worth almost EUR 80 million (for faster, easier and cheaper acquisition of bank loans)
30	Adoption of the Ordinance on the temporary general prohibition of movement and public gathering in public places and areas in the Republic of Slovenia and the prohibition of movement outside one's municipality (2020) (with exceptions); older people were allowed to go shopping between 8:00 and 10:00 only (IUS info, n.d.)
April	
2	Adoption of the Act Determining the Intervention Measures to Contain the COVID-19 Epidemic and Mitigate its Consequences for Citizens and the Economy (ZIUZEOP, 2020) (measures worth EUR 3 billion)

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3 We present all the measures imposed by the Government, which in the period of the first wave of COVID-19 were listed on the IUS info (n.d.) website. Although not all measures are related to crime, they indicate that the movement of people was restricted to municipalities and that, in addition to the formal control aimed at curbing the COVID-19 epidemic, there was an increase in informal control in family and narrower community settings. In particular, the Government provided information to the public through the media and carried out general preventive measures of police surveillance and other forms of supervising violations to control the epidemic. These measures are not the subject of analysis in this article but are an attempt to put crime into context during these specific social emergencies in Slovenian society.
The implementation and effects of the measures require further analysis by aspects of the response to the epidemic in the past, in the wider European and global context, and, above all, after the end of the epidemic.

9	The ban on passenger air transport in the EU was extended until 27 April 2020 (the ban was in force for other countries until revoked)
11	The first anti-corona act (ZIUZEOP, 2020) entered into force, the performance of non-urgent outpatient specialised activities was allowed and the scope of police powers was widened to take action against violators of anti-corona measures
18	Maintenance and seasonal work on private land outside the municipality of residence (under special conditions) was permitted; some sports/recreational activities in the municipality of residence were again allowed
20	Stores selling construction materials, cars and bicycles and dry cleaners were reopened; car tyre services and vehicle roadworthiness testing were again available
26	Insurance brokerage and car wash services were allowed
29	Public libraries, galleries and museums were reopened and permission was given for the provision of services of real estate agents and chimney sweeps
30	The ban on movement between municipalities was lifted and it was again allowed to visit older people in homes for the elderly (IUS info, n.d.)
May	
1	Adoption of the second anti-corona act (Act Amending the Act Determining the Intervention Measures to Contain the COVID-19 Epidemic and Mitigate its Consequences for Citizens and the Economy [ZIUZEOP-A], 2020)
4	Catering service were allowed on terraces and restaurant gardens; certain non-food shops, hairdressing salons, goldsmiths, watchmakers and churches were reopened
5	Courts were allowed to reopen non-urgent cases;
9	The provision of all medical and dental services was again allowed
10	Slovenian citizens who own real estate or vessels in Croatia were again allowed by the Republic of Croatia to enter the country and visit their property (a seven-day quarantine was imposed on citizens returning from Croatia)
11	Public passenger transport was restored (international passenger transport continued to be banned)
12	International flights to and from Slovenia were restored
15	Adoption of the Ordinance on the temporary restriction of the gathering of people in the public places and areas in the Republic of Slovenia (2020) (up to 50 people in public places)
18	Kindergartens were reopened; pupils in the first three grades of primary school and final-year students at secondary schools (small groups) returned to schools; all shops reopened; tourist accommodation providers with fewer than 30 rooms were allowed to receive guests; restaurants were able to serve guests indoors again
19	Adoption of the third anti-corona act (Act Amending the Act Determining the Intervention Measures to Contain the COVID-19 Epidemic and Mitigate its Consequences for Citizens and the Economy [ZIUZEOP-B], 2020); introduction of tourism vouchers (amounting to EUR 200 for all adults and EUR 50 for minors)
23	Relaxation of restrictions for most sporting activities (excluding fitness centres and similar facilities)
25	Ninth-graders returned to schools; other primary school pupils returned to schools in June; secondary school students completed the school year by remote learning
31	Declaration of the end of the first wave of epidemics (IUS info, n.d).

Crime in Slovenia in 2019–2020 (January–September)[4]

Overall, police work on crime decreased in the first nine months in 2020, as shown in Table 1. The number of investigated criminal offences decreased by 17.6%, while the percentage of investigated criminal offences remained almost the same. The estimated damage caused by criminal offences decreased by 18%, with the number of suspects falling by 19.9% and the number of injured parties by 17.1%.

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4   Source of statistics:
– A record of the offences dealt with as of 11 January 2020.
– Crime statistics are displayed by the date on which the crime was detected by the police.
– The investigated criminal offences are statistically presented in cases where the Police filed a criminal complaint or a report to supplement the criminal complaint [148/9 ZKP]; exceptions are criminal offences relating to road transport. The presentation does not cover criminal offences with respect to which the Police submitted a report to the State Prosecutor's Office [148/10 CKP] and with respect to which no suspicion of the offence or no grounds for a criminal complaint was found after the completion of investigation. Nor does the presentation cover minor criminal offences where the injured party withdrew from the case.

Table 1: Criminal offences committed in the January–September period in 2019 and 2020 (source: Criminal Police Directorate, 2021)

January–September	2019	2020	
Number of criminal offences detected (CO)	**39,991**	**33,697**	**−15.7%**
Number of criminal offences investigated	19,516	16,077	−17.6%
Percentage of criminal offences investigated	48.8%	47.7%	−1.1%
Estimated damage in EUR	EUR 126,466,457	EUR 103,655,392	−18.0%
Number of suspects – statistical data	25,302	20,257	−19.9%
Number of injured persons – statistical data	41,107	34,076	−17.1%

An overview of statistics by police directorates shows a drop in the number of criminal offences in 2020, as evident from Table 2. There was a decrease in the number of criminal offences in all police directorates, but the General Police Directorate (Criminal Police Di-rectorate – CPD) and National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) saw a significant increase in such offences. The percentage of criminal investigations did not change significantly.

Table 2: Crime in the area of police directorates (source: Criminal Police Directorate, 2021)

January–September	2019		2020		
Organisational unit	**Number of criminal offences (CO)**	**Percentage of investigated CO**	**Number of CO**	**Percentage of investigated CO**	**Increase/decrease of CO**
Celje PD	4,413	59.3%	4,348	61.8%	−1.5%
Koper PD	2,977	48.5%	2,564	45.3%	−13.9%
Kranj PD	2,420	45.4%	2,360	50.6%	−2.5%
Ljubljana PD	17,468	43.1%	13,511	37.5%	−22.7%
Maribor PD	5,810	50.6%	4,433	50.0%	−23.7%
Murska Sobota PD	1,490	62.5%	1,268	63.7%	−14.9%
Nova Gorica PD	1,578	52.2%	1,400	55.3%	−11.3%
Novo mesto PD	3,806	55.3%	3.735	56.1%	−1.9%
GPD	29	93.1%	78	92.3%	169.0%
Total	**39,991**	**48.8%**	**33,697**	**47.7%**	**−15.7%**

Table 3 shows a decrease in criminal offences with respect to all categories of crimes dealt with in 2020.

Table 3: Overview of criminal offences by categories, 2020–2021 (source: Criminal Police Directorate, 2021)

Types of crime	2019		2020		
	Number of CO	**Percentage of investigated CO**	**Number of CO**	**Percentage of investigated CO**	**Increase/decrease of CO**
Organised crime	440	98.0%	315	93.3%	−28.4%
Economic crime	4,950	67.9%	3,872	64.6%	−21.8%
Juvenile crime	1,017	99.7%	728	99.7%	−28.4%
General crime	35,041	46.1%	29,825	45.5%	−14.9%

Table 4 presents data on the criminal offences dealt with by month. In the first two months of 2020 alone, there was a small increase in the number of criminal offences dealt with, while in all other months from March to September the number of criminal offences decreased by an average of 15.7% compared to the previous year.

Table 4: Number of criminal offences by months in the 2019–2020 period (source: Criminal Police Directorate, 2021)

Month of detection	2019		2020		
	Number of CO	Percentage of investigated CO	Number of CO	Percentage of investigated CO	Increase/decrease of CO
January	4,552	53.7%	4,608	48.3%	1.2%
February	4,158	51.5%	4,235	48.7%	1.9%
March	4,959	52.5%	3,593	50.5%	−27.5%
April	4,286	49.9%	3,106	54.3%	−27.5%
May	4,425	48.3%	3,804	52.5%	−14.0%
June	4,512	49.8%	3,819	48.4%	−15.4%
July	4,398	45.3%	3,998	42.2%	−9.1%
August	4,284	42.0%	3,350	41.1%	−21.8%
September	4,417	45.6%	3,184	43.1%	−27.9%
Total	**39,991**	**48.8%**	**33,697**	**47.7%**	**−15.7%**

Table 5 shows only the statistics on the criminal offences for which the number increased during the first nine months of 2020 compared to the same period in 2019. It should be noted that percentages could be misleading, especially in criminal offences with a low frequency rate. Money laundering (+ 125 %) saw the largest increase (but not in absolute terms), followed by manslaughter (+ 111.1%), forgery or destruction of documents (+ 109.3%), murder (100%), sexual abuse of a vulnerable person (+ 60 %) and arson (52.2%). Illicit manufacture and trafficking in narcotic drugs, illicit substances in sports and illicit drug precursors increased by 50%, abduction of minors by 41.4%, and rape by 36%.

Table 5: Investigated criminal offences that increased compared to the previous year (source: Criminal Police Directorate, 2021)

Criminal offence	2019		2020		
	Number of CO	Percentage of investigated CO	Number of CO	Percentage of investigated CO	Increase in number of CO
Money laundering	8	11	18	43	125.0%
Manslaughter	9	100.0%	19	94.7%	111.1%
Forgery or destruction of business documents	225	98.7%	471	99.2%	109.3%
Murder	5	100.0%	10	100.0%	100.0%
Sexual abuse of a vulnerable person	10	80.0%	16	100.0%	60.0%
Arson	23	8.7%	35	34.3%	52.2%
Illicit manufacture and trade in narcotic drugs and illicit substances in sport	88	183	132	146	50.0%
Abduction of minors	277	84.8%	392	92.3%	41.5%
Rape	25	92.0%	34	94.1%	36.0%
Money laundering	39	89.7%	51	98.0%	30.8%
Endangering life by means of dangerous implements in a brawl or quarrel	36	100.0%	43	97.7%	19.4%
Use of counterfeit non-cash means of payment	471	16.1%	519	3.1%	10.2%
Non-payment of maintenance	139	100.0%	150	97.3%	7.9%

Criminal offence	2019		2020		
	Number of CO	Percentage of investigated CO	Number of CO	Percentage of investigated CO	Increase in number of CO
Sexual violence	30	83.3%	32	84.4%	6.7%
Extortion and blackmail	175	52.0%	181	39.8%	3.4%
Damaging another person's object	2,501	23.6%	2,558	25.1%	2.3%

Below we present data for the period of the first wave of COVID-19 in 2020 and for the same period in the previous year.

Crime in Slovenia in 2019–2020 (March–May)

In the same order, we present data on police criminal investigation work during the first wave of the COV-ID-19 epidemic (March–May 2020). Table 6 shows that, in general, the number of criminal offences dealt with decreased by 25.9%. Criminal investigations decreased by 21.4%, the percentage of investigated criminal offences was approximately the same, while the percentage of offences detected by the police with their own activity increased by 6.12%. The estimated damage caused by criminal offences increased by 47.3%. The number of suspects (–19.9 %) and injured parties (–27.5%) decreased.

Table 6: Criminal offences committed in the March–May period in 2019 and 2020 (source: Criminal Police Directorate, 2021)

	2019	2020	
Number of criminal offences	11,977	8,872	–25.9%
Number of criminal offences investigated	6,007	4,722	–21.4%
Percentage of criminal offences investigated	50.2%	53.2%	3.1%
Number of criminal offences detected by police	1,734	1.831	5.6%
Percentage of criminal offences detected by police	14.5%	20.6%	6.2%
Estimated damage in EUR	EUR 32,501,027	EUR 47,862,266	47.3%
Number of suspects – statistical data	7,806	6,273	–19.6%
Number of injured persons – statistical data	12,234	8,866	–27.5%

Table 7 shows that the decrease in crime did not occur only in the area of the Celje Police Directorate, other police directorates saw a decrease from 5.4% (Nova Gorica) to 42.6 % (Murska Sobota).

Table 7: Crime in the area of police directorates in the March–May period in 2019 and 2020 (source: Criminal Police Directorate, 2021)

Organisational unit	2019		2020		
	Number of CO	Percentage of investigated CO	Number of CO	Percentage of investigated CO	Increase/decrease of CO
Celje PD	1,286	61.3%	1,343	69.4%	4.4%
Koper PD	857	48.8%	557	49.6%	–35.0%
Kranj PD	723	45.9%	563	53.3%	–22.1%
Ljubljana PD	5,307	45.5%	3,570	42.8%	–32.7%
Maribor PD	1,702	51.6%	1,110	55.1%	–34.8%
Murska Sobota PD	488	63.9%	280	65.0%	–42.6%
Nova Gorica PD	499	55.1%	472	70.6%	–5.4%
Novo mesto PD	1,100	52.1%	966	56.9%	–12.2%
GPD	15	93.3%	11	90.9%	–26.7%
Total	**11,977**	**50.2%**	**8,872**	**53.2%**	**–25.9%**

Table 8 indicates a decrease in the number of investigated criminal offences in all months of the epidemic (14% in May, 27% in April and 39.9% in March).

Table 8: Criminal offences by month (source: Criminal Police Directorate, 2021)

Month of detection	2019		2020		
	Number of CO	Percentage of investigated CO	Number of CO	Percentage of investigated CO	Increase/decrease of CO
March	3,266	53.0%	1,962	52.9%	−39.9%
April	4,286	49.9%	3,106	54.3%	−27.5%
May	4,425	48.3%	3,804	52.5%	−14.0%
Total	**11,977**	**50.2%**	**8,872**	**53.2%**	**−25.9%**

We found that there was a decrease in the number of investigated criminal offences in all types of various criminal offences (Table 9). The highest percentage decrease in the number of investigated criminal offences was in organised crime (–73.5%), followed by juvenile crime (55.3%), general crime (–28.8%) and economic crime (–6.5%).

Table 9: Criminal offences by type (source: Criminal Police Directorate, 2021)

Types of crime	2019		2020		
	Number of CO	Percentage of investigated CO	Number of CO	Percentage of investigated CO	Increase/decrease of CO
Organised crime	136	97.8%	36	75.0%	−73.5%
Economic crime	1,544	67.0%	1,444	78.2%	−6.5%
Juvenile crime	318	99.7%	142	99.3%	−55.3%
General crime	10,433	47.7%	7,428	48.4%	—28,8%

Table 10 shows data for criminal offences where there was an increase in the number of cases compared to the same period of the previous year. There was a significant increase in manslaughter from one[5] criminal offence in 2019 to 10 criminal offences during the COVID-19 measures in spring 2020. There was also a significant increase in embezzlement (+314%), sexual abuse of a vulnerable person from one to four cases in 2020, arson from four to 15 offences, forgery or destruction of business documents (+248%), and abduction of minors (+92.9%). This was followed by tax evasion (from 22 to 38 cases), endangering life by means of dangerous instruments in a brawl or quarrel (from 12 to 18 cases), the use of counterfeit non-cash means of payment (+18.5%), threats (+14.3%), and rape (from 8 to 9 cases).

Table 10: Investigated criminal offences that increased compared to the previous year (source: Criminal Police Directorate, 2021)

Violation	2019		2020		
	Number of CO	Percentage of investigated CO	Number of CO	Percentage of investigated CO	Increase of CO
Manslaughter	1	100.0%	10	90.0%	900.0%
Embezzlement and unlawful use of another person's property	62	93.5%	257	99.6%	314.5%
Sexual abuse of a vulnerable person	1	0.0%	4	100.0%	300.0%
Arson	4	25.0%	15	46.7%	275.0%

5   At low frequencies of occurrence, we used absolute numbers rather than the percentage change.

Violation	2019		2020		
	Number of CO	Percentage of investigated CO	Number of CO	Percentage of investigated CO	Increase of CO
Forgery or destruction of business documents	108	99.1%	376	99.5%	248.1%
Abduction of minors	85	92.9%	164	88.4%	92.9%
Tax evasion	22	100.0%	38	100.0%	72.7%
Endangering life by means of dangerous instruments in a brawl or quarrel	12	100.0%	18	94.4%	50.0%
Use of counterfeit non-cash means of payment	119	5.0%	141	0.0%	18.5%
Threats	329	314	376	375	14.3%
Rape	8	87.5%	9	77.8%	12.5%

In the following, we present the opinions of criminal investigators and heads of divisions at the Criminal Police Directorate regarding crime in 2020. The findings offer a quality complement to the observations and explanations of the data provided in the tables.

The investigation of crime in the pandemic from the chief investigators' point of view

We asked the heads of divisions at the Criminal Police Directorate for additional information to supplement the official statistical data on crime in Slovenia. The answers are presented below.

Regarding the detection of *organised crime*, they note that there was a drop in detected criminal offences of prohibited crossing of the state border or territory between March and June 2020 due to COVID-19 measures and the closure of state and municipal borders. After the relaxation of the measures in June 2020, these offences have again increased significantly.

Regarding *the use of illicit drugs*, an increase in sales of illicit drugs over the *dark web* was detected due to the restrictions on movement and other government measures to combat the COVID-19 epidemic. According to NGOs and the National Institute of Public Health, illicit drug prices on the black market remained stable and did not increase throughout 2020.

Relatively speaking, the slightest decline in crime during the epidemic measures is recorded in *economic crime*, which is a consequence of limited police activity during the declared pandemic. Given the specific nature of investigating economic crime, which is closely linked to the work of legal persons, other state authorities and bearers of public authority, the operability of units investigating such crime was severely impeded and reduced during this period.

From the first reports of alleged irregularities in the supply of protective equipment, to which the media and other sources drew attention to, the police monitored and prioritised such cases and cooperated with other relevant competent authorities. Within the scope of their powers, they investigated both alleged irregularities in the *purchase of equipment* by officials exercising public authority and other individual cases of alleged irregularities practiced by suppliers of protective equipment. In this period, police saw *a major increase in criminal offences of fraud connected to the online sale of goods*, which can be partly related to general restrictions on movement and the increased online activity of the population.

Taking into account the circumstances and measures put in place due to the COVID-19 epidemic, it appears that *property crime* between 12 March 2020 and 31 May 2020 declined compared to the same period in 2019. During the period of measures, the largest number of burglaries were carried out in residential houses in urban areas, parking lots, holiday homes and other facilities in apartment buildings (cellars and garages). While the first few months of 2020 saw an increase in burglaries compared to the same period in 2019, operational monitoring of the problem and the statistics of the number of criminal offences show that the number of burglaries and other property offences decreased during the measures. Restriction on movement during the measures was an overriding reason for the decline in property crimes.

A decline in criminal offences *committed against life and body* was detected in the period studied. It should be noted that criminal offences against life and body were fewer compared to other criminal offences. One reason for the decline in such criminal offences was again the restriction on movement during the period of implementing measures and fewer interactions in places that facilitate conflicts and inebriation.

Criminal offences *against marriage, family and youth* also decreased during the measures imposed to combat the epidemic. In this period, the police dealt with fewer domestic violence offences. The police responded appropriately in all cases; in most cases a restraining order was issued to the suspect. The number of criminal offences of neglect and maltreatment of minors also fell during the epidemic. The same applies to criminal offences against the sexual integrity of children. Measures to contain the spread of the COVID-19 epidemic have also forced people to spend more time at home, surrounded by their closest family, which can cause tensions between family members. We should keep in mind that schools, jobs and shops were closed, while all other services were limited. This means that violence might have occurred but no one noticed or reported it. In such circumstances, it is hard for the victim to break the cycle of violence and seek help. Therefore, both during and after the epidemic, the police carried out a number of activities aimed at raising awareness of these types of criminal offences and issued precautionary guidelines and guidelines for victims of violence.

Regarding the activities of organised crime groups in connection with the measures to contain the spread of COVID-19, criminal investigators estimate that illegal activities did not cease as a result of these measures, but *organised crime groups adapted* to the measures with the aim of committing criminal offences and obtaining illegal proceeds, particularly in human trafficking, drugs and weapons. Particular attention should be paid to events associated with *radicalism, terrorism and the spread of intolerance*, which is already reflected in recent developments in some EU countries, e.g. terrorist attacks in France and the case of shooting at a police officer in Croatia. Although the situation regarding the investigated criminal offences has improved since the epidemic, the general restrictions on the operation of all services led to limited possibilities of investigating economic crime and thus fewer completed investigations. The latter, i.e. the complexity of investigating

criminal offences during the epidemic, will be addressed in the discussion.

Within the framework of European and international police cooperation, the Slovenian police cooperate in investigating cross-border serious and organised crime. Some related activities are presented below.

International criminal activity

Criminal investigators estimate that organised crime groups quickly adapted their activities to the new circumstances and took advantage of the crisis caused by the COVID-19 epidemic. During the first wave of the epidemiological crisis and immediately afterwards, EU security authorities detected changes in existing security threats and the emergence of new criminal activities. The criminal activities most affected by the epidemiological crisis include cybercrime, illegal distribution of counterfeit and substandard goods, and various types of fraud and schemes involving deception, often linked to organised forms of property crime (Europol, 2020; Djordjević & Dobovšek, 2020).

The economic situation during the crisis offered new opportunities for criminal organisations, which focused on the supply of high-demand goods, taking advantage of the widespread presence of uncertainty and fears caused by the epidemiological crisis. EU security authorities note that during the pandemic, one of the key criminal activities in the EU was the distribution of counterfeit and substandard goods of poor quality, fuelled by a significant increase in demand for health and sanitary products (e.g. masks, gloves, cleaners and hand disinfectants) and personal protective equipment. Illegal sales of such products particularly increased online, both through various online platforms and through traditional selling methods. These kinds of fraud targeted individuals, businesses and health institutions.

According to estimates by EU security authorities (Europol, 2020), cybercrime was at the forefront of taking advantage of the opportunities of the epidemiological crisis. Cybercriminals have exploited individuals' increased anxiety, the demand for information, the demand for supply of certain goods, and the reliance on digital solutions and remote communication while working from home to increase the circle of their potential victims in order to obtain sensitive data and/or blackmail and gain access to potential juvenile victims.

EU security authorities (Europol, 2020) estimate that the outbreak of the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic had no significant immediate impact on the wholesale trafficking of drugs. They also assess that the effects of the pandemic have been limited to supply and distribution networks based in the EU. The decline in exports of basic chemicals and precursors, typically imported from Asia and used in the production of synthetic drugs, has slowed down but not halted the production of such drugs.

Criminally active individuals and criminal organisations engaged in fraud at the EU level have quickly adapted the already established fraud schemes to take advantage of the general distress of individuals, businesses and public organisations. These schemes have been thematically adapted to the COVID-19 pandemic and measures taken to contain the spread of the virus. EU security authorities report on a range of schemes involving deception carried out both by telephone and in person, with the perpetrators focusing on more vulnerable groups of people, such as the elderly.

They also report (Europol, 2020) that after the introduction of the first restrictive measures there was a drop in the number of burglaries and thefts in private homes followed by a new surge after the lifting of the measures. Health institutions and pharmacies are being increasingly targeted by property crime, specifically when it comes to the misappropriation of medical equipment, sanitary products and medicines for which there is high demand across the EU. They also report that the number of robberies in stores selling essential goods has been increasing.

Despite severe travel restrictions and stricter border controls, migrant smuggling into the EU has continued, albeit at a reduced rate. Curfews, restrictions on movement and border closures constrained the possibilities for smuggling networks to carry out their illegal activities at a normal level. Smuggling networks have changed their *modi operandi* and routes. Stricter controls have forced facilitators to find riskier routes, often endangering the lives of migrants. European security authorities have also seen an increase in the prices of facilitating illegal migration, which is a consequence of increased risks for criminal organisations, increased travel difficulties and high demand.

The impact of the pandemic on the terrorist threat in the EU has been limited. During the COVID-19 pan-

demic, the digital world has further strengthened its importance as a platform for spreading anti-systemic narratives. Before May 2020, Member States and Europol witnessed an increase in propaganda posted on terrorist and extremist scenes. All extremist scenes have interpreted the epidemiological crisis in line with their own ideological goals.

Most of this propaganda disseminated conspiracy theories regarding the alleged sources of COVID-19 and reports of alleged hidden government programmes. Jihadist terrorists have tried to portray the pandemic as a punishment from God that will weaken Islamic enemies and encourage their followers to take advantage of the situation and carry out attacks, while right-wing extremists blamed foreigners and minorities for the emergence and spread of the pandemic.

EU security authorities (Europol, 2020) have also detected more anti-government sentiments and propaganda, not only on the extreme left and right wings, but also among a population that is ideologically hard to define. They have also noted that different ideas and topics seem to blend together, which makes it increasingly difficult to distinguish ideological backgrounds.

Discussion and conclusion

The purpose of this article was to determine what police statistics tell us about the investigated crimes in Slovenia. The aim was to find out whether the number of detected crimes increased or decreased during the studied period, especially during the COVID-19 measures. A review of preliminary studies of crime before and during the COVID-19 pandemic in Slovenia (Kokoravec & Meško, 2020) suggested that media had reported an increase in crime, while the statistics we verified for the purpose of this article showed that there had been a decline in the number of reports for most criminal offences in this period.

The results of this analysis are similar to the results of the study that analysed crime in Ljubljana (Kokoravec & Meško, 2020) in slightly different time periods during the epidemic as part of the international comparative study on statistics of reported crime in major and capital cities of countries around the world. The study was conducted by multiple universities and police departments at a global level (Eisner, 2020). Similar to the previous two analyses, the investigated crimes in Ljubljana in the first

eight months of 2020 decreased in number compared to the same period in the previous year. This analysis showed that during the first eight months and during the first wave of COVID-19 in spring 2020, the police in Ljubljana dealt with fewer criminal offences compared to the same period of the previous year (2019). The analysis was based on a review of the daily crime records and not on the communicated overview of criminal offences in certain periods of time.[6] There is a thin and often blurred line between the classification of a minor offence and a criminal offence of domestic violence, so we are including findings of a statistical review of these offences according to the Protection of Public Order Act (ZJRM-1, 2006), which indicates a decrease in the number of investigated offences in the family environment in the Ljubljana area in both periods of 2020 (during the first wave of COVID-19 in the spring and in the first eight months of 2020). The analysis of data for the whole of Slovenia during the first nine months and during the COVID-19 outbreak in spring 2020 paints a slightly different picture. In the first nine months of 2020, an increase of 5% was detected (from 1,257 in 2019 to 1,324 in 2020). We also detected an increase of 34.1% during the first wave of the COVID-19 epidemic compared to the same period in the previous year.

The study conducted by Plesničar, Drobnjak and Filipčič (2020) paints a slightly different picture; it is based on police crime statistics but focuses more on the total number of criminal offences according to the chapters of the Criminal Code rather than on criminal offences in specific terms. As a result, the criminal offences against the family show an increase in crimes against the family for the entire chapter of the Criminal Code because of one criminal offence – abduction of minors.

All previous papers, including this one, that paint a picture of crime during the COVID-19 epidemic contribute to the gradual clarification and understanding of the phenomenon of crime. Last, but not least, the data on the investigated crime give evidence of police work on crime rather than of the actual extent of crime in society. At this point, we can unequivocally assess that police officers and criminal investigators did a huge amount of work during the epidemic despite the fact that, statistically speaking, they dealt with fewer criminal offences (taking into consideration that during the first wave of COVID-19 police management ensured continuous police operations when a higher number of police officers and criminal investigators got infected and a certain number of them worked from home). The effectiveness of the investigation of criminal offences should be further examined in the context of carrying out other tasks or tasks first encountered by the police during the epidemic and in light of sick leave taken by criminal investigators and police officers, bearing in mind the absences from work due to COVID-19 infections.

In order to obtain a more relevant portrayal of crime, delinquent behaviour and the harm suffered by victims of criminal offences during the epidemic, it would be useful to carry out a victimisation study and a study on self-reporting of delinquent behaviour. It would also be useful to determine the level of fear of crime and identify the relationship between the level of fear of crime and the level of crime.

The data presented in this article should be interpreted with great caution, because the characteristics of certain specific criminal offences and their contents should be further examined. From the point of view of criminological interpretations of delinquent behaviour and crime, a decrease in the majority of criminal offences could be attributed to the fact that the daily routine has changed, that people have stayed at home, that they have worked from home and communicated online, that they have exercised caution at work, and so on. Moreover, the opportunities have changed due to informal control and formal control regarding movement restrictions in specific areas at specific times. Moving a large part of the population online has contributed to increased vulnerability to online fraud and other risks. Last but not least, numerous government measures also reduced hardship, whereas informal help, social cohesion and solidarity made it easier for people to overcome this difficult period. Slovenia, similarly to other countries around the world, found itself at a crossroads of uncertainty, ignorance, limited information and the search for better solutions.

We would like to conclude this article with Europol's findings regarding crime during COVID-19 that is specific to the European area, because there are some distinctive features of the second wave of COVID-19 (that have not been studied) that warrant further investigation in the future, specifically after the second wave. These

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6   The timeframe was set by the Violence Research Centre, Institute of Criminology, University of Cambridge, Cambridge Institute of Criminology, led by Manuel Eisner (Violence Research Centre, n.d.). The part of the analysis that includes the Ljubljana data was presented at the World Health Organisation meeting (Eisner, 2020).

are the impact of COVID-19 on the quality and effectiveness of police work, exploiting isolation for various abuses (from online sexual abuse to the abuse of older persons), drug markets, the transformation and adaptation of organised crime and COVID-19 as an opportunity for trafficking, online sales and online fraud, tackling COVID-19 misinformation and the profitable activities of criminal organisations, and falsified medicines for coronavirus on the black market (Europol, 2020).

The analytics department at the Criminal Police Directorate is seeing similar problems in Slovenia. An overview of the reports of investigated criminal offences in the Slovenian environment will be available in the annual report on crime for 2020, which will also include the analysis of the second wave of the COVID-19 epidemic in autumn 2020.

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Managerial and institutional issues: health and well-being

Impact of Stress Caused by the COVID-19 Pandemic Work and Conduct of Police Officers in Stressful Emergency Situations

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Abstract

This paper elaborates the relationship between stress from the COVID-19 pandemic and the work and conduct of police officers in stressful emergency situations and is directly based on a survey conducted among police officers working in Croatia. Field research was conducted in May and June 2020 during the first pandemic wave on a sample of 988 police officers. The objectives of this study are to determine the extent to which the emergency situation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has led to changes in police officer work and behavior of police officers, to determine the severity of stress exposure and to assess police officers in relation to the following sources of stress in the police environment: newly created working conditions, working expectations, interpersonal relations, control in work, support from superiors or associates or the general public, work roles, familiarity with changes, mistakes made in work and a certain insecurity in terms of job preservation. The obtained results suggest that the crisis caused by the pandemic has affected organizational changes in the police force, changed the structure and scope of police tasks and had a significant impact on the professional health of police officers. Moreover, the risk of infection has increased given that police work continues to be carried out in direct contact with citizens, and consequently increased exposure to stress.

Keywords: COVID-19 pandemic, stress, police work, occupational health.

INTRODUCTION

Police action in new security circumstances

Police work is constantly changing and demands the ability to adopt to new circumstances. Such changes are mainly influenced by new technologies that improve policing and increase its efficiency. Secondly, changes are also often a result of democratic processes in society, new policing standards and social values (Vitez & Balgač, 2016). Examples include new standards for protecting victims and approaches towards perpetrators of crimes or towards certain vulnerable groups (persons with disabilities, migrants, asylum seekers, the LGBT population). The third group of reasons related to changes in police work involving a new security environment, especially based on a global international scale. Accordingly, such changes became evident that in police work and activities during the migrant wave

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to Europe after 2015 and also the recent wave of terrorist attacks on European soil (Borovec, 2020). A particular setting that has had a significant impact on police work is the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic affecting all parts of the world.

In December 2019, health authorities in the People's Republic of China observed an increase in the number of people suffering from pneumonia in the city of Wuhan (population 11.08 million, 2018). Wuhan is the capital of Hubei Province (population 58.5 million, 2015). Examined patients had symptoms exhibiting fever and difficulty breathing. According to available data, the first case was detected on December 8, 2019. Once initial information was received concerning infections stemming from the unknown virus, an alarm was sounded in all competent agencies tasked with monitoring infectious diseases at the international level, as well as in all nation states. The first case of coronavirus in Croatia was confirmed on February 25, 2020. Due to the spread of the infection among the population and the reactions of the competent health and government departments, changes were introduced which subsequently affected all aspects of life and work in Croatia. These changes were apparent in the economy, transport, tourism, education, public services, services sector and, in fact, every area of life. Consequently, the nature and intensity of social contacts also changed, and social distancing which had previously evoked a negative connotation suddenly became a desirable style of behavior.

As a reaction to this new threat, the Croatian Government established the Civil Protection Headquarters of the Republic of Croatia with the purpose of coordinating all services in the event of the onset of the COVID-19 in Croatia. The Civil Protection System Act stipulates that the civil protection headquarters is an expert, operational and coordinating department established at the state, regional and local level implementing civil protection measures and activities during large scale accidents and catastrophes.

The Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Interior was appointed Chief of the Headquarters which consists of representatives of relevant sectors from public administration institutions, operational forces of the civil protection system and police, as well as representatives of legal entities of special importance for the civil protection system in Croatia. The crisis in Croatia

is managed using central crisis management based at the National Civil Protection Headquarters.

Coinciding with the formation of the National Civil Protection Headquarters, the National Police Headquarters was established and given the task of coordinating and implementing police measures and activities at the national level. Key decisions passed to prevent the spread of the infection and their implementation, largely undertaken by the police, were as follows:

a) Decision on Measures to Limit of Social Gatherings, Work in Commerce, Provision of Services and the Holding of Sports and Cultural Events
b) Decision on Working hours and Mode of Work in Commerce and Industry for the Duration of the COVID-19 Disease Outbreak
c) Decision on Prohibiting of Leaving Place of Residence and Permanent Residence in the Republic of Croatia
d) Decision on Temporarily Banning Passing through the Border Crossings of the Republic of Croatia
e) Decision on Banning Entry into Seaports and Inland ports of the Republic of Croatia
f) Decision on Shutting Down Playgrounds and Outdoor Sports Venues, and
g) Decision on Imposing Restriction Measures on the Streets and Other Public Places

The scope of the new tasks for the police force becomes evident in that, depending on the current epidemiological situation, between 700 and 1,200 police officers are given such tasks on a daily basis. On the other hand, assuming new job roles is facilitated by the fact that previous policing jobs, such as those involving public gatherings and traffic law enforcement, have been greatly reduced. A number of new activities related to state border control and border police also took place. This line of police work required implementing the Decision on Temporarily Banning Passing through the Border Crossings of the Republic of Croatia with the exception of permitting persons in transit, cross-border workers, health and traffic staff to pass through the border crossings.

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to significant changes in the way of life and habits of the entire population. The manner of committing crimes has also changed to some extent. Instructions given to police officers mandating them to perform only necessary and urgent tasks in direct contact with citizens required a different approach to conducting criminal investigations as well as collecting data on crime and criminal offenses. Ac-

cordingly, certain changes in criminal phenomenology have also become apparent:

a) This has primarily been the emergence of new forms of crime such as fraud related to impersonating medical and humanitarian personnel, production and sale of fake and counterfeit medical and protective products, fake news related to the COVID-19 pandemic as well as an increase in criminal offences in the area of cybercrime.

b) Due to the changes in economic flows and daily routines of citizens, certain types of crimes have shown a decreasing trend, primarily traditional property crimes.

c) Violent crimes involving murder, attempted murder and rape have increased. Data on such crimes should be approached with caution, given that the data is based on crime reported to police, and which may have been skewed due to limitations on citizens in directly contacting the police and been able to report a crime.

d) Coinciding with Europol's assessment and recommendations that the global COVID-19 pandemic poses a cyber security risk, the Croatian criminal police recorded an increase in criminal activity in cyberspace, as well as increased activity on the dark web.

However, police and judicial authorities are facing a two-fold challenge: responding to new criminal threats and adapting operational methods to the new environment.

Occupational risks in police work

Police work is specific and demanding in many ways. The organization of work, working conditions, police tasks, emergency situations as well as obligations, mandated powers and the moral code set a high demand on police officers. Accordingly, the police profession is ranked among the high-risk occupations, and hence the need for providing police force employees various protections and assistance (Borovec et al., 2020). Typical police work involves operational activities accompanied by violence, danger, tension, trauma, confrontation with death and the use of firearms on a daily basis. In addition to organizational stressors, conclusions on the stressful nature of police work drawn from literature become clear. Axelbred and Valle (1978) identified policing as the most dangerous form of work in the world, while Fenell (1981) argued that it is also the most dangerous emotional form of work.

Identifying factors that negatively impact the performance of police work and working ability of each police officer is important, and include risks to physical integrity and health as well as possible sanctions

and prosecution for the manner in which policing is performed. Regardless of the nature of risks, such factors have a negative effect on the motivation of police officers in performing tasks and fulfilling work obligations. Possible negative consequences may encourage risk avoidance among police officers, something which is in conflict with the nature of police work and its effectiveness.

Literature on this topic deals with various professional risks faced by police officers, and can be classified as follows:

a) Risk of death and murder
b) Risk of attack and injury
c) Risk of infectious diseases
d) Risk of stress and fatigue
e) Risk of posttraumatic stress disorder
f) Risk of developing an addiction
g) Risk of other types of injuries and illnesses.

In addition to the new circumstances brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, there are reasonable grounds to claim that the mentioned professional risks for police officers lead to the risk of further exposure to stress and the risk of infection.

Several introductory considerations related to the mentioned risks are necessary, especially the risk of stress in the police force. Stress is the body's response to a situation perceived as threatening, dangerous or threatening to a person's physical or mental integrity.

The human body is exposed to daily doses of stress, and reactions to stress are constantly present. Exposure to overbearing stress not only makes a person incapacitated in the short term but leads to long-term harmful effects, depending on the amount of daily exposure to stress and stressful situations. The impact of pressure from certain occupations is a significant predictor of exposure to higher amounts of stress. According to the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work,[2] some examples of working conditions that cause psychosocial risks include:

a) Excessive workload
b) Conflicting requirements and unclear role of workers
c) Non-involvement in making decisions that affect the worker and the inability to influence the way work is done
d) Poorly managed organizational change, business insecurity

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2 https://osha.europa.eu/hr/themes/psychosocial-risks-and-stress

e) Ineffective communication, lack of support from management or colleagues
f) Psychological and sexual harassment
g) Third party violence.

According to Tot and Šikić (2004), the largest classified group of consequences caused from stress to the health of police officers were neurotic disorders. They highlighted the fact that the police profession is particularly susceptible to various stressful situations, and various occupational diseases of police officers are mentioned in this regard. Therefore, when recruiting, future police officers are required to possess complete physical health, psychological stability, as well as social and emotional maturity. However, exposure to various stressors, traumatic events, crises and their accumulation, inadequate defense mechanisms and neglect of psychophysical fitness may possibly weaken over time the good initial predispositions and high levels of motivation for the police profession as well as weaken the immune system leading to various disorders and diseases. For the same reasons, inappropriate and socially unacceptable behavior, disagreements and conflicts in the workplace or family, and other disturbances can ultimately lead to suicide.

Due to the specifics of police work, the term "police stress" has long been used in literature and practice. In addition to stressors that are recognized in emergency situations, there also exist constant sources of stress or everyday stressors, the impact of which accumulates and over time can gradually and over the long-term disrupt psychophysical stability. Some of these stressors are recognized as being specific to working conditions such as daily work, shift work, social characteristics, sense of physical vulnerability and other aspects of police work, including specific forms of communication involving a hierarchical command structure, assigned responsibilities, the carrying of weapons, special powers).

According to Mayhew (2001a, 2001b), extremely stressful events in the professional life of police officers are the violent death of a partner in the police force, dismissal, loss of life of a citizen while policing, wounding citizens, suicide of a colleague, violent death of another colleague on duty, murder committed by a police officer, violence or injury in the line of duty, serious personal injury inflicted while on duty, suspension, impediments to promotion, arrest of an armed suspect, investigations at the scene of a violent death, prolonged absence from one's family, participation in office-involved shootings, salary reduction, internal investigation procedure and the like.

It is clear that stress does stem from all types of workloads but occurs when the assessment of a police officer's own abilities to perform a certain task or resolve a situation is not aligned with the objective requirements of the task or situation. Unknown situations or situations possibly leading to an unknown outcome, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, may instill fear. Characteristic stressors of police work and those caused by the organization of work may possibly lead to a state of boundless stress (N.N., 2006).[3]

Different types of stress are associated with various consequences. Responses to stressors related to the nature of work, interpersonal relationships and organizational stressors can cause negative mental or physical reactions. In addition to the body's immediate reactions to stress, stressors may also cause acute and chronic reactions. Immediately after a traumatic event, reactions may occur such as loss of sleep, emotional distancing from friends and family, excessive wakefulness or a sense of numbness (Chapin et al., 2008).

Interpersonal stressors are an indispensable part of the stress faced by police officers. Sour relationships between colleagues and superiors in the police force lead to an increased level of stress where interpersonal conflict becomes more stressful than events such as police chases, murder, robbery or gun incidents (Garner, 2008).

Organizational stressors also include shift work, overtime work, administrative workloads, poor equipment, uncertain opportunities for advancement, low salaries, insufficient training, work on holidays and weekends, lack of administrative support, poor relations with superiors, lack of communication throughout the police hierarchy and numerous interpersonal rules (Glavina & Vukosav, 2011). Research has shown that organizational stressors are more worrying than stressors arising from the content of the police profession, i.e., they exert a stronger impact than stressors stemming from the nature of the actual police profession (Graf, 1986; Dowler & Arai, 2008).

Accumulated organizational stressors and direct work-related stressors increase aggressive behavior,

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3 Psychische Belastungen und Stress im Polizeidienst – Runter vom Stresskarussel, (2006).

where Manzoni and Eisner (2006) noted that domestic violence and abuse are often the result of the police officer's profession directly endangering family members.

A police officer may be exposed to causative agents of infectious diseases when investigating a criminal offense, conducting an investigation, taking samples and clues, or arresting a suspect. Examining clothes or the body of a drug user or searching premises always poses the risk of getting stabbed with a used needle and consequently infected with HIV, hepatitis B, or some other virus or bacterium. Officers come into contact with hepatitis B through saliva, bite, vomit, or stool. However, research by Heiskell and Tang (1998) showed that the perception of risk far outweighs the actual likelihood of contracting HIV or AIDS. The onset of the COVID-19 virus and given the newly assigned policing tasks in controlling the movement of citizens, implementing self-isolation and quarantine measures, the possibility of police officers getting infected increases.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND WORK METHODS

Research goal

The aim of this research is to determine the extent to which the emergency situation brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic has led to changes in the work and conduct of police officers in Croatia. Furthermore, the objectives include determining the severity of consequences of stress exposure based on self-reports and assessments from police officers in terms of following sources of stress in the police environment: new working conditions, expectations, interpersonal relationships, roles, awareness of change, mistakes made in work and job insecurity. Ultimately, the aim of the paper is to determine the share of pandemic-related tasks in the total workload of police officers.

It should be noted that this paper is part of a broader research project that aims to investigate the predictor power of certain specifics of the police work environment in circumstances brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Sample description

The survey included a sample of 988 police officers in Croatia, representing approx. 5% of the total number of police officers. Male police officers account for 77% of the total, meaning that 23% are female police officers.

Based on levels of education, about 16% of police officers possess a university degree and 68% have a high school diploma. In terms of gender, 33.9% of respondents are regular police, 13.3% from the criminal police, 20.3% are traffic police, 25.2% from the border police, 3.7% are intervention police, while 3.7% of respondents come from other branches of the police. The ages of respondents are from 20 to 62 years. Considering the structure, the sample is representative of the stated socio-demographic characteristics.

Survey questionnaire

The research was based on a questionnaire[4] used to investigate the impact of the emergency situation imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic on changes in the work and conduct of police officers and measuring assessments of respondents in certain typical areas of the police work environment. The survey in the form of a questionnaire consists of four sections. Sociodemographic data were collected in the first section of the questionnaire. The second section of the questionnaire includes control questions covering direct experience with COVID-19 and the involvement of police officers during the pandemic. The third section of the questionnaire contains 11 scales:

1. Changes in working conditions (9 statements/variables) measuring changes in work organization, tactics and methodology of action,

2. Workload (8 statements/variables) measuring intensity of work and compliance of tasks, deadlines,

3. Interpersonal relationships (5 statements/variables) exploring communication and relationships as well as conflicts with co-workers and managers,

4. Control in work (5 statements/variables) measuring the possibility of managing work tasks,

5. Supervisor support (5 statements/variables) measuring support from management, openness to communication, management feedback,

6. Support from associates (4 statements/variables) assessing the possibility of receiving help from associates, respect and understanding,

7. Public support (3 statements/variables) determining the degree of public and media support,

8. Work role (5 statements/variables) measuring an understanding of one's own role and tasks in the work environment,

4   HSE_dodana-skala-1.pdf (hzzzsr.hr)

9. Awareness of changes (4 statements/variables) measuring an awareness of changes, participation in creating and understanding changes,

10. Mistakes made in work (6 statements/variables) measuring the intensity and reasons for making such mistakes,

11. Job insecurity (4 statements/variables) identifying concerns about possible job loss and fear of negative changes.

Answers were ranked on a 5-point Likert scale: (1) Strongly disagree; (2) Disagree; (3) Neither agree nor disagree; (4) Mostly agree; (5) Strongly agree.

The last and fourth section of the questionnaire assesses consequences of stress exposure. Respondents were offered a choice of three categories:

A) Occasional and shorter episodes of anxiety and negative feelings including anger, sadness, fear, frustration. Added to this are occasional stress reactions of shorter duration without disturbances to one's health condition, occasional mistakes and accidents at work, as well as short periods of reduced work efficiency

B) Frequent psychological symptoms: anxiety, worry, irritability, frustration, mood swings, difficulties in concentrating and making decisions, sleeping difficulties. Occasional physical symptoms include headaches, stomach aches, nausea or chest pains, negative feelings concerning work. Such symptoms are reflected in an increase in the number of mistakes, accidents or injuries at work, as well as shorter sick leave, prolonged periods of reduced work efficiency and reduced work motivation.

C) Stress-related health problems: high blood pressure, diabetes, stomach ulcers, frequent headaches or migraines and digestive problems. This also is reflected in difficulties of a psychological nature such as depressive symptoms, anxiety, constant physical and mental exhaustion, chronic fatigue, frequent mistakes, accidents or injuries at work, including longer sick leave, continuously reduced work efficiency and work avoidance.

Respondents were also given the opportunity to estimate the share of pandemic-related task in their total workload.

By checking the validity and reliability factor, the questionnaire exhibited good metric properties. The reliability indicators in the questionnaire are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Reliability of the measuring instrument

Measuring scales	Cronbach's α
Engagement during the pandemic	0.75
Changes in working conditions	0.72
Workload	0.87
Interpersonal relations	0.91
Control in operation	0.88
Supervisor support	0.90
Associate support	0.83
Public support	0.74
Working role	0.91
Awareness of change	0.83
Operating errors	0.89
Job insecurity	0.54
Complete questionnaire	**0.77**

Work methods

The survey was conducted in May and June 2020 on a sample of 988 police officers, based on a survey method using a stratified sample of all twenty Police Directorates in the Republic of Croatia. The survey of respondents was conducted by an educated interviewer using the face-to-face method in paper and pencil format. Preceding the survey, respondents were introduced to the aim and purpose of the survey, as well as the fact that the survey is anonymous and voluntary. Respondents were also informed that individual answers will not be published but only the results obtained on the total sample. Data processing was carried out using the statistical program SPSS to check the validity and reliability of the questionnaire. The factor structure of the questionnaire was verified by performing a confirmatory factor analysis, given that the variables are classified in certain areas in terms of their meaning, and establishing a good reliability of Cron-

bach's alpha at 0.77. Given that the aim of this paper is not factor analysis, the results will not be presented in more detail; however, summarization of data in the form of the mentioned factors contributes to clarity and interpretability of the results.

RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The first part of the research collected data on the experiences of police officers with COVID-19 positive individuals. The results show that during the first wave of the pandemic and the lockdown, 10.3% of police officers had contact with a person who was COVID-19 positive while on duty, 11.5% had a COVID-19 positive colleague in their organizational unit. 4.9% of respondents ended up in self-isolation, and 0.8% eventually became COVID-19 positive. These results indicated that, regardless of social distancing measures and the introduction of remote work (working from home), po-

lice work was forced to continue through active duty out in the field and direct contact with citizens. Importantly, decisions made by the Croatian Government on introducing new models of work in state and public institutions did not apply to police officers in any branch of the police force at any time.

The COVID-19 pandemic and implementation of measures to prevent it led to the introduction of new tasks, and changes in police affairs. The extent to which new tasks were represented in total working hours of police officers is shown in Graph 1. The results show that for 50% of police officers, new tasks stemming from measures for the COVID-19 pandemic and its prevention accounted for fifty percent or more working hours. In other words, every second police officer spent more than half of his or her working time on pandemic-related tasks.

Graph 1. Share of pandemic-related tasks in the total workload of police officers.
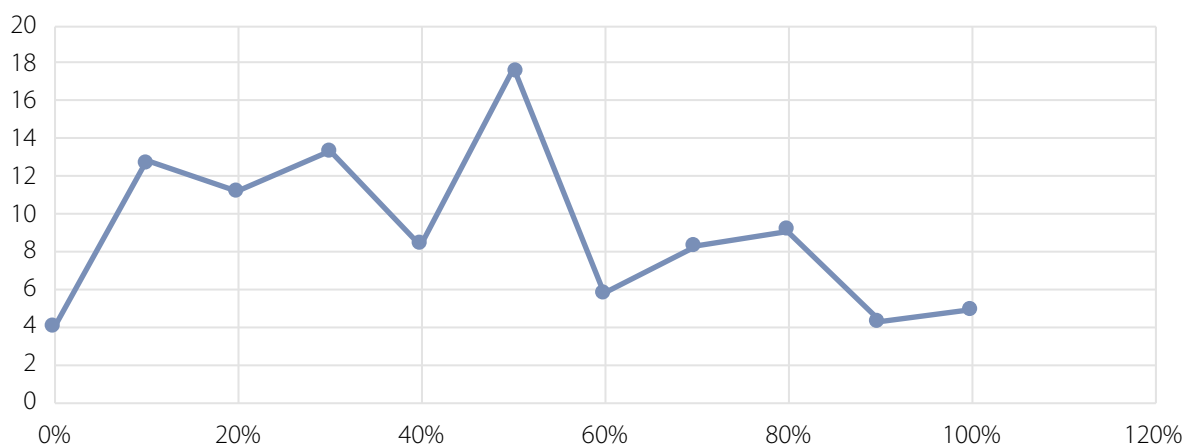
Having established that new jobs exhibit a significant proportion of work by police officers during the COVID-19 pandemic, the next logical step is to identify the types of pandemic-related jobs. Based on the results shown in Graph 2, it becomes evident that police officers mostly performed supervision tasks at police checkpoints in order to verify compliance with measures prohibiting leaving the place of residence without a valid pass issued by the competent authority. In all, 54.9% of police officers performed these tasks in an intensity ranging from sometimes to frequently. Police officers were also often engaged in other tasks related to the new situation and monitoring compliance with self-isolation measures. The results indicate that 34.9%

of police officers were occasionally referred to interventions concerning persons who were ordered to self-isolate or were in quarantine due to COVID-19. Understandably, the largest group of police officers were involved in controlling leaving of place of residence, given that at the time when the measure was in force, some 200 police checkpoints were established on the territory of Croatia, requiring police officers to perform control tasks on a 24/7 schedule. This raises the question of maintaining an intervention capacity within the police force and the quality performing regular police tasks, especially if taking into account that the police did not utilize additional resources besides their regular personnel capacities.

Graph 2. Engagement of police officers in new jobs during the COVID-19 pandemic.
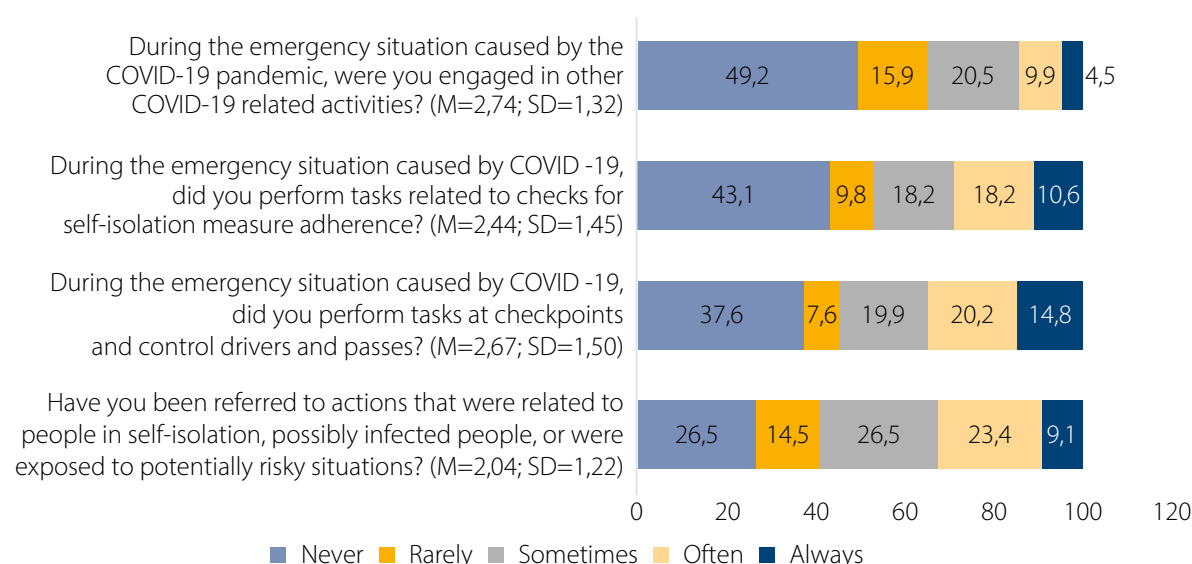
The results obtained on the scales in the form of collected assessments of possible sources of stress in the police environment such as new working conditions, expectations at work, interpersonal relationships, control at work, support from superiors, associates and the public, work role, awareness of changes, mistakes made in work and job insecurity, will be presented as a summary of results from the respondents on the given scales (Table 2), without showing the individual results or manifest variables.

The overall results from the respondents on individual scales show that the highest results were obtained on the scale of understanding the work role (m = 4.0868; sd = 0.595). Given the content of the statements on this scale (e.g., "It is clear to me what is expected of me at work", "I know how to perform work tasks", "I am clear about my obligations and responsibilities", "I understand the goals and purpose of my department (work units)", "My work fits into the overall goal of the work organization"), the conclusion shows a high level of acceptance of new tasks by police officers and an understanding of their purpose.

Table 2. Scaled results from respondents in terms of sources of stress in the police environment.

Descriptive Statistics					
Overall results on the scales:	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Dev.
New working conditions	971	1.00	5.00	3.4399	.59261
Requirements and work intensity	973	1.00	5.00	2.7220	.82882
Interpersonal relationships	984	1.00	5.00	2.3037	.86594
Self-control over work	982	1.00	5.00	3.0589	.84487
Supervisor support	984	1.00	5.00	3.5533	.86732
Associate support	987	1.00	5.00	3.7163	.83392
Public support	985	1.00	5.00	2.6531	.87886
Understanding the work role	986	1.00	5.00	4.0868	.59535
Awareness of change	985	1.00	5.00	3.2079	.77900
Work errors	985	1.00	5.00	2.1948	.72430
Job uncertainty	981	1.00	5.25	2.7123	.73217

The results obtained on the scales measuring support from superiors, associates and the public are interesting. In the new circumstances caused by the pandemic, police officers estimate that the greatest support comes from their colleagues (m = 3.7163; sd = 0.83392), followed by managers (m = 3.5533; sd = 0.86732), with the least support coming from the public (m = 2.6531; sd = 0.87886). This result is as expected given the existing collegial solidarity among police officers in difficult and demanding circumstances, and that fact that most of the measures taken against citizens were repressive control and surveillance measures, which often lack public support. Therefore, the survey result on trust in institutions (Ahrendt et al., 2021) is understandable, indicating that the level of public trust in the police in Croatia decreased during the pandemic, and clearly felt by police officers in terms of lack of support.

Above-average results were obtained on the scale for newly created working conditions (m = 3.4399; sd =.59261). This means that respondents expressed a high level of agreement with statements that there were changes in tactics and methodology in the new circumstances, and in addition to regular tasks they were engaged in other pandemic-related tasks and organizational changes happened in the new situation. Hence, the clear conclusion is the significant impact of the pandemic crisis on the work of the police in organizational and operational terms.

A slightly above-average result was obtained on the scale relating to knowledge of changes (m = 3.2079; sd = 0.77900), meaning that respondents generally agreed with the statement that I have enough opportunities to ask superiors about changes in work, that they are always asks for an opinion on changes in work, it is clear to me how they will work in practice and that they are regularly referred to changes. This is an important component in all situations that require flexibility by police in adapting to new circumstances.

The results also show a slightly above-average level of agreement with the statements on the scale relating to self-control at work (m = 3.0589; sd = 0.84487), meaning that police officers in the new circumstances to some extent retained control over their working hours and manner of performing assigned tasks.

Average results on the scale relating to requirements and work intensity (m = 2.7220; sd =.82882) support the claim that there was only a slight shortening of deadlines for completion of work tasks, coinciding with an increase in workloads and that police officers were not forced to neglect other work tasks due to increasing workloads. This indicates available opportunities for new tasks within the workload of police officers in Croatia, i.e., an increase in pandemic-related tasks coincided with a decrease in other segments of police work. This is also pointed out in the introduction to this paper, where work related to public gatherings, securing large gatherings and the like during the pandemic was reduced.

On the scale relating to job insecurity, average results were also obtained (m = 2.7123; sd = 0.73217), meaning that police officers did not experience a significant increase in concern about job retention, nor fear of changes in working conditions or salary reductions.

Slightly below-average results were obtained on the scale relating to interpersonal relationships (m = 2.3037; sd = 0.86594). Statements provided in this context have a negative connotation. This implies a slight disagreement among respondents against the statement that the new circumstances led to an increase in tension or disagreement among colleagues, or weaker communication among colleagues, an increase in conflicts with colleagues, managers and other associates. In general, there is no evidence of a deterioration in interpersonal relations among police officers related to circumstances brought on by the pandemic.

Finally, the level of agreement among respondents with statements on the scale relating to errors in work is low (m = 2.1948; sd = 0.72430). Given the way the statements were defined, the conclusion is that respondents do not agree that with the notion that, given the current emergency, they make more mistakes at work, that mistakes are due to fear of exposure to the COVID-19 infection, or that they failed to fully adapt to the new situation.

The results on the consequences of stress that police officers experience due to exposure to various circumstances and working conditions, show that as many as 79.5% of surveyed police officers stated that they experience mild consequences of stress. The second category of police officers who developed moderate symptoms of stress accounted for 15.6% of respondents, while the third category referring to more severe symptoms of stress accounted for 4.8% of surveyed police officers. Given the symptoms described above, these results show that police stress is extremely present, dangerous to the health of police officers, and that mitigating the effects of stress should be a continuous obligation. Further research within this project will draw further light on working conditions, demands and intensity of work, interpersonal relationships, self-control over work, support from superiors, associates and the public, an understanding of work roles, awareness of changes, work mistakes and job insecurity in crisis situations, related to police stress and the potential to reduce police stress in terms of these aspects.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of this study, the conclusion is that the crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly affected police organizations as well as policing. The impacts are visible in each police officer at both the organizational and individual level. In addition to work traditionally performed by the police prior to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, new tasks have emerged for police officers, primarily related to implementation of measures in prevent the spread of the COVID-19 infection. However, due to significant changes in all segments of life and work, a significant reduction in all economic and social activities, certain segments of police work underwent a decline in the number of activities. This primarily refers to public gatherings and mass events.

Though other activities have largely introduced new forms of work, primarily teleworking or working from home, these forms of work have not been introduced into the police force in Croatia, and is the reason a significant number of police officers have had contact with infected and isolated persons due to self-isolation measures. Hence, the impact of this crisis should be viewed not only in terms of organizational changes in the police force, but also as risks to the health of police officers.

On the other hand, in terms of the data on the exposure of police officers to stress, this crisis should also be viewed as an occupational health issue. Almost 20% of police officers stated that they felt moderate or severe symptoms caused by stress in the workplace, which is extremely worrying not only due to the effects of stress on overall health, but also on the work efficiency of police officers.

In considering the observed characteristics of police work, the conclusion can be drawn that police officers, regardless of the new circumstances, have been able to maintain a high level of understanding of their work roles, a high level of support from colleagues, and a somewhat lower level of support from managers, with public support ranked the lowest. The new tasks led to changes in tactics and methodology of police work. Police officers were well informed of the changes and the ability to retain control in performing their tasks as well as managing their activities. This COVID-19 crisis did not instill a fear of job loss or negative changes stemming from working conditions did not increase

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among police officers. There was also no disruption of interpersonal relationships or tensions among colleagues.

This paper has practical value as it facilitates understanding ongoing changes in the police force due to current global crisis while emphasizing the importance of occupational health in the police force and pointing out the need for additional training in overcome stress experienced by police officers (Frenkel et al., 2020).

When taking into account the new tasks assigned to police officers and their part in overall police operations, the argument stands that organizational change and rapid adaptation of the police organization to new challenges were necessary. Accordingly, future crises are a realistic expectation, crises that will impose new challenges and tasks for police organizations. This lesson was learned from the crisis caused by the great migrant wave in Europe in 2015, as well as the crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic. The issue of increasing police intervention capabilities in crisis situations should be addressed by strategic management. Given that the increased scope of work often involved simpler tasks, such as traffic and passenger checks, securing certain areas or monitoring implementation of imposed measures, which does not represent high-risk and incidental tasks, a possible solution is to organize and engage a reserve (auxiliary) police force. This type of reserve police force does not currently exist in Croatia. Hypothetically, this force could be assigned tasks that are less demanding in terms of complexity and danger, but still require police involvement. When a crisis occurs requiring more intensive engagement, the police force face a double challenge: responding adequately to the actual crisis and also maintaining an intervention capacity and quality of service as is customary in all other areas of their activities.

Furthermore, occupational stress reduction programs should be implemented at all levels of the police organization, and police management must be more qualified to recognize stress and burnout among its employees. The recommendation is that police management become more aware of the importance of certain predictors of stress in the work environment. They should be able to create a supportive work environment, providing police officers with adequate support at all levels, understanding their roles and the expectations placed on them. Police officers should be aware of all organizational changes and adequately prepared in applying new tactics and methods of work. Each of these aspects can contribute to either increasing or decreasing stress at work. In conclusion, other lessons learned during the crisis need to be integrated into police training and education.

The presented research also has certain limitations. First, there are no pre-crisis indicators, hence the intensity and extent of changes that have taken place cannot be shown. Furthermore, additional analyzes are required to show the predictive power of certain aspects of the police work environment that contribute to the onset of occupational stress.

Given that this research was conducted during the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, conducting longitudinal research would be useful in showing further changes to the observed phenomena during the crisis, in this case caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

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The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Police Officers' Mental Health:

Preliminary results of a Portuguese sample

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Abstract

This study had a twofold objective. First, we aimed to measure the levels of stress symptoms and burnout on the police officers who volunteered for the study. Second, we proposed to examine the effect of COVID-19 exposure and exposure to traumatic experiences in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic on the officers' mental health. The National Directorate of the *Policia de Segurança Pública* (Portuguese Public Security Police) approved this study and was responsible for distributing information about the study and the link to an online questionnaire among their officers. As expected, the levels of burnout, psychological distress, and posttraumatic stress (PTS) were higher than similar professional populations in non-pandemic conditions. Officers with fewer than 11 years of work experience showed fewer symptoms of PTS compared to those with longer work experience, but at the same time, they reported higher levels of burnout. Women revealed higher scores of burnout-disengagement, but no other differences compared to their male colleagues. Officers who were married or living in a partner relationship obtained lower levels of posttraumatic stress than officers who reported being single, divorced, or widowed. The responsibility of caring for an elderly relative increased psychological distress and PTS levels. In general, exposure to COVID-19 or being at risk of infection had less impact on the officers' mental health than exposure to traumatic experiences. In conclusion, as expected, the pandemic is having a stressful effect on police officers, but it is not homogeneous among different groups. Implications for intervention policies are discussed.

Keywords: Burnout, posttraumatic stress, psychological distress, mental health, COVID-19

Introduction

Among professional groups, law enforcement has been identified as one of the most hazardous and stressful occupations due to the complexity of roles and responsibilities it entails (Deschamps et al., 2003; Liberman et al., 2002; Tuckey, Winwood & Dollard, 2012). In addition to specialised knowledge and technical competence (e.g., use of weapons), the officers need to develop social skills (e.g., interrogating suspected criminals) and certain psychological abilities (e.g., mediating tense situations) to appropriately intervene when required. A UK study involving a large sample of law enforcement agents found that under normal circumstances (i.e., in the absence of natural or human-caused catastrophes), the prevalence of mental health problems was noticeably higher than in the general population (Houdmont & Elliott-Davies, 2016). Job-related demands are the primary causes of stress and burnout symptoms, and in law enforcement, the job demands are especially high (Backteman-Erlanson, Padyab & Brulin, 2013). The extent to which the wellbeing of officers is affected is directly related to their experiences at the operational and organisational levels (Deschamps et al., 2003). Operational policing entails cumulative exposure to different potentially traumatic situations (Tuckey et al., 2012). Traumatic situations do not necessarily imply aggression, violence, or life-threatening events; the impact of incidents such as encountering a recently deceased person, a tragic road traffic accident or attending to a severely injured child, for instance, also contribute to the high prevalence of burnout and mental health problems among this professional group (Carlier & Gersons, 1994; Chopko, Palmieri & Adams, 2015; Weiss et al., 2010). When mental wellbeing is affected, it impacts many different aspects of life functioning (Agolla, 2009). Under normal conditions, job-related stressors in law enforcement are the leading cause of sickness absence (University of Cambridge, 2018) and illness-related retirement (Summerfield, 2011). A UK study in 2017 found that 47% of the officers had taken sick leave for mental health issues within the past five years of the time of the study (Police Firearms Officer Association, 2017).

The prevalence of mental disorders in law enforcement has been widely debated in the scientific literature. Houdmont and Elliott-Davies (2016) found that 39% of the participants in their study, among English and Welsh police officers, required mental health care. A nationwide survey conducted with a large sample of police officers in Norway found that 8.2% suffered from severe depression and 11.2% severe anxiety symptoms (Berg et al., 2006). In Australia, Harman (2019) showed that the prevalence of mental disorders was higher among police and emergency services than any other professional group. Similar findings have been reported in many other countries.

Occasionally, operational policing exposes officers to potentially extreme traumatic events. Police officers are among the first responders to natural catastrophes and to disasters either accidentally or intentionally caused by humans. Earthquakes, tsunamis, wildfires, aviation accidents, explosions, riots, and terror attacks expose emergency responders to exceptionally dangerous and traumatic situations. These situations are, in general, characterised by a significant loss of life under a short timespan. The urgency when searching for potential survivors and the life-threatening conditions when rescuing people and recovering dead bodies from the rubble are work-related stressors that add to the sense of being responsible for the security of the public and furthermore the safety and wellbeing of colleagues and other frontline responders. Under such circumstances, the prevalence of posttraumatic stress (PTS) and other anxiety spectrum disorders increases sharply (e.g., Neria, DiGrande & Adams, 2011; Razik, Ehring & Emmelkamp, 2013). The effect of PTS is devastating – it reduces the quality of life, contributes to poor physical health, and boosts self-harming behaviours (Berget et al., 2007; Maia et al., 2007).

In this regard, the COVID-19 pandemic is of greater cataclysmic proportions than any previous event in the last 75 years, although it is occurring over a longer timespan. The known number of people infected, severely sickened, and killed by COVID-19 is very high in many countries, and healthcare systems worldwide have been overwhelmed and close to collapse. A lack of sufficient personal protective equipment has been a complaint of many frontline professionals in many nations during the beginning of the pandemic.

There has been a widespread high risk of contagion, and considering that the level of subjective threat has a higher psychological impact than a real threat (Razik et al., 2013), it is reasonable to hypothesise that the perceived level of exposure to the virus could be traumatic in itself. Furthermore, among frontline responders, a feeling of being unable to protect the health of close relatives and friends, and an occasionally hostile social

environment might increase their risk of developing mental disorders.

Securing the psychological wellbeing of law enforcement agents should be a priority for mental health services because, besides protecting the public from criminal activity, these agents are responsible for enforcing measures (i.e., restrictions, curfews, and lockdowns) that protect public health. Identifying the early signs of mental health problems establishes a base for applying evidence-based policies that can help prevent associated co-morbidity and disability in such a valuable professional group. We established the objectives of the study with this framework in mind. First, we aimed to measure the level of burnout, psychological distress, and PTS in officers who volunteered for the study. Second, we proposed to analyse the effect of COVID-19 exposure, risk of infection, and traumatic experiences on the police officers' mental health in the context of the pandemic.

Method

Study design and recruitment

This study had a cross-sectional design with data collection occurring at a single moment in time. The study was approved by the National Directorate of the *Policia de Segurança Pública* (NDPSP), one of five law enforcement bodies operating in Portugal with around 21,000 police officers. The NDPSP distributed the information about the study and the to the web-based questionnaire among the officers, indicating that participation was voluntary. Data collection took place between late July and late December 2020. Since we, the researchers, had no control over the recruitment process, it was not possible to ensure that all the officers were contacted, and, therefore, we could not calculate the response ratio. In total, 1,639 officers responded to the questionnaire, with 97.4% (n = 1597) accomplishing the only inclusion criterion of being in active service at any time since January 1st, 2020.

Questionnaire

The questionnaire included:
a) sociodemographic questions (i.e., gender, marital status, school-age children, and caring for an elderly relative), b) one question about exposure to COVID-19 in the line of duty, and c) standardised tools to measure burnout, psychological distress and posttraumatic stress.

Oldenburg Burnout Inventory

The Oldenburg Burnout Inventory (OLBI) is a self-report instrument with responses on a five-point Likert scale (1 = *Strongly disagree* to 5 = *Strongly agree*). The instrument assesses two dimensions – disengagement and exhaustion (Demerouti et al., 2001) – with eight items per dimension. Demerouti and colleagues (2003) offered initial construct validity evidence for this instrument. The OLBI demonstrated acceptable reliability (i.e., test-retest reliability and internal consistency) as well as factorial, convergent, and discriminant validity (Halbesleben & Demerouti, 2005). In the current study, Cronbach's alpha are.840 for disengagement and.873 for exhaustion. For each dimension, we calculated the total score (sum of items' scores) and the mean item score to compare with other studies in the scientific literature.

General Health Questionnaire – 12 items

The 12-item version of the General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-12) (Goldberg & Williams, 1988) is frequently used to measure common mental disorders in public health surveys. This instrument is used to screen for general (i.e., non-psychotic) psychiatric morbidity (Goldberg & Williams, 1988). The GHQ-12 uses a four-point Likert scale (0 = *Better than usual* to 3 = *Much less than usual*). We calculated the total score as the sum of the items' scores. To compare with other studies, we recoded the variable, as proposed by Goldberg and Williams (1988), in which categories *Better than usual* and *Same as usual* scored 0 and categories *Less than usual* and *Much less than usual* scored 1. In this case, the possible range is 0 to 12, with higher scores indicating a higher level of psychological distress. This instrument has been widely used and extensively validated in general and clinical populations worldwide (e.g., Hystad & Johnsen, 2020; Lundin et al., 2016; Tait, French & Hulse, 2003). The Cronbach's alpha in this study was.907.

Posttraumatic Stress Checklist for DSM-5

The Posttraumatic Stress Checklist for DSM-5 (PCL-5) is a 20-item self-report measure that assesses the *DSM-5* symptoms of PTS (Weathers et al., 2013), and it is one of the most widely applied screening measures to evaluate posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in clinical and research settings. We adapted the scale's four initial questions to the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, asking whether the respondents had endured or witnessed one or more stressful experiences that involved death, threatened death, or actual or threatened serious injury. In these initial questions, we also asked if

the respondents had learned about an event where a close relative or friend experienced premature or unexpected death. If the respondent answered *Yes* to any of these questions, the questionnaire would unlock 20 items about posttraumatic symptoms. These items were rated on a five-point Likert-type scale, with scores ranging from 0 = *Not at all* to 4 = *Extremely*, resulting in a symptom severity score. A cut-off score of 31–33 has been recommended (Bovin et al., 2016) to consider the presence of a disorder. This instrument has been validated in multiple samples (e.g., Blanchard et al., 1996; Forbes, Creamer & Biddle, 2001; Ruggiero et al., 2003). The Cronbach's alpha in our study was .967.

Ethical concerns

Besides the information of the study distributed by the NDPSP, the first screen of the online questionnaire presented the researchers' affiliations and contact information, the objectives of the study, and informed about the conditions of data protection. Furthermore, and since we considered the questionnaire entailed a risk for psychological discomfort, we advised that if that were the case, the participant might consider closing their browser and seeking help from support resources available at their place of employment. We also offered a telephone-based emotional support line with a registered clinical psychologist who collaborated on the study. To access the questionnaire, the participants had to express their consent to participate in the study. The study received ethical approval by the XXXX Swedish National Ethical Review Committee.

Results

From the total number of respondents, 88.4% (n = 1412) were men, while 11.2% were women (n = 179). The majority of officers (n = 951, 59.7%) had worked in law enforcement for more than 20 years, while 25% (n = 398) had been in the profession between 11 to 20 years, and 15.3% (n = 244) had 10 years or fewer of service. We found no statistically significant differences between officers who worked 11 to 20 years and those who worked for more than 20 years in the profession regarding the three scales' scores. Therefore, we clustered these two groups for the analyses. The greatest percentage (82.5%, n = 1318) were married or living with an intimate partner, while 17.3% (n = 276) were single, divorced, or widowed. The larger part (66.4%, n = 1058) reported having school–age children even if they were not living with them. Almost a quarter of the sample (22.3%, n = 356) had been responsible for the care of an elderly relative at some time since January 1st, 2020. When asked if they were exposed to COVID-19 in the line of duty, 65.2% (n = 1042) answered *Yes*, 9.3% (n = 148) answered *No*, and 25.5% (n = 407) were not sure. We found no statistically significant differences between those officers who answered *No* and those who answered *Not sure* in the scales' scores. Thus, we clustered both groups for the analyses. A significant number of officers (n = 995, 62.3%) answered *Yes* to at least one of the four initial questions of the PCL-5, and from them, 95.6% (n = 950) reported having at least one symptom of PTS. Considering a cutoff score of 33, we obtained a prevalence of probable PTSD of 26.1%. In Table 1, we present the descriptive statistics of the scales.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of burnout, psychological distress, and posttraumatic stress

	OLBI-D	OLBI-E	GHQ-12	PCL-5
Valid cases	1586	1577	1594	994
Scale rank	[8-32]	[8-32]	[0-36]	[0-80]
Sample rank	[8-32]	[8-32]	[1-36]	[0-80]
Mean (total score, Likert) (SD)	20.3 (4.1)	20.2 (4.1)	12.5 (5.7)	21.6 (17.9)
Mean (total score, 0-0-1-1) (SD)			2.7 (3.3)	
Mean (mean item score) (SD)	2.54 (0.51)	2.52 (0.51)		
P_{25}, P_{50}, P_{75} (total score, Likert)	18-21-23	17-20-23	8-11-15	6-18-34

Note: OLBI-D = Disengagement scale of the Oldenburg Burnout Inventory; OLBI-E = Exhaustion scale of the Oldenburg Burnout Inventory; GHQ-12 = General Health Questionnaire, 12-item version; PCL-5 = Posttraumatic Stress Checklist for DSM-5.

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We compared the mean value of each of the scales for the different groups. Since we performed 27 comparisons, we applied the Bonferroni adjustment for multiple comparisons testing (e.g., Chen, Feng & Yi, 2017), and considered any result <.002 statistically significant. While police officers newer to the profession (i.e., 10 years of experience or less) obtained higher scores on average for both the disengagement (t(1580) = 3.939, p <.001) and exhaustion scales (t(1571) = 4,291, p <.001), more experienced officers obtained higher scores on average for psychological distress (t(1588) = -4.631, p <.001), and PTS (t(989) = -2.536, p =.011). Officers who were responsible for the care of an elderly relative during the pandemic, obtained higher scores on average for psychological distress (t(499,951) = -3.944, p <.001), and PTS (t(402,231) = -3.858, p <.001). Officers who reported they had been exposed to COVID-19 in the line of duty, obtained higher scores on average for disengagement (t(1225.053) = 5.663, p <.001), exhaustion (t(1203.678) = 7.905, p <.001), and psychological distress (t(1358.946) = -6.760, p <.001). Likewise, officers who had been exposed to stressful experiences in the context of the pandemic obtained higher scores on average for disengagement (t(1347.505) = -10.796, p <.001), exhaustion (t(1348.888) = 12.464, p <.001), and psychological distress (t(1523.664) = -12.582, p <.001).

We tested a hierarchical linear regression model using each of the total score of the scales as a dependent variable. In the first step of the regression, we introduced the predictors *gender* (men are the reference group), *years in law enforcement* (10 years or less is the reference group), *living situation* (married or living with an intimate partner is the reference group) and *responsible for the care of an elderly relative*. In the second step, we introduced the predictors *exposed to covid-19 in the line of duty* and *exposed to stressful experiences in the context of the pandemic*. The coefficients of the regression analysis are displayed in Table 2. What best explained disengagement was being a woman, newer to the profession, and unexposed to stressful experiences. What best explained exhaustion was being newer to the profession, unexposed to COVID-19, and unexposed to stressful experiences. Psychological distress was higher among those with more experience in the profession, those responsible for the care of an elderly relative, those exposed to COVID-19, and those exposed to stressful experiences. Finally, having more experience in the profession, being single, divorced, or widowed, being responsible for the car of an elderly relative, and being exposed to COVID-19 were predictors of PTS.

Table 2. Coefficients of the hierarchical linear regressions' second step

Predictors	OLBI-D β	OLBI-D Sig.	OLBI-E β	OLBI-E Sig.	GHQ-12 β	GHQ-12 Sig.	PCL-5 β	PCL-5 Sig.
Gender	.051	.041	-.002	.944	-.003	.915	-.010	.762
Years in LE	-.104	<.001	-.115	<.001	.117	<.001	.075	.020
Living situation	-.005	.843	-.015	.555	.024	.330	.074	.022
Care of elderly	.020	.418	-.023	.351	.063	.009	.116	<.001
Exposed to COVID-19	-.049	.063	-.092	<.001	.052	.043	.066	.038
Exposed to SE	-.238	<.001	-.259	<.001	.258	<.001	--	--
Adjusted R^2	.077		.103		.097		.026	
ANOVA	22.785	<.001	31.067	<.001	29.423	<.001	6.255	<.001

Note: OLBI-D = Disengagement scale of the Oldenburg Burnout Inventory; OLBI-E = Exhaustion scale of the Oldenburg Burnout Inventory; GHQ-12 = General Health Questionnaire 12-item version; PCL-5 = Posttraumatic Stress Checklist for DSM-5, LE = Law Enforcement; SE = Stressful Experiences.

Discussion

The objective of this study was to evaluate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on police officers' mental health because they are among the frontline workers with the specific role of enforcing pandemic management strategies, especially restrictions, curfews, and lockdowns. We hypothesised that there might be additional factors to the job-related demands that are the primary cause of burnout and psychological distress (Backteman-Erlanson et al., 2013) in the law enforcement profession. Furthermore, the pandemic might have facilitated exposure to stressful experiences, and exposure to COVID-19 and the risk of contagion might represent a stressful factor in itself. While the results confirmed our hypotheses to a certain degree, we do not seem to be on the verge of a major mental health crisis in the law enforcement profession due to the COVID-19 pandemic. On average, we found levels of burnout and psychological distress only slightly higher than those reported for police officers during normal conditions (i.e., in the absence of natural or human-caused catastrophes) (e.g., Basinska & Dåderman, 2019; Basinska & Gruszczynska, 2017; Basinska, Wiciak & Dåderman, 2014; Sundqvist et al., 2015). Regarding PTS, it is difficult to establish comparisons because studies employ different measures. However, we found only marginally higher mean levels on the PCL-5 than others who employed the same instrument in police officers' populations and public safety personnel during normal conditions (e.g., Lentz, Silverstone & Krameddine, 2020; Shields et al., 2021). While 26.1% of our study's participants were above the PCL-5 cut off point indicating probable PTSD, a study by the University of Cambridge (2018) estimated a prevalence of 20% of PTSD in officers who had experienced traumatic events other than catastrophes. Therefore, the current scenario differs from that found during cataclysms, as it has been estimated that the excess of morbidity rate of psychiatric pathology can reach 20% in the first year of a catastrophe (Bromet, 2012). Anxiety spectrum disorders are amongst the highest rates, especially among emergency workers exposed to a higher number of deaths (Government Office for Science, 2010; Razik et al., 2013; Wisnivesky et al., 2011).

The development of mental health problems during catastrophes is directly related to the fear of severe injury or death caused by a threatening event and a perceived lack of control (Butler, Panzer & Goldfrank, 2003). Regarding the COVID-19 pandemic, although the number of deaths and people affected is much higher than any other known natural or human-caused disaster in modern times, the fact that it is occurring over a long time span might be producing a tolerance effect that increases resilience for major mental health problems. Furthermore, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic seems to differ whether officers are newer or more experienced in the profession. While newer officers are more vulnerable to burnout, those with more years of service are more vulnerable to psychological distress and posttraumatic stress. These results are consistent with previous findings reported in the scientific literature about the impact of the experience levels on occupational stress (Ahola et al., 2017; Balakrishnamurthy & Shankar, 2009; Queirós et al., 2020), an aspect that should be considered in preventive and clinical intervention efforts.

Regarding our second objective, we verified the impact of exposure to COVID-19 and stressful experiences in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic as a risk factor for mental health problems. Matsuoka and colleagues (2012) reported an association between PTSD symptoms and concern for risk of radiation exposure in rescue workers following the Great East Japan Earthquake. In our study, we found that exposure to stressful experiences had a greater effect on mental health than exposure to COVID-19. Thus, the concern for being exposed to a potentially life-threatening virus seemed to cause less strain and have less psychological repercussion on officers than exposure to experiences related to serious injury or death, even if these experiences were not a direct threat to the respondent. On the other hand, it was interesting to verify that non-exposure increased burnout levels. This finding requires further investigation and is a clear direction for new research.

It is noteworthy that psychological distress and posttraumatic stress were associated with the responsibility for taking care of an elderly relative. Since the risk of death due to infection by COVID-19 is so high among elderly people (e.g., Kang & Jung, 2020; Yanez et al., 2020), this represented a cumulative stress factor that added to the job-related factors.

As a final note, we highlight the implications of the study for law enforcement management. While there is an increased need for mental health support, the severity of the effect produced by the COVID-19 pandemic appears far less damaging than that produced by other cataclysmic events in first responders. Managers

should not fear a major mental health crisis in the profession, and low-intensity intervention and follow-up should address the current needs of most officers. The COVID-19 pandemic is having a heterogeneous effect based on officers' characteristics, which brings us to a "one size does not fit all" situation where tailored services might prove more efficient in addressing mental health needs. Attention should be given not only to officers exposed to risks, as those who reported having not been exposed also showed psychological vulnerabilities. If support is provided, the problem might be contained without major job losses.

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The Health and Well-Being of Portuguese Military Academy Cadets During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Abstract

This study aims to analyse the health and well-being of cadets from the Portuguese Military Academy during the outbreak caused by COVID-19, using data from a survey applied to all students who attended the institution in June 2020 and in January 2021. It puts forward the question of whether the health and well-being of future military leaders reveal a pattern of convergence with the remaining students of higher education, or whether they depart from it, in terms of living conditions, workload, levels of stress, mental health, and behaviours during the COVID-19 pandemic. The investigation presents a portrait and the evolution of the cadets and compares it with the known results, identifying similarities and divergences. The data suggest that the measures implemented at the Portuguese Military Academy can be considered successful due to the student's perception and comparison with other realities. The absence of positive cases of COVID-19 (from March to July 2020), the promotion of some factors inherent to healthy lifestyles, and the maintenance of workload and stress levels are evidence of this. However, during the second wave (January 2021), the deterioration in all indicators related to well-being and mental health, suggests the necessity to monitoring the students in more fragile psychosocial and well-being conditions.

Keywords: Military Academy; cadets; COVID-19; health, well-being.

INTRODUCTION

The reality that the world is going through will serve as a point of reference, as were the great wars and other diseases with significant global impact. COVID-19 pandemic is demonstrating that despite technological and scientific developments, as well as in other different dimensions, such as politics, economic and social, the world that tended to appear more stable and controlled by human beings, now reveals high weaknesses. An event that supposedly got its start at the local level (Wuhan / China) quickly went global, with complex impacts on different dimensions, generating uncertainties and increasing the notion of risk. In response to the situation, global fundraising efforts have been made for scientific research on vaccine development, which, in record time, emerged at the end of 2020, when Portugal began to face the second wave of COVID-19. Despite all the effort, the pandemic has further highlighted existing inequalities, both locally and globally. COVID-19 affected most sectors of activity, especially hospitality, catering, and support services (Mamede, Pereira, & Simões, 2020).

The spread of COVID-19 has forced a rapid adaptation on education, but the impact and the repercussions of these changes in teaching, and especially on students, are not yet fully known and predictable.

Following some studies, related to the impact on the well-being of higher education students resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic (Van De Velde, 2020), the investigation, carried out at the Military Academy (MA), shows that the students understand the measures adopted by the institution. However, some deterioration in part of the well-being and mental health indicators is revealed (Alberto & Malheiro, 2020). Given the relevance of the topic to guide the measures adopted at MA, it was considered pertinent to carry out the second wave of the questionnaire, maintaining the main objective: analysing the health and well-being of cadets during the outbreak caused by COVID-19.

MILITARY ACADEMY AND COVID-19

Being aware that the risk of spreading the disease could interfere with the health of all who serve in MA, concrete measures were defined to be carried out by all teachers and students present at the facilities in Lisbon and Amadora, allowing the normal functioning of MA.

Initially, these measures were registered in the MA COVID-19 Contingency Plan of March 9, 2020. This plan aimed at mitigating severe illness and, in turn, the impact on students, staff, teachers, and military personnel of MA, reducing the spread of infection through the application of COVID-19 prevention, control, and surveillance procedures in the Academy, permanently monitoring the situation, ensuring the timely collection and communication of information and, ensuring the regular functioning of the Academy (Academia Militar, 2020a).

This plan was elaborated during the pandemic containment phase, forcing all those who serve in MA to comply with the rules issued by the health authorities in their face-to-face activity. Also, it required creating isolation spaces if a suspected case was detected, preparing the military to react to the detection of these cases. Implementing these standards obliged the Military Academy to purchase sanitary material, as is the case with antiseptic solutions and surgical masks, to take more care in cleaning and disinfecting classrooms and sports venues, and post informational posters on transmission prevention measures of the virus. Subsequently, on March 14, due to the evolution of the pandemic, the Academy's Commander ordered the suspension of all classroom activities, foreseeing to resume regular activity on April 14, after the Easter holidays, which did not happen, because there were no conditions within Portuguese society to resume face-to-face teaching.

This fact required the application of the measures of the digital technological program to support distance learning provided for in the COVID-19 Contingency Plan, (Academia Militar, 2020a), which ordered students and teachers to:

1. Compliance with the theoretical classes provided for in the annual activity calendar and the schoolwork plan, using the Colibri Zoom application, not dispensing with the use of e-mail and Moodle;

2. The elaboration of works of an academic nature;

3. The development of research activities;

4. The study of the matters contained in the respective Study Plans;

5. The accomplishment, by the professors (and other actors involved), of the work related to the revision of the new Study Cycles;

6. The maintenance, by the students, of a minimally regular physical activity, according to the specific training plan disclosed: quarantine Workout 19.

Looking ahead to the end of the State of Emergency on April 30, the *MA 2020 Return Plan* was disseminated, which aimed at the progressive lifting of the containment measures motivated by the pandemic COVID-19, in order to guarantee, successfully, the end of the year academic year 2019 / 2020, safeguarding the health, hygiene, and safety conditions of the military and civilians (Academia Militar, 2020b).

This plan aimed at progressively returning to teaching, training, physical, and administrative support, through the chronological implementation of measures divided into four phases, from May 3 to October 12.

- In the first phase, the intention was to maintain distance learning and prepare MA for the progressive return of those providing teleworking services.
- In the second phase, which took place from 1 to 30 June, it was decided to end the school year by maintaining distance learning and progressively increasing military and civil servants who provide service in MA.
- In the third phase, which ran from 1 to 31 July, the activities planned after the school year (exams and Councils) were carried out, and the Lion 2020 Exercise was carried out in the Command Post Exercise (CPX) modality. Despite being foreseen, it was not possible to complete Military Training Blocks 2 and 3.
- In the last phase of this plan, MA prepared the beginning of the new academic year and provided Cadets with a set of internships complementary to military training. In this phase, the necessary conditions were met to proceed with the presentation of the Applied Research Work and carry out the Military Aptitude Test necessary for the preparation and selection of Cadets who would enter the academic year 2020 / 2021.

At the launch of the academic year 2020 / 2021, there was a need to implement a new plan, the Contingency Plan Resume MA 2020 / 21, of September 23, in order to resume classroom activities, teaching, military training, physical, administrative, and support, maximizing the presence of students and teachers, in safety (Academia Militar, 2020c).

This document defined the rules to be adopted to resume classroom teaching activities, without neglecting the possibility of adopting other modalities because of the evolution of the pandemic, such as the creation of a student rotation regime so that 50% could follow the teaching activities in a telematic way, always favouring classroom teaching for 1st-year students.

While in the academic year 2019 / 2020, MA did not register any case of COVID-19 in the universe of its students, in the academic year 2020 / 2021, several dozens of cases were registered, spread throughout the 1st semester with greater incidence in the period after the Christmas holidays, coinciding with the most critical phase of the disease nationwide.

The Military Academy adopted measures that allowed that the detected cases were not propagated internally to the remaining students. Noteworthy are the measures related to the immediate isolation of students with a positive test to COVID-19, as well as all those who deprived them. Given the specificity of the mandatory boarding school, daily activities were organised so that cadets sharing the same room were always together in their day-to-day lives, limiting contact with the rest. In this way, whenever a positive case was detected, it was enough to isolate this nucleus of cadets to stop the spread of the disease, instead of isolating a class or a company, thus allowing a minimum interference in classroom activities, at the same time, protecting the remaining students.

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of international research was to recognise the relationship between the pandemic caused by COVID-19 and the well-being of higher education students. These objectives were disaggregated in the assessment of living conditions and workload; changes in stress levels, well-being, mental health, and health behaviour and variations between institutions and between countries (Van De Velde, 2020).

The previous purposes were adapted to the institution's reality, because some questions did not make sense in the reality of the Academy, and because it was intended to go further in other areas and deepen the motivations/causes. However, it had preserved the integrity of the instrument.

The questionnaire was applied using Google Forms (with email validation by the respondents) at two different times. The questionnaire was first applied in June 2020, and the results have already been released and analysed (Alberto & Malheiro, 2020). The second

moment of the application of the questionnaire survey occurred in the first half of January 2021, obtaining 366 responses (93% of the universe), so it is considered that the response rate is representative of the main tendencies of the students of MA.

The application of the same survey by questionnaire at two different times guarantees the reliability of the data and an analysis of its evolution. However, it should be noted that the universe, despite being constituted in two moments by all students of the institution, had a variation of students from 2020 to 2021 - the fourth year left, and new students were admitted in October 2021 for the first year academic.

The analysis and debate of the standards that result from the application of the instrument are contained in the section of the text that follows, stressing that such information was made available on February 19, 2021, to all relevant actors for the design and implementation of measures (and monitoring students) at MA.

RESULTS

Concerning the characterization of the sample, it appears that 13.1% of respondents are women and that the age of the majority of respondents is between 18 and 23 years old, a characterisation in line with the age limits for accessing the institution and the total feminisation rate (14%). It is also noted that 48.6% were not in a stable relationship; 95.6% were born in Portugal. In regard to the item "What importance do you attach to your studies compared to other activities?" it was found that for 33.6% of the respondents they are "more important," for 62% they are "equally important" and for 4.4% they are "less important." One last reference on the 44% percentage of "higher education" responses to the question "What is the highest level of education your mother has completed?" being one of the determinants of school success.

The characterisation is consistent with previous studies (Carreiras et. al., 2020), however, the deterioration of the indicators related to the financial condition stands out. While in June 2020, only 1% replied that they could not resort to friends and family for financial situations ("borrowing 300 euros"), a semester later, this percentage increased to 9.3%. Responses to the statement "I had enough financial resources to cover my monthly expenses" also suggest a deterioration in the students'

financial situation. Three students even mentioned that they contacted "the student support service or the social service of their university/college/school" to "discuss problems or financial difficulties." This deterioration of economic indicators, being a negative aspect, corresponds to the international standard in this variable (Van de Velde et al., 2020).

Concerning teaching activities, only 29% of students "agree" that "academic work has increased significantly since the outbreak of COVID-19;" 24% say they know "less what is expected of me in the different courses / disciplines since the outbreak of COVID-19" and 19% agree that "the change in teaching methods resulting from the outbreak of COVID-19 has caused them much stress."

These results help to understand that 29% agree that "the educational quality of my institution of higher education is inferior to the educational quality that is provided before the outbreak of COVID-19," in addition to only 16% saying they are "concerned with the possibility of not being able to complete the school year due to the outbreak of COVID-19". Of course, the students' perception of possible degradation of education is not favourable. However, the pattern already identified at the international level follows, where a significant group of students stressed the decrease in the quality of education. (Van de Velde et al., 2020).

The analysis of the data allows affirming that there was an improvement in the habits related to tobacco consumption. However, the improvements are less significant in January 2021 than they were in June 2020. This pattern was also verified in answers to the question "During the last week, on average how many cigarettes you smoked per day?" because the answer "zero cigarettes" had an increase of 0.4% (from 76.2% to 76.8%), well below the evolution that occurred in June (where the increase was 4.5% in this response when compared to the period before the COVID-19 outbreak). On the other hand, the average daily consumption of cigarettes (before and after the outbreak of COVID-19) had dropped in June from 2.5 cigarettes to 1.8 cigarettes, respectively. In January, we saw an increase in the average daily consumption of cigarettes by 1.75 to 1.77.

Regarding alcohol consumption behaviours, the data indicate a more marked improvement. The answer "never (almost never)" to the question "how often did

you drink six or more glasses of alcohol on a single occasion" evolved further during this pandemic phase.

The trend is also corroborated by the study of the results to the question "In the last week, on average, how many glasses of alcohol you drank (number of glasses - for example, a glass of wine, a shot, a glass of beer between 25 to 33 cl)?" since the average consumption decreased from 2.84 to 0.84, and in June it had reduced from 3.3 to 2.9 glasses of alcohol.

With the "daily (almost daily)" practice of physical activity, a decrease from 70% to 52% is observed. This behaviour had already been noted in the previous study, although slightly decreased from 78% to 67.9%. A new fact is that 7% also answered "never, (almost never)" to the question "On average, how often did you practice intense physical activity such as lifting weights, running, aerobics or cycling, at least about 30 minutes during the last week?" These data must be framed by the fact that in January, there were a high number of students in isolation - with the obligation to stay at home / in the institution - and that there were institutional indications for carrying out a period of adaptation to physical effort after confirmation and recovery from the disease. This procedure is in line with recently published studies that support the need to assess risk before resuming physical activity, according to the severity of the disease presented, and a return to physical activity from at least seven days without symptoms of infection, with an initial adaptation period of at least two weeks of minimal effort, with adequate monitoring of the progress of the physical condition (Salman et al., 2021).

Regardless of the apparent degradation of some components linked to healthy lifestyles, serious health problems are not to be expected. Many students (95.9%) do not suffer from any of the conditions that were asked to list (heart disease; kidney disease; diabetes; high blood pressure; recent cancer diagnosis; obesity).

Regarding the question "Did you have any of the following symptoms such as coughing, sneezing, or nasal congestion in the last month?" it appears that 43.7% answered "no", 51.6% answered "yes", and 4.6% "I am not sure." These results are very different from those obtained in June 2020 and are in line with the evolution of the pandemic in global terms. It was also found that 5.7% answered "yes" to the question "Was there an occasion when you tried to hide these symptoms from other people (for example, in a store or on the street)?".

Regarding students "infected by COVID-19 (confirmed by laboratory test)", 50 cases (13.7%) were reported, but 62% stressed that "they have already been in isolation due to contact with a suspected COVID-19 case" and 51% "has already been in isolation from contact with a COVID-19 positive patient." The results for the question "Indicate the number of days that you have been in isolation (at MA, at home, or elsewhere) since the beginning of the academic year 2020 / 2021" also appear to be pertinent) since the average was 13 days for one total of 272 students who were in isolation.

The average answer to the question "In your opinion, what is the probability of being infected / reinfected with COVID-19" was 6.1 (with a scale from 1 to 10 where 1 = "Very unlikely" and 10 = "Very likely"), in June it was only 4.1. Regarding the "level of concern about becoming infected with COVID-19", the measure was 7 (with a scale from 1 to 10 where 1 = "Not at all concerned" and 10 = "Very concerned"), when in June 2020, the average was 6.

The main concern of the students remains that someone in their relationship could be infected; 54.1% say they are "very worried" while in June, only 36% said so. The average answer to the question "How worried are you that someone in your relationship could be infected with COVID-19?" is 8.8 (with a scale equal to the previous one). This concern is also noted with the results of the question about "How concerned are you that doctors and hospitals will not have the appropriate medical equipment to deal with the outbreak of COVID-19?", which reveals the average of 8.7 (scale equal to the previously mentioned) when in June it was an average of 6.3.

The average response of students to the question "To what extent did you adhere to the measures implemented by the government vis-à-vis COVID-19?" remains high at 8.7; in June it was 8.5 (with a scale of 1 to 10 where 1 = "I didn't adhere at all" and 10 = "I strictly follow", and most still consider that the information they received was timely and perceptible.

In addition, all students chose the options "always" or "most of the time" in the question "During the performance of the selected activities (e.g., taking a walk or having a drink) - how many times do you think you have fulfilled the measures proposed by the General

Director of Health for personal protection (wearing a mask) and social distance?". In any case, the average answer in the question "What is the number of people with whom you had contact on December 24 and 25, 2020, without wearing the protection mask or without fulfilling the social distance?" was 5.4.

It was found that 30 students (8.2%) reported that during the last week, they did not perform any of the activities indicated (e.g., taking a walk, talking with friends or family, participating in recreational activities, or having a drink with friends) when in June this percentage was only 3.6%. In this sense, it was found that 4.6% answered "no" to the question "Do you have someone with whom you can discuss intimate or personal matters?".

It seems that it still deserves a special emphasis and need for future investigations, the percentage that during the last week, "with some frequency" or "very often" (June 2020 / January 2021): they felt depressed (5.7% / 12%); they felt that everything they did was with effort (28.4% / 35%); slept badly (13.4% / 27%); they felt alone (10.2% / 14%); they felt sad (6.1% / 13%); they felt lack of energy (12.6% / 20%); felt bored (21.5% / 21%); felt frustrated with life in general (10.1% / 14%); they felt anxious (15.9% / 19%); they felt lack of company and coexistence (36.6% / 47%) and; they felt isolated from other people (22.4% / 34%).

Knowing that these results are not exclusive to the cadets of the Military Academy, as other studies suggest that students experienced intense feelings of loneliness during the COVID-19 pandemic, and there are many reports of symptoms compatible with depressive conditions (Van de Velde et al., 2020). The degradation of almost all the indicators previously analysed will indeed have to continue to deserve the institution's best attention.

The rate of infection with COVID-19 within the sample of the respondents was 13.7% (from the beginning of the pandemic to the date of response) and therefore higher than the rate observed in the general population. In addition, 77.9% of students affirm "to know someone in my relationship network who has been or is currently infected with COVID-19," when in June it was only 12.6%, of which 3.5% died. Despite a high-

er infection rate in this subpopulation, it is essential to note that there were no deaths in the students and that the majority had no symptoms or only mild symptoms.

CONCLUSIONS

The Military Academy guided its plans and measures adopted in compliance with the guidelines disseminated by the Health Authorities, knowing how to adjust the commitment to the real pandemic situation. Despite the current record of positive cases of COVID-19 being higher than the national average, the measures adopted by MA, given its internship regime, proved to be quite effective, namely in the speed in detecting and controlling contagions avoiding outbreaks within your community.

This study demonstrates the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic had on the health and well-being of military academy students. Despite being part of the international standard, it was possible to observe a slight deterioration in the cadets' financial situation and their perception about the quality of the education received.

It is still possible to identify a promotion of factors linked to healthy lifestyles (tobacco and alcohol consumption). However, there has also been a decrease in the practice of physical exercise, conditioned by situations of prevention and recovery of COVID-19 and compliance with the guidelines from public health entities. There was an increase in concern about contracting the virus and the perception of risk and probability of being infected compared to the first study. The results related to well-being and emotional health proved to be worrying because there was an increase compared to the first study in several indicators (depression, tiredness, difficulties in sleeping, sadness, frustration, anxiety, loneliness), which require greater attention on the part of MA in future studies.

The results of this study were made known to the Command of Academy to be able to implement actions on time and draw attention to the identification/signalling of students who are more fragile at the social and psychosocial level. These results also allow us to realise the importance of carrying out new studies to perceive the evolution of health and the well-being of future military commanders.

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Mental Health of Police Trainees during the First Wave of the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic took power over the world in 2020. Because of this situation, we surveyed the experiences of the police trainees in the first two months of the pandemic in Hungary as part of ongoing research in the 2019-2020 school year. Respondents were members of different police departments, and the epidemic-related activities became part of their everyday tasks. In the research, we used a questionnaire that we had prepared. It had 14 questions, and it was a part of our test battery, which examined mental health in a longitudinal study. The inventory was filled in online during the period of respondents' professional examinations (from the end of May to the beginning of June 2020), and we received 28 answered questionnaires about the experience of policing the pandemic. The reason of the low participation rate – 28 responses from approximately 100 people – was probably the impersonal online format, because earlier data collections had been led by the researchers, and they yielded higher response rates. The results showed that females experienced larger fear related to the health of relatives than males. Their everyday services were influenced significantly by sleeping difficulties and they felt duties more physically overwhelming at this time. The outcomes did not show gender differences in the fields of mental health. Despite some negative influences, the pandemic was not perceived as particularly stressful for police work over the first two months of its eruption. Although the sample was not representative, it could serve as a basis for the future research of these questions – especially when considering that the pandemic is more stressful for everyone both mentally and physically at the time of the second and third waves.

Keywords: COVID-19, mental health, police trainees, gender difference

Introduction

The impact of COVID-19 on police work

The Coronavirus or COVID-19 has transformed our life significantly from the beginning of 2020. Our lifestyle changed as a result of the pandemic, and in many parts of the world, the military and police have had an active role in the fight against the virus through ensuring compliance with lockdown and quarantine arrangements (Farrow, 2020). In connection with all this, many aspects of the police work have also changed. The state of danger was announced on 11th March 2020 in Hungary and related to the Government Decree 40/2020. (11th March), in which new measures were introduced in connection with police work. This outlined that the Hungarian police officers would face these tasks of handling the pandemic just like other countries. Many components of police work changed by degrees, such as the rules of social distancing in police measures, using protective personal equipment (PPE) like gloves, masks, hand sanitizer (Khadse et al., 2020). In parallel, the daily work of units altered, although with various degrees (Frenkel et al., 2020; Jennings & Perez, 2020; Stogner, et al., 2020).

Mental health impact of coronavirus on police officers

The impact of COVID-19 on mental health has been researched from the beginning of the pandemic. It is not a big surprise, that most of the studies are focusing on the health care workers primarily, but we are able to find some research on police officers and the general population in persistently increasing quantities. Summarizing the results of these studies we can say that in addition to a clear increase in the incidence of anxiety disorders, an increase in the proportion of depressive symptoms and stress levels also emerged in several cases (Grover et al., 2020a; Vicario-Merino & Muñoz-Augustin, 2020). Overviewing the results of surveys about police officers we can say that though the main streams of the results show one direction, we can find a really mixed picture in some details.

The surveys were filled out mostly online due to the social distancing guidelines that are one of the most important protectors from the virus. Frenkel et al (2020) conducted longitudinal research with qualitative and quantitative parts especially among European police officers in five countries (Austria, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Germany, and Spain – region Euskadi). Their results were interesting both in terms of work and in terms of private life. Quite a few respondents reported stressors in their private life: they talked about worries related to the health of relatives and childcare with home-schooling. The main tasks were changed: the regular work tasks were complemented with added coronavirus-related duties. The experiences of work-related stressors in the pandemic showed a mixed picture: approximately one-quarter of the respondents did not notice any changes in this field, but problem areas such as challenges in the constantly changing governmental measures, expectations of social distancing rules between colleagues turned up as stressors (Frenkel et al, 2020). Fears related to getting infected by COVID-19 and worries about infecting others also appeared in the study. Questions about PPE pointed to widely divergent experiences of police officers in different countries: In some countries, PPE was abundant, while in others PPE supply was a serious problem. The research was done in the first few months of the pandemic, and even though the dropout was high between different measurement points, we think it is still relevant and important because of its internationality.

In a Russian study by Soloviev, Zhernov & Ichitovkina (2020), female police officers showed a significantly higher degree of depression and anxiety, they were significantly less likely to show maladaptive stress reactions than male officers, and female officers were less afraid of getting infected. The study was conducted straight after the first COVID-19 infection registered among Moscow police officers.

The following results are from countries that were among the first to find themselves in a difficult situation because of the coronavirus infection rate, such as China and India:

- a study in Wuhu found different levels of depression and anxiety among police officers.. Education, location, police classification (security, regimental, traffic, criminal, etc.), and using sleeping pills were identified as risk factors (Yuan et al., 2020);

- extension of working hours, chronic diseases, and older age increased psychological stress significantly in north-western China. Male police officers perceived a significantly higher level of organizational stress in this representative sample during this period (Huang et al., 2021);

- Grover et al (2020b) found an increased level of stress and negative emotional responses among Indian police officers, furthermore female police officers showed

a higher level of anxiety, depression, and negative emotional responses than male officers;

- another research in India also drew attention to negative psychological impacts, and they noted that they had found a higher infection rate among police officers than the general population during the first wave (Khadse et al, 2020).

We can see that the results of these studies differ under aspects of gender: in some countries, females showed higher degrees of psychological impact during the first wave of the coronavirus, in some countries the male officers did. The contradictory results can draw attention to the fact how much we don't know yet about the effects of coronavirus on mental health.

Materials and Methods

Participants and procedures
The participants of this study were police trainees. The police trainees who completed their probation year in the 2019-2020 school year served in the spring of 2020 at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, therefore they had tasks in the police work related to the pandemic. With this in mind, we created a questionnaire in our longitudinal study to capture the experiences during those few months of police trainees, who took their professional examination at the end of May and beginning of June 2020 in one of the law enforcement schools in Hungary. This was the third and last data collection time in our longitudinal study.

The survey was conducted online, which was a difference from earlier times when trainees had filled out the inventory in the presence of researchers. At this measurement point, only 28 out of about 100 trainees participated in the survey. In earlier years, there had been 131 (out of 151) and 115 (out of 145) respondents. The low participation rate was thus probably a consequence of these changed circumstances, namely the impersonal online response format.

Measures
We applied inventories about anxiety and depression to measure mental health. Participants assessed their depression during the last month using the Center for Epidemiological Studies Depression Scale (CES-D). This questionnaire has 20 items, which cover 4 groups of depressive symptoms: cognitive, emotional, behavioural, and interpersonal (Radloff, 1977).

We measured anxiety in two ways and one of that was the measuring of trait anxiety. Respondents rated it using STAI-T (State-Trait Anxiety Inventory – Trait), which has 20 items, and it mapped the usual degree of respondents' anxiety (Sipos, Sipos & Spielberger, 1988).

The current degree of depression and anxiety was measured using the Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale (HADS), which measured these factors in the previous week. The scale has 14 items, seven about depression and seven about anxiety (Muszbek et al, 2006). The participant responded on a four-point Likert scale in every questionnaire. In this study, 14 questions were used to measure police work during the first wave of COVID-19. Survey items were developed based on own experience as a psychologist at the Hungarian Police and they fitted in with the focus of our research (health behaviour, stress, burnout, and mental health). The items covered the following areas:

- in what kind of police tasks the respondents participated related to the pandemic (home quarantine inspection, service at a border crossing point, law enforcement activities related to lockdown restriction);
- how much they experienced the service as stressful according to the given criteria (general; physical, emotional);
- questions about PPEs;
- what kind of situation they were afraid of related to the coronavirus (meeting an infected person, getting infected, a family member getting infected, their colleague getting infected, others getting infected);
- the extent of the changes they experienced on themselves, based on the given criteria (having sleeping difficulties; becoming more tired; becoming irritated, tense; their behaviour has changed towards others; worried; becoming impatient; their thoughts were constantly around the coronavirus) and how much these factors affected their duties;
- the changes of health behaviour.

The coronavirus-related mini questionnaire in detail and its basic results were published (Borbély, 2021).

The participants also provided their demographic characteristics, such as age, sex, marital status, place of residence, and probationary place.

Results

Demographics and Descriptive Statistics

The mean age of the 28 participants was 23.14 years (SD=5.52). 60.71% (n=17) of the participants were male and 39.29% (n=11) were female (see Table 1). The mean depression scores for the study participants were 13.21 on CES-D (SD=8.34) and 4.04 on the HADS – Depression Scale (SD=2.38), which showed that depression is not typical in the sample (Muszbek et al, 2006).

The mean of trait anxiety (M=36.50, SD=9.08) was substantially lower than the Hungarian standard (M=43.72, SD=8.53; Sipos, Sipos & Spielberger, 1988). There might be several factors behind it, like the low mean age in the sample and the expectation of the workplace among other things. The mean of current anxiety was 3.50 (SD=3.14) on the HADS – Anxiety Scale, so this was in the normal range (Muszbek et al., 2006).

Table 1: The demographic characteristics of the sample

Variables	Categories	n	%
Gender	Male	17	60.71
	Female	11	39.29
Marital status	Single	9	32.14
	In a relationship	18	64.29
	married	1	3.57
Place of residence	county seat or city with county rights	6	21.43
	other towns	6	21.43
	village	16	57.14
Probationary place	county police department	21	75.00
	Budapest Police Department	6	21.43
	Airport Police Directorate	1	3.57

Related to the involvement in the COVID-19 response, the majority of the respondents (64.29%, n=18) were involved in two tasks, while 21.43% (n=6) of the sample participated in all three tasks and 14.29% (n=4) of the sample were involved in only one type of task. The participation rate in each task is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: COVID-19 related tasks at duties (N=28)

COVID-19-related duties (N=28)
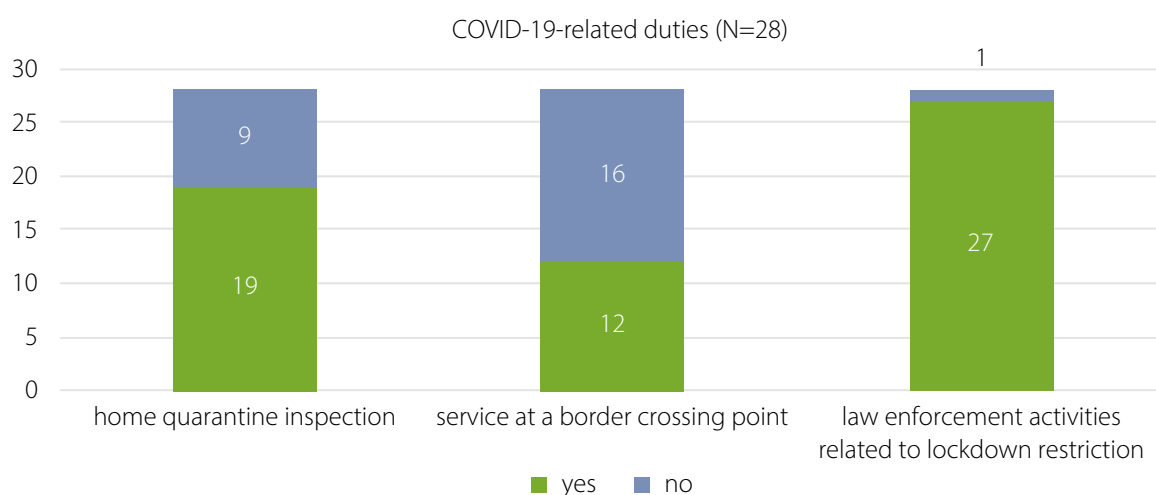
Gender differences in the sample

We used the nonparametric Mann-Whitney U test for the investigation of gender differences because of the low number of participants and violation of normality.

We compared genders to examine whether male and female police trainees experience and perceive depression, anxiety, fears, self-observed changes, and factors influencing duties differently or not. As shown in Table 2, there is no significant difference between the mental health outcomes of males and females.

Table 2: Comparison of the average level of depression and anxiety between genders

	Male	Female	p (Mann-Whitney U)
	Mean ± SD	Mean ± SD	
CES-D Depression	12.94 ± 10.09	13.64 ± 4.95	0.186
STAI-T Trait Anxiety	35.59 ± 9.23	37.91 ± 9.09	0.422
HADS Depression	3.82 ± 2.70	4.36 ± 1.86	0.255
HADS Anxiety	3.24 ± 3.47	3.91 ± 2.66	0.253

The gender differences related to the investigated factors of the pandemic are shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Comparison of fears, self-observed changes, and factors influencing duties between genders

Fears	Male	Female	p (Mann-Whitney U)
	Mean ± SD	Mean ± SD	
meeting an infected person	1.59 ± 0.80	2.18 ± 1.40	0.303
I'm getting infected	1.76 ± 0.83	2.27 ± 1.19	0.253
someone in my family is getting infected	3.29 ± 1.61	4.45 ± 0.69	0.077
my colleague is getting infected	2.29 ± 1.10	2.55 ± 1.37	0.695
I infect others	2.71 ± 1.57	3.45 ± 1.21	0.134

Self-observed changes	Male	Female	p (Mann-Whitney U)
	Mean ± SD	Mean ± SD	
I had sleeping difficulties.	1.18 ± 0.39	1.64 ± 1.03	0.246
I became more tired.	1.24 ± 0.44	1.50 ± 0.71	0.302
I became irritated, tense.	1.24 ± 0.44	1.64 ± 0.92	0.296
My behaviour towards others has changed.	1.18 ± 0.39	1.09 ± 0.30	0.635
I became impatient.	1.29 ± 0.59	1.36 ± 0.81	0.926
I was worried.	1.65 ± 0.79	1.82 ± 0.75	0.551
My thoughts were constantly around the coronavirus.	1.35 ± 0.61	1.45 ± 0.69	0.745

Factors influencing duties	Male	Female	p (Mann-Whitney U)
	Mean ± SD	Mean ± SD	
sleeping difficulties	1.12 ± 0.33	2.00 ± 1.18	0.017
fatigue	1.47 ± 0.72	2.18 ± 1.17	0.079
irritation, tense	1.53 ± 0.87	2.18 ± 1.54	0.372
worries about my family	2.41 ± 1.46	3.10 ± 1.60	0.273
my thoughts constantly revolving around the virus	1.31 ± 0.60	1.55 ± 0.82	0.540
fear of getting infected	1.53 ± 1.07	2.27 ± 1.27	0.063

In terms of fears, there was a trend difference between males and females for the item "someone in the participant's family is getting infected" (p=0.077). In the area of self-observed changes, there are no significant differences between the genders. At the same time, there were some interesting differences in the field of factors influencing duties. The difference was significant with regard to sleeping difficulties (p=0.017), which were reported significantly more often by females. Furthermore, fatigue and fear of getting infected tended to influence the duties of female police trainees more often.

There were three questions about being overwhelmed in the first two months of the first wave. There was no statistically significant gender difference in the summarizing question ('Did you feel more overwhelmed with the duties in this time?' p=0.706). The two more questions about emotional and physical overload had nominal answer options, so we conducted a Chi-square test or if the requirements were not made, we chose Fisher's Exact Test. The results showed there was no significant difference between males and females in the area of physical overload (p=0.518), but the difference was significant in the emotional overload among female police trainees (p=0.022).

Virus-related factors and mental health

We examined correlations between the virus-related factors and mental health. As shown in Table 4, there is no significant correlation between fears and depression, and anxiety. Among the self-observed changes, two items had a significant relationship with depression in the previous month (CES-D). These are 'My behaviour towards others has changed.' (r=0.401; p=0.035) and 'My thoughts were constantly revolving around the coronavirus.' (r=0.386; p=0.042). The correlations were of weak to medium strength. Besides them, there was a significant correlation between factors influencing duties and mental health: 'My thoughts constantly revolving around the virus.' (r=0.588; p=0.001). The correlation with CES-D was of medium strength. Thus, the thoughts around the virus showed a significant relation to one of the depression scales (CES-D) both at work and in private life.

Table 4: Results of correlation between mental health scores, and fears, self-observed changes and factors influencing duties

Fears	CES-D	STAI-T	HADS-D	HADS-A
meeting an infected person	0.192 (0.328)	0.133 (0.501)	-0.055 (0.783)	0.049 (0.806)
I'm getting infected	0.210 (0.284)	0.198 (0.313)	0.094 (0.634)	0.065 (0.743)
someone in my family is getting infected	-0.175 (0.372)	0.113 (0.568)	0.068 (0.731)	-0.136 (0.491)
my colleague is getting infected	-0.131 (0.506)	-0.114 (0.563)	-0.265 (0.173)	-0.330 (0.087)
I infect others	-0.179 (0.363)	0.086 (0.663)	0.021 (0.915)	-0.233 (0.233)
Self-observed changes	**CES-D**	**STAI-T**	**HADS-D**	**HADS-A**
I had sleeping difficulties.	0.078 (0.693)	-0.123 (0.534)	0.120 (0.543)	0.048 (0.807)
I became more tired.	0.181 (0.366)	-0.062 (0.760)	0.261 (0.188)	0.261 (0.188)
I became irritated, tense.	0.114 (0.562)	-0.039 (0.845)	0.150 (0.446)	0.215 (0.272)
My behaviour towards others has changed.	0.401* (0.035)	0.137 (0.486)	0.256 (0.189)	0.364 (0.057)
I became impatient.	0.206 (0.293)	0.186 (0.344)	0.132 (0.503)	0.237 (0.224)
I was worried.	0.150 (0.447)	0.134 (0.498)	0.149 (0.450)	-0.046 (0.815)
My thoughts were constantly revolving around the coronavirus.	0.386* (0.042)	0.373 (0.051)	0.114 (0.564)	0.178 (0.365)

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Factors influencing duties	CES-D	STAI-T	HADS-D	HADS-A
sleeping difficulties	0.147 (0.455)	-0.053 (0.788)	0.168 (0.392)	0.167 (0.395)
fatigue	0.214 (0.275)	0.141 (0.473)	0.149 (0.450)	0.286 (0.140)
irritation, tense	0.250 (0.200)	0.095 (0.629)	0.133 (0.501)	0.315 (0.103)
worries about my family	0.005 (0.980)	-0.072 (0.721)	0.071 (0.727)	-0.008 (0.969)
my thoughts constantly revolving around the virus	0.588** (0.001)	0.373 (0.055)	0.356 (0.068)	0.376 (0.053)
fear of getting infected	0.228 (0.242)	0.218 (0.265)	0.173 (0.380)	0.203 (0.300)

Discussion

When this paper was written, new research results from the first COVID-19 wave were being published constantly; therefore, we can find more and more recent articles after only a few weeks that we could not include any more. At the same time, we could not find another study with police trainees on probation in Hungary. All the research showed a very mixed picture from different points of view – how strong was the coronavirus present at the time of research, in which phase were they in the first wave (ascending – culminating – decreasing) –, so that it was difficult to compare the results to each other.

Our findings show a remarkable difference compared to the study by Soloviev, Zehrnov & Ichitovkina (2020): in this study, there was no significant difference between males and females in terms of depression and anxiety, but female police trainees typically showed higher mean scores in these fields. Regarding the other aspects (irritation, fear of getting infected), we could observe reverse tendencies in our results as in the findings of the Russian study, but we found a much less significant difference. Furthermore, the mean age of the sample in the Russian study was higher than in ours. Also the Russian study examined only police officers in the capital, Moscow, while our research had a mixed sample in terms of probationary place. The police trainees in this study worked at different police stations, in different counties and in the capital, but not only in the capital. Meanwhile, the trends of our findings are similar to the results of Grover et al.'s (2020b) survey of Indian police officers.

Huang, Bodla & Chen (2020) found gender differences among Chinese police officers at the time of the first wave in their study on a representative sample. The partial results of their study showed that the male officers typically scored higher than female officers did, thus male officers score worse, but the vast majority of these results were not significant. In the study of Yuan et al (2020), the male officers showed a higher rate of anxiety in Wuhu. These studies have similar results to the Russian studies, in contrast to our findings, which showed opposite tendencies.

As seen in the international research findings, the male officers showed worse scores of mental health indicators than the female police officers in several cases (among Chinese and Russian police officers), but the opposite results were also represented (among Indian police officers and in our sample). The discrepancy in these findings points to the possibility that a whole range of factors could affect the research results, such as the mean age of the sample, the cultural background and in some cases, it could also be the social appreciation of the police. At this point, these are only hypothesis - it would need further research to state these relations.

The research presented in this paper did not use a representative sample; in addition, we studied a specific group (police trainees). These were quite strong limitations of our research, but the results could be worth considering, and they could be a good basis for further research given that this study was done in the time of the first wave when the number of infected people in Hungary was low both in society and among police officers. As these lines were written, we were in the second part of the third wave of COVID-19, and the statistics were showing a significantly higher number of infected people and deaths in our country. Because of these factors, further research is necessary, especially as we have more and more information about the coronavirus and its long-term effects for the physical and mental health, and the presented study could be a basis for others.

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Managerial and institutional issues: adaption and innovation

The Impact of the COVID-19 Crisis on Law Enforcement Practice

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic and its consequent crisis continues to have a significant and potentially long-lasting impact on our everyday lives, on the serious and organised crime landscape in Europe and on law enforcement practice. The consequences of the crisis on law enforcement work have been strongly felt and have been manifold. Police authorities had to adapt by stepping up coordination efforts; they had to refocus their work on priority areas such maintaining public order, overseeing border control and compliance with lockdown measures. Certain crime areas that have been particularly pronounced in the crisis context have been also set as key priorities for some national law enforcement authorities. New, specific working measures had to be designed to ensure the safety and protection of law enforcement staff carrying out their duties on the ground. In parallel, law enforcement authorities had to devise contingency plans to address the reduction in the work force stemming from COVID-19 infections. The COVID-19 crisis has also prompted the reassessment of law enforcement cross-border cooperation practices and the need to identify suitable solutions for operational secure remote communication.

Keywords: COVID-19, law enforcement, crisis response, cross-border cooperation

More than a year since its outbreak, the COVID-19 pandemic and its consequent crisis continues to have a significant and potentially long-lasting impact on our everyday lives, on the serious and organised crime landscape in Europe and on law enforcement practice. Criminals are resourceful and continue to operate during times of crises, taking advantage of new vulnerabilities and changes in the wider environment. Both, opportunistic ventures and organised crime have exploited and profited from the pandemic context, shifting market focus and *modus operandi*. Serious and organised crime has continued and in fact, flourished during the crisis. Law enforcement had to ensure that its response to crime remains effective during the pandemic. Law enforcement authorities in the EU Member States and Partner Countries similarly had to adjust to a new working reality as the consequences of the crisis on law enforcement work have been strongly felt. The topic has also garnered the attention of the academic community with a few research being published on the organisational and operational consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic on law enforcement agencies in the United States (Jennings & Perez, 2020; Lum, Maupin & Stoltz, 2020; Waseem & Laufs, 2020) and how police officers mentally tolerated the strain in some EU Member States in view of the new measures and duties introduced as a consequence of the crisis (Frenkel et al., 2020). Nevertheless, the academic literature pertaining

to the topic remains limited. This paper aims to add to the discussion by providing an overview of the key coping strategies taken by some EU Member States, Europol's cooperation partners and Europol itself in order to mitigate the consequences the crisis exerted on law enforcement work. The data used for this paper comprises contributions provided by EU MS and Third Partners to Europol as well as internal briefing notes produced at Europol.

In the EU, law enforcement authorities had to adapt to this volatile situation by stepping up coordination efforts and refocusing their work on priority areas such maintaining public order, overseeing border control and compliance with lockdown measures. While some EU Member States have opted for the creation of dedicated task forces or central command posts in order to devise an approach to COVID-19, there have been also countries where law enforcement coordination has been under the remit of ministries of internal affairs (Europol, 2020, p. 5).

The COVID-19 pandemic has confronted law enforcement authorities with a set of environmental demands and stressors, most specifically with relation to the risk of infection and new tasks (Frenkel et al., 2020). In practical terms, this has entailed additional organisational and operational challenges which have necessitated the introduction of adequate responses or as Frenkel et al. term it (2020), coping resources. New working procedures had to be devised adhering to social distancing and remote working, while ensuring that the new measures did not affect business continuity (Europol, 2020e, p. 3). Law enforcement authorities had to devise contingency plans as well in case of reduction in the work force stemming from COVID-19 infections (Europol, 2020b, p. 4). New, specific working measures had to be designed and implemented in order to ensure the safety and protection of law enforcement staff carrying out their duties on the ground. Interpol and national law enforcement authorities developed dedicated awareness-raising campaigns and guidelines to inform law enforcement staff on how to stay safe, how to interact with citizens during the crisis and how to protect themselves against the COVID-19 virus (Interpol, 2020; Europol 2020b, p. 4).

As other law enforcement authorities, Europol, the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation, had to adapt to the crisis circumstances. In order to ensure its business continuity, since end February

2020 Europol activated its Crisis Management Team (CMT), a decision making body where COVID-19 related decisions concerning Europol's staff, its premises and Europol's operational and strategic activities have been assessed and taken. The CMT is still active and follows carefully the pandemic's evolution in order to adapt the Agency's response to the volatile circumstances.

Certain crime areas that have been particularly pronounced in the crisis context – such as crime against persons, cybercrime, including online child sexual abuse, online fraud, counterfeiting and organised property crime – have been also set as national key priorities for some EU Member States' law enforcement authorities (Europol 2020b, p 3.). In parallel, some law enforcement authorities also suspended non-essential missions, limited arrests in preliminary investigations and scaled down certain policing duties in the beginning of the crisis in order to be able to focus on the most urgent cases and new priorities. These new priorities included the enforcement of lockdown rules and enhanced border controls as well as the oversight of the safety of hospitals, test centres, vaccination centres and the transportation of patients (Europol, 2020, p. 6).

The COVID-19 crisis had significantly impacted cross-border law enforcement cooperation and prompted the reassessment of collaborative practices. An urgent need emerged to identify suitable solutions for operational secure remote communication and information exchange in crisis situations. Several discussions were held at the EU decision-making level in view of enhancing cross border law enforcement cooperation and secure communication and information exchange during the COVID-19 crisis (Council of the European Union, 2020a; Council of the European Union 2020b; Council of the European Union 2020c). Based on the recommendations of the European Council and in response to the increased need to exchange information between Member States and Third Countries on policing issues related to the COVID-19 crisis which do not fall under Europol's mandate, Europol launched the so-called v-ROOM (Virtual Requests for out of Mandate) European Platform for Experts (EPE). This platform is accessible to liaison officers, Europol National Units and National Contact Points (MS and Third Parties) as well as Europol staff and intended for the exchange of COVID-19 related strategic information and requests, such as performance evaluation, logistical or legal issues (Europol 2020c, p. 4).

The COVID-19 crisis has also amplified the prevention efforts of law enforcement agencies. Informing the public about ongoing crime schemes and raising awareness on how it can be avoided to fall victim of them have been crucial during the pandemic when criminals exploited the vulnerabilities created by the crisis. Some law enforcement authorities engaged in informing citizens on COVID-specific crime threats (Europol, 2020e, p. 3). In its efforts to inform the general public on the evolution of crime in the pandemic context, Europol issued several strategic reports on the topic, set up a specific COVID information campaigns site about the major crime threats and published a how-to-guide on COVID-19 global online safety for parents and carers, given the increased time spent online by children.

One can argue that the pandemic can no longer be viewed as an emergency: some of the wider changes that were introduced as exceptions in societies' way of working, have become recurrent and normal and are likely to stay for some time. The same applies to the realm of law enforcement; the COVID-19 crisis will likely leave a heritage of long lasting effects on the EU criminal landscape and law enforcement work.

However, learning from crisis experience may also make the work of law enforcement more resilient and better equipped in the long-term. Europol and national law enforcement authorities need to be ready to face similar challenges and learn from past experiences. Effectively learning from crises relies on the exchange of best practices and effective preparedness. It is important to reflect and assess how law enforcement authorities should approach not only evolving crime threats, but also what lessons are there to be drawn from crisis experience when it comes to policing work. Therefore, it is essential to map the mitigating measures that can be applied to the work of law enforcement organisations in crisis situations and further the academic debate on their viability and effectiveness.

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A Comparative Study of Police Organisational Changes in Europe during the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Abstract

Police organisations—like many other social institutions—were forced to make changes in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This exploratory study uses data from 15 European countries to examine how the police organisations have adjusted their operations during the COVID-19 pandemic. The results suggest the way in which police organisations responded to the pandemic was complicated. Some police functions, such as handling of complaints and internal investigations, did not change substantially during the pandemic. On the other hand, functions which normally involved significant face-to-face contact within organisations, such as in-person rollcalls and police training, were substantially affected. Police organisations also changed their reactive policing activities, such as handling of calls for service, traffic stops, and taking people into custody, as well as proactive policing activities, such as community policing and directed patrols. The results further indicate that police administrators did not perceive that these changes would negatively affect either their relationship with the community nor morale within police organisations.

Keywords: Policing, COVID 19, organisational changes, leadership

Introduction

Police forces across the world are generally used to handling critical incidents, whether major natural disasters, major crimes or terrorist incidents. Although not planned events, most police forces have prepared for them and for coping with the rescue, recovery and in-vestigation processes required by them. Few of these events last longer than a few days in their initial active phase and, generally, police forces are able to begin returning to "normality" shortly thereafter. When the World Health Organisation declared the COVID-19 a pandemic on March 11, 2020 (WHO, 2020), it called on countries "to take urgent and aggressive action" and

triggered a global critical incident that has, at time of writing, lasted for over a year, affected every country around the world and required a sustained critical incident response that can only be paralleled by global crises such as the Second World War.

In response to the COVID 19 pandemic, many governments declared a state of emergency and enacted a variety of measures designed to protect public health, ranging from restricting public gatherings and closing non-essential businesses, to imposing the stay-at-home orders and lockdowns. By April 2020, more than 3.9 billion people in over 90 countries were asked or ordered by their governments to stay at home to prevent the spread of COVID-19 (Sandford, 2020).

The police found themselves in crisis mode. On the one hand, police officers had to protect themselves by wearing personal protective equipment (PPE) and limiting contact with the public, while simultaneously providing necessary police services to the public. Beyond the usual police responsibilities, the police have been charged with the task of enforcing COVID-19 measures newly enacted by the government, often with a lack of clear guidelines and adequate police training (Warren et al., 2020). As a result, police agencies have changed their internal operations and the manner in which they interact with the public (Alexander & Ekici, 2020; Lum et al., 2020; Maskaly et al., 2021a; Warren et al., 2020).

This paper seeks to explore the extent of the changes police organisations made during the initial stages of the COVID-19 pandemic. Our research draws on a survey of senior executives, which was carried out after the first major phase of the pandemic and covered a sample of 28 countries in both the Global North and Global South (Maskaly et al., 2021a). In this paper, we focus specifically on the European countries in our sample. We assess the degree to which police agencies' organisation and operation have changed during the pandemic. In the process, we estimate these changes in the police agencies' internal organisation, their reactive policing strategies, and their proactive policing strategies.

Empirical research on changes in police organisations during the COVID-19 pandemic

As governments sought to cope with escalating hospitalisations and deaths during the first phase, most

police agencies across the world found themselves tasked with issuing fines and making arrests for violations of the COVID-19 restrictions (Warren et al., 2020). Some crime rates and calls for police service seem to have decreased, at least temporarily (Maskaly et al. 2020a; Nivette et al., 2021). Police agencies were required to adapt rapidly to these changes, while trying to protect their own staff from both contracting and spreading COVID-19.

An immediate area of concern for organisations was the acquisition of proper personal protective equipment (PPE) for employees and training in its proper use. Even police agencies in the Global North (e.g., USA) struggled to secure PPE for employees early in the pandemic. In our global survey of police agencies, we reported that the respondents from 75% of countries indicated that use of PPE has changed in response to COVID-19 and, as expected, dramatically increased during the pandemic (Maskaly et al., 2021a).

Police forces tried to reduce risk by minimising exposure to COVID-19 through limiting contact with the community. Police agencies minimised in-person proactive activities, such as community policing or problem-solving efforts, directed patrols, use of special operations teams and traffic stops (Maskaly et al., 2021a). The Police Executive Research Forum (PERF) (2020) documented another strategy for police "self-isolation": a changed response to certain calls for service and the reliance on alternative reporting strategies (e.g., by phone, online). We found this same trend internationally as well with over two-thirds of countries reporting reduced number of arrests for minor crimes and about one-half of the countries reporting reduced the arrests for serious crimes as well (Maskaly et al., 2021a).

The changes to police organisations in response to the pandemic also affected their operations. Most police agencies modified personnel scheduling, assigned officers to work remotely and separately, and suspended in-person training—both academy and in-service (Alexander & Ekici, 2020). This trend was not isolated to the Global North: most police organisations reported decreased in-person training (86%) and increased remote work (63%) (Maskaly et al., 2021a).

Current Study

One of the findings that has emerged from early research examining the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on police operations around the world is the

amount of variability in the organisational responses to the pandemic. While there are some universal changes made by police organisations (such as augmented use of personal protective equipment), many others seem to be less universal and more contextual (Lum et al., 2020; Maskaly et al., 2020). This study seeks to contribute to our understanding of the ways the police organisations adapted by exploring the extent of these shifts in various aspects of police agencies' organisational and operational domains. Specifically, we not only measure whether policing in these domains has changed, but also their valence. In addition, we examine the anticipated consequences for both police agencies and the communities.

The data for this study were collected through an online survey administered to police executives around the world. Our survey design drew on Police Executive Research Forum's (PERF) recommendations for police agencies (2020) and the results of the early systematic data collections from other researchers (Lum et al., 2020) and was informed by expert feedback from police executives in different countries (e.g., Croatia, South Korea, United Kingdom, and the United States). The questionnaire has sections asking about the magnitude of potential changes, the valence of those changes, and whether those changes were made as a result of organisational policy. In this article and in our wider research project, we have tried to understand not only how the police organisations adapted to the challenges of the pandemic, but also to propose and test some of the hypotheses advanced to explain the changes and their impacts.

Map 1: The European countries which provided survey responses (n. 15)
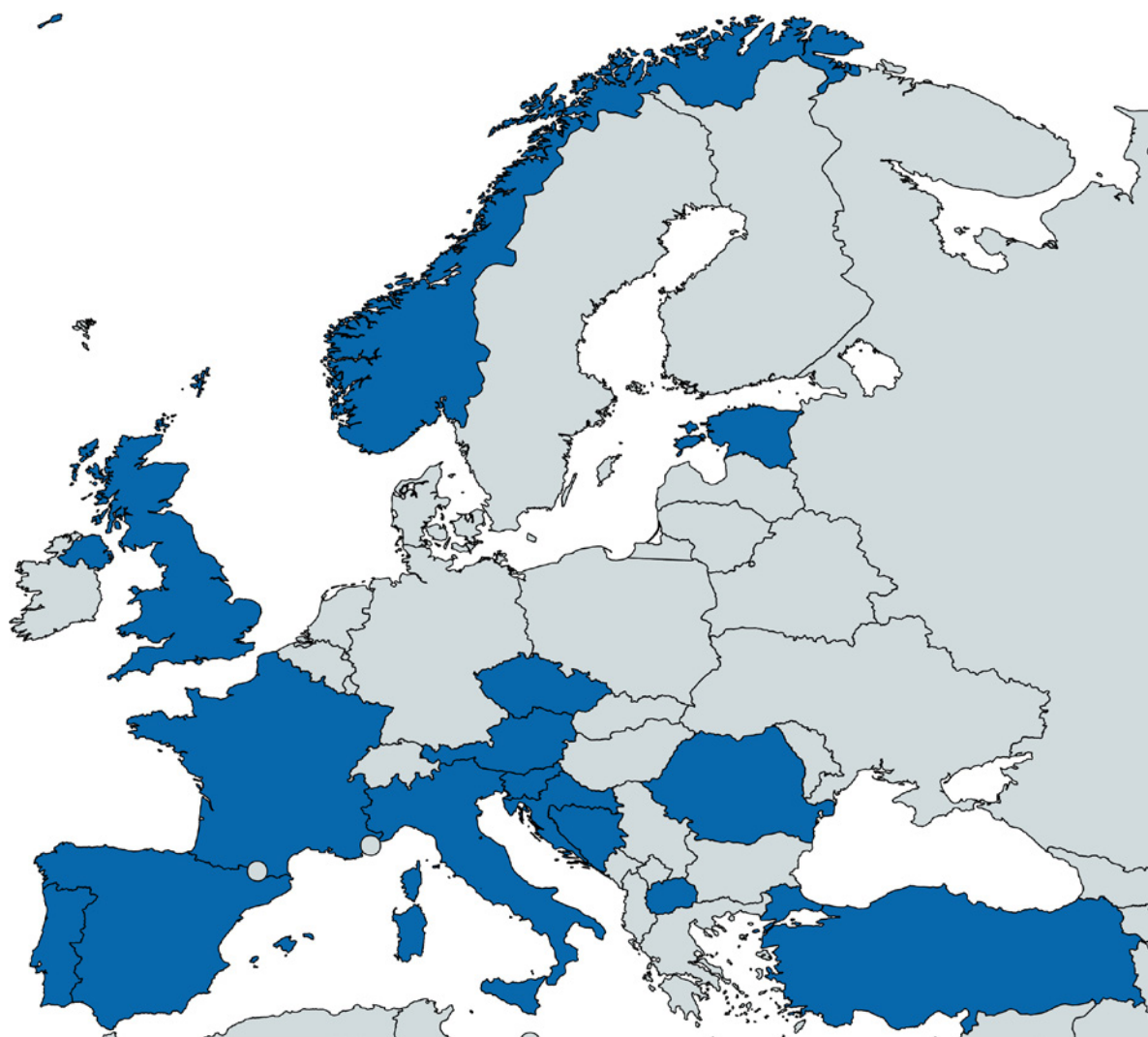
To ease the understanding of the findings, we will group similar items together (e.g., operational changes, proactive policing). Most of the questions in the questionnaire featured Likert-type scales. A fuller description of the questionnaire can be found in Maskaly et al. (2021a).

The data were collected through a digital survey using a restricted link—and associated password—that was sent to police executives in the summer of 2020 through two primary means. Firstly, the survey was distributed to member states of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). Secondly, we reached out to organisations including The European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Training in Europe [CEPOL] and the National Police Chiefs Council in the UK.

Our unit of analysis is the nation state, because most countries responded to the pandemic at a national level. In total, we received the data from 28 countries. In this article we have focused on a subset of 15 European countries (Map 1). If multiple submissions were received for a country, we averaged all the responses to create an aggregate figure for that country and rounded them to the closest whole number, so that the results could be presented with the response anchors that were available for individual responses.

The measures in this study relate to the organisational changes implemented by police organisations. Specifically, we tap into potential organisational and operational changes made in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Firstly, we created the index for each domain of policing to assess the magnitude of change (i.e., *absolute change*). This was measured on a 4-point Likert scale, from 0-4. Secondly, we explored the valence or direction of the change, that is, whether things increased, decreased, or remained the same (i.e., *valence of changes*). These items were measured on a 5-point Likert scale from -2 (significantly decreased) to 2 (significantly increased). Third, we studied the anticipated consequences of such changes (i.e., *anticipated consequences*).

Table 1. Measures in the survey

| |
|---|
| Reassigned personnel to address staffing needs |
| Police officers working remotely |
| Use of vacation time |
| Shift briefings or roll calls |
| Police training |
| Use of civilians (non-sworn) personnel |
| Data collection and reporting by the police agency |
| Use of personal protective equipment |
| In person citizen contacts at the front desk |
| Field training |
| Public access to police facilities |
| Use of physically separated working locations for special units |
| Internal investigations of allegations of misconduct |
| Handling of citizen complaints against the police |
| Activities of special ops. (e.g., narcotics, gangs, traffic, vice) |
| Activities of special operations (e.g., cybercrime, online fraud) |
| Use of SWAT/tactical teams |
| Officer-initiated activities |
| Problem-solving and community-policing activities |
| Use of directed patrols or extra patrols |
| Ways in which citizens could report crime |
| Handling of calls for service |
| Traffic stops |
| Enforcement of laws dealing with minor crimes |
| Taking people into custody |
| Number of citizen complaints for non-COVID-19 policing |
| Number of Calls For Service (CFS) overall |
| Number of CFS handled in person |
| Number of family violence CFS |
| Number of traffic stops |
| Number of business alarms |
| Number of traffic crashes |
| Number of burglaries |
| Number of felony arrests |
| Number of misdemeanor arrests |
| Number of arrests for family violence |
| Number of arrests for domestic violence |

Table 2: Research questions

Sections	Shorthand
What has changed?	Absolute change
How much has it changed?	Valence
What are the anticipated consequences of these changes?	Anticipated consequences

With data from only 15 European countries, this study is descriptive in nature. The analyses proceed in three stages. First, we examine the *absolute change* in the four domains of policing (organisational structure, complaints and investigations, proactive activities, and reactive policing). Second, we examine the *valence of changes* in the five domains of policing (organisational structure, complaints and investigations, proactive activities, reactive policing, taking people into custody). Third, we measure the *anticipated consequences* of these changes on both police officers and citizens.

Results

In the Figures 2-8 below, that we have selected to present in this paper, we show the aggregated data for each of the responding countries. In each figure we show percentages of the countries who reported a change and in three ranges (did not change, somewhat changed or mostly changed) or three levels of difference (decreased, did not change or increased).

Figure 1: Absolute Changes within Police Agencies by Percent of Countries with Changes
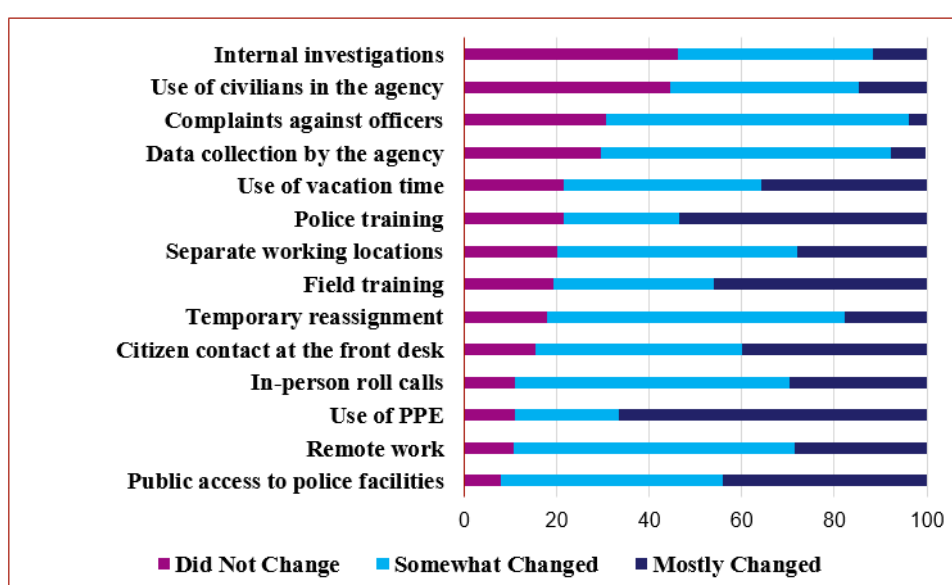
In Figure 2 we have shown the percent of countries reporting changes in a range of organisational functions, both internal and external. Overall, the findings demonstrate some change or significant change in each area. Some functions, such as complaints, internal investigations, and data collection by the police organisations were less likely to change in different countries and, hence, are more stable during the pandemic, whereas those internal and external functions which normally involved significant face-to-face contact were substantially affected.

The areas that were significantly affected include in-person rollcalls or briefings, public access to police facilities and front desks and training. In a clear response to COVID, the use of remote working and the adoption of PPE were 'mostly changed'. Given the importance of daily briefings, the use of PPE and the work location for the routines of policing, these findings suggest a very significant disruption to the normal patterns of frontline policing, whilst the internal bureaucracy and accountability carried on much more closely with normal business.

Figure 2: Absolute Changes in Reactive Policing by Percent of Countries with Changes
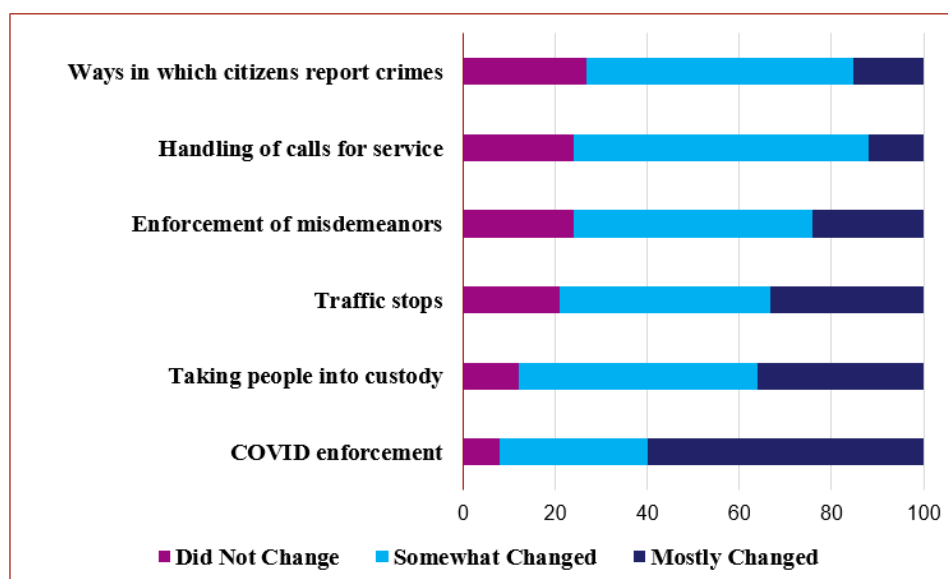
In exploring changes to 'reactive policing', the most significant changes were in the shift towards COVID enforcement operations. Our findings suggest that there was a more or less universal shift of emphasis towards COVID enforcement operations.

The change in traffic stops and enforcement of non-COVID minor crimes ('misdemeanors') whilst also significant were, at least partly, explicable by the substantial changes to the movement of people enforced by the COVID restrictions. Likewise, given the falls in some day-to-day crimes such as shop theft (given that many shops were closed by restrictions), it is not surprising to see changes in the flow of people into police custody.

Most of the countries also changed the way in which their police officers handle calls for service. This included changes to the ways in which citizens reported crimes as well.

Figure 3: Absolute Changes in Proactive Policing by Percent of Countries with Changes
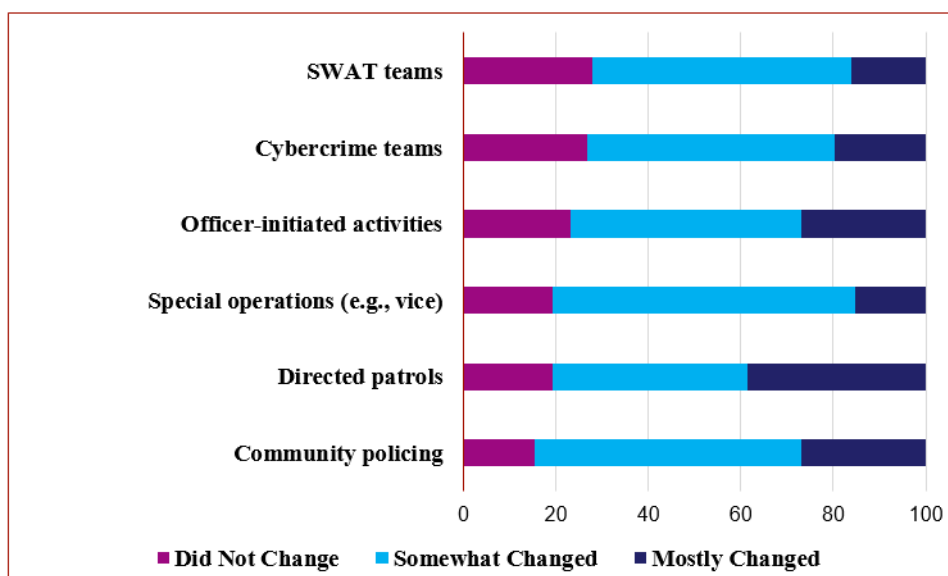
In focusing on changes in proactive policing (Figure 3), the changes were most significant in community policing. Community policing normally requires substantial face to face contact through public meetings, patrols and personal visits to local complainants and victims.

However, there were substantial changes across all areas of proactive policing. The survey documented changes to officer-initiated activities, special operations, directed patrols and the use of specialist teams such as SWAT. In a European context such specialist teams would include specialist public order as well as firearms teams.

In the second set of Figures, we focus on the *valence of changes*, which provide a clearer guide to the extent of the relative changes across the different functions and operational activities.

Figure 4 explores the valence or direction and strength of changes in the functions set out in Figure 1 above. This Figure reinforces the relative stability of internal accountability functions—internal investigations and non-COVID-19 complaints—that was suggested above. It also demonstrates the scale of the increase in the use of PPE and the shift towards remote working.

Figure 4: Valence of Changes within Police Agencies by Percent of Countries with Changes
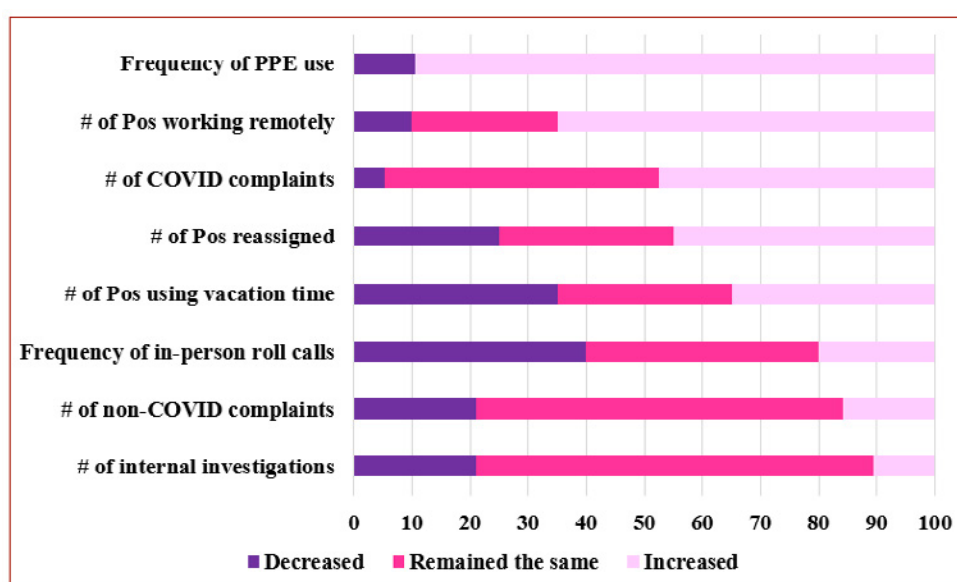
In Figure 5, the data shows the extent of the reduction in volume of crime reactive policing and roads policing. With the reduction in movement of people and the requirement in most jurisdictions for people to stay at home, it is not surprising to see that these operational functions were most significantly affected across most countries in our study. The number of calls for service decreased overall, as did the prevalence of various reported crimes and related arrests.

In many of the crime areas, police administrators in more than half of the countries surveyed noted a clear decrease in the area. However, the apparent equipoise in the area of family violence is also worthy of note.

Figure 5: Valence of Changes in Reactive Policing by Percent of Countries with Changes
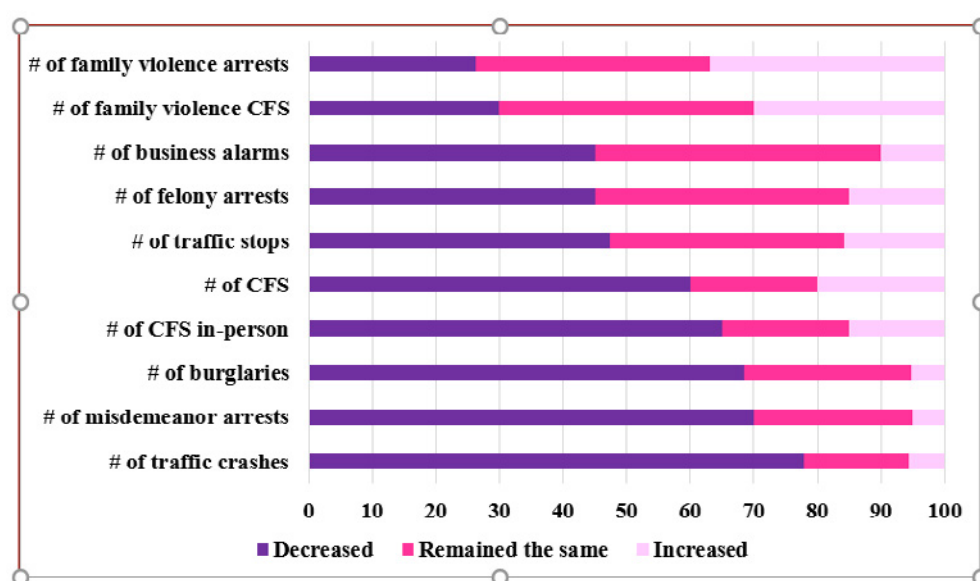
We have already seen above in Figure 3 that community policing appeared to be one of the most significantly affected operational areas. Figure 6 reinforces that finding: community policing showed the largest decrease in proactive policing activities, with the police administrators from more than half of the countries reporting a decrease.

Alongside this, there was also a significant decrease observed in police officer initiated proactive activities. In contrast to this, there was an apparent increase in nearly half of the sample of the responding countries in the deployments of special teams – "SWAT" or specialist weapons teams - which include specialist public order units.

Figure 6: Valence of Changes in Proactive Policing by Percent of Countries with Changes
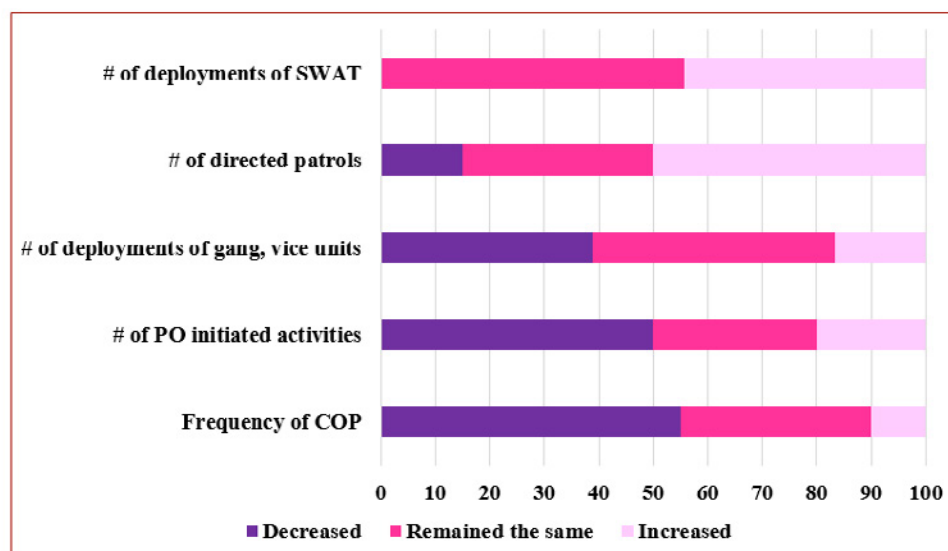
The final Figure - Figure 7 - focuses on the respondents' views of the likelihood of a set of potential consequences of policing the pandemic. Overall, despite the changes that we have documented

above, the police administrators from the majority of countries showed a level of optimism that service quality, public safety, public confidence and staff confidence in management either would not

change as a result of these changes or would tend to improve. Only in the impact on officer safety and the ability to recruit new officers did some anticipate adverse impacts.

Figure 7: Anticipated Consequences by Percent of Countries with Changes

Discussion

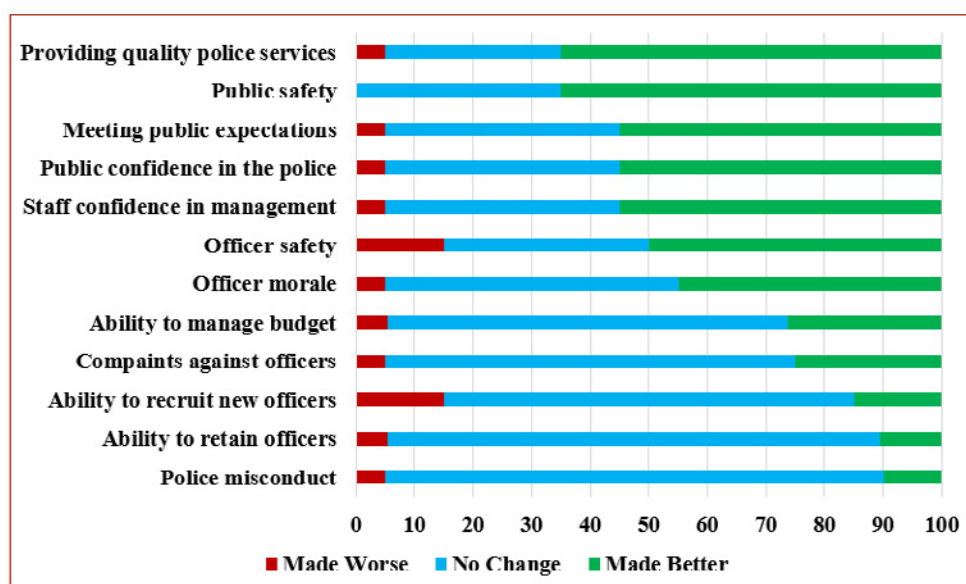This article has explored the impact of policing the pandemic on police organisations across a sample of 15 European countries. The findings have been developed from our wider global survey, which we have set out in Maskaly et al. (2021a and 2021b), and reflect the responses to our survey instrument by senior executives in the police forces. The responses were received shortly after the first wave – May to July 2020 – of the COVID 19 pandemic. Our results show that police agencies' operational and organisational domains have changed during the first phase of the pandemic.

While some aspects of police organisation (e.g., internal investigations, handling of complaints) remained relatively stable during the first phase of the pandemic, other aspects of police organisation that include face-to-face contacts (e.g., in-person rollcalls, training) were significantly changed. In addition, partly in response to the changes in citizen behaviour during the pandemic and related lockdowns, reactive policing activities (e.g., how arrests are handled, arrest for minor crimes) and proactive policing activities (e.g., community policing, directed patrols) changed as well.

Our findings suggest how significant a challenge to normal policing routines the pandemic proved to be in its first (and we suggest subsequent) phase. Whether it be answering calls for service or responding to emergencies, investigating crimes, handling (literally) offenders, attending town hall meetings or briefing and training officers, policing in normal times requires officers to be face to face with the public they serve, the suspects that they are dealing with and their colleagues. The survey shows that most of the European police forces who responded experienced a significant degree of disruption to the "normal" in the first phase. That disruption appeared to be concentrated more heavily in reactive operation functions (e.g., calls for service, arrests for minor crimes, traffic crashes) and proactive operation functions (e.g., community policing).

At same time, officers were required to engage in the new duty – the enforcement of COVID-19 restriction regulations. In our wider analysis of the global survey (Maskaly et al., 2021a&b) we documented the concerns of police administrators across the world at the muddled and poorly communicated restriction requirements that they were charged with enforcing. Our work has also suggested that the urgency of changes was driven most strongly by the data about death rates rather than other cues, which suggests that

perceptions of the legitimacy of police enforcement might also have a similar relationship with the health data. Whilst our respondents were generally optimistic about the impact of changes on policing during the first phase of the pandemic and the consequent changes to police operations, we consider that the combined effect of reduced community policing and face to face policing with an enhanced enforcement may have medium and long term consequences for perceptions of police legitimacy and confidence in the police management.

Relatedly, we see that there are changes in the frequency of certain call types during the lockdown. Notably, there has been a keen interest surrounding the effects of the pandemic on domestic violence. We specifically examined the police chiefs' perceptions about the number of calls for service for family violence, the number of family violence arrests, and the number of domestic violence arrests. Interestingly, we see that there is a perception of a decrease in the number of DV arrests (i.e., the confidence interval does not intersect with 0), while we cannot see as clear of a pattern for the number of calls for service or arrests for family violence. We posit two potential explanations here. First, the effects of the pandemic on the instances of domestic violence may be driven by a host of other factors beyond the pandemic itself. In other words, the pandemic likely does not affect everyone equally. For some unmeasured—at least in this study—reason domestic violence may become more problematic in some locations but not others. Second, we see that there is some confusion over the interchangeable use of the terms "family violence" and "domestic violence". In some locations the distinction between these two phenomena is meaningful, while it may not be in others. We would recommend that subsequent research more explicitly differentiate what these terms should mean to local participants.

We see that some operational changes have multiple potential factors affecting the change. For instance, the number of traffic stops and traffic crashes decreased in jurisdictions. However, we are unsure if these factors were driven by changes in the driving populace (i.e., reduction in cars on the road) and/or were a result of organisational changes (e.g., prohibition on making traffic stops). It could also be that there was a change in the driving behavior, but anecdotal evidence in the media suggests that many traffic stops involved people well exceeding the speed limit in a particular jurisdiction. One media account recounts the story of a motorist who was stopped for traveling at 130 miles per hour (209 kilometers per hour) in a 65 mile per hour (105 kilometers per hour) zone (Lazo, 2020).

Likewise, we see that the police chiefs perceive that the number of serious and minor crime arrests in most jurisdictions generally declined, but this could be due to downstream decisions of other criminal justice organisations (i.e., jails minimising admissions) or organisational changes (i.e., explicit orders to stop arresting unless certain conditions are met). It remains unclear what the reason for these decisions was and what the effects will be on subsequent case processing.

Finally, this research should be seen as part of a conversation. As we write, we have the benefit of knowing that the pandemic has lasted more than a year beyond the survey we undertook in 2020. Our data provides an important glimpse in the "rear view mirror" at a key point in time in the first phase of the pandemic. Furthermore, in our wider global survey (Maskaly et al., 2021 a&b), we have data from 14.4% of the countries accounting for 35.8% of the world's population, so adding other countries may change the substantive conclusions drawn here. In addition, it may be just as important to look at what is happening within these countries. We consistently see a great deal of heterogeneity from those countries from which we received multiple responses. This suggests that it may be necessary to look at these issues and the effects of the pandemic at different levels (i.e., country, regional, locally) to fully understand how the COVID-19 pandemic affected police organisations. Above all, we regard it as essential for researchers to continue to look: the COVID 19 pandemic is the single largest global event since the Second World War. Policing has had a central role throughout the pandemic and for good or ill, it seems highly likely that the pandemic will leave a lasting impact on policing.

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Porous Passivity:

How German police officers reflect their organisation's learning processes during the pandemic

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Abstract

The paper is based on interviews that have been conducted in autumn 2020 with 28 police officers in different positions who work for the Länder Lower Saxony and North Rhine-Westphalia. They have been interviewed for a project that aims at understanding the forms of knowledge that are being activated in the police profession. The interviewees have been asked – inter alia - what kind of learning processes they were seeing within the police that might have been impacted by the pandemic. The answers they have been given hint a lot at the "porous passivity" that the psychologist Stephan Grünewald has found to be the answer of the general German public towards the measures takes against the corona-virus. We found there to be five different aspects that the answers of the interviewees can be ordered into: 1.) one is the impression that police work does not change much due to the pandemic. 2.) but police officers miss being with their colleagues a lot, 3.) many say that the contact between the general public and the police has become more difficult a) because of the mask that makes mimicking and understanding the other more complex and b) because people might think it to be too difficult to get into contact with the police. 4.) protection against invisible threats such as viruses and bacteria has been an issue before corona so officers are happy that finally these concerns are being taken seriously, 5.) the maybe most interesting answers concern the impression of at least some officers that corona is something that comes from "above" (in the hierarchical sense) and that they have to deal with it even though they regard the real danger to be much smaller than assumed by the political class.

In short, the police officers we talked to do not seem to see much learning during the pandemic, but they miss being police officer "out there on the street" they and are not really sure if they pandemic is at all *that* dangerous.

Keywords: organisational learning, police, corona, bureaucracy

Trainee police officers have a lot to learn. Curricula in most of the German police academies are quite similar. Those curricula address numerous topics, encompassing social sciences (ethics, sociology, psychology, intercultural competence), law (penal, traffic, civil service), and so called "police subjects" (forensic science, tactics, traffic management). In addition, to their theoretical studies, students also receive training in a variety of practical topics, ranging from specific situational scenarios, to communication workshops, to shooting, to crowd control. The students also receive on-the-job training as part of their degree programme. The question is: what else will students have to learn once the police has learnt its lesson on the practical impact of pandemics?

French social anthropologist Frédéric Keck (2021) is a keen observer of "pandemic lookouts" in Hong Kong, Taiwan and Singapore, who have been watching for signs for a new kind of virus since at least 2005. In 2020, their fears became reality, in the form of Covid-19. "The modern state," Keck argues (in Fabius 2021, p. 26.-29), "is built on prevention by evaluating the distribution of risks in a population." The possibility of a virus that crosses the species barrier and thus changes form is not integrated in the philosophy of modern states. Covid-19 thus puts the known political order into question. Modern states, according to Keck, are based far more on the pastoral virtues of administration than on the cynegetic-type of observation upon which hunter-gatherer societies relied. But it is no longer possible to domesticate illnesses and to separate 'nature' from 'culture' *stricto sensu*. The idea of the state itself will thus have to change and become far more inclusive than modern states have been before (Latour 1997).

The Corona crisis has indeed proven to be a test for police, as well as political, structures around the globe. If Frédéric Keck is right, policing future societies will require new curricula in police academies and training colleges.

The following reflection look at the lessons learned so far. It is based on interviews conducted in Autumn 2020 with 28 police officers in different positions who work for the German *Länder* Lower Saxony and North Rhine-Westphalia. Some of these officers are in training, some teach in police academies, and others work in front-line positions or in management. They were interviewed for a project that aims to understand police organisational memory in general and learning processes particularly, and the different forms of knowledge that are activated in the police profession.

The interviews revealed five themes with respect to the Corona pandemic:

First, the need for personal protective equipment as a barrier against invisible threats such as viruses and bacteria, were an issue even before Corona. Officers are happy that their concerns are finally being taken seriously. For example:

> *"I washed my hands very often, even before Corona. You do not want to touch someone who has lived on the streets and who has not taken a shower in weeks. But when help is needed, well: we do it anyway. And this is why I think that officers are in fact happy that they now get a certain protection and that they are given masks and disinfectant and so on."*

Second, police officers greatly miss being with their colleagues, as they regard their job to be a very social one. Being close to each other in fact seems to be part of the police culture, which is based very much on oral traditions (Grutzpalk & Hoppe 2918, p. 13-22). Police culture also seems to be very reluctant to accept individualism and is based on work being performed in groups rather that by individuals. As one respondent put it,

> *"I think that all of them are looking forward when finally, they can cooperate with others. I think that most of them are rather social beings and they want to work with other teams too."*

Third, many were concerned that contact between the general public and the police has become more difficult during the pandemic. This is not only because wearing a mask hinders interpersonal communication, but also because people might be reluctant to contact the police in the first place. One officer responded that he did not wear a mask on duty, as he finds it obstructs his performance, to the point of not being able to do his job properly. Another officer put it like this:

> *"This is particularly true for small stations where elderly people come by, because maybe they have lost their keys or the wheelbarrow is not in the garden anymore. And maybe with all the Corona restrictions they do not come anymore."*

Fourth, responses suggested that for at least some officers, the dangers of the pandemic were being overblown. Such officers had the impression that anti-Corona measures were being imposed from above (in the hierarchical sense) and that the real danger was much lower than assumed by the political class. One respondent referred to a certain dissonance as a result.

"I think that it is difficult for many colleagues to perform their duties well because maybe they have a totally different idea about how things should be done. And when you have to take action against people who do not follow the Corona-regulations but within yourself you think: 'what is this nonsense about?' than I think it is difficult that these two poles are united within you."

Fifth, there seems to be a certain reluctance amongst police officers to learn from the crisis. Some say that this is also due to structural issues, as police work is still mainly paper-based and as social structures rely very much on personal contact and connections. One respondent sums up his experience thus:

"I think that actually police have not learned much during the Corona-crisis. I think that everybody continues as they have done before, maybe with a thinner programme and just the way things fit more or less."

This final theme fits well with the practice of 'muddling through', which Astrid Jacobsen (2001) has found to be to be part of policing rationality.

The themes that emerged during our research strongly suggest "porous passivity" in the police. The German psychologist Stephan Grünewald (2021) has found this to be the general response of the German public to measures taken against the Corona virus. In policing, this porous passivity might have to do with power structures. That is, police are in a position that might include the "ability to afford not to learn," which Karl W. Deutsch (1966) has described as being one of the general aspects of power. When viewed through this lens, learning processes might yet remain to appear. Perhaps they are more latent and more invisible than one might think. The whole Cepol-Conference „*Pandemic Effects on Law Enforcement Training & Practice* " *has* in fact shown that there are changes taking place, mainly on the technical side of policing.

We would not go so far as to conclude that the police in Germany are not learning much during the pandemic. However, we assume that most of the learning processes are going to pass silently, and might not even be recognised as such.

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New Challenges for Police During the Pandemic and Specific Actions to Counteract Them in Romania

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Abstract

Measures designed to prevent the spread of SARS-CoV2 included a series of actions that contributed to the amplification of social tensions - traffic restrictions, limitation of income sources, adjacent economic shortages, return to the country of a large number of Romanian citizens, and the number of fines for violating the restrictions provided by the military ordinances - some of which affected the activity of the police. Therefore, police had to face new threats and to ensure the respect of a wide range of limitations in regard to people's conduct and public order. This article will analyse the specific challenges faced by the police in the period following the spread of Covid-19, mainly during the lockdown installed in Romania, challenges directly related to the measures adopted, the changes in the daily routine and the necessary actions to limit and eliminate the pandemic's negative effects. More specific, the article analyses the group conflicts that have risen during lockdown and aggressive conduct towards Police determined by the enforcement of rules meant to limit the pandemic in different areas of the country. The paper pays a large amount of attention to the ways in which the Romanian Police approached these cases, their implication and elaborates a set of necessary measures police needs to implement in order to properly manage them.

Keywords: *police, pandemic, authority, social conflicts*

The Pandemic in Romania

In 2020, the world faced a new kind of threat that none of us was prepared for. The SARS-CoV2 outbreak has affected societies around the world, at all levels. All norms were seriously challenged, social order was threatened, with sanitary and economic deficiencies threatening us indefinitely. On February 26, 2020, it was established that the virus had reached Romania when a man from Gorj County was confirmed positive with COVID-19. On March 16, 2020, a state of emergency was declared at the national level, which allowed the government to take new measures to protect and ensure the safety of citizens. During the state of emergency, the following measures were taken: gatherings of more than 100 people were banned, travel was re-

stricted, citizens had to fill out a form to account for all their outside activities, restaurants, and beauty salons were closed, all artistic, scientific, and religious, sports, gambling and entertainment events were suspended. Groups larger than six people were no longer allowed to walk together, and students began taking classes online. As time went on, more and more restrictions were imposed. All persons confirmed to have the disease were admitted to hospitals and were not allowed to stay at home, even if they had no symptoms. People who entered the country had to remain in inpatient quarantine for 14 days before they could travel to their final destination. The state of emergency was extended until May 15, when it was placed in a state of alert. During the state of alert, some of the restrictions were lifted while others were imposed, with rules applied differently across the country depending on the rate of coronavirus infection in each town or village. Local police departments had to expand their responsibilities to reduce the spread of the effects of the pandemic. Their authority was questioned because people felt unsafe and did not know if the measures taken by authorities to contain the COVID -19 outbreak were appropriate or in their best interest. Many people did not believe the virus existed or that the disease was serious and therefore felt that the actions taken by lawmakers and law enforcement were inappropriate and violated their rights. Although in the beginning the fear of the unknown made people respect the enforced rules, after a while people began to resist, disobey, and question the necessity of such norms. Individuals perceived the authorities as incoherent because of the fact that the measures taken were frequently changed and the information transmitted was contradictory, as scientists discovered new aspects about the disease all the time, leaving room for conspiracy theories.

Return of the expats

In 2019, statistics from European Commission showed that Romania had the highest emigration rate from any European Union country. When the pandemic started, many of the emigrants wanted to return home because they lost their jobs abroad and were afraid of not seeing their loved ones. The estimates say that in 2020, about 1.3 million people came back from abroad. When they arrived in Romania, they had no jobs, no means to support their families, and no qualifications to get jobs that would earn them as much as if they worked in the countries they had

emigrated to. In a time of uncertainty, they were left without support and without knowing when they could return to live the life they were used to. Another situation was the one in which some individuals who went abroad used to commit crimes in order to support themselves there. With the lockdown imposed in many states, the opportunities for crime decreased, especially petty theft, in which most of them were involved. Having lost the opportunity to earn money, they decided to return to Romania and once they arrived here, the problem of supporting themselves remained and frustration and despair began to accumulate. Moreover, in the period around Orthodox Easter people began to resist even more the norms imposed, as they felt that their identity was under attack and that the authorities did not take into account their beliefs. Romanian Constitutional Court decided at some point that the military ordinances and consequently, the fines issued to those that did not comply with the regulations, have an unconstitutional character. Therefore, for a few days after this decision was taken, police officers were left with no means of coercion. Moreover, the public began to perceive law enforcement as dishonest and against the wellbeing of the population. Another fact that led to confrontations between the police and the members of the community was the media portrayal of the sanctioning role of the police during the pandemic. Constantly, people were reminded about the number of fines issued and videos of police officers being aggressive towards individuals that did not obey the laws were displayed when such situations had happened. Given all these circumstances, it came to a point when groups of people displayed aggressive behaviour towards the police and their intervention triggered extensive debates in the media and online environment, questioning both their legitimacy and effectiveness. In the light of these events, we conducted a research, which analysed the conflicts between the police and the citizens that happened during the pandemic in order to identify ways in which we can increase the police's efficiency and authority, in the benefit of public safety. The research focused on the group conflicts that happened in Săcele, Braşov County, in the city of Hunedoara, Hunedoara County and in Rahova neighbourhood, from the capital city of Romania, Bucharest, conflicts in which police had to intervene in force. During this research, we analysed relevant literature to the subject and previous reports done by the Research and Crime Prevention Institute from within the General Inspectorate of Romanian Police, and we

conducted a series of interviews with the police officers involved in these specific missions and with the ones that coordinated the interventions.

Social Conflict Theories

According to Karl Marx and his social conflict theory, the society is an arena of inequalities, which generates conflicts and social development. Societies are usually structured in such way that it supports some members of the upper class at the expense of the others, and characteristics such as race, class and age are related to social inequality (Hayes, 2020). Lewis A. Coser defines social conflict as "a battle between values and claims of status, power and resources, in which the opponent's purpose is to neutralise, debunk or to eliminate the rivals". Coser analyses the roles that social conflicts have in the social changes that emerge in a society, stating that each social system has elements of social tension and potential conflict, which anticipates future social changes (Coser, 1957). Georg Simmel sees conflict as an integrative social force: the social reality includes capacities that promote social order, but that also promote social conflicts. Conflict could be either a unifying factor, determining people to fight together against a common enemy, either a dividing force (Simmel, 1904). Robert K. Merton believed that not everybody is able to obtain success by legitimate means. Even though social expectations are the same for everyone, the battle to achieve them begins at different starting points. Merton stated that there is a strong link between unemployment and deviancy, because the legal methods to obtain money are not accessible to some individuals, so they start to commit crimes in order to meet the social expectations (Merton, 1938). Moreover, Albert Cohen stated that the disadvantages determine frustration in individuals and lack of trust in their own social status, therefore they resort to committing crimes in order to earn the respect of other members of the society (Cohen, 1955). Robert Agnew commented on the strain theory of delinquency as explained by Merton and Cohen and came up with an alternative theory, in which not the discrepancy between means and expectations causes delinquency, but the initial set and context in which adolescents grow up. Therefore, an individual might "walk away from an aversive situation" by using any means to avoid pain and frustration, even though this specific situation does not affect one's goals, but because it is perceived as (Agnew, 1985).

Contesting Authority - Hunedoara Case

The first case analysed was the one from the city of Hunedoara. On April 18, 2020, while patrolling the neighbourhood and checking if there were any violations of the rules imposed during the state of emergency, the police officers found a drunk man who did not have the mandatory form and who could not explain the reasons why he was on the street. After this incident, the man's friends, relatives and neighbours attacked law enforcement officers with rocks and a variety of blunt objects. Some of the first responders were injured and two of the police cars were damaged. This particular attack on the police was not premeditated and was based on the social tensions caused by the pandemic and the social discourse about the number of fines issued and the large amounts of money people were being fined at a time when resources for survival were scarce.

Ignoring authority - Săcele Case

The next case we looked at was the one from Săcele, Brașov County. On April 19, 2020, members of one family verbally assaulted the children of another family, all based on pre-existing tension and alcohol consumption. Police officers and members of the gendarmerie arrived at the scene very quickly and when they attempted to break up the conflict, they were completely ignored. No violence was aimed at the first responders, but the conflict between the two sides continued as if nothing had happened. Although the police officers fired several warning shots, the citizens involved in the conflict continued to fight. At one point, one of the men involved in the conflict hit a member of the other family with a car, at full speed, even though armed forces were present. According to first responders to the case, alcohol consumption increased the severity of the conflict, but such altercations were common in the area. Police officers believed that social tensions also escalated because of the restrictions imposed during the state of emergency, as opportunities for members of this community to earn money decreased. Many of the community members lived in extreme poverty and used illegal means to make a living. This neighbourhood was located in a very poor area of the city and had no sewage system, no running water, and no public lightning system.

The people who lived there had low levels of education, were unemployed, had children at an early age, and therefore conflicts were recurrent in the community. This event was widely reported in the media and journalists emphasised that the police were not able to intervene and establish public order in such situations. Although the parts involved in the conflict were not aggressive towards the police at any moment, they completely ignored their orders.

Challenging Authority - Rahova Case

Also on April 19, 2020, another incident occurred in Bucharest, unrelated to the previous one from Braşov County. At around 8:45 pm, the police received a call on the emergency line about an altercation happening in the street between numerous people. Thirty-seven individuals involved were escorted to the police station to give statements. Although it initially appeared to be a spontaneous conflict in an area where such conflicts are common, officers soon learned that the confrontation was planned. After the intervention, the police officers investigating the conflict found out that prior to the conflict, the leader of one of the groups had made a live video on Facebook bragging about a party he had organised with his friends at his home, which was against the regulations. At a certain point in his live video, he stated that no authority could stop him and that he would attack the police officers if they tried to break up the party. When they arrived at the scene, groups of people were waiting for them, equipped with rocks, bricks, shovels, chairs and anything else they could get their hands on. Some of the police officers were hit and required medical attention. Although the police officers fired warning shots, the crowd continued to attack them until officers arrived from Special Forces Unit. The officers stated that it was the first time in their careers that a conflict occurred for the sole reason of confronting the police. Some of the participants involved in the conflict came to Romania after living abroad because of the pandemic. Without the proper means to support themselves, they wanted to make themselves look powerful in the eyes of the rest of the community by disobeying the orders of the authorities.

Causes of Conflict

In regard to the violent behaviour of the individuals involved in the conflict, the socio-economical and lack of culture and education are the first set of factors which conducted to the triggering of the conflicts. Poverty, marginalisation, alcohol consumption that increased during the days before the Orthodox Easter, formed an accumulation of factors that generated antisocial and violent behaviours. Old conflicts have emerged when, because of the pandemic, many of the individuals (especially the ones involved in the Rahova case) were forced to return home from abroad, and on the base of social strains generated by the restrictive measures, violent behaviours emerged. Police officers believed that the main causes of these conflicts were previous misunderstandings between the parts involved and alcohol consumption. They also mentioned low levels of education, unemployment, lack of public lightning systems, marginalisation of these communities and lack of legal consequences for the members of the community that were previously involved in different types of offences as factors that contributed to the escalation of the conflicts. Police training and citizen`s contact with the police were severely affected by the pandemic. Temporary reassignments, lack of resting days, shortage of personnel and lack of personal protective equipment also played a role in the occurrence of these events. The acute phases of the conflicts have played out in the presence of a low number of police officers, before the Special Forces Unit's arrival because of the rapid way in which they unfolded, without pre-existent clues. Even though in the Rahova case the conflict was announced on the instigator's Facebook page, the magnitude of the incident could not have been predicted. In regard to the socio-demographic characteristics of the participants, the persons involved were mostly male, some of which had criminal records, either for theft or for violent acts. Women and children rather have a triggering role in the conflicts, or they exert, through screams and threats, pressure on the police and on the members of the gendarmerie during their interventions. The police, as an institution that exerts social control, imposes compliance with the law and sanctions the individuals that break it, but also an institution that is constantly in contact with the citizens usually surrounding sensible events, is one of the lowest ranked institutions when looking at opinion polls that measure trust in public institutions. Citizens developed more adversity against the police during the state of emergency and the pandemic, period in which the sanctions for breaking the military ordinances were far greater than the usual fines, because they saw the police as the main force of the state to enforce these rules, which they were not sure that they were

in their best interest. Even though at the beginning of the pandemic law enforcement officers were perceived as guardians and protectors of the well-being of the society, as time went by and people started to feel economic and social distress (unemployment, not knowing what will happen next, contradictory or fake news), they lost their trust and began to question every action of the police.

An expert group set up within the General Inspectorate of Romanian Police closely monitored the comments left on the Romanian Police official Facebook page and posts that were submitted on social media which reflected the change of perspective, from total support to blaming the law enforcement for almost anything. The hostile messages increased in number and in intensity, some of them even suggesting violent actions against the police. These messages reached a peak near the Easter holidays and were generated by the public debates surrounding the religious ceremony and people being allowed to participate to it. Most of the conflicts between the citizens and the police officers, including the ones that we analysed in this research, happened in the same period. Therefore, there was a connection between the conflicts and the religious beliefs of the population.

Improving Policing

In the future, many profound systemic changes should be made, some of which depend on more than just the police. These communities should be given adequate support regarding education and essential services to develop and become part of society. Educating the public regarding legislation is also the responsibility of the Romanian Police. The Research and Crime Prevention Institute, through its Prevention department, organises activities in schools and among the general population, informing participants about the legal provisions regarding different types of crimes, the consequences of illegal behaviours and how they can avoid becoming victims. Although this is a good start, unfortunately there are very few police officers assigned to these units who have to educate a large number of people. Therefore, partnerships with other private or public entities and the media are essential in order to be able to deliver the message. The police relationship with the community is very important and relevant to the people's compliance, especially in those situations where any norm can be challenged. Understanding

the rules imposed, feeling that the police are a partner in ensuring the safety of the community and not emphasising the regulatory role of the police can lead to an improvement in police-community relations. Although much of the news during the pandemic focused only on the number of fines issued and on the mistakes made by law enforcement, some significant improvements have been made. The number of press conferences organised by the police increased and citizens were constantly informed about the actions taken. Communication was standardised so that people could easily follow the development of regulations and the evolution of the pandemic. Each institution, which played an important role during the COVID-19 outbreak, transmitted their message through a representative in a common press conference. Finally, during our research we had found that for the people involved in the conflicts, this type of behaviour was not a novelty. The majority of them had already had some form of contact with the police. Considering that some of them were involved in different types of crimes and that the consequences were minimal, we could conclude that the severity of the punishment should be increased in some cases to prevent future violations of socially accepted norms and laws. Law enforcement are often accused of inefficiency and corruption because of the low frequency of pre-trial detention and the insignificant sanctions applied to those who commit violent crimes, people not understanding fully the limited responsibilities that law enforcement has. Another aspect that should be better regulated is the use of firearms during a police intervention. The superiors are often investigating police officers for long periods, after they decide to use their gun in an intervention. Until everything is settled, some police officers might have their wages cut. Law enforcement agents are also afraid that the people that they decide to use force against might be able, through their system of acquaintances in the political area, to affect their career, which sometimes also leads them to perceive their own authority as diminished.

Conclusion

These conflicts had some common characteristics: a low level of education, the general behaviour of the people involved, social exclusion, poverty, lack of essential services. In addition, all these events took place around the Orthodox Easter, when some of them used to have big parties and consume large

amounts of alcohol. The uncertainty and social discourse about the pandemic also had some influence on the development of these conflicts. The case from Săcele, Braşov County, was the conflict least determined by the pandemic. In this case, the participants had numerous previous conflicts and the community from which they came felt that they should resolve their conflicts themselves without the intervention of specialised authorities, relying more on traditional forms of justice. Although these three group conflicts seemed to have some common characteristics, they had different motivations that led to the initiation of these conflicts. They were in some ways linked to the pandemic, in the sense that the outbreak of COVID-19 contributed to the accumulation of social tensions.

These three conflicts, and other of a smaller magnitude that happened around the same period, are rather exceptions and will not lead to a generalisation of such behaviours against the police. The intent or the instigation to violence against police were rarely expressed and frequently condemned by the other members of the society in the online environment, therefore the conflicts decreased in the following period in number and in intensity. A low level of trust can manifest through not wanting to help law enforcement in certain situations (not agreeing to testify, not wanting to report certain crimes etc.), but to increase acts of violence against the police requires a state of lack of legitimisation unattainable under normal democratic conditions.

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CEPOL

The Role of Law Enforcement Agencies and the Use of IT Tools for a Coordinate Response in Pandemic Crisis Management:
The STAMINA project

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Abstract

Pandemic crises are disruptive events that imply a threat to the health of citizens, and also to public safety. In order to provide an adequate response, Law Enforcement Agencies (LEAs) organisations up to now had to adapt their structures, staffing conditions and competencies to the exceptional circumstances. At the same time, pandemics, such as COVID-19 that is currently a real scenario, require from LEAs to test their capabilities and thus to further identify their own gaps and get to know themselves better. The complexity of this kind of phenomena requires a coordinated and multidisciplinary response through Information Technology (IT) tools to mitigate the effects of pandemics. In this sense, our participation in the European H2020 STAMINA project: *"Demonstration of intelligent decision support for pandemic crisis prediction and management within and across European borders"* brings added value to our daily work as LEAs. The project implements a set of tools whose goal is twofold: improvement of management of information in all phases of the pandemic, as well as improvement of response and coordination among all first responders involved in a pandemic. STAMINA attempts to achieve this through the combination of a number of IT tools ranging from Predictive models and Early Warning systems to Real-time Social Media Analytics and a Common Operational Picture (COP) platform that acts as the main interface for real-time situation assessment and coordinated responses of the involved LEAs.

Keywords: pandemic crisis management; Valencia Local Police; predictive analytics; early warning systems, law enforcement agencies

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has created a range of unforeseen and unprecedented challenges for Law Enforcement Agencies (LEAs) including police departments worldwide. In light of these challenges, the goal of this article is to understand the potential short- and long-term effects of disasters and public health emergencies on policing organisations and officers. The most common issues and best practices identified in the literature are included in the research. At the same time, it is further discussed 'what works' in the context of policing such emergencies. The literature that is discussed below reveals a few categories of issues predominantly raised in this context, namely police-community relations, intra-organisational challenges, as well as inter-agency collaboration and cooperation. A number of open issues is presented below that have immediate implications for policing during COVID-19 but also cover long-term effects, providing valuable recommendations for after the crises has passed.

Currently, in the context of such pandemics and particular during COVID-19, LEAs play a crucial role in keeping the pandemic under control by both promoting safer communities and fighting criminals who take advantage of the outbreak. In this sense, to avoid the spreading of the disease, LEAs had to establish new plans and protocols and to adapt their internal structures to more flexible work schedules and bubble work groups.

In addition to day-to-day security challenges, LEAs had to pay special attention to activities in the private and public areas in order to avoid illegal parties. Informing citizens about new pandemic regulations, monitoring restrictive measures such as the correct use of masks and curfew compliance, as well as the assistance and support for vulnerable citizens at home are some relevant examples. The collaboration with the health sector has been crucial in tasks related to public health such as supporting the implementation of public health measures, controlling the compliance of infected citizens with quarantine measure and tracking of close contacts to avoid overwhelming the health services.

Citizens' trust in LEAs has been a cornerstone in maintaining citizen security. Trust-building must be worked on in the long term with a continuous and preventive approach in order to obtain the desired results. In the current COVID-19 crisis, the citizens' trust in LEAs has helped to engage citizens in respecting established norms and collaborating to reduce the risk of social unrest. In the specific case of the Valencia Local Police (PLV) in Spain, trust was promoted by establishing new communication strategies via social networks as well as using loudspeakers in patrol cars and drones with messages of encouragement, reassurance and requesting citizens to stay at home and collaborate in respecting the rules.

Furthermore, LEAs have reported new patterns of criminal activity and citizens' requirements. For instance, minor offenses have decreased while there has been an increase of neighbourhood complaints for breaches of regulation, illegal parties and curfew breaches. COVID-19 has already brought a rise in cyber criminality, mainly due to the increasing usage of internet and reliance on technology for entertainment and connection to the outside world. Besides, the rise of misinformation and fake news has undermined LEAs' efforts to protect citizens from COVID-19. Fake news has often caused confusion and mistrust in the governments' crisis management plans while fostering conspiracy or denial theories and causing altercations and demonstrations against the preventive measures.

To address these challenges, PLV participate in the EU STAMINA project that brings together first responders, policy-makers, technology and crisis management experts from across Europe and neighbouring countries to develop technologies and recommendations for improving pandemic crisis management practices. This paper presents the ways that STAMINA can support LEAs' practices in the preparedness and response phases of the crisis management cycle.

The rest of the paper is organized as it is shown further on. The next section discusses previous work on the use of technology in policing public health measures. Then, we set the case study of the Valencia Police actions during an airborne virus pandemic on the scene of the STAMINA EU project, providing the motivation and the details of a proposed action plan that could be adopted by LEAs in terms of using a combination of toolsets for a better coordinated response in pandemic crisis management. Finally, the paper concludes with a brief discussion about the proposed approach and how the STAMINA project can support LEAs in pandemic crisis management.

Experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has infected millions and killed several hundreds of thousands of people worldwide[1]. The pandemic has, however, not only created unforeseen and in many ways unprecedented challenges for the public health sector but also for LEAs (Brooks and Lopez, 2020). Police officers and staff are often directly or indirectly involved in the pandemic response and have thus a higher risk of getting infected (Bates, 2020). In addition, many governments have taken emergency measures to protect their population and slow the spread of the virus. Such actions, including lockdowns, travel bans, and social distancing rules are often controlled and enforced by the police, creating additional service demand for LEAs (Laufs et al., 2020). This comes on top of existing duties as the police are expected to maintain order and continue neighbourhood policing operations (Bonkiewicz & Ruback, 2012), all while under a greater strain on resources (Kennedy, Brooks, & Vargo, 1969; Stogner, Lee Miller & McLean, 2020). To successfully understand and manage the plethora of challenges that emergency situations such as COVID-19 create, first responders such as the police need to learn from other agencies and from past experiences with similar scenarios. A key mechanism for this is the review and academic analysis of disaster management practices and policies. The literature on law enforcement and disaster management, and specifically research focusing on public health emergencies, however, is often not practical enough and remains unclear how COVID-19 may impact policing in the short- and long-term (Rojek & Smith, 2007). Our work seeks to address this gap by assessing the implications that pandemics and public health emergencies can have for policing. In doing so, it seeks to identify best practices and to offer recommendations for policing the current COVID-19 outbreak. PLV's participation in the EU STAMINA project that focuses on pandemic crisis management supports this claim. In this context, it is expected that this collaboration will provide recommendations that will help police organisations and leaders to design adequate public health emergency preparedness and operational protocols during public health emergencies. Given the growing interest in researching on and strengthening the intersections between law enforcement and public health through EU projects, this article provides a novel contribution in terms of developing this area and facilitating new ways of thinking about the role of police officers during pub-

lic health emergencies (Punch and James, 2017; Dijk and Crofts, 2017; Dijk et al., 2019). Our article outlines experiences, gaps and issues that LEAs have faced during the current COVID-19 pandemic. It is further tailored to the specific national context of how police departments in Spain are currently experiencing this situation and how they could coordinate responses in a pandemic crisis management through the STAMINA tools.

Experiences, gaps and issues that LEAs have faced during the current COVID-19 pandemic

The coronavirus pandemic has been both a challenge as well as an opportunity to learn about the weaknesses of our own police organisations and investigate ways of improving our practices. The main gaps and problems LEAs have faced are listed below:

- The pandemic is being managed exclusively as a public health problem and not with a **multidisciplinary approach**. This situation involves not only health personnel and patients, but also other actors and first responders, such as the LEAs.

- The **lack of personal protective equipment** at the beginning of the pandemic (gloves, masks, hydro-alcoholic gel, etc.).

- The **lack of health information** regarding citizens the police must assist and support as well as the **lack of data sharing** (health system, control agencies, security bodies). First responders with a non-sanitary profile do not have access to medical resources or medical information.

- The **lack of a two-way and fluid communication between citizens and those who manage or combat emergencies** resulting in loss of valuable and useful information that would facilitate decision-making.

- The **lack of analysis of social networks** to verify citizens' trust in their leaders and to further check the degree of collaboration.

- Difficulty to **combat misinformation and fake news**.

- The **lack of coordination among different profiles of first responders** (local police, health workers, firefighters, social services,) due to the **absence of a common interface or emergency management platform** to share information and resources.

In addition to learning about the gaps and opportunities in our police organisations, the pandemic has helped us to create synergies with other multidisciplinary organisations through our participation in Research & Development (R&D) projects. In that sense, PLV are currently participating in the H2020 EU project STAMINA, which is designing different IT solutions to help better coordinate the efforts of first responders.

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1   https://coronavirus.jhu.edu.

The STAMINA Project

The STAMINA research and innovation project focuses on pandemic crisis management. This includes developing a toolset for predictive modelling of pandemic outbreaks, along with early warning functionalities and a decision support system. To assist preparedness, a crisis management tool is developed, and is defining the roles and responsibilities of key actors, and implementing different training scenarios. Real-time web and social media analytics also assist in capturing societal feelings and reactions, raising awareness and increasing public trust in public health institutions and government authorities. Smart wearable diagnostic devices are used for first line screening and monitoring. All information is fed to a Common Operational Picture (COP) platform, as the main interface for real-time situation assessment and coordinated response of the involved actors. The STAMINA toolset, upon its completion, will be accompanied by a set of guidelines on effective implementation of risk communication principles and best practices in cross-organisational preparedness and response plans. The use of the STAMINA methods and tools will be finally demonstrated through 12 national and regional small-scale demonstrators and one large-scale cross-border simulation exercise involving all consortium partners.

Trial scenarios and EU Summit of pandemics national planners and stakeholders

In the STAMINA project, a large number of trials is planned in order to test and validate the developed solution on the field while iteratively providing adaptations based on real-life operational scenarios contributing to the overall STAMINA end-user-oriented approach. Besides, at the end of the project PLV will organise and host an EU Summit of pandemics national planners and stakeholders to present the projects outputs. Apart from presenting the project´s output, it will be an impressive forum where all the stakeholders can discuss the outputs and exchange knowledge about the latest findings and recommendations in pandemic crisis management. The main aim is the elicitation of best practices.

The Spanish trial will take place in Valencia in spring 2022 when the whole project is going be close to its completion. Its implementation will be based on the collaboration between PLV, the Valencia Port Foundation (VPF) and the Spanish Red Cross-TECSOS Foundation (CRE-TECSOS).

The trial will deal with an infected person with an airborne virus who has been ordered confinement at home. Valencia is under a wave of an airborne virus and he/she will break the lockdown to attend an open-air drinking party in a leisure area in the city of Valencia. The priority of the LEAs at that moment will be to search for the infected person as well as to initiate the tracking protocol in order to identify the people who have been in contact with that person.

Within the scope of the Spanish trial, four STAMINA tools - Web Social Media Analytics tool (WSMA), Flu and Coronavirus Simulator (FACS), Early Warning System (EWS) and Common Operational Picture (COP) - will be included. Their value with respect to the management of that pandemic crisis is given below, while at the same time, the interconnection of the particular tools is also discussed.

Real-time Web and Social Media Analytics tool (WSMA)

The Web and Social Media Analytics tool (WSMA) is an online web application aimed at monitoring and analysing social media content according to specifications given by the end-user and leveraging Artificial Intelligence (AI) and rule-based analytics engines. WSMA includes a dashboard through which end-users can provide filtering and searching parameters (e.g., keywords, language, location) that helps the tool to retrieve content most relevant to them (Figure 1). Once provided with these inputs, WSMA starts collecting data from available social media Application Programming Interfaces (APIs) (currently Twitter and Reddit) starting from seven days before the moment the analysis has started. While collecting them, it feeds the data to processing pipelines and generates statistics highlighting trends and topics most often discussed as well as indicators of the sentiment-polarity (positive, neutral or negative "tone") of the messages. These analytics are then visualised on the dashboard (through graphs such as trend lines, bar charts, networks, word clouds – Figure 2 and 3) and compiled into reports. As the tool collects more data (data is collected on an hourly basis), the visualisations on the dashboard are updated so that end-users can always have an up-to-date picture on the discourse on social media. The reports, delivered on a weekly basis, are meant to provide aggregated analytics over a larger time span to allow the user to evaluate the evolution of the social media discourse over time.

Figure 1: WSMA input parameters dashboard (preliminary version).

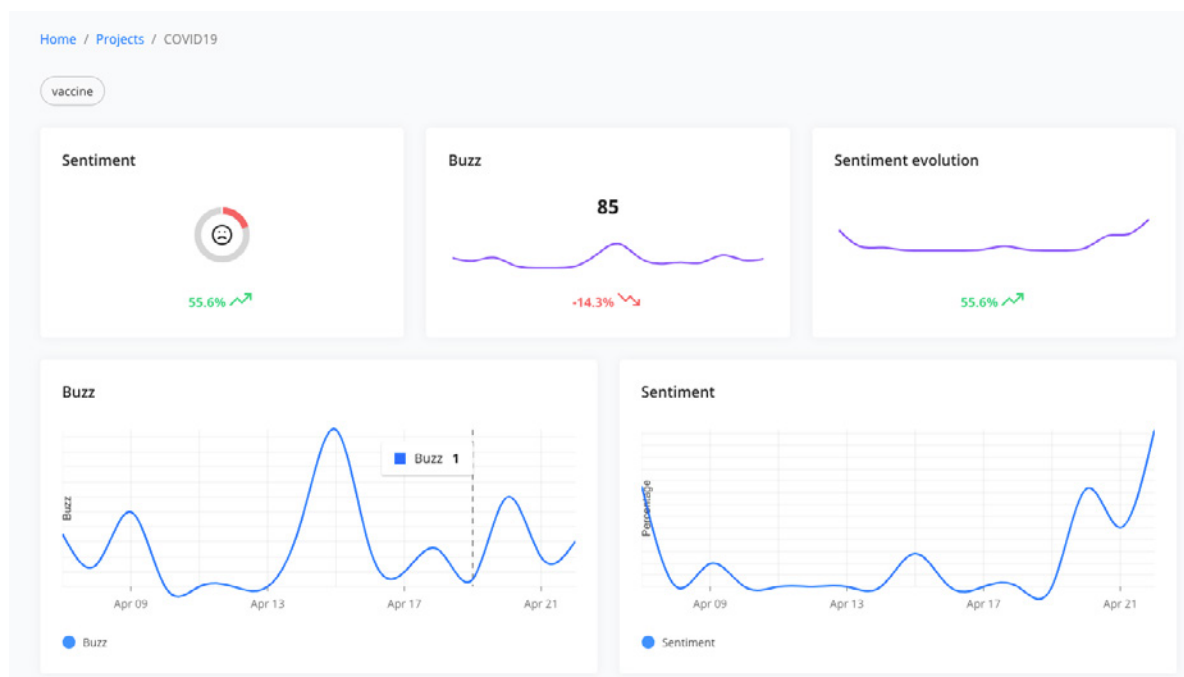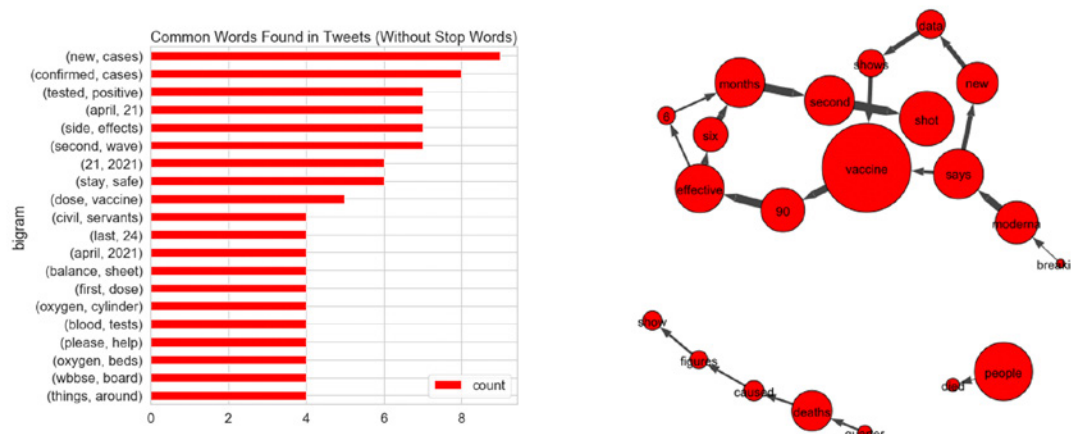**Figure 2:** WSMA visualisation dashboard (preliminary dashboard).

Figure 3: Example of text analytics.

With respect to the Spanish trial, PLV, VPF and CRE-TEC-SOS, in order to reduce the distrust towards the authorities that can undermine the efficacy of the containment measures and the compliance with them, decide to gather insights from social media data on the institutions' response to an "airborne virus", at both regional and country-level. Although social media users are not representative of all the demographics of citizens, PLV believe that these platforms can provide fast and easy access to a relevant and quite varied fraction of the population discourse. The police officers (end-users) may log in to WSMA and provide relevant input parameters such as the locations of interest (Valencia, Spain) and keywords to track ("Policia local de Valencia", "PVC", "Estado de alarma", "confinamiento domiciliario", "fiesta", "botellón", "ocio nocturno", "cierre de los bares"). WSMA dashboard shows, through the sentiment evolution trend line, what has been reported in the previous days, on average, from the social media users' side regarding negative sentiments in posts mentioning the authorities. From the graphs showing frequent words, co-occurring words and their relations, PLV may infer that those social media users are talking about unfair rules, desires to go to parties, impatience for the restrictions, etc. Based on these findings, PLV decide to: 1) share on their communication channels an article detailing their efforts in controlling confinement breaches and 2) gather citizens' perceptions on the police work during the "airborne virus" emergency through an online survey. In this way, PLV aim to strengthen even more the trust relationship with their audience by providing evidence regarding their actions and by showing interest in hearing the audience's voice.

Flu and Coronavirus Simulator (FACS)

The Flu and Coronavirus Simulator (FACS) is an Agent-Based Simulation (ABS) tool that focuses on "airborne viruses" transmission within the context of a town, small city, or borough. It combines disease properties, geospatial information and basic demographic information to attempt a forecast of expected infection and hospitalisation rates across the region (Mahmood et al., 2020). It supports the implementation of prevention measures such as lockdown and vaccination strategies as well as emergence of new strains. FACS uses OpenStreetMaps (OSM) geospatial data; epidemiological and intervention data published by public health authorities; and demographic data published by national statistics authorities. Secondary data is used when there is lack of or missing data. The FACS disease model is a Susceptible, Exposed, Infected, Recovered, Dead (SEIRD) model (Figure 4) and relies on bespoke disease transmission equations to resolve the likelihood of infections between individuals in a given indoor (or outdoor) space that considers aspects such as the size of space, ventilation, time spent in that space on a day, and the total time spent by infectious persons in that space. The output of the simulation is visualised on a scatter chart on a map. This mode makes it easy to identify infection hotspots. The output is also plotted on timeseries graphs with confidence intervals for more in-depth analysis. Example output graph visualisations is shown in Figure 5 and scatter map in Figure 6. PLV will be able to see the outputs of the simulations on the COP tool. PLV will also have access to raw output data, should they wish to perform further analysis.
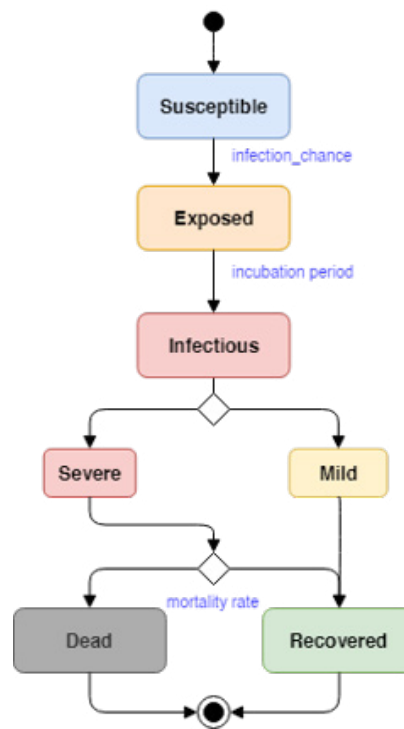
Figure 4: FACS disease model.
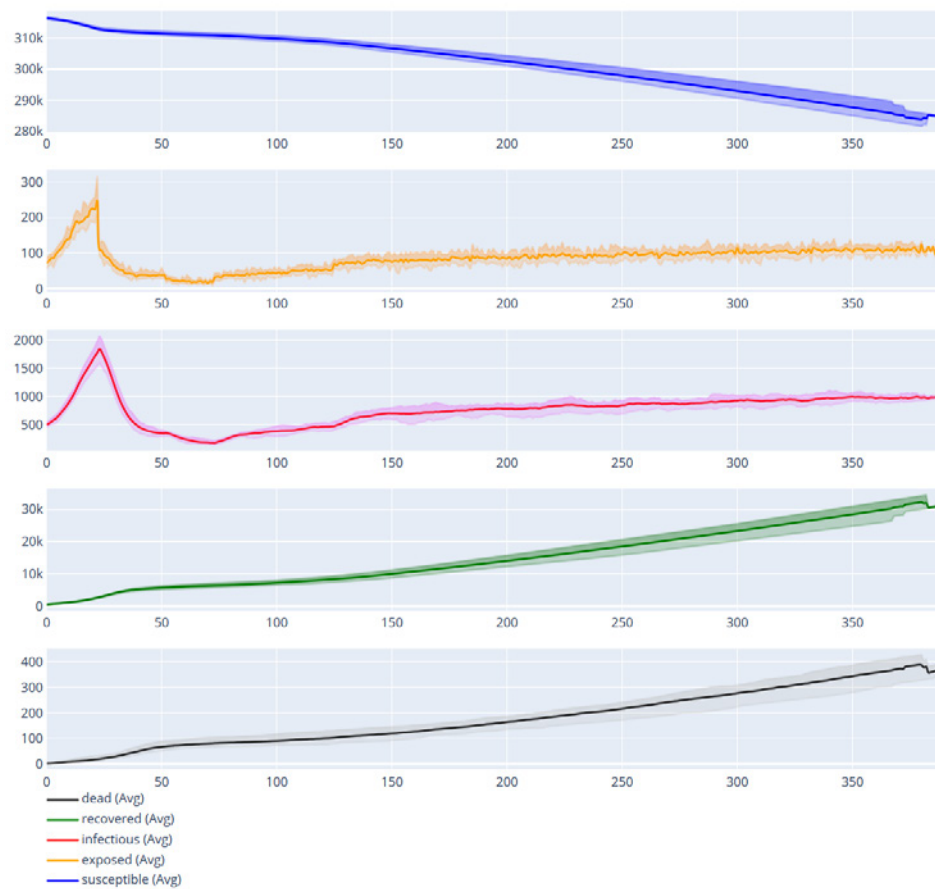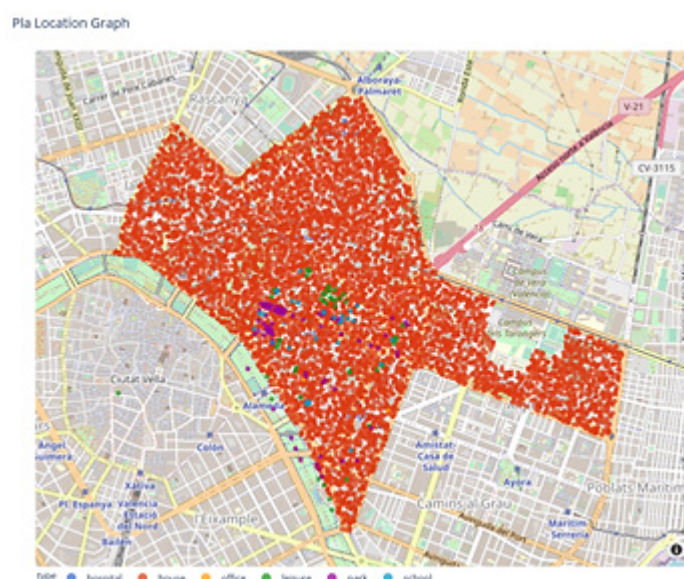

Figure 5: FACS graph output

Figure 6: FACS map visualisation – Pla del Real, Valencia.

The trial scenario is as follows. There is a new wave of "airborne virus" infections in Valencia and the Town council decides to implement strict lockdown measures to prevent overwhelming the healthcare system.

PLV are already aware that confinement measures are not very popular and they expect that a small proportion of the population will breach the rules. In anticipation, they want to understand what the impact on infections and hospitalisations will be, should different population profiles breach the rules. PLV's aim is to be better prepared to take the appropriate enforcement actions, if they receive notification from the track and trace system of a lockdown breach.

PLV therefore runs FACS for the following hypothetical but realistic scenarios:

1) *A single individual with the following profiles does not abide by the rules:*
   i)   A young adult with a very active social life.
   ii) A healthcare worker that continues to go to work.
   iii) A supermarket worker that continues to go to work.
   iv) A single household adult that visits their partner.
2) *All the four profiles breach the rules simultaneously.*

Based on the FACS predictions for each scenario, PLV will be able to prepare action plans and therefore act immediately when the track and trace system indicates that a person of a certain profile has breached the lock-

down rules. PLV will also be prepared to prioritise actions when several incidents of disobedience occur at the same time.

ML-based Early Warning System (EWS)

Integral to STAMINA's promised value in the response phase of a pandemic is the proposed Early Warning System (EWS), which automatically notifies its users at the operational and the tactical level when certain values controlled by STAMINA exceed critical levels. The EWS operates on the basis of information gathered by other STAMINA tools and additional datasets, as visualised in Figure 7. Users want to be notified of the occurrence of (potential) outbreaks early on. The EWS can do this based on pre-determined thresholds in certain available indicators or by identifying alerting patterns based on historical data.

The potential use of the EWS within the Spanish trial, is to share the preliminary evaluations with respect to the number of people who came in touch with the infected person, at an early stage. The purpose of EWS is twofold: enhancing the preparedness of users (police officers, PLV and VPF) and processing various inputs of information (i.e., number of positive PCR test results, number of total PCR tests, number of tweets including words such as "airborne virus", Valencia party, etc.) in order to provide real-time parallel in-situ or remote situational awareness. As such, the Early Warning System has the potential to play a very important part in enhanced pandemic response by alerting the responsible parties of

Figure 7: EWS capability to operate on the basis of information gathered by other STAMINA tools
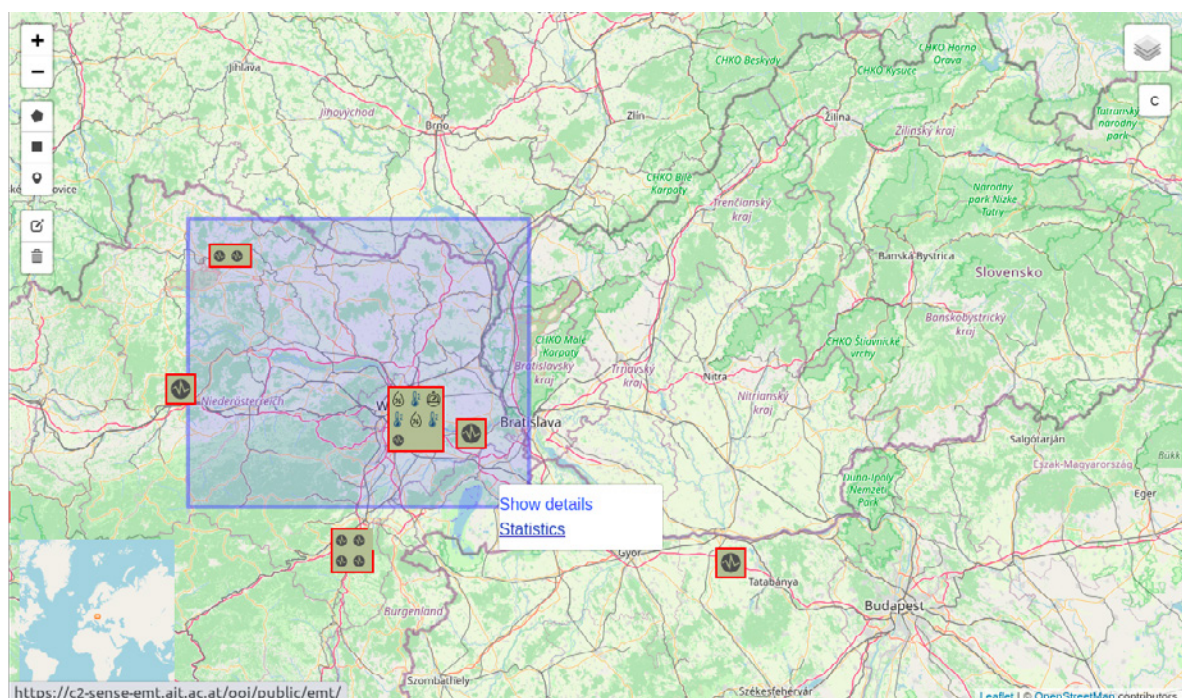
PLV and VPF to a potential outbreak, where they might otherwise have not realised its significance until later.

Additionally, all the imported data is processed and exported in real-time by assisting and supporting in this way the real-life situation of having an "airborne virus" infected person breaking the mandatory judicial confinement to which she/he has been imposed to. The output in terms of alerts, warnings and information messages is finally visualised through COP where the police authorities have a clear map-based observation showing the levels of alerts and warnings colour-coded in terms of their importance (i.e., low, medium, high).

Common Operational Picture (COP)
COP is a web-based software solution aiming to provide different kinds of visualisations by integrating external tools and data sources. The focus lies on map visualisations of georeferenced data (Figure 8). However, other types of visualisations such as graphs and tables are available (Figure 9). Moreover, messages can be included as a type of visualisation, for which there is multilingual support, allowing a more robust cooperation. COP is built to support decision-making, by integrating and displaying the most recent and relevant data from diverse sources, such as sensor data, in a birds-eye view of a situation. The visualisations are customisable to the specific needs of the users; however, it is best suited for

showing the current states and not the historical evolution of these values.

Next to that, the overview can be complemented with basic data analysis functionalities for making short-term predictions and monitoring resources for incoming data. This is achieved by the user's ability in the tool to set and configure different threshold limits for parameters of interest. The tool then automatically monitors said thresholds and raises alarm once these thresholds are violated.

The main purpose within the Spanish trial will be to gather all relevant (meaning on a strategical level) information outputted by the other involved tools and present them in a structured and consistent way that will aid decision makers with their tasks. The visualisations displayed in COP will support authorities in their decision-making process and help them use their resources more effectively.

The authorities will have access to the results generated by FACS in order to assess the possible threat potentials from different hypothetical scenarios, while results from WSMA will help the authorities to analyse real-life events. All that will be complemented with notifications, warnings and alerts from the EWS that are going to be displayed on a map in order to allow authorities to keep track of the evolving situation.
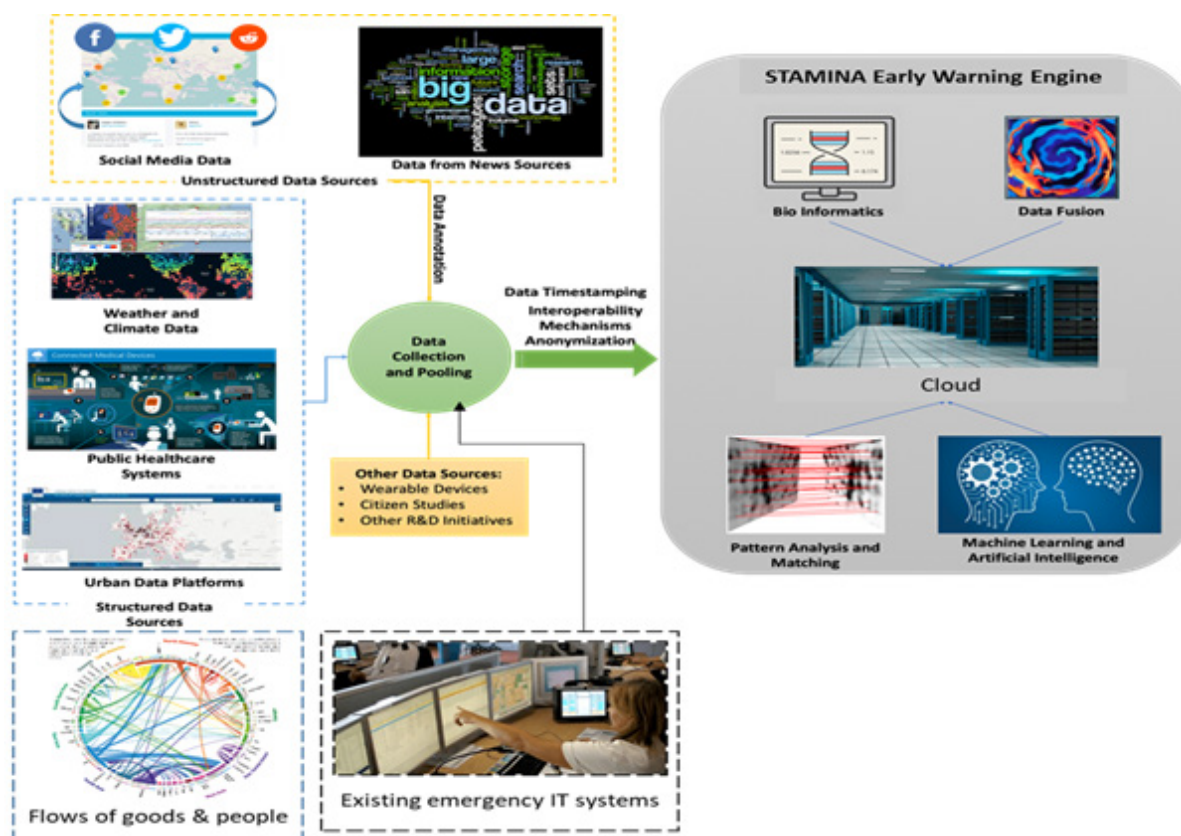
Figure 8: Map visualisation of georeferenced data.

Figure 9: Alternative visualisation option showing a graph

Discussion and Conclusions

The COVID-19 pandemic has shown that many public sector organisations were not adequately prepared for crises of that scale. LEAs have faced challenges unparalleled with anything that they had to deal with prior to the pandemic. The fast pace of change of rules, the lack of public trust, the appearance of new patterns of criminal activity were some of the challenges that LEAs faced during the pandemic. Further, they had to adapt rapidly to new ways of communication with other emergency services.

Nonetheless, the current pandemic provided an opportunity to better understand our strengths and weaknesses and therefore identify ways to improve our practices. But, have we learnt the lessons? Are we prepared for the next big crisis? What actions can we take to improve our practices? To address these questions, PLV participate in R&D activities and advocate knowledge-sharing and innovation.

Such an activity is the EU STAMINA project that offers a set of IT tools that facilitate the performance of the LEAs' functions. It is necessary to use IT tools that facilitate the organisation and management of information among the different first responders in order to be able to provide a comprehensive response to pandemic crises. Adequate communication between the administration and citizens is a fundamental factor in maintaining public safety. Having IT tools with models that define the scope and spread of the disease allow police forces to take decisions in the most effective way. Having systems that analyse data and can warn of a potentially dangerous situation allow first responders to anticipate and minimise the effects of the crisis.

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Responding to Domestic Abuse - Policing Innovations during the Covid-19 Pandemic:

Lessons from England and Wales

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Abstract

This paper, based on research funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (RCUK; Grant number ES/V00476X/1), offers a review and analysis of the different ways in which police officers (in role of domestic abuse leads) in 22 different police forces in England and Wales, endeavoured to provide optimum service delivery in relation to domestic abuse during 2020-21. The paper suggests that thinking about these DA leads as entrepreneurs offers a valuable lens through which to make sense of the range of innovative practices that were introduced and the future potential of these in responding to domestic abuse.

Keywords: Covid-19, policing domestic abuse, innovation, entrepreneurial policing.

Introduction

In offering some thoughts on how the pandemic might impact upon policing, Mawby (2020) suggested three areas in which consequences might be anticipated: the enforcement of new legislation, the use of new strategies, and the deployment of new personnel. These suggestions were made at a time of wider debate concerning the impact of the pandemic on crime itself. Mawby suggested that there would be fewer burglaries (because fewer properties were left unattended), there would be fewer thefts of/from vehicles and there would be a decline in public violence but an increase in private violence. For an evidenced analysis of the impact of social distancing on crime rates in general see Mohler et al (2020) and for a general assessment of the impact on violence see Eisner and Nivette, (2020). Other commentators went so far as to suggest that in the context of changing crime patterns the pandemic moment afforded the opportunity for criminology and criminal justice to engage in the experimental testing of theory and practices (see for example, Miller & Blumstein, 2020; Stickle & Felson, 2020) particularly in relation to routine activity theory (Cohen & Felson, 1979). Such debates aside, it is evidently the case that criminal justice professionals across the globe, like many others working in public sector support services, faced unprecedented challenges. This paper explores the nature of these challenges and the policing responses to

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them as seen through the eyes of police practitioners working within the field of domestic abuse.

The first part of the paper situates the challenges posed for those working within the field of domestic abuse against the backcloth of the wider evidence of the impact of public health responses to the pandemic, specifically the impact of lockdowns on domestic abuse. The second offers a brief overview of the methodological approach adopted by the project reported on here. Thirdly, the paper offers some findings from this research focusing on the innovations adopted by police forces in England and Wales and posits the role of the domestic abuse lead as an entrepreneur. The concluding part of this paper offers some reflections on the wins and losses associated with these innovative practices, which might be of value for other jurisdictions.

Covid, lockdowns, and domestic abuse

In relation to the work reported here, it is important to note that recorded incidents of domestic abuse have been increasing year on year in England and Wales. From 31st May 2013 to 30th June 2017 recorded incidents of domestic abuse increased by 88% (HMICFRS 2019) with the Office of National Statistics reporting another 24% increase by March 31st, 2019 (ONS 2019). In addition, it has been increasingly recognised internationally that crises of various kinds increase rates of violence against women and children (see for example, Rao, 2020, Nguyen & Rydstrom, 2018, Parkinson, 2019). Concerns that the coronavirus pandemic, and the public health directives to 'stay at home', would provoke such outcomes were expressed in early 2020 by Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka. She talked of 'a perfect storm for controlling, violent behaviour behind closed doors' and went on to name the consequences of Covid-19 isolation restrictions on domestic abuse as 'The Shadow Pandemic' (Mlambo-Ngcuka, 2020). However, the extent to which these concerns were realised and carried consequences for policing remains subject to empirical scrutiny. It is undoubtedly the case that different jurisdictions saw a rise in calls to a range of organisations for support in relation to domestic abuse during the first lockdown in 2020 (see UN Women, April 2020: Usher et al. 2020; Pfitzer et al 2020). The pandemic was certainly taking its toll on violence(s) towards women and children (see inter alia Bourgault 2021, Fraser, 2020); however, debate on the impact of the

pandemic on the work of criminal justice agencies has been more muted. Most jurisdictions seem to have reported an initial decrease in calls to the police followed by spikes in the number of calls (see for example, Peterman et al. 2020, Leonhardmair & Herbinger, 2021). The purpose of the ESRC-funded Shadow Pandemic (June 2020 – December 2021) project is to analyse the impact of lock-downs in England and Wales on the police and courts response to domestic abuse.

The ESRC Shadow Pandemic project

The project uses mixed-methods informed by the 'rapid research approach' (Vindrola-Padros, 2019). This project follows the recommendations of McNall and Foster-Fishman (2007) in engaging in data collection and analysis at the same time and sharing findings with stakeholders early in the research process (Johnson & Vindrola-Padros, 2017). An online questionnaire was distributed to all policing leads for domestic abuse in England and Wales through the office of the National Police Lead for Domestic Abuse in June 2020. This questionnaire asked respondents to reflect on the impact of the pandemic, whether policing as normal was possible, and if not what kinds of changes to practice had they introduced in order to maintain service delivery. The findings from this initial work are discussed in Walklate et.al. (2021a). Twenty-five police forces replied to this questionnaire (58% response rate) out of which 22 domestic abuse leads from different forces agreed to a further interview. At the time of writing, these respondents are being interviewed for the third time. These interviews have been conducted using Microsoft Teams (the online platform preferred by the police) during September- October 2020, January-February 2021, and May-June 2021. The methodological challenges of working in this way have been discussed in Richardson et al. (2021). This paper is primarily based on data gathered from the questionnaire and this series of interviews.

The interviewees were from a mixed group of police forces comprising urban, rural, and semi-rural forces with a mix of different demographic populations including several large metropolitan forces alongside other smaller forces. The respondents were all domestic abuse leads of different ranks (Chief Inspectors, Superintendents and Chief Superintendents). The interviews were semi-structured and lasted about an hour. They were transcribed and analysed using an adapted

form of Framework Analysis (Ritchie and Spencer, 1994) with a key focus on innovative practices.

Innovation in Responding to Domestic Abuse

Weisburd and Braga (2019) remind us that understanding innovation in any organization is neither simple nor straightforward. Moreover, in the context of policing much of the academic focus on innovative policing has been seen through the lens of a crisis in policing (especially in the United States) and particularly a crisis as perceived by those exposed to policing practices. Innovation driven in this way has resulted in a wide range of initiatives from community-based policing to technology driven system-based practices, developments which are not only evidenced in policing in the United States. However, innovation can mean different things depending on whether it is viewed as systems-based or as more consumer-based. For example, Fox and Albertson (2020) in their analysis of the value of innovation for the probation service in England and Wales, identify three different models of innovation. They observe that in some respects, because criminal justice relies upon coherence, consistency, and adherence to well-defined processes in the delivery of its mission, innovation can be contra-indicated in relation to these principles. This is particularly the case in relation to policing where there is a fundamental reliance upon a 'command and control' model of policy implementation and decision-making. From this viewpoint, it might be concluded that innovation and criminal justice constitute a contradiction in terms. However, this is not necessarily the case when faced with the complex and intertwined problems of service delivery and consumer demand, as are policing domestic abuse leads. It should be noted that little of this discussion has focused attention on the context in which a crisis in society, albeit a public health crisis, both adds to that complexity and becomes the driver for doing things differently: innovation. Thus, this wider social context created a need for innovation in and of itself.

Thinking about innovation in this way, as driven by a public health emergency rather than a crime or policing emergency, the findings from our research illustrate the wide range of proactive practices police domestic abuse leads reported. Of central importance are the ways in which they advertised that they were still 'open for business' for victims of domestic abuse (see also Walklate et al 2021a). These practices ranged from using multimedia

platforms emphasizing 'business as usual'; implementing a single point of contact for all domestic abuse support; using Facebook/online forums to reach out to victim-survivors; working with community leaders to access hard-to-reach audiences; and having a police presence in supermarkets, pharmacies and local shops, as a way of offering safe spaces for victims to report domestic abuse. In addition, some police forces were also proactive in providing technological aids (like providing Ring doorbells to high-risk victims) and in using analytics to identify high-risk victims with whom contact had been lost and to identify high-risk offenders with a view to reminding those on bail of any conditions they have to abide by. In addition, with a focus on victim safety the majority of forces in our project held regular (daily or weekly) online multi-agency risk assessment conferences to ensure swift responses to, and the development of, safety plans for high-risk victims (this particular innovation has been discussed in detail in Walklate et al 2021b). All these practices were implemented in a context in which, as lockdown took hold, the pattern of other crime related behaviour changed (as implied by Mawby, 2020). These changing crime patterns were also reported to us by the domestic abuse leads interviewed. As one commented:

> "…..because we've got that little bit of additional sort of space and capacity at the minute because we don't have things like the night time economy fully back yet….we've had a period of time where kind of some of our traditional levels of demand have dropped off a little bit, and it's enabled us to put even more focus on this [DA], which has been really good and it's giving us a more positive momentum, which we're trying to sort of keep as we're moving forward, I'm really keen that we kind of keep that focus" (Female Inspector, DA lead, urban-rural force, mixed population).

Such variations in the patterning of crime are also evidenced in the data available from the Office of National Statistics (ONS) published in May 2021 for the year ending December 2020. The practices highlighted above lend weight to the views expressed in the HMIC-FRS Report on 'The Police Response to the Coronavirus Pandemic 2020' published in April 2021, which states: Through innovation, flexibility and adaptability, forces generally successfully maximised the protection of staff while minimising the effect on public service (ibid: 2). Reflecting this observation and the data from our interviews with police domestic abuse leads, it is possible to visualise the challenges and opportunities facing them during 2020-21 in the following way.

Figure 1: Centring Domestic Abuse Leads as Entrepreneurs

This figure places the domestic abuse lead at the centre of a context in which the nature of crime in England and Wales changed during 2020. It was also a context in which widespread and significantly vocal anxieties emanating from support services on the potential impact of lockdowns, specifically on those living with violence, were also being expressed. In May 2020, the government put £76 million extra funding in place to assist support services. Hence practices were put in place (digitally and through other means of communication) to convince the public that the police remained 'open for business'. At the same time, those at the centre of the policing domestic abuse business utilised the resources available to them (including the use of frontline officers whose time was less occupied with crime related to the night-time economy for example) to respond to the needs of repeat victims and target repeat offenders, all with public protection and safety in mind.

The closure of the courts produced a backlog of cases. In March 2021, there was a backlog of 476,932 cases in the Magistrate's Courts and 56,875 in the Crown Court (HMCTS, 2021), which required renewed efforts on the part of police in terms of resources and resource allocation to try and reduce levels of victim attrition. Our interview data indicated that this changing set of demands required domestic abuse leads to be open to, and encourage, innovative practices. In particular, it

demanded that they be passionate, agile, resilient, and tenacious in delivering their task: all individual characteristics associated with the drivers for change. They also had to be entrepreneurial in securing resources to enable them to deliver change and secure an appropriate level of service for domestic abuse victims.

Domestic Abuse Leads as Entrepreneurs

Smith (2020) charts the (limited) growth and development of what he terms 'entrepreneurial policing' and in doing so suggests, "…traditionally, the term 'entrepreneur' itself lies out with the pragmatic lexicon of policing" (p 2). Moreover, whilst there has been an increasing, if marginal, interest in entrepreneurial policing since the publication of the Flanagan Report (2008), in England and Wales the police interest in this concept increased after the 2008 financial crisis and the measures of austerity that followed (Smith, 2020). Police forces in England and Wales were hit by the pandemic just as some of the worst effects of austerity measures were impacting on budgets. In 2019, there was a targeted personnel uplift of 20,000 new police recruits, colloquially referred to as Boris' Bobbies, after the Prime Minister who introduced them, the effects of which have yet to translate into fully trained policing personnel. However, the concept of entrepreneurial

policing has a presence pre-dating these issues. The work of Hobbs (1988), 'Doing the Business', in which detectives are seen to 'trade' information to secure results, stands as testimony to the intellectual heritage associated with this concept. Of course, some of this work blurs the boundaries between police entrepreneurialism as involving both legitimate and illegitimate practices. Indeed there is a rather richer vein of work excavating the illegitimate than the legitimate (see inter alia Sherman, 1974; Punch, 1996). Indeed, Smith (2020: 9) offers a very detailed and useful conceptual map of what he calls the 'policing entrepreneurial nexus' and in so doing makes the case for its value in making sense of a wide range of work associated with the policing task.

Put simply, and for the purposes of the focus of this paper, entrepreneurial policing constitutes more than the introduction of business practices into a public service. This vision of policing is, using terms borrowed from Klein et al. (2010), about understanding how police officers, occupying particular roles deploy their leverage and capabilities to deliver the task of policing. As Smith (2020) suggests, and which coheres with the understanding adopted in this paper, this kind of vision centres domestic abuse leads as agents of change who also have the *agency* to deliver on that change. Sometimes this agency is about the kinds of innovative practices listed above (delivering the same task differently) but sometimes this agency also involves securing the funding needed to do the task (a more traditional sense of entrepreneurship). In addition, this requires securing the engagement of other service providers working alongside and with the police in the delivery of services. For example, one Domestic Abuse Lead informed us:

"We're also fortunate enough to tap into a funding stream that allowed us to bring in two additional victim care officers for our xxxx, which is our commissioned Victim Support service in xxxx. Pleasingly, after a sort of succession of papers that had put together and sort of evidencing the worth and the impact, it was agreed a couple of months ago that we could recruit in one Detective Sergeant and five police staff members to basically make up that big Safeguarding Hub. But we've completed recruitment so we're certainly not up and running with our full complement yet, but we're getting there and I hope that, come late July, we should have five and then hot off the press, last week I was invited some more money in the pot from the Ministry of Justice which will allow us to recruit an

additional 3 into that hub, so one individual. It'll be on a short-term contract for now, because it's essentially two years' worth of funding and the hope will be we'll find the money to sort of funding permanently going forward" (Male, Superintendent, urban-rural force).

With another domestic abuse lead saying:

"…through the Home Office issued last year in some perpetrator cash funding for perpetrators. We applied for that funding to implement MATAC. If you've heard of that in South Yorkshire, so we used, we used some of that. We used some of that funding for and it wasn't much funding and it didn't last very long, so it was really intense, actually, but we recruited a small project team to implement MATAC in xxxxx" (Female, Superintendent, urban force).

Further, another respondent pointed to success resulting from additional funding:

"I think something we did in xxxxxx which was really beneficial was that funding came down for programs from central government that we set up a pilot for perpetrators, which we're doing in xxxx. So that's our biggest city. It's got the most we've got the most traffic in terms of domestic abuse victims and perpetrators. And what we, we put some funding into there. And so what think? The latest stats that I heard about a couple of weeks ago with that last year we managed to engage three people voluntarily with perpetrator services - in the first three months of 2021 alone, we've put 119 people into it, so we've managed to go and find the funding to do proactively target high harm perpetrators because we're a high harm force. That's what we focus on. So we've got high harm teams" (Female Superintendent, rural force).

While in each of these examples, the extra funds came from different government sources, on other occasions the importance of excavating more local opportunities came to the fore. One respondent noted:

"But yes, we've had quite a bit of precept growth and actually what happened is our Chief sniffed an opportunity to endear himself to the PCC [Police and Crime Commissioner; locally elected], I think. I put in a suggestion to the Chief about this particular growth that we've just described, and he said not only can you have it, I want you to take last year's growth and so you can actually have it straight away so you can have it now we couldn't keep up … It was kind of going

from concept to actually people starting in the space of eight weeks, you know, couldn't keep up. We're now kind of doing a hasty review now just to make sure it's still on track, but yeah, I'd say it's the speed of it was around PCC uplift" (Male, Chief Superintendent, urban-rural force).

In addition, three force areas in our study succeeded in engaging the delivery of support and legal services from an independent service provider in which at the first point of contact with a domestic abuse complainant a frontline officer could, with the permission of the complainant, pass their details on to this service provider using an app on their mobile phone.

In sum, the majority of the domestic abuse leads interviewed for this project not only approached the role and the changing demands facing them during the pandemic with a personal passion for their role and the ability to be agile and resilient in their decision-making, they were also engaging in bidding for funds and negotiation processes with other service providers (both nationally and locally) to enable optimum service delivery. This combination of having leverage and capability might well fit with a notion of social entrepreneurship as characterised by Smith (2020) and further work is needed to determine its conceptual feasibility. However, what is the case is that domestic abuse leads certainly used the space in which they found themselves to good effect and in different ways to more conventional brokerage between policing and local businesses (Brewer, 2017).

Concluding Thoughts: relevance for other jurisdictions?

Conceptualizing policing through the lens of innovation and entrepreneurship is not new. However, viewing policing in this way has been on the periphery rather than at the centre of policy concerns. In the context of policing in England and Wales, it is evident that the presence of austerity measures has been one im-

petus for reviewing policing, and indeed the delivery of the whole of the criminal justice system. The public health response to the global pandemic added a further impetus for reviewing how best to deliver policing and ensure the protection of victim-survivors. Thinking about policing service delivery in this way may have some resonance for other jurisdictions which imposed social distancing and 'stay at home' restrictions. The international evidence discussing the consequences of stay at home directives for those living with violence, especially women and children, suggests this is the case. Our research points to the pivotal role of police domestic abuse leads in charting a path through both the challenges, and opportunities of service delivery, in meeting the complex demands posed by domestic abuse during the pandemic. That role, in imagining ways to ensure safety for victims of domestic abuse (from online multi-agency risk assessment conferences to virtual messaging, to making sure that repeat offenders were warned of their behaviour), to negotiating for funding to deliver services, has not only required agile thinking and resilience but has also required the kinds of capabilities and leverage not normally associated with policing. It may be of value for other police jurisdictions facing the same challenges of increasing calls to respond to domestic abuse, to reflect upon not only the innovative practices reported here, but the vision of policing that those practices articulate. It is of course the case that different jurisdictions respond to and prioritise domestic abuse and the policing role in that process in different ways. The research reported in this paper is a platform from which further comparative learning may well be of benefit. In this respect, there is certainly more work to be done.

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Managerial and institutional issues: training and learning

Police Training in Baltimore During the Pandemic

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic presented significant challenges for police training in the United States city of Baltimore. The city's police department operates its own police academy, training both new recruits and incumbent officers. The police academy was able to quickly shift to remote learning for recruits enrolled in entry-level training. All recruit classes graduated nearly on time, but the prolonged period they spent in remote learning interfered with the trainees' ability to subsequently apply what they had learned in practical scenarios. For incumbent officers, continuing education was interrupted for four months, reducing the amount of in-service training that could be accomplished during 2020. This article recounts the police department's experience with training during the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic, beginning in March 2020.

Keywords: Training, COVID-19, Pandemic, Baltimore, USA

Background

Policing in the United States is decentralized and fragmented. There are roughly 18,000 separate law enforcement agencies[1] in the country, including about 12,500 municipal police departments and 3,000 county sheriff agencies, with the rest accounted for by special jurisdiction agencies (such as campus police or park police), state-level agencies, and federal (national) agencies (Reaves, 2011).[2] To be clear, these agencies are separate and independent, not part of any nationwide ministry or national police service. A police chief in a city or town is hired by, and reports to, elected and/or administrative officials in that city or town, and no one else. Sheriffs, since they are almost all elected, answer to the voters in their county.

The U.S. has about 750,000 sworn police personnel[3] – police officers,[4] deputy sheriffs, etc. Quick math tells

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1   The terms "police department" and "law enforcement agency" are used interchangeably in this article. This is common in U.S. terminology, especially as sheriff departments balk at being referred to as police departments. Each of the 18,000 agencies has police authority, although the breadth of their duties and the specific features of their jurisdictions vary.

2   Although this census is dated, there isn't any reason to suspect that the numbers of agencies has changed very much.

3   In the U.S., the term 'sworn' refers to personnel who have police authority, as distinguished from non-sworn or civilian staff such as analysts, dispatchers, crime lab technicians, etc.

4   In the U.S., the position title "police officer" refers to first-level sworn staff, i.e., police of the lowest rank. In other words, "officer" does not indicate an elevated rank as it might in some other countries. In virtually all U.S. law enforcement agencies, new sworn members attend a police academy and enter service at the lowest rank.

us, then, that the average sized American law enforcement agency has 42 sworn staff. In fact, the distribution of agencies by size is severely skewed toward the low end. The U.S. has a few relatively large agencies (less than 100 have 1,000 or more officers),[5] and a vast number of small ones. Half of the country's law enforcement agencies have 10 sworn members or fewer.

As one might expect, very small agencies are not capable of staffing and operating their own police academies. While many larger departments do run their own academies, there are also regional and state-level police academies that serve the needs of smaller agencies. According to the most recent census of U.S. police academies, 264 out of 681 academies were operated by individual law enforcement agencies, while 417 academies served multiple agencies and were operated at the regional or state level (Buehler, 2021).[6]

Each of the 50 states in the U.S. has some type of police training commission or other regulatory body that establishes and oversees minimum training standards in its state.[7] There are no national police training standards – none. Proposals for national standards do arise from time to time and have garnered substantial support over the past year, since the murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis and subsequent protests around the country.

Baltimore, Maryland

Baltimore is a city on the east coast of the United States, one hour north of Washington, DC and three hours south of New York City. In the early 1800s it was the 3rd largest U.S. city and in the 1960s its population almost reached 1 million. However, in the wake of de-industrialization and the growth of suburbs, most recent estimates report Baltimore's population is below 600,000 for the first time in more than a century (Knezevich, 2020).

Baltimore remains a vibrant port city with a robust tourism industry, fine dining, diverse neighbourhoods, affordable housing, and high-quality sports entertainment, museums, and parks. It is home to the world-renowned Johns Hopkins Hospital and sports apparel juggernaut Under Armour. However, its population also suffers from high rates of poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, homelessness, and substance use disorders. Perhaps most notoriously, the city is horrendously violent. Since 1990, Baltimore has recorded less than 200 murders in only one year. In 2020, the city lost 335 lives to murder, yielding a per capita murder rate of 55 per 100,000, second highest among U.S. cities and reportedly 16th in the world (Security, Justice and Peace, 2021). In the quest to reduce the city's rate of violent crime, the Baltimore Police Department (BPD) is the most visible government agency.

The Baltimore Police Department

The BPD, founded in 1857, is one of the oldest police departments in the U.S. Today it is also one of the largest police departments per capita, with roughly 2,500 sworn personnel, or 40 police officers per 10,000 residents (Maciag, 2014). Its recent history has been marked by community mistrust, division, and even resentment. In the mid-2000's, Baltimore police made more than 100,000 arrests per year – equivalent to roughly one-sixth of the city's population (Fenton and Prudente, 2020). Arrests for minor offenses such as loitering, drinking alcohol in public, urinating in public, trespassing, and disorderly conduct were commonplace. In fact, a Justice Policy Institute report published in 2005 found "more than half of Baltimore's African-American men in their 20s [were] either incarcerated or under criminal justice system supervision" (Davis, 2005). Mass arrest and incarceration were in full effect.

In the four years before widespread unrest rocked Baltimore in 2015 with burning, looting, and armed combat between police and citizens, the city paid out $11.5 million in civil judgments to more than 100 people who died or suffered broken bones or head trauma at the hands of BPD officers (Beyer, 2018). Perhaps even more damning, though, was the rampant corruption. Even before 15 officers connected to BPD's Gun Trace Task Force were indicted on a litany of federal charges related to years of theft, robbery, drug dealing, planting evidence, and falsifying charging documents, Baltimore police officers were convicted of a pay-to-play car towing scheme, drug dealing on a police station

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5   Of course, what passes for a large agency in the U.S. pales in comparison to many national police or big-city police in the rest of the world. The single largest U.S. law enforcement agency is Customs and Border Protection (part of the national-level Department of Homeland Security) with about 44,000 sworn personnel. The next largest is the New York City Police Department with 35,000 police officers. After those two, agency sizes drop off quite sharply.

6   There are also a small number of federal-level training academies that train members of federal (national) law enforcement agencies.

7   For links to training commissions in each state, see https://www.iadlest.org/post-portal.

parking lot, tipping off criminals to police activity, and committing robberies while on duty.

The tipping point in the fractious relationship between BPD and the city's majority African-American population was the death of Freddie Gray, a healthy, 26-year-old Black man from the Westside of Baltimore who suffered a fractured neck and pinched spinal cord while in the custody of Baltimore police officers (U.S. District Court, 2017). After his death, the Department of Justice launched an exhaustive civil rights investigation into BPD's practices surrounding the use of force, stops, searches, and arrests. Pursuant to this investigation, the parties entered into a consent decree in 2017 to remedy "systemic deficiencies in BPD's policies, training, supervision, and accountability structures that fail to equip officers with the tools they need to police effectively and within the bounds of the federal law" (U.S. Department of Justice, 2016). This legal action requires BPD to comply with over 400 reforms and to demonstrate the ability to sustain those reforms beyond the life of the consent decree (U.S. District Court, 2017). A primary focus of the consent decree is training Baltimore police officers according to national best practices, constitutional policing, and departmental policy and procedure as developed through a collaborative process with the Department of Justice, Baltimore City Consent Decree Monitoring Team, and community stakeholders.

Police Training in Baltimore

The Maryland Police and Correctional Training Commission (MPCTC) establishes minimum training standards for all police officers and police academies in the state. For recruit training, MPCTC mandates 240 Terminal Objectives that the curriculum must cover, with testing of each trainee on each objective. A minimum academy length of 750 hours is also mandated. Once through the academy and into their careers, incumbent officers must complete a minimum of 18 hours of approved continuing training (often called in-service training) each year, over and above time spent requalifying with firearms and other weapons. As part of continuing training, the state also specifies certain topics that must be included each year, or in some cases at least every two or three years.

The Baltimore Police Department's recruit academy substantially exceeds the state's minimum requirements. Our curriculum is 1,200 hours in length and includes extensive instruction on topics not specifically

mandated by the state, such as community policing, problem solving, procedural justice, fair and impartial policing, cultural diversity, and de-escalation. The curriculum also emphasizes the police department's own policies and procedures, which are more restrictive than prevailing law in relation to use of force, stops, searches, and arrests.

In-service training in the police department also far exceeds state minimum standards. In recent years, all officers have received at least 56 hours of annual in-person training, usually delivered in the form of three 2-day courses and a 1-day course. In addition, all officers complete a variety of short e-learning courses each year, amounting to an additional 1-2 days of in-service training. Some officers complete specialized or elective training on top of what is required for every officer.

The delivery of training within the Baltimore Police Department has undergone significant enhancements over the last several years. The number of instructors has increased and the process of selecting instructors has been strengthened. Professional curriculum developers and law instructors have been added. Facilities were dramatically upgraded when the Education & Training Section moved from a dilapidated former middle school to the campus of the University of Baltimore in May 2020.

A substantial philosophical/pedagogical shift has also taken place. Starting in 2018, it was recognized that training delivery at both the recruit and in-service levels was too instructor-centred and too dependent on lecture. A concerted effort has since been undertaken to make lessons and lesson delivery more learner-centred, more engaging, and more consistent with principles of adult learning. Instructors are now referred to as facilitators and lesson plans are not approved unless they incorporate student engagement activities. Facilitators are routinely observed and given feedback about ways to engage trainees more effectively. Though this transition is still underway, "death by PowerPoint" has largely been eliminated.

One other change is directly attributable to the Consent Decree that the City of Baltimore entered into in 2017. The Consent Decree specifies training courses that must be developed and delivered, in most cases to all sworn staff, though in some cases to personnel in specialized assignments, such as sex offense detec-

tives or internal affairs investigators. When developing courses, training staff collaborate actively with members of the Consent Decree Monitoring Team and representatives from the U.S. Department of Justice. Those parties ultimately have to approve each course before it is delivered. In addition, most courses are posted for public comment, and any comments received must be given fair consideration. Then, up to three pilot tests of new courses may be required before the course is officially certified for delivery to members of the department. It is an arduous and time-consuming process, but it has resulted in better quality lesson plans and courses.

Feedback from members of the police department about the new approaches to training has been very positive. On surveys at the end of the first 2-day in-service course developed and taught under the new model, delivered to over 2,000 sworn members in 2019, 97% of officers rated the course superior to previous training they had received from the department. Following subsequent courses, 80-90% have consistently given positive ratings to training content and to their level of engagement during the course. Similar high proportions report being confident that they will be able to apply the training in the field.

Adapting to the Pandemic

The first cases of the COVID-19 virus were confirmed in the State of Maryland on March 5, 2020, and the governor declared a state of emergency. Starting on March 10, public schools and universities began announcing temporary closures; throughout the month additional restrictions on public gatherings and non-essential businesses were imposed. On March 12, state government employees were instructed to telework if possible. On March 14, the first coronavirus case in Baltimore was confirmed; eligible city government employees began teleworking on March 18. Also on March 18, the first COVID-19 death in Maryland was reported. By the end of March, pandemic cases in the state neared 2,000, with 13 deaths. Fifteen months later, the state had recorded over 460,000 cases and over 9,500 deaths.[8]

Early in March 2020, the police academy adopted several safety measures, including frequent cleaning of

surfaces (desks, tables, gym mats), social distancing whenever possible, wearing of masks, and screening of staff and trainees when they arrived each morning (temperature checks and questioning about any symptoms they might be experiencing). At that time, there were four classes of recruits matriculating in the police academy, as noted in Table 1, plus four sections of a 2-day in-service course for all sworn personnel were being held each week. Per day, there were about 175 recruits and officers attending training.

When Baltimore's government employees were authorized to telework on March 18, and with COVID-19 cases increasing dramatically around the U.S., the police department decided that in-person training was likely to become unsafe. The decision was made to suspend all in-service training, for safety reasons and to maximize the availability of sworn officers for operational duties. The question was then how to proceed with recruit training.

Training academy staff who were technology-savvy recommended that recruit training shift to remote learning. A quick scan of available platforms suggested that Zoom was flexible, user-friendly, affordable, and, if used properly, equally as secure as other alternatives. The police department's Information Technology Section quickly secured a sufficient number of Zoom user licenses.

A significant hurdle that had to be overcome was that the state's police training commission (MPCTC) had never approved any form of e-learning or remote learning for recruit training. Existing rules required that instruction covering the mandated 240 entry-level Terminal Objectives had to be in-person. Also, testing on those objectives had to be in-person. An emergency request to waive these rules was submitted on March 19, and it was rejected. Within a day, however, wiser heads prevailed. MPCTC agreed that remote learning could be approved if a satisfactory protocol was in place to verify (1) that each recruit was actually in attendance for each lesson, and (2) that each recruit completed each test without any help from study materials, the internet, or another person. Attendance and testing integrity had to be guaranteed and would be subject to audit.

Within a day a formal protocol was developed, submitted to MPCTC, and approved. Recruits would receive their training at home, via Zoom. If they lacked

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8   Dates and data retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/
     Timeline_of_the_COVID-19_pandemic_in_Maryland and
     https://coronavirus.maryland.gov/.

Table 1. Academy Recruit Classes in Session as of March 2020.[9]

Class	Start Date	End Date	# of Recruits
2019-04	2 August, 2019	10 April, 2020	27
2019-05	21 October, 2019	12 June, 2020	20
2020-01	13 January, 2020	25 August, 2020	27
2020-02	9 March, 2020	9 October, 2020	30

a personal computer of their own, they were assigned a departmental laptop. During the training day, they were required to be visible on Zoom at all times, except when on breaks. During testing, while they took their exams on a personal or laptop computer, their departmental smartphones were positioned over their shoulder to detect any form of cheating.

Three of the recruit classes were set up for remote Zoom learning on Monday and Tuesday, March 23-24. This included assigning laptop computers as needed, instruction on how to use Zoom, and explanation of required protocols. Some remote training for the recruits began on March 24, and all three of these recruit classes were full-time on Zoom as of March 25.

The exception to this remote learning strategy was Class 2019-04. This class of recruits had only three weeks remaining until graduation, and little of their remaining course work seemed suitable for remote learning. One outside instructor (not a member of the police department) "Zoomed in" one day while team-teaching with a facilitator who was present in the classroom. Otherwise, this recruit class completed their last 15 days of the academy in-person, with in-person instruction, graduating as scheduled.

The other three recruit classes – 2019-05, 2020-01, and 2020-02 – were, of course, at different stages in the entry-level curriculum when remote learning began. Given the uncertain pandemic situation, how long each class would remain on Zoom was unknown. The approach taken was to "front-load" lessons that seemed amenable to remote learning, while delaying, as long as possible, those lessons that required in-person instruction. The latter included defensive tactics, driving, vehicle stops, and training with firearms and other weapons.

All three recruit classes had their training exclusively on Zoom for the remaining few days in March. Table 2 reports the extent of remote training for each class over the following four months (Class 2019-05 graduated in mid-June). Several factors account for the scheduling patterns that were adopted. Initially, an effort was made to move all instruction to Zoom. However, by the end of April, nearly all the remaining courses needed by Class 2019-05 required in-person instruction, and Class 2020-01 was scheduled for firearms training, driving training, and tactical-medical training. Postponing those courses would have upset the schedule for the next class in line, Class 2020-02, and would have had a domino effect on the year's following classes, since these skills courses use specialized facilities[10] and specialized instructors. Moreover, those same instructors provided ongoing training to in-service personnel, some of which is mandatory every year. The potential for a logjam before the end of 2020 was recognized, so a decision was made to proceed with the skills training for 2020-01 in May.

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9 Recruit classes that started in 2019 operated on a 34-38 week schedule. Beginning in 2020 (unrelated to the pandemic), the schedule was trimmed to 30 weeks.

10 The driving facility is operated by the state and used by many academies and agencies. As a result, weeks are reserved far in advance. Had our academy not used our weeks when they had been reserved, we ran the risk of not being able to reschedule the required training in a timely manner, creating delays in graduation and further deviating from a standardized training calendar.

Table 2. Extent of Remote Training for Recruits

Month	Percent of Training Hours Delivered Remotely		
	Class 2019-05	**Class 2020-01**	**Class 2020-02**
April 2020	86%	95%	100%
May 2020	14%	4%	90%
June 2020	0%	21%	28%
July 2020	n/a	27%*	0%

* Due to a two-week COVID-19 quarantine of the entire class.

By the beginning of June 2020, the intention was to return more recruit training to in-person instruction, creating a better balance between in-person and remote training. Academy staff had become more adept at enforcing COVID safety measures and everyone, including trainees, had become more accustomed to masks and social distancing. At that point, three additional factors, two virus-related and one not, influenced scheduling. One was that the academy's non-sworn law instructors continued to telework. As a result, even when recruits were physically at the police academy, they continued to receive most of their law courses via remote learning, with the instructors "Zooming in." This practice continued into 2021.

Another factor that periodically affected scheduling was positive COVID tests among trainees, staff, or their close friends and family members. The most common occurrence was for a trainee to report that someone close to them had COVID symptoms or a positive test. This would automatically result in the trainee being sent home (quarantined) for a period of time, and if the trainee had recently been in close contact with other trainees, they often had to be quarantined as well, until further COVID testing could be completed. As a result, it was not unusual to have one or a few trainees taking lessons at home via Zoom, while the rest of their class was in-person at the academy. Occasionally, an entire class had to be quarantined for a week or two, in which case all instruction shifted to Zoom until they could return to in-person training.

A third factor affected scheduling in early June – protests following the murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Most of the academy instructors are sworn officers, and they were assigned to protest duties nearly every night for about two weeks. Baltimore's protests were overwhelmingly peaceful, but evidence from other cities showed that the police department had to be prepared each night. For the first week, re-

mote Zoom instruction was provided by a skeleton crew of civilian academy staff, mainly law instructors. During the second week some sworn instructors were able to assist, often working overtime.

The police department started three more recruit classes in 2020. Class 2020-03 spent much of its first six weeks on Zoom, but starting with Class 2020-04 a more concerted effort was made to balance remote and in-person instruction right from the start of the academy. In the second half of 2020, the revised scheduling pattern for the first ten weeks was to have 2-3 days each week on Zoom, and 2-3 days in person at the academy. Then, during the remaining twenty weeks of the curriculum, almost all instruction was in-person. Now that the pandemic has largely subsided in the U.S. (as of mid-2021), and vaccines are widely available, recruit training is once again entirely in-person, barring exigent circumstances such as a widespread quarantine or severe weather.

When in-person recruit training partially resumed at the end of April 2020, and then became more and more frequent over the following months and into 2021, social distancing presented a significant complication. Class 2020-02 started with 35 recruits, finishing with 30. That number exceeded what could safely be taught in a single classroom. Consequently, for much of their training, recruits had to be split into two groups, using two classrooms. While occasionally a single instructor would be present in one room and simultaneously Zooming into the other room, the more common solution was for the instructor to teach the course twice. This solved the problem of social distancing, but strained the academy's resources by doubling each instructor's workload. This has continued to be the case, since subsequent class sizes have been even larger.

As previously mentioned, continuing education (in-service training) was suspended in March 2020. The

2-day course for all sworn personnel that had been in progress at that time was resumed in July, with social distancing and other safety measures in place. Because of smaller class sizes, it took the remainder of 2020 and a few weeks into 2021 to deliver the course to all 2,200+ sworn staff who were required to complete it.

Two other 2-day in-service courses had been planned for 2020. Due to lost time, it was necessary to postpone one course into 2021. This was disappointing, since all three planned in-service courses fulfilled requirements of the Consent Decree Monitoring Plan. A further challenge arose with the third in-service course on responding to calls for behavioral health crises and sexual assault. The class on behavioral health, largely taught by clinicians and other experts from outside the police department, had to be taught via Zoom because the instructors or the organizations they represented were not willing to teach the class in-person. Further complicating the situation, however, a curriculum had already been obtained for that day's lessons from a national organization, but they refused to allow it to be taught remotely. As a result, a new curriculum for Day 1 of the 2-day course had to be developed from scratch.

Despite these challenges, the officers favorably reviewed the 2-day in-service course, and the academy demonstrated to the Monitoring Team and Department of Justice that remote training could be effective. In addition, this was the first time the police department had authorized officers to sit at home, while on duty, to complete required training. While many officers had some initial challenges with the Zoom technology, in the end they were all able to complete the training and pass the test. On surveys conducted at the end of the course, 76% of officers said they preferred being trained remotely, while only 10% said they preferred training in-person.

Observations and Lessons

A familiar phrase holds that "necessity is the mother of invention." We did not really invent anything, but the pandemic did force us to make some changes we probably would not have made otherwise. Here are some lessons we think we learned.

1. Perhaps most importantly, we found that "in-person" is not the only way police training can be accomplished. Up to one-third of our 30-week entry-level curriculum was delivered remotely, resulting in recruits successfully passing their testing on the courses they took via Zoom. A 2-day in-service course was also delivered remotely, and successfully, to 2,200+ sworn officers.

2. By the same token, there is a limit on the extent to which in-person police training can be replaced. One obvious limiting factor is hands-on skills training. While it might be possible to incorporate some forms of simulation training via remote delivery, it seems inevitable that almost all training on self-defence, arrest and control, weapons, emergency driving, and various tactical situations (vehicle stops, person stops, evidence collection, crowd control, room clearing, active shooter, etc.) will have to be delivered in-person.

3. Another limiting factor is the need to integrate classroom learning with practical application. During the first few months of the pandemic, recruits were almost exclusively at home receiving remote instruction. To accomplish this, classroom instruction was "front loaded" while everything else was delayed. Then, when recruits returned to some in-person training after 4-8 weeks of mostly remote instruction, they had significant difficulty performing correctly in practical scenarios. To some extent they had forgotten what they had learned about the law, department policy, interviewing, etc., and in other cases they just couldn't apply their knowledge and make good decisions when confronted with complex situations involving victims, suspects, disputes, suspicious situations, or crime scenes.

4. A third limiting factor is that having recruits "at a distance" for an extended period made supervision and socialization more difficult. Recruits in our academy are police department employees, on the payroll, and as such are held to standards of conduct. The 30 weeks of the academy are also a time during which recruits are socialized to the best traditions of the police profession and the specific mission and values of the Baltimore Police Department. Accomplishing these objectives via Zoom was more challenging than doing it in-person.

5. Our response to these limitations of remote learning, once it became permissible to reinstitute in-person training, was to revise scheduling so that recruits had at least some training at the police academy every week. As pandemic-related restrictions were further relaxed, we slowly shifted recruit training back to in-person, with particular emphasis on timely integration of classroom learning with

practical application, starting at the very beginning of the 30-week curriculum. As expected, this has resulted in recruits performing much better in practical scenarios.

6. The recruits complained about having so much of their training on Zoom. This might seem to contradict the experience with in-service training, where the vast majority of current officers gave remote training positive reviews. The explanation, we think, is that it was a novelty for current officers, both as a way to receive training and as an opportunity to be paid to stay home. For recruits, the novelty wore off after weeks and weeks of remote training. Also, recruits were beginning a brand-new experience when they entered the police academy. Eight hours a day at home on Zoom was not the experience they expected or wanted.

7. We did learn that remote training created some challenges for both trainees and instructors. Inevitably, technical difficulties popped up from time to time – WiFi interruptions, videos that wouldn't stream well over Zoom, logon troubles, etc. Often it was necessary to have one academy instructor "running the Zoom" while another instructor facilitated the lesson. Instructors well-versed in engaging recruits inside the classroom didn't automatically become adept at engaging them on Zoom. Similarly, some recruits did not participate as well or learn as much in the remote environment as they would have in-person. Academy specialists in adult learning and curriculum design did provide both recruits and facilitators with professional development and coaching, helping them become more comfortable with remote learning, but all involved were happier when they could convene in-person at the academy.

8. Finally, earlier we mentioned the high level of collaboration involved in developing courses under the Consent Decree. During the pandemic, another lesson we learned was that we could maintain and even expand collaboration despite not being able to have face-to-face meetings with the Monitoring Team, Department of Justice representatives, and community stakeholders. As in many other spheres of government and commerce, Zoom meetings became the norm, and ultimately more people were able to participate and contribute than had been the case pre-pandemic.

Conclusion

The COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 interrupted in-service police training in Baltimore and forced the police academy to make a number of adjustments to recruit training. Banished to Zoom, the learning process for recruits was upended and the link between knowledge acquisition (knowing) and application (doing) was significantly stretched if not broken. In the end, remedial work brought the recruit training to a successful conclusion, and a substantial amount of in-service training was accomplished as well. But the pandemic, including social distancing requirements, put considerable strain on training academy staff and resources that would be difficult to sustain over a long period.

We think that the reforms and enhancements that had been underway since 2018 contributed to the academy's ability to adapt quickly and perform effectively under pressure when the pandemic arrived in March 2020. The federal consent decree in place in Baltimore puts a lot of burdens on the police department, but it has also been an engine for positive change in policies, systems, and resources. That infrastructure, though still being developed, helped us keep our footing when we suddenly had to start delivering training in a completely different way.

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Towards Common Values and Culture -

Challenges and Solutions in Developing the Basic Training of the European Border and Coast Standing Corps Category 1 in the Pandemic Crisis

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Abstract

The development of the Basic Training for the European Border and Coast Guard Standing Corps was in the final stage when the pandemic crises hit all of us dramatically in early 2020, and forced to find alternative solutions in carrying out the training in new circumstances. Urgent actions were needed to re-design the implementation of the Basic Training, as the situation at the external borders of the EU did not allow to compromise the rapid establishment of the Standing Corps. The good practices and lessons learnt will certainly play a key role when establishing the "new normal" in training and education. Furthermore, the leading role of the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) in shaping common values and culture of the new formation is emphasized. The conference bulletin paper presents pragmatic oriented approach and explores the training and education solutions chosen at the time when the pandemic hit this activity and forced to change the training methods immediately and significantly.

Keywords: Frontex; European Border and Coast Guard Standing Corps; common core curriculum

Introduction

Establishment of the European Border and Coast Guard Standing Corps has been recently the most visible change in the European approach in the management of the EU external borders. The political decision of the EU to have its own law enforcement officers for border protection and migration management and return-related tasks, has manifested a paradigm shift, also in the field of training and education. The European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) has a leading role in capacity building, for example in terms of providing training for the members of the European Border and Coast Guard Standing Corps category 1.

The European Border and Coast Guard Regulation (Regulation (EU) 2019/1896) gives the legal basis for the statutory staff of the standing corps. The European Border and Coast Guard standing corps are composed of four categories. However, only cat. 1 is statutory staff

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of the Agency, that is recruited and undergoes the basic training provided by Frontex. The staff of all other categories is seconded from the Member States. All categories may work together in the same Frontex operation(s).

The basic training for the very first iteration of the standing corps cat. 1 was planned to take place in early 2020 as six months long contact learning, but the COVID-19 restrictions forced to change the plans. The situation at the external borders did not allow significant delays nor cancellation of the training. As a solution, the training was restructured to start with online phase, to be followed later with a contact learning phase. Considering that building up the values and common working culture among the basic training students starts on a day one of the training, the solution taken was related to further exploration of methods allowing to achieve value-based learning outcomes in the online learning environment. As the result some specific actions were essential to facilitate the challenge of establishing common working culture during the online phase.

Learning of values and working culture in the law enforcement context

Common values and proper working culture within the law enforcement are demonstrated every day on the duty, and outside of the duty hours. Values are what guide an agency and its employees (McCartney & Parent, 2015), and facilitate the ethical behaviour. Thus, the awareness and understanding of the core values of the agency by an individual plays a vital role in fulfilling the daily tasks. Taking into consideration that the law enforcement agencies have differing values depending on their function, they build up the unique character of agency. The values create united community that shares the same believes. Agreed by all members, the imparted values are concentrated throughout the agency and become a part of the agency's organisational culture. (McCartney & Parent, 2015).

Following Alvesson (2002), there is an enormous variation in the definitions of the organisational culture. Alvesson (Ibid.) continues by citing Borowsky (1994) and Ortner (1984) saying that the word 'culture' has no fixed or broadly agreed meaning even in anthropology. Alvesson (2002) uses the term 'organizational culture' as an overall concept for a way of thinking, taking

an interest in cultural and symbolic phenomena. He (Alvesson, 2002) highlights the importance of symbols, rituals, myths, stories and legends, as well as interpretation of events, ideas, and experiences the groups are involved, and they live with. Moreover, Alvesson includes in the organisational culture the values and assumptions about the social reality (Ibid.).

Schein (2003) defines culture as a *"pattern of basic assumptions that the group has invented, discovered or developed in learning to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration"* (p.30). Moreover, if it has worked well enough, the assumptions will be considered as valid ones, as granted, and therefore to be taught to the newcomers as a correct way to perceive, think and feel (Schein, 2003). Following Schein (2003), we develop the patterns of perceiving, thinking and feeling that tend to hang together and provide meaning to our daily events. In this regard the basic training is like a "melting pot" – during the basic training all students, coming with very diverse professional and personal backgrounds, also from different national ranks and positions, should find a common pattern of basic assumptions by accumulating solutions to various problems they face, in managing both their external tasks in the learning context, and internal tasks of organising themselves to work and learn with each other (Schein, 2003). Common language and conceptual system, a common set of rules for relating to the environment and each other support the learning process (Schein, 2003). Therefore, the way of delivering the basic training by sharing and presenting the organisational cultural matters and common values is a key factor building the individual ability to operate in a unitary manner in demanding circumstances.

The recent (2021) study of Pedagogical Conditions of Organizational Culture Formation of Future Border Guard Officers (Shumovetska et al. 2021), explored the effectiveness of pedagogical conditions of organizational culture formation of future border guard officers in Ukraine, by observing the experimental (n=120) and control (n=118) groups of cadets within their border guard academy. According to the study (Ibid.), the organizational culture of border guard officers is conditioned by the specifics of their professional activities on border protection and differs from the cultures of others by the content of its structural components. Based on the study results, the formation of organizational culture to future border guard officers is effective when training intensifies value-motivational

attitude, promotes the development of teamwork skills and communication interaction, and develops organizational and managerial decision-making and leadership skills. Moreover, within the organizational culture of a border guard officer, the components of *personal* (value orientations, needs and interests), *cognitive* (knowledge and main requirements of organisational culture, mission of the agency) and *behavioural* (professional ability ensuring the effectiveness of the activity), were found essential. (Shumovetska et al. 2021.)

In the law enforcement environment building up the organisational culture starts from the basic training, which shall develop ethically sustainable attitude and respect for fundamental rights in all conditions. As stipulated in the International Human Rights Standards for the Law Enforcement, the law enforcement officials shall respect and protect the human dignity and maintain and uphold the human rights of all persons. (UN-HCR, the International Human Rights Standards for the Law Enforcement). It may be said that basic training is the moment of incorporating of one's personal values to the agency's core values to understand the specificity of law enforcement duties. The training provider and all persons involved in the learning process have a huge responsibility in shaping the values and organisational culture. Promoting correct values remains equal obligation of both individuals and institutions.

Learning of working culture related matters and values in the context of first iteration of the European Standing Corps had a specific character, as students were already possessing law enforcement experience from their national authorities, and therefore were already having internalised national habits and approaches. Furthermore, the group was presenting rich European dimension in terms of national cultures and habits, still having the strong presence of each student's personal values. Undoubtedly, the variety of experiences and organisational culture differ depending on countries and authorities they come from. According to Schein (2003), the training may fail if the students return to the cultures that do not support concepts, values or assumptions learnt in the respective new training attended.

Common culture based on well-defined values becomes of special importance in critical periods such as COVID-19 pandemic, or significant moments when the new organisational formation is being established. The development and delivery period of the Europe-an Border and Coast Guard Standing Corps Cat. 1 Basic Training was challenged by both mentioned situations.

As the training gathered over 250 students, coming from different countries and with different backgrounds, the group development was expected to be challenging. According to Tuckman (1965) the group development can be divided in stages, namely stages of forming, storming, norming, and performing. In the *forming* stage the group is established, and the tasks are allocated, the establishment of dependent relationships with the leaders, other group members, and pre-existing standards takes place. In the second phase, *storming*, the members are expressing their ideas, opinions, and viewpoints, which may differ from the ones from the others, and if not managed well, it may lead to confrontation inside of the group. According to Tuckman (1965) this stage is *"characterized by conflict and polarization around interpersonal issues" (p.396)*. In the next stage, *norming*, the group has overcome the resistance, the feeling belonging to the group has increased, the working practices have been harmonised, rules and values are taking place, and people are finding their places in the group. Finally, in the performing stage, the roles are becoming functional, and the group is committed and focusing on the task. (Tuckman 1965.) It is worth to mention that Tuckman later developed two more phases, namely adjourning, and transforming.

European Standing Corps training development

The European Border and Coast Guard Regulation (Regulation (EU) 2019/1896) is highlighting the importance of training based on common culture and values, and respect of fundamental rights. Furthermore, according to the Regulation (Art. 62.3), the Agency shall ensure that standing corps training follows the common core curricula.

The common core curricula, namely the Common Core Curricula for Border and Coast Guard Basic Training – CCC Basic (Frontex, 2017), and Mid-level Management Training in the EU – CCC ML (Frontex, 2019) are stipulated by the EU legislation, and they have been setting the obligatory border and coast guard training standards within the EU Member States and Schengen Associated Countries already since the establishment of the Frontex Agency. Being integrated into national training

systems for border and coast guards in the EU Member States and Schengen Associated Countries, the common core curricula are promoting high ethical values, respect for fundamental rights, ensuring the achievement of operational job-competences and facilitating the operational cooperation among national and EU authorities working on the borders. Interoperability is a necessary component for efficient cooperation thus, it is also important part of education of European border and coast guard. Utilising the Agency's curricula as a basis for the standing corps training development ensures that the core competences and training provided for the new formation are in harmony with the ones provided by the Member States to the national border and coast guards.

The Basic Training Programme for the European Border and Coast Guard Standing Corps Cat. 1 was developed between October 2019 and February 2020 in close cooperation with the Member States. The Programme provides the members of the standing corps with the necessary competences to operate in a unitary manner in any operational area, generating added value and fully respecting fundamental rights in all actions. One of the main objectives of the basic training is to develop a common border and coast guard culture and values as well as harmonised practices for the members of the standing corps cat. 1 who come from different law enforcement services of the EU, with a rich variety of professional backgrounds. The European dimension of standing corps cat. 1 training is enlarged by legal and ethical Agency's responsibilities to ensure that standing corps officers are well trained and fully prepared to perform tasks with executive powers and use of force (Articles 55.7, 82 and Annex V of the Regulation (EU) 2019/1896).

Originally the Basic Training Programme was designed as a full six months operational, highly practical contact learning. However, due to the pandemic, Frontex was in an urgent need to achieve (part of) the objectives via the online environment. Considering the situation at the external borders, cancelling, or significantly delaying the training was not an option.

Due to the pandemic the start of the first iteration of the Basic Training for the Standing Corps was re-scheduled from May 2020 to 14 June 2020. The basic train-ing was redesigned into a three months online phase (14 June – 4 September 2020) and a three months of contact phase (14 September - 5 December 2020). The contact phase was run in parallel in two border guard training centres in Poland. The entire basic training was delivered by trainers from the Member States, staff of other EU Agencies as well as staff of Frontex. All together 252 standing corps officers graduated from the first iteration of the Basic Training.

The training solutions chosen at the time when the pandemic hit this activity were under unique pressure of high expectations related to the establishment of the new European formation. It seems relatively easy to arrange knowledge-based training and learning in the online environment, however, teaching, learning, and building up a common culture, internalising the common values utilising such an approach is still subject of educational research. Considering the newly established standing corps a priority was given to learn to ensure the fundamental rights in all circumstances, to create the feeling of being together and united with the other members in an online learning environment, to build up trust and capacity for interoperability of the first ever uniformed service of the EU.

As mentioned, the six-month long operational training was divided into three months of online and three months of contact phase. Nearly all knowledge and cognitive skills-based learning from each of Basic Training Programme modules were transferred to the online environment. Consequently, the practical skills, with some exceptions, were left to the contact phase. Such solution influenced among the others the assessment of the basic training, as numerous practical skills such as swimming, shooting or first aid could be only assessed during the contact phase. Separating the knowledge from the training of skills had pros and cons. On one hand, sometimes the time between the knowledge and the actual skills training was relatively long and therefore some refreshing lessons were needed on the contact learning phase. On the other hand, knowledge-wise the students were fully prepared for the skills training from the day one of the contact learning phase. The online part of basic training was built in Moodle platform, taking the advantage of the basic features of the software.

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Specific solutions for online learning phase

Several solutions were developed to achieve the learning outcomes related to physical training, value-based matters and team building related aims during the online learning phase.

The online part included a specific **physical training component** aiming to prepare students for the physically demanding contact learning phase and to balance the difference between two phases to possible minimum. The physical training part was accompanied by manual, instructional videos, and self-assessments cycles. The self-assessment reports were monitored by Frontex. The physical training was aligned for the purpose to maintain the physical condition at least on the entry level from the recruitment process and if possible, to develop further. Due to the pandemic related restrictions, all exercises were designed to be doable at home or outdoors.

Trainers on duty system. As it was seen crucial to provide the students with the experience of having a 'living person behind the screen', a trainer on duty system was established. It offered a quick and well-structured response system for students' questions. Each student was allowed and encouraged to send questions to the trainers either via the student group leader or individually. The trainers on duty provided the answers with a very short notice – in practice nearly 24/7 availability of trainers was provided. Furthermore, the trainers on duty had an immediate capability to provide extra online sessions on students' request, when needed. This option was used several times, and it proved to be efficient way to respond on ad-hoc needs addressed by the students or identified by the trainers.

The trainers were representing nearly all Member States. Due to their national duties and the COVID-19 influence, trainers were rotating, and the back-up was needed, which sometimes caused challenges in coordination. However, engaging operational staff from the external borders of the EU as trainers increased the credibility of the training, ensured the European dimension of the training, and made sessions interesting. It happened that sometimes trainers answered students' questions during their own duties directly from the field. Undoubtedly, a great job was done by all the trainers involved in terms of presenting excellent example of cooperation and interoperability for the students.

Student group leaders' concept was introduced already during the online phase and it continued during the contact learning phase. The students were organised in fourteen groups, with the student group leader in each group. The special attention was put to keep the gender, geographical and law enforcement-related balance in each group. The student group leader was rotated monthly, and participated in the weekly briefings with project manager, module coordinators and core trainers of the week, on behalf of the group.

What is important, the student group leaders met their groups separately online daily. The group leaders received valuable experience from leading a multinational group online, and the members became familiar of being commanded and coordinated in international law enforcement environment. All student group leaders made a great job in establishing and maintaining the encouraging, supportive, and respectful atmosphere in their groups. The born of the great group spirit was very evident and visible for everyone involved.

In addition to the information management via group leaders, each student was always allowed to contact trainers and other staff also personally, if necessary. Furthermore, each group had Frontex coordinator assigned. Lots of online group working tasks were given during lessons. The group work was coordinated and reported by the student group leader. The aim was to prepare the students to work together, to highlight the importance of growing the team spirit. Additionally, sharing good practices and experience from national service took place, the students were already helping each other (as it was reported in feedback), and getting prepared to meet the challenges together – a slogan "together we can make it" became very familiar for everyone involved.

The main challenge however was devoted to reaching value-based learning outcomes in the online environment, to establish the European border and coast guard community virtually.

Dedicated sessions for the values and culture were organised according to the training programme. As much as possible the case studies and role-playing scenarios were utilised to encourage active approach in solving situations that may cause ethical dilemmas. The online discussions were aimed to provide the support in handling such challenges by constructive thinking how to quickly analyse and resolve potential

moral conflict. The sessions resulted in fruitful debates among the first generation of standing corps on values and common European border and coast guard culture; encouraging emails and lots of online discussions followed; feedback after the module completion confirmed that such sessions were needed and highly appreciated.

Weekly briefings, group leader coaching, dedicated introductory sessions for the upcoming module, feedback collection system, trainers' coordination, group tasks, etc. are the examples of dedicated tasks undertaken during the online phase of basic training. The common culture, shared values and feeling of being united does not come automatically, as granted. It must be planned, it must be a visible aim, and the learning methods must support its achievement, it must be taken into account in all training, and the delivery has to be monitored and taken the care of at every step. That was the approach during the online phase applied by strong cooperation and shared responsibility for successful training process.

All the entities involved in the training delivery were fully engaged during the three months of online phase: from the top management to the staff responsible for supporting online learning. National trainers, being experienced in implementing the common core curriculum at the national level, shared now the common values and the EU border guard culture with the new standing corps officers. Common European border and coast guard culture and the attitude built on respect of fundamental rights trained with each edition of the common core curriculum, paid off at that time of basic training delivery. The community of border and coast guards under the umbrella of the Agency was ready on duty proving the real picture of cooperation and ethical standards.

Contact Phase

Following the Tuckman's (1965) model of group development, *"forming–storming–norming–performing"*, the training designers' aim was that at least the initial stages of the group development has taken place already during the online phase, to be continued in the contact phase.

Evidently the goal was reached, as the result of the online phase was that when the contact phase started,

and 252 students met face to face for the first time, they were not strangers anymore. They had common understanding of the aimed values, and the leadership model functioned very well. During the contact learning phase, the pandemic hit the training again, and strict measures had to be implemented in both training centres. At that moment the cooperation, mutual trust and common spirit learnt already during the online phase, worked. The standing corps community stayed united. The cooperation between students and trainers remained very fruitful. During the contact learning phase, the training was conducted in two training centres, but even despite the physical distance between two training groups they act and behaved as one.

Due to national restrictions, the contact learning phase training had to be re-organised and the schedules for both training centres were changed many times, also due to the introduced travel ban and problems with trainers travelling. Numerous activities were conducted in simulated environment and several field visits were cancelled. The broadcasting sessions were provided for those in isolation. Nevertheless, the cooperation, great teamwork and high-level interoperability, and continuous support of all involved entities, including host authorities, allowed to reach successful graduation moment.

Concluding remarks

The Common Core Curriculum for Basic Training in the EU provides the solid foundation on which the Basic Training for the European Border and Coast Guard Standing Corps Cat. 1 was developed. The core competences on common values, respect of fundamental rights, cooperation and interoperability are integrated into Basic Training of Standing Corps. Furthermore, deep involvement of national trainers, trainers from other Agencies and Frontex staff gave the excellent example of interoperability and cooperation in practice. That made conducive atmosphere to build up the common culture, to understand and promote values. Somehow, it provides the proof of constant need to have human factor engagement, instead of using the technology only, when aiming to reach value-based results in online environment. It must be admitted that although it was highly demanding time from the perspective of all entities involved, it was rewarded by feeling of success.

Looking from the perspective of organisational culture, the environment of students (and trainers) was composed of civil and law enforcement cultures from various countries and national services cultures. Besides, various, sometimes very strong organisational cultures from professional background of students have had influenced. The European common border and coast culture must find its own place upon that, by individual understanding of European duty for the common safety and security with full respect of fundamental rights. The basic training is the right moment to establish and internalise the common European border and coast culture on an individual and organisational levels within the standing corps learning.

The gained experience showed that reaching value-based learning outcomes in the online environment is possible till a certain extent. It required much more than turning the contact learning methods into the online ones, the way of thinking needed to be changed. High engagement and motivation of all stakeholders was of crucial importance in reaching the success.

The very first training of the newly established law enforcement formation is often perceived as return on expectations, in terms of what successful training delivers to key stakeholders, to which degree their expectations have been covered. Results defined as the combination of the organisational purpose and mission, mean in government or military organization, accomplishing the mission within the resources allocated. However, seen from the broad and long-term perspective, the results are created through the culmination of countless efforts of people, departments, and environmental factors. Their visibility may take time. Leading indicators help to bridge the gap between individual initiatives and efforts, and organizational results (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2021). In case of law enforcement, the expectations are always very high (on each side: students – society – trainers – authority). The necessary guaranty of high expectation fulfilment is ethical code of conduct based on values and organisational culture.

The officers of the first standing corps iterations have been deployed from January 2021. They are on the EU borders, in Frontex HQ and in some other training centres supporting the delivery of the next iterations of Basic Training. Based on the collected and analysed feedback, and everyday duty reports it can be said that the methods applied, and the approach taken worked: common values and culture are shaped and promoted every day!

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Challenges for Police Training after COVID-19:

Seeing the crisis as a chance

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic has shown how vulnerable the world is and posed unprecedented challenges to almost every part of society including the police. While the scope of research within the police on the impact of COVID-19 has been on police officers and their stress levels, their mental health, demands, and coping resources as well as the potential impacts of police legitimacy, the impact on police training due to COVID-19 has been a minor topic of research. COVID-19 and its consequences on police training illustrate a lack of digital preparation, equipment, and infrastructure, as well as a multitude of other challenges, which lie ahead of the police training. Among them are a demographic change combined with a divergent family educational background of the future police recruits, a new generation of police recruits (Generation Z) linked to a necessary new style of leadership, and the possible damage of the police reputation because of popular cases related to extremism and racism (e.g., public loss of legitimacy and acceptance). Furthermore, continuous new challenges can be found in the daily police work (e.g., cybercrime, complexity of operations), which affect police training as well. Lastly, there is the question of how the police force is willing to face, manage, and overcome these challenges after the Covid-19 pandemic to be prepared for the future. The challenges and solution approach will primarily focus on Bavarian police training but can easily be transferred to almost any police training in Europe and even in some aspects to the German dual educational system.

Keywords: police training, challenges, digitalisation, COVID-19

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has shaken the whole world to its foundations and has affected almost every part of society. Only two months after the outbreak of COVID 19 was confirmed worldwide in March 2020, United Nations Secretary-General Guterres (2020) declared that the coronavirus disease was "the most challenging crisis we [the world] have faced since the Second World War". Soon after, articles were published on the impact of COVID-19 on numerous aspects of public life (e.g., economy, education) including police work. While the focus of research within the police on the impact of COVID-19 has been on police officers and their stress levels, their mental health, demands, and coping re-

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sources (Frenkel et al., 2021; Stogner, Miller & McLean, 2020), as well as the potential impacts of police legitimacy (Jones, 2020), the impact on police training due to COVID-19 (e.g., Koerner & Staller, 2020) has been a minor topic of research. This circumstance is interesting, because even before COVID-19, the landscape of police training and education had been changing (Baylis & Matczak, 2019) and had been gaining more attention again (Bartkowiak-Théron, 2019). Reasons for this process of transformation of police training were challenges that were not as disastrous as the ones which the COVID-19 pandemic brought along, but those challenges were considered to be permanent and would affect significant aspects of police training and education and police work in general. Although COVID-19 caused negative effects of unparalleled magnitude (e.g. economy lockdown, school closures), some fields are thriving under the new circumstances (above all digitalisation). In addition, the times of pandemic crises required decision-making, which had to be quick, bold and sometimes unorthodox. Therefore, the article aims to identify the (future) key challenges for police training and outlines an outlook on current challenges that police training is going to face, based on the experiences and associated changes that were implemented in reaction to the pandemic but also for reasons beyond this particular challenge.

The Bavarian police training

The Bavarian police training has the ambition to be modern and to prepare police trainees in the best possible way (Polizei Bayern, 2020). Therefore, police training has to anticipate future challenges for police work, on the one hand, and prepare and equip itself for upcoming challenges, on the other hand. Before discussing and analysing the main future challenges, we will have to take a closer look at the principles of Bavarian police training.

In 2021, around 3.800 police trainees are attending the Bavarian police training at six different locations throughout Bavaria. The Bavarian police training consists of about 5.000 lessons (including two internship periods at local police stations) in two and a half years and is based on the three pillars: a) professional competence, b) action competence and c) social skills.

These different competences are represented by twenty subjects of great variety, including law (e.g., police

law, traffic law or penal law), practical training (e.g., weapon handling, self-defence, or administrative procedures) and personal/social skills (e.g., police ethics, political education and current affairs, or communication and conflict management). There are four main topics that will structure all lessons: patrol duty, traffic police work, crime fighting and working in a police station with a total of 32 interdisciplinary modular units that include 92 scenarios such as road traffic accidents, domestic violence or driving under influence. The idea behind those interdisciplinary modular units is to ensure that all police trainees achieve certainty in action and confidence in their own competences based on a) theoretical knowledge on one specific topic and b) simulation-based trainings to practise a standard course of action. Once they have completed police training, police trainees have various opportunities such as joining the uniformed police, the riot police or qualify for the higher education program (diploma course of the Bavarian police).

Challenges for police training

In recent years, the Bavarian police training has repeatedly been declared the most attractive employer for pupils by the Trendence institute (Bayerische Polizei, 2020). To stay attractive and get the best possible police trainees, the Bavarian police training has to permanently adapt its curriculum, its organisation as well as learning and practice methods. Therefore, the Bavarian police training should recognise and embrace the following five key challenges (see Figure 1). First, all five challenges will be described briefly. Secondly, the presumed consequences for police training of every challenge will be outlined. Thirdly, possible approaches to meet these challenges will be presented (some of those ideas are already implemented into the training programme).

Demographic change
One of the biggest challenges Europe has to face is the demographic change, i.e., the decline of its population[2] (England & Azzopardi-Muscat, 2017). Although a decline in population growth may not necessarily be a negative phenomenon in itself, as Bongaarts (2016) points out; nevertheless, it entails several challenges, e.g., the shrinking of the working-age population with

2 Europe is the only region worldwide expecting their population to be in decline by 2050 (England & Azzopardi-Muscat, 2017; United Nation, 2019).

Figure 1: The five key challenges for Bavarian police training (Source: author's own illustration)
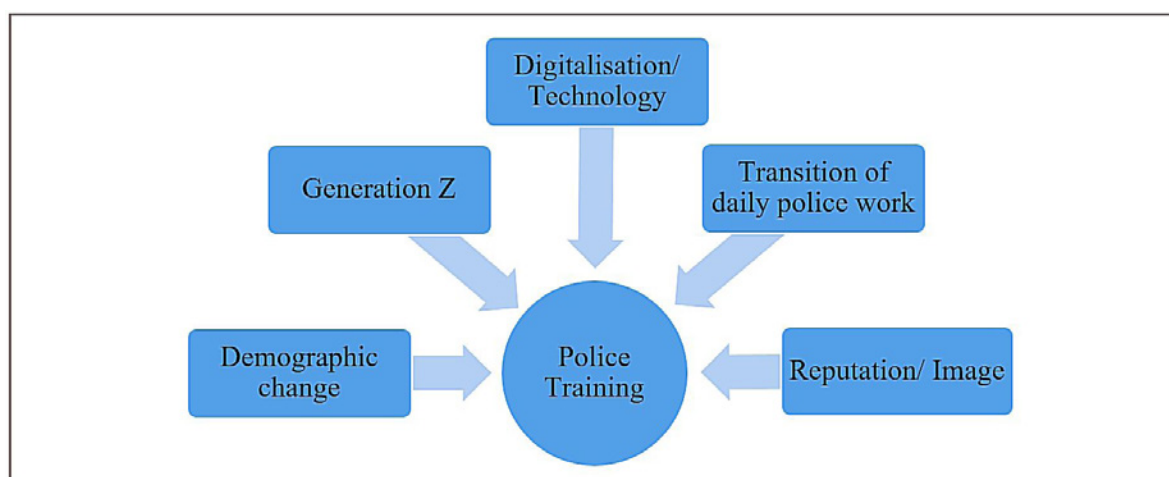
an ageing population at the same time. That means, on the one hand the population is becoming older, and, on the other hand the number of children and young people (aged 0-19) is projected to decrease (European Commission, 2020). Consequently, the decreasing number of potential applicants for police training will be a major challenge. Furthermore, Bavarian police has to compete with prestigious global companies such as BMW, Siemens, Adidas, Audi, as well as with Federal Police (Trendence, 2019). Chambers et al. (1998) stated already more than twenty years ago that there is a "war of talent", which will intensify over the years. Nowadays, the world is in the midst of transitioning from *the old reality* to *the new reality* (cf. Beechler & Woodward, 2009; Landry, Schweyer & Whullans, 2018). That means, while in the past people needed companies and therefore had to accept their requirements and conditions (*old reality*), today (*new reality*) it is quite often the other way around. Companies often need people and therefore, they must accept the requirements and conditions of potential employees (e.g., work-life-balance, flexible work schedule, training facilities). Besides the fact that the general number of applicants for police training will decrease (see figure 2), meaning that the applicant-ratio[3], respectively, will decrease, the academic level of the applicants will decline as well, or rather is already declining due to the smaller pool of qualified candidates. A team from one of the most renowned research institutes for education in Germany (Autoren-

gruppe Bildungsberichterstattung, 2020) announced last year, that the number of graduates with higher education entrance qualification is stagnant or might even decrease. The same is to say for the general certificate of secondary education. Moreover, the number of school dropouts is increasing.

Furthermore, it is a fact that more than half of the adult population in Germany are obese (Statis, 2019) and the same trend can be seen among adolescents (Schienkiewitz et al., 2018). As a result will probably be some long-term effects on physical performance, especially since most children and adolescents were physically inactive during the COVID-19 pandemic (Ten Velde et al., 2021). These effects will be noticeable in police training as well. This is important to keep in mind, because physical fitness is a key part of police training and for the work as a police officer later on (Fuchs & Muff, 2021).

As pointed out before, the consequences of the demographic change (and there are more) will be quite challenging for police training. The following list shows how the Bavarian police training is trying to handle the difficult demographic circumstances in order to convince the best graduates from secondary school to join the police force:

- 40 special recruitment counsellors
- tailored social media content (twitter, facebook, instagram)
- internships are being offered grade 9 and higher
- career website

3   The number of applications is not only decreasing because of the demographic change, but also because of other factors, e.g., the current public image of the police (as will be mentioned later on). In the last years, the application-ratio was at an average of 8:1 (eight applicants for one apprenticeship training position), but for the recruitment in March 2022 there has already been an application-ratio drop of 6:1.

Figure 2: Actual and prognostic number of police trainees from 09/2019 until 09/2025 (own illustration)
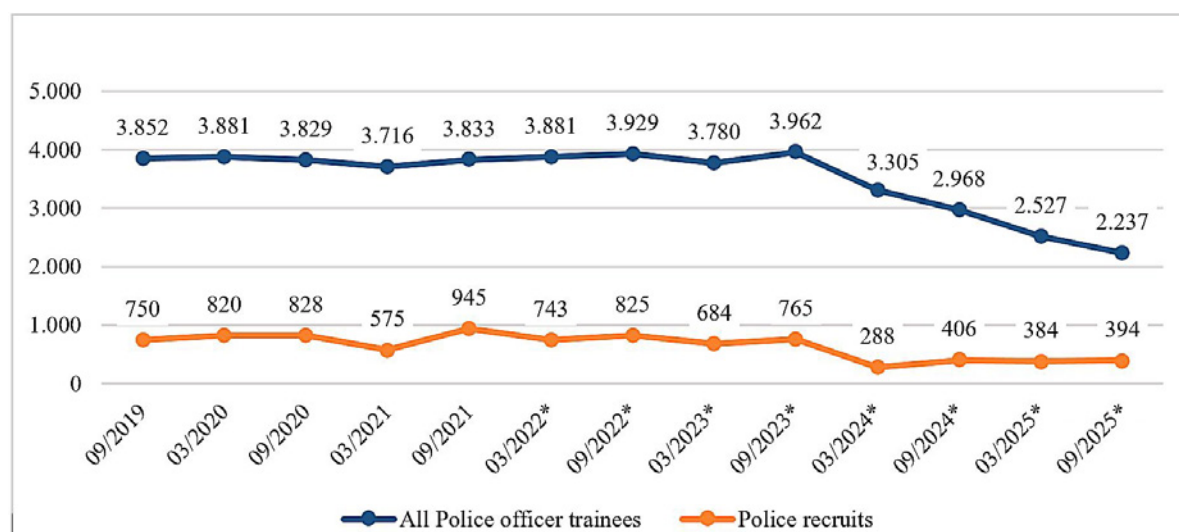
- tailored advertising campaigns for potential young police officers (since 2013) and for IT-specialists (since 2018)
- video advertising running in over 40 cinemas and on YouTube

Although the Bavarian Police is already trying to win potential police officers in several different ways, the Bavarian police must try to convince more applicants with migration background, not only to be an adequate reflection of society, but also in regard of the multiple diverse communities. Additionally, the Bavarian Police should try to increase their percentage of female applicants (approx. 30% - 35%). Moreover, it might be helpful to revise and adapt the assessment test and its requirements regarding all test sections, namely German (language proficiency), basic skills (e.g., logical reasoning), sports skills, group discussion and an interview.

Generation Z

Very closely linked to the demographic change is the issue of Generation[4] Z. The term *Generation Z* (Gen Z) classifies people who were born between 1995 and 2010 (Seemiller & Grace, 2017), succeeding Generation Y (Millennials) and followed by Generation Alpha (McCrindle, 2014). According to this definition, the oldest member of Generation Z is 26 years old and the youngest is, or is turning, 11 years old in 2021. From this follows that the Generation Z are and will be the majority amongst police trainees for the next 10 to 15 years

and therefore their needs and demands will affect police training significantly. To gain an understanding of Generation Z, this chapter provides an overview of their learning characteristics. Gen Z is the first generation who grew up in a fully digitalised world and whose world was shaped by the internet (Seemiller & Grace, 2016). Furthermore, computers, smartphones, social media and constant connectivity are part of their lifestyle (Moore, Jones & Frazier, 2017). Because of this, Prensky (2001) introduced the term "Digital Natives[5]" to illustrate the natural way of interaction with technology and the fluent use of it. Along with the label "Digital Natives", there is the prevailing assumption that Gen Z possesses inherent tech- and web-savviness (Hargittai, 2010). In contrary to this assumption, a variety of research studies (e.g., Jones & Cross, 2009; Kennedy & Fox, 2013; Margaryan, Littlejohn, & Vojt, 2011) show that members of Gen Z (and also Gen Y) are far less proficient in using technology than generally assumed. Although they use some tools more actively, their use of technology and knowledge is limited in terms of range and nature (Margayan & Littlejohn, 2008). Therefore, it can be stated,

"…though learners in this generation have only experienced a digital connected world, they are not capable of dealing with modern technologies in the way which is often ascribed to them" (Kirschner & De Bruyckere, 2017, p.140).

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4   Generation is defined "as groups of individuals born during the same time period who experience a similar cultural context and, in turn, create the culture" (Campell et al., 2015, p. 324).

5   Originally, Prensky (2001) generated the term "Digital Natives" for the Millennials (Generation Y), hence Gen Z is called "Digital Natives 2.0" as well.

Nonetheless, the widespread use of smartphones, computers and unlimited access to the internet has a major impact on learning styles (Moore, Jones & Frazier, 2017) in combination with new learning environments. Seemiller & Grace (2016) describe the learning style of Gen Z as students who prefer independent and self-paced learning. Even though they (generally) prefer intrapersonal (solitary) learning by means of multiple online opportunities (e.g., completing an online module, or watching an instructional video), they are still open to collaborative group work. Furthermore, they see their teacher or instructor, respectively, as a learning facilitator who helps them developing relevant and hands-on skills and provides constant feedback. Other characteristics of Gen Z are that they collect and synthesise information superficially rather than by checking a single source of validation (Dede, 2005), they are said to have a short attention span (Shatto & Erwin, 2016) and a (non-) ability to multitask (Amez & Baert, 2020; Kirschner & De Bruyckere, 2017). Above all, their potential copy-and-paste attitude (Comas, Sureda, & Urbina, 2006) seems to be dangerous because it could result in a tendency to plagiarism, and, maybe even more importantly, in trusting and using wrong information (fake news) due to their less distinctive competence to evaluate information critically, as recently shown in a report by the OECD (2021). The study from Hasebrink, Hölig & Wunderlich (2021) shows that more than half of the adolescents between 14-17 years do not feel the need to inform themselves on news and current events using journalistic content, but instead they use non-journalistic information sources (e.g., influencer) to shape their own opinion. However, it is important to keep in mind that the description of a generation (in this case Gen Z) is only a generalisation of distinct characteristics in relation to selected traits (e.g., learning style, behaviour) and that they are not valid for every member of Gen Z.

As mentioned before, Gen Z is driven by a different learning style and social practices than previous generations; they embrace new opportunities brought to them by digitalisation and changing learning environments. Therefore, police training and its teachers must adapt their teaching styles and forms. The first changes have already been made in Bavarian police training, a process that was accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic. According to the expectations and needs of the police trainees, the first classrooms were equipped with digital interactive Whiteboards (IWBs) and digital devices (tablet computer, smartphones) were provid-

ed for the trainees as well as for the teaching staff in December 2019. Due to the new technical opportunities, but above all due to the pandemic, a transition from traditional training to remote learning had begun to take place. Along with the digital equipment, new kinds of multimodal learning (auditive and visual learning) have emerged in response to the needs of the *new* police trainees. However, even though police training has started to adapt its learning environment and teaching style, there is still great room for development. In addition to greater variety of teaching and learning methods, e.g., the concept of blended learning or flipped classroom, respectively, and the incorporation of intrapersonal learning into class and group work (Semiller & Grace, 2016), there is a need for new learning styles (mobile learning, video-based learning). Furthermore, it is assumed that above all the implementation of gamification will help to motivate the police trainees and result in high commitment, the facilitation of deep understanding and enhanced cognitive and skill-based outcomes, as several studies have shown (Beavis, 2017; Wilson et al., 2009). Verifying the truth of information and news is a core task of police work. Therefore, it is and will be important to support police trainees to extract answers from multiple sources of information on the one hand, and to strengthen their political knowledge and competence to evaluate information critically, on the other (Bråten, Braasch, & Salmerón, 2020), as the Bavarian police training does by including subjects like political education and current affairs into their curriculum. All these changes are only possible if teachers and trainers will be prepared and equipped for those tasks. Therefore, extensive trainings are needed in terms of teaching style (edutainment, use of digital devices), methodological variety and the way feedback and learning opportunities are given to police trainees.

Digitalisation

Unlike most of the other challenges, digitalisation will not only pose a major challenge to police training in the future, but it already has been an important topic for the last five to ten years. The COVID-19 pandemic has shown that the Bavarian police training was not ready to face this challenge adequately in the beginning. Hence, the quality of learning in police training suffered noticeably in the beginning of the pandemic, as shown in figure 3. However, the COVID-19 pandemic helped to fuel the engine of the digital transformational process, because it showed where the strengths and weaknesses of police training lie in regard to digital-

Figure 3: Development of learning quality after introducing digital devices and LMS during COVID-19 (own illustration)
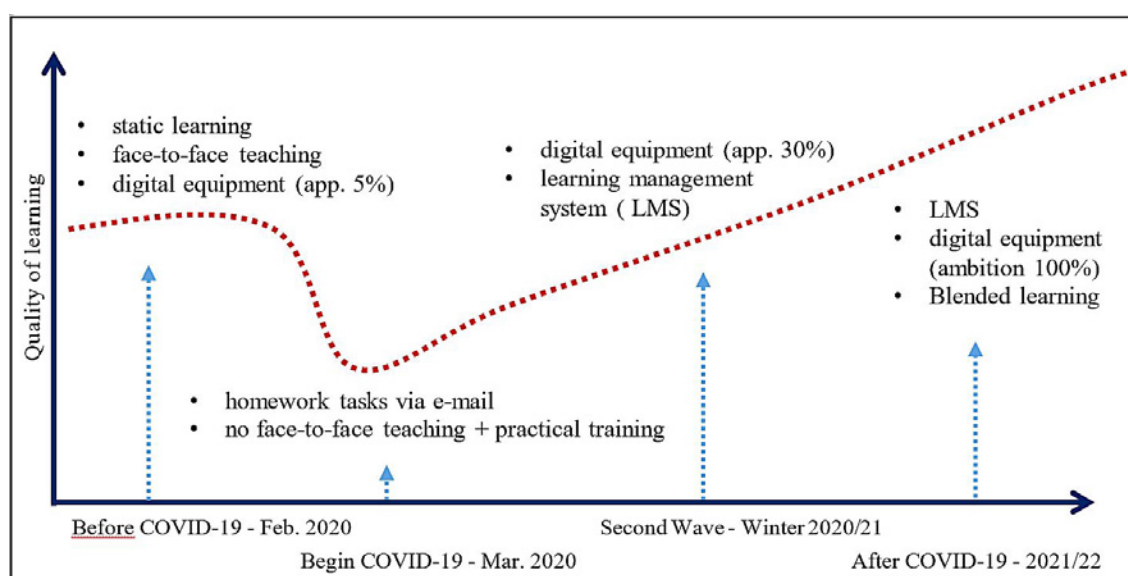
isation. In the further course of the pandemic, it became apparent that the Bavarian police training was able to take the pandemic as a chance because the Bavarian riot police[6] already had a vision and a ready to implement concept on how to digitise police training. The basic aim of digitising police training is to use the potential of learners and teachers, as well as learning content and settings to increase both the effectiveness and efficiency of police training. The four key factors that have contributed to using COVID-19 as a chance in regard to digitalisation of police training are outlined below.

The basis of digitalisation of Bavarian police training is a media-educational concept (*key factor 1*), which contains and connects all-important aspects of digitalisation. It aims to make learning in a highly complex police environment as effective and sustainable as possible and focuses on the objectives of the basic police training and further education. This means that the digitalisation of police training should help young police trainees to develop their skills from the beginning of police training and, in the long run, prepare them for their daily work at a police station. Therefore, digital devices and technical equipment (*key factor 2*) are indispensable. Already in December 2019, one project unit was equipped with IWBs in every classroom and in May 2020, all members of the teaching staff and each police trainee of this particular unit received a tablet-comput-

er (convertible) and a smartphone. Besides the fact that the pandemic made it obvious, that adequate digital equipment is necessary for a modern police training, internal evaluations conducted by the author showed as well that using digital devices had a positive impact on the performances of the police trainees from the project unit (Fuchs, 2020). The police trainees of the project unit stated that the lessons were more varied, the interdisciplinary understanding was better and on an emotional and motivational level they were more committed to learning. Moreover, the digital devices do not only serve as a learning medium and provide new didactic-methodical elements for lesson planning (e.g., blended learning, gamification), but above all, they represent an operational tool. Therefore, the handling is taught in simulation-based practice classes as well because tablet-computers as well as smartphones are the same devices that the police trainees will have to work with when they are on duty once they have graduated. Additionally, these technologically skilled graduates can act as multipliers for their colleagues who have less experience with these digital devices. Therefore, Bavarian police training will equip all 160 classrooms with IWBs by the end of 2021 and all police teachers and police trainees will receive personalised tablet-computers and smartphones by March 2022. While digital devices are obviously essential for modern police training, there is also the need for an interactive learning platform/ learning management system (LMS) (*key factor 3*). In general, an LMS can be described as a "framework that handles all aspects of the learning

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6   In Bavaria, the riot police is responsible for police training and further education, besides their task as a riot unit.

process" (Watson & Watson, 2007, p.28), including following functionalities (Coates, James & Baldwin, 2005):

- asynchronous and synchronous communication (e.g., email, chat, forum)
- content development and delivery in different formats (e.g., documents, video, links)
- formative and summative assessment (e.g., multiple-choice testing, submission)
- class and user management (e.g., course registration, administration).

Although, the Bavarian police has had its own LMS within the police network since 2013, until the COVID-19 pandemic it was used only sporadically for some online courses for advanced training. Furthermore, the Bavarian police used a web-based LMS for their training programme for top athletes (70-80 police trainees), who complete their police training in five instead of two and a half years. When all training facilities were closed for several weeks in March 2020, a working web-based LMS had to be implemented within two weeks to provide the learning materials for the police trainees. Apart from optimising the web-based LMS, the LMS within the police network was refined and extended in the months past and was officially (re-)launched in March 2021. Now the Bavarian police training is using its intranet-based LMS, which provides

- standardised learning material (e.g., lecture notes, slide shows, homework assignments, video tutorials)
- a database that provides learning material for all teachers at every training location
- interactive learning objects, e.g., modular units, multiple choice tests, polls
- support for teachers, students, and administrators

Once all police units are equipped with digital devices (roll-out is starting this year), the Bavarian police training will be able to share non-confidential as well as confidential learning and teaching material. This will be a huge gain, since currently there are many restrictions regarding confidential material due to web security issues. As a result, the Bavarian police training will be able to provide their complete training content via LMS for in-class teaching as well as distance and hybrid learning models. In combination with the digital devices the LMS should generate both an active and interdisciplinary teaching and learning style regarding remote learning, but, above all, also for in-class lessons or practical trainings. Moreover, an interactive LMS is expected to help strengthen police trainees' self-learning skills, which will lay the foundation for efficient

self-management and lifelong learning throughout their police careers

As Kendal & Stacey (2002) point out, the way teachers approach the use of digital devices has major consequences for the effectiveness of its use in the classroom. Accordingly, the lack of training options for the teaching staff is one of the key reasons, why digital devices have not reached their full potential in classrooms (Camilleri & Camilleri, 2017; Oigara & Ferguson, 2020) yet. Therefore, further training and constant coaching for teachers and instructors, but also for police trainees, are *key factor 4* for a successful digital transformation of police training. That means, firstly, that every police trainee is being introduced to the use of digital devices and on learning with digital media. Secondly, every member of the teaching staff is getting the opportunity to attend a basic media educational course on the use of the LMS, in addition to a training on the use of the digital devices (IWB, tablet-computer). By June 2021, more than 20 (online) training courses have already been offered, with a participation of approx. 200 police teachers and trainers.

The digital transformation of police training is an ongoing process (e.g., revising of the teaching material, developing new learning formats) and new technologies constantly offer additional tools and functionalities to support teachers and leaners; still, one should keep in mind that the focus should always be on the different needs and requirements of each individual (Stephanidis et al., 2019). Therefore, it is not enough to buy digital devices and provide learning tools and systems. Instead, all these four key factors must consider and equally developed from the beginning and throughout the process, to make the digital transformation of police training as well as in any other form of education successful (figure 4).

Transition of daily police work

The 21st century has so far seen many changes in crime and security environment all over the world. Apart from long-known external threats such as terrorism and mass movements of refugees as a result of persecution, violence, poverty or climate change (Ransley & Mazerolle, 2009), *new* forms of crimes have emerged in the last ten to twenty years, such as environmental crime, cybercrime (Matthews, 2020) and CBRN[7]-threats (Benolli, Guidotti & Bisogni, 2021). Above all, the cases of cybercrime have been constantly increasing in the last

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7   CBRN = Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear

Figure 4: The four key factors in a successful digitisation process (own illustration)
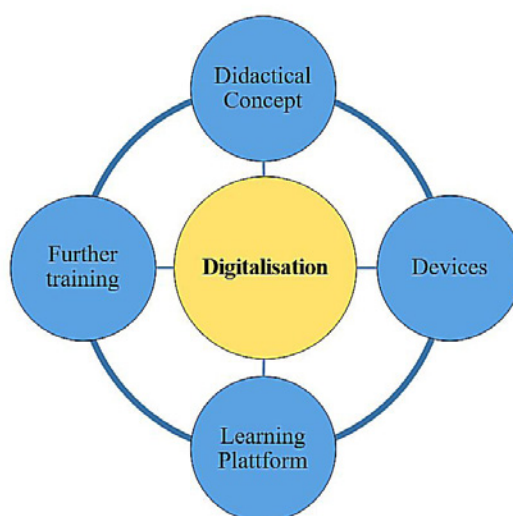
years, as figure 4 shows (Federal Criminal Police Office, 2015[8], 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021). Since there is still no standard definition of cybercrime, the classification of cybercrime by Grabosky (2007) appears helpful for a basic understanding: cybercrime is roughly classified in a) the computer is used as the instrument of crime, and b) the computer is the target of the crime.

Furthermore, the police nowadays have to play a greater role in dealing with entrenched social problems and anti-social behaviour (Ransley & Mazerolle, 2009). Even though the traditional forms of police work (e.g., street crime, property crime, drug crime and violence) are still the focus of police training, the rise of technology has changed the range of police work (Ransley & Mazerolle, 2009). Accordingly, police training has to be aware of these changes and has to consider them. Hereafter it will be shown how the Bavarian police training adapts its training content to the new challenges. However, it must be noted that regular police training will not be able to fully cover all new technologies such as artificial intelligence, big data applications or information and surveillance technologies and, respectively, all new security issues and new forms of crime that have emerged. Nevertheless, police training must educate police trainees in those fields and lay the foundation for an understanding of information and communication technology (ICT) that they can build on once they have graduated. Therefore, the Bavarian police adjusts

its curriculum every six months (according to the experiences of the police force) and implements current topics, if necessary. Over the last two years, several new topics were added, including new technologies such as "body-cams", "drones" and new elements of cybercrime. As described in chapter 2, the concept of the Bavarian police training is interdisciplinary and modular, so that new topics such as commodities fraud, cyber bullying or ATM tampering are part of a specific modular unit and are taught through different subjects. For example, the unit "Cybercrime – Commodities Fraud and Cyber Bullying" is taught in theory in criminology and law as well as in IT classes, on the one hand, and practised in simulation-based training on the other[9]. The Bavarian police is convinced that this type of teaching and learning represents the most promising approach on teaching practical and theoretical skills at the same time. Furthermore, from this year on, trainees must prove their capability in using their digital devices when faced with new technologies and crime topics during their final exam. However, the Bavarian police training needs to embed particular digital competence areas even more firmly into the curriculum (cf. Vuorikari et al., 2016), such as:

- information and data literacy (e.g., searching, managing and evaluating data),

- communication and collaboration (e.g., interacting and collaborating through digital technologies)

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8   Data has been collected with the PKS system (Police Crime Statistics) since 2014 therefore previous cybercrime data is not comparable. (Federal Criminal Police Office, 2015).

9   To be able to react in time for changes concerning crimes and technologies, the Bavarian police training has several departments that design and implement sample cases for simulation-based training.

Figure 5: Cases of Cybercrime in Germany from 2014 to 2020 (own illustration)
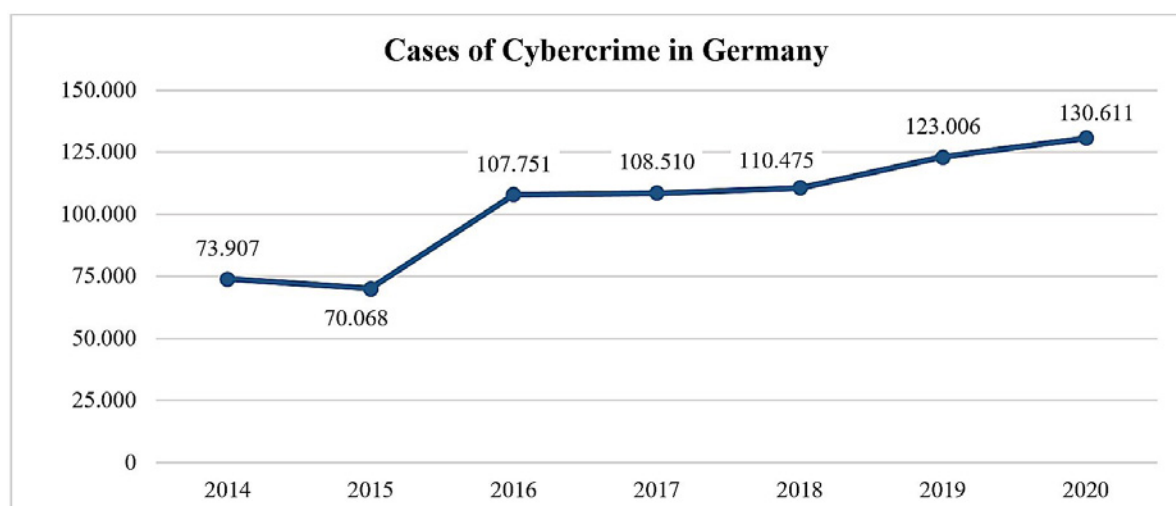
- digital content creation (integrating digital content, copyright, programming),
- cybersecurity (e.g., protecting devices as well as personal data and privacy) and
- (digital) problem solving (solving technical problems, identifying digital competence gaps).

In addition to keeping the training curriculum up to date concerning new crime topics, there are new skills required not only for police trainees, but for the teaching staff as well. In order to meet the needs of police personnel regarding skills and knowledge necessary to deal effectively with current (cyber) crime issues, the Bavarian centre for continuing education offers several courses e.g., in the field of cybercrime and other new types of crime. To respond to permanent changes in daily police work in general, the centre conducts 850 seminars per year. Of course, COVID-19 forced them to switch to online seminars as well; therefore, there is an opportunity now to permanently expand their range, offering blended learning or e-learning units, in order to enable members of the teaching staff to continuously read up on new crime topics on their own.

Reputation and public image of police

The previous four challenges are external factors to whose effects police training has to react and adapt in order to guarantee a modern police training and to remain an attractive employer. The challenge that lies in the reputation and public image of the police force, on the other hand, is largely affected by themselves. Nevertheless, the public's perception of law-enforcement agencies, especially police organisations, has signifi-

cant influence not only on the popularity of the police as an institution, but also on the attractiveness of the police as an employer and therefore on the recruiting for new trainees (Wilson et al., 2010). However, even though, the public image of the police force can have such powerful effects, it is important to keep in mind that the public's perception is shaped through three different narratives (Alpert, Dunham & Stroshine. (2015):

- First of all, by the media and entertainment industry (internationally: e.g., Bad Boys, CSI, Law & Order, and nationally: e.g. Tatort, Polizeiruf 110 and also documentaries),
- secondly, by print media, social networks, and news programs (news media) and
- thirdly, by the police itself through social media and its own media appearance.

However, in recent months several cases of police violence as well as cases of extremism and racism in police forces worldwide have widely damaged the image and the reputation of the police in general. Especially the deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and Jacob Blake in the USA (Williams & Toldson 2020), of Cédric Chouviat in France (BBC, 2020), who all died at the hands of police officers, the beating of Michel Zecler in France (Onishi, 2020), or the discovery of chat groups with right-wing extremist content in German police units, which became public in 2020 (Sehl, 2021), have defined the narrative on the German police in recent times. There has been an ongoing discussion on whether there is structural racism inside the German police force (Abdul-Rahman et al., 2020). According to a survey done by the European Commission (2021a),

Figure 6: Trust-level of the German police from autumn 2016 until spring 2021 (own illustration based from the European Commission, 2021a)
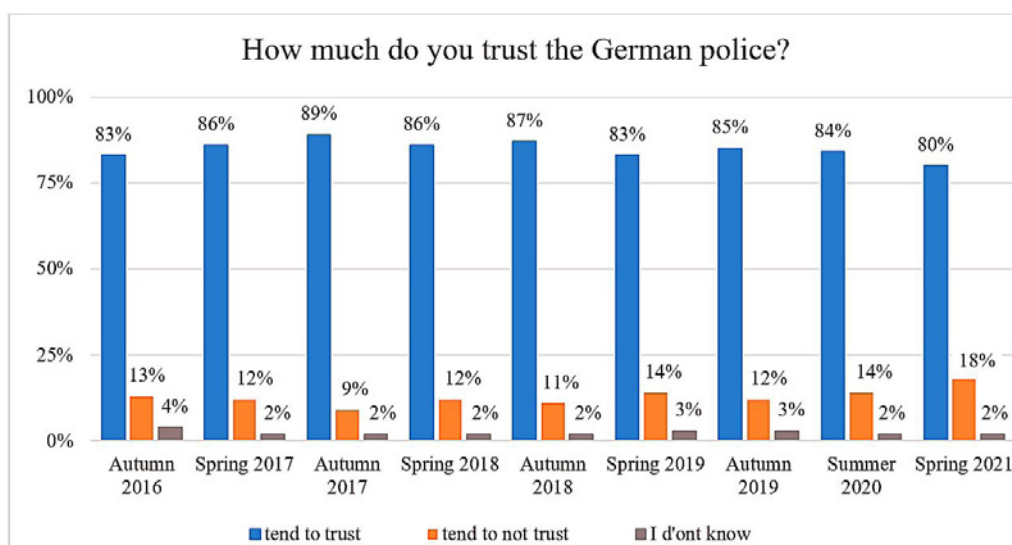
80% of the population in Germany still trust the German police. However, compared to the last five years, the level of trust in the German police has reached an all-time low in 2021[10] (European Commission, 2021a), as shown in Figure 5. Taking this downwards trend into consideration, some high-ranking police officers like the President of the Federal Criminal Police Office is worrying about a general loss of trust in the police and therefore a loss of legitimacy and acceptance by the public (Norddeutscher Rundfunk, 2020).

To regain the trust of the people, two substantial adjustments are necessary (cf. Hiller, 2020):

A) Rethinking police work and the public image associated with it. That means, firstly, that especially high-ranking police officers from all law-enforcement agencies and politicians must be willing to analyse systemic problems, approach structural change and communicate results and findings proactively, and secondly, stop the *code of silence*.

B) Setting *new* priorities in police training, above all in the area of personality development, in order to change the culture of the police from the inside.

The following part describes shortly, what actions are being taken by the Bavarian police training to strengthen the personality development based on liberal-dem-

ocratic values and ends in an outlook on additional actions that should be taken in the future. As described in Chapter 2, Bavarian police training is based on three pillars: professional competence, action competence and social skills. Above all, subjects such as political education and current affairs, communication and conflict management as well as police ethics – those three subjects combined account for 12.7% of all teaching units and are part of the social skills aspect of the training – have aim to support and shape the personal development of the young police trainees, for example in terms of democratic resilience[11]. More precisely, the Bavarian police training teaches an understanding and an awareness of following topics:

- democratic and human rights-oriented attitudes and behaviour
- the problem areas of racism, anti-Semitism and hate crime
- the importance of structured exchange between police training, police practice and civil society in order to combat right-wing extremism and racism via project days and cross-cultural exchanges, e.g., with the Jewish or Muslim community.

Furthermore, in January 2020 all Bavarian police trainees (N = 2.602) were asked about their understanding of democracy (Muff & Fuchs, 2020). The results were

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10 Comparing the different countries in the EURO-area (73%) and in the non-Euro area (57%) the trust-level in the German police remains widely above average (European Commission, 2021b).

11 The Bavarian police training understands democratic resilience as "the ability of an individual, (…) a community [and an organisation] to withstand, cope, adapt (…) from stresses and shocks such as violence [and] conflict (…) without compromising long-term development (European Commission, 2016, p.2).

widely positive and corroborate the results of Krott, Krott & Zeitner (2018) that police training has a positive impact on the decreasing xenophobic attitudes.

In addition to the efforts taken regarding the police trainees' democratic resilience, from this year on, the personnel in charge as well as all members of the teaching staff must also take part in further training courses on topics such as extremism and racism, conducted by the Head of the Bavarian Riot police.

In the near future, it would be desirable to make police training more diverse in terms of the personnel in charge to a) impact the culture of the organisation positively and b) serve as role models, on the one hand, and show that everyone has equal opportunity to climb the ranks within the police service, on the other hand.

Beyond that, potential recruits still consider the Bavarian police as being backward and hierarchical (Trendence, 2019). Therefore, it could be helpful, as Wilson et al. (2010) point out, to reduce unnecessary bureaucracy (continuing the way of digitalisation), to communicate goals effectively and to be fair and transparent in all aspects of policy. This includes openness to and cooperation with research institutions even on sensitive issues such as racism and ethnic profiling.

Conclusion

The COVID-19-pandemic will hopefully be a once-in-a-lifetime event and puts almost everything into perspective, including structures, mechanisms, and rules within police training. After the training facilities had to close down, there was an immense pressure to keep the police training running as well as possible. Suddenly, police trainees were asked to use their private computers and laptops, work outside the training facilities and participate in online classes and video conferences. Police teachers now had to work from home, creating videos and modular learning units on a learning management system and discover new ways of teaching (blended learning). Moreover, final exams had to be rescheduled and new rules were set temporarily to facilitate exams under pandemic conditions. It is undeniable that COVID-19 had disastrous consequences in many ways. Nevertheless, COVID-19 also showed that a lot of things and changes are possible, e.g., *digitalisation*, if we are open – or rather have to be open – to adapt. For example, before COVID-19, there was the general attitude that blended learning was unsuitable for police education and training. After the experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic, several police institutions consider blended learning as a necessary and useful future teaching method in police education (Belur & Bentall, 2021; Himberg, 2021). Therefore, it would be a greatly missed opportunity, if they did not hold on to those innovations once the pandemic is over, even though some things will have to be adapted anew.

As pointed out in this article, police training will have to face enormous challenges over the next years that will affect it in several ways. Some changes have already begun (e.g., digitalisation) and some are yet to come but will have long-lasting effects (e.g., demographic change). Although COVID-19 has challenged Bavarian police training in an unprecedented way and certainly had some negative impact (e.g., no practical training and face-to-face-teaching), they have proven that they can successfully cope with this situation and even thrive from it.

Beyond that, there is a need to monitor empirically change and its impact on police training. Therefore, the Bavarian police training aims to start a research project in September 2021 in cooperation with the Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich. The project will run for three years and will focus on the impact of digitalisation on police training regarding the three levels of analysis in social sciences: micro level, meso level and macro level. In addition, the Bavarian police training is planning an evaluation of the assessment test for new recruits.

Eventually, if the Bavarian Police are willing to make use of the positive side effects of the pandemic and stay flexible, open-minded, and courageous, when it comes to quick and sometimes unorthodox decision-making, there should be a fair chance that they will master future challenges and live up to their own ambitions – forming a police force that is well equipped to face any challenge, providing modern and contemporary police training, offering interesting career options, and providing a rewarding occupation with great benefits.

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Training and Education During the Pandemic Crisis:
The H2020 ANITA project experience

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic is deeply redesigning the approach and practices in the field of training targeting law enforcement agencies (LEAs). The effects are interesting and multifaceted and are expected to persist on the medium and long term. In fact, a new room for debating on positive and negative experiences, advantages and difficulties, emerging needs and requirements, pioneering ideas and ground-breaking initiatives has opened. The H2020 ANITA project wants to contribute to this debate by providing details about how it has managed to reorganise its training activities from in-person to remote sessions, the perception and feedback from the participating LEAs and the criteria it is using to design curricula for public and private stakeholders on online illegal trafficking. It is emerging that digitalised and remote trainings addressed to law enforcement agencies require both a new and innovative didactic concept and a ground-breaking learning paradigm. In-person lessons are essential for their wide-ranging benefits, but the COVID-19 pandemic is showing how distance learning could be also revolutionary and powerful. However, the equilibrium among the three main components represented by educating, discussing and exchanging should be established. In this framework, the hypothesis on if and how innovative knowledge-based and user-centred technologies – like the ANITA platform, which is investigation-based – could be used also to further build capacities, training and curricula for LEAs is explored. These tools are likely to have a great potential for generating contents to be used for multi-stakeholders training and capacity building, mutual understanding and exchange of information and practices.

Keywords: H2020 ANITA project, online illegal trafficking, remote training, law enforcement agencies, learning paradigm

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Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic is deeply redesigning the approach and practices in the field of training targeting law enforcement agencies (LEAs). In particular, the extraordinary experience of the lengthy 'lockdown' months experimented in early 2020 by all the European Union countries has initially forced police academies, Universities and research centres to suspend training without offering an alternative. Then, they have revolutionised their approach and catalogue, moving from in-person sessions to remote activities, in the various forms of webinars, online courses etc, usually held on communication platforms. However, this has not been an easy task and it is still in progress. The effects are interesting and multifaceted and are expected to persist on the medium and long term. A new room for debating on positive and negative experiences, advantages and difficulties, emerging needs and requirements, pioneering ideas and ground-breaking initiatives has opened. The H2020 ANITA project wants to contribute to this lively debate by providing details about how it has managed to reorganise its training activities, the perception and feedback from the participating LEAs and the criteria it is using to design curricula for public and private stakeholders on online illegal trafficking.

Accordingly, the paper will start by briefly introducing the H2020 ANITA project. It will then describe the ANITA experience about training during the COVID-19 pandemic and it will finally present the hints and lessons learned so far.

The H2020 ANITA project: a brief overview

ANITA - Advanced tools for fighting online Illegal Trafficking[2] is an action funded by the European Union H2020 Programme under the Call for Proposals on Technologies for prevention, investigation, and mitigation in the context of fight against crime and terrorism. It is implemented by 17 partners, covering 11 Countries, including 6 EU LEAs. The project, which started in May 2018 and at the time of writing is now in its final stages of implementation, is specifically addressed to design and develop a novel user-centred investigation platform integrating innovative tools to discover relevant data sources disseminated on the Web (including the Surface Web, the Deep Web and the Dark Web) and

analyse, enrich and correlate them to support investigations on illegal trafficking[3]. The project revolves around three main use-cases: 1) drugs, NPS and counterfeit medicines 2) weapons and firearms 3) terrorist financing.

ANITA's primary goal is twofold: 1) to boost the LEA's investigation process in a layered juridical and ethical approach by significantly increase their operational capabilities through a set of innovative tools for efficiently addressing online illegal trafficking challenges 2) to facilitate the novice officers training process and to optimize the learning curve.

ANITA is based on four pivotal activities, namely:

1. 'Listening to the Web' – detecting, monitoring and collecting data and information;

2. 'Analysis' – big data analysis and analytics development, with specific regards to entity recognition, topic extraction, classification clustering, summarisation, emotions recognition, stylometric analysis;

3. 'Knowledge-management' – knowledge generation and reasoning, with the integration of human factor in the analysis loop and the possibility for Law Enforcement officials to validate new knowledge;

4. 'Decision-making support' – modules integrated in the ANITA platform addressing the needs of the specific functional areas (investigation, source monitoring, text analysis, image and video analysis, audio analysis, knowledge browsing and validation, unconscious human feedback in the loop).

One distinguished feature, which best characterises the ANITA project, is what is termed as the 'knowledge-based approach' that is grounded on the intent to balance two key components such as the research activities on the one hand and the technological development on the other.

The scheme in Figure 1 explains how this approach has intrinsically permeated in each relevant phase of the ANITA project, thus contributing to the specific activities and to the overall action.

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2   The project dedicated website is available at the following URL: https://www.anita-project.eu/ (Last consulted on 08/07/2021).

3   The ANITA platform is investigation-based, where 'investigation' is an operative workspace in which users can manage information related to a specific case. There are two main user profiles corresponding to 'basic investigator', that can be assigned to one or more investigations, and to 'investigation manager', that can create a new investigation and add basic investigators to the investigation. The investigation manager has access also to administrative functionalities which are not available to a basic investigator.

Figure 1 - ANITA Knowledge based approach
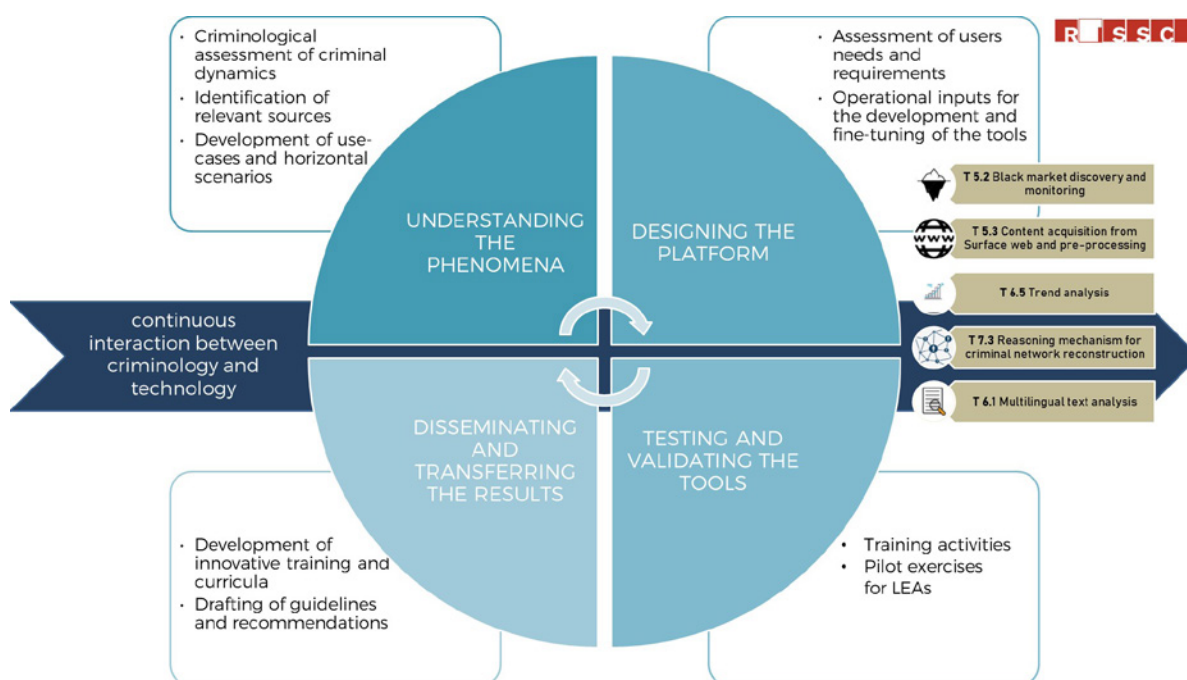
Understanding the phenomena - From the very beginning of the activities, a solid knowledge base has been developed on the three main use-cases of interest for the ANITA project, in order to support the consortium in better understanding the multifaceted manifestations and the latest dynamics of illegal trafficking, but also to facilitate the dialogue between the LEAs and the technological providers. In addition, by designing a criminology-led methodology, inputs have been provided by the research team on the relevant sources to be used for and by the ANITA tools. Moreover, based on real data and thanks to the collaboration between the researchers and the technological experts, 'horizontal scenarios' have been outlined so to explore connections between illegal trafficking activities concerning different goods. For example, use-cases have been explored about the same vendor distributing both firearms and synthetic drugs on the same or in different crypto markets, about the same profiles found to be active on both some Dark Web crypto markets and Surface platforms or about terrorist attacks performed with firearms bought on the Dark Web. The capacity to provide LEAs and the overall consortium with a general assessment of the criminal phenomena, focused examples on illegal activities and their independences, but also with hints about the possible future trends and developments, was an important added value for the ANITA project.

Designing the platform - While outlining and developing the ANITA platform, the knowledge-based approach has contributed to better assess the needs and requirements of the LEAs participating in the consortium. Often, the interaction between the end users and the technological developers is hindered by the different mind-set and background, and this can in turn affect the configuration and usability of the tools. The common understanding of the criminal phenomena to be countered and the punctual assessment of the LEAs desiderata have averted this risk and have supported the proper configuration of most ANITA tools.

Testing and validating the tools - The knowledge-based approach is currently used during the crucial phase of the ANITA platform test and validation. Ad-hoc train-the-trainer modules have been delivered to key figures within the participating LEAs, so to facilitate the internal transferring of notions and information to the colleagues involved in the two rounds of pilots. In particular, the horizontal scenarios have been used to clearly exemplify how the ANITA tools could be of help during an investigation.

Disseminating and transferring the results - Finally, the dissemination activities and the various initiatives aiming at facilitating the transferring of the ANITA results have benefited of the knowledge-based approach be-

cause the interaction between criminology and technology has provided the partners with examples and case-studies for better describing the added value of the ANITA tools, with hints about their application in the law enforcement environment, ideas for proposing new curricula and suggestions for elaborating guidelines and recommendations for relevant public and private stakeholders.

Training LEAs in the COVID-19 pandemic: the ANITA experience

The COVID-19 pandemic has severely impacted on the ANITA project under many respects. In particular, it has totally annulled any possibility of organising in-person meetings for a long period of time (eventually lasting till the end of the project), thus forcing the consortium to revise the plans for both the training activities targeting the participating LEAs and the two-round sessions of pilots needed for testing and validating the ANITA platform by the LEAs themselves. The decision-making process has been quite complicated because designing a remote online configuration for physically driven activities has posed several difficulties and challenges. Hence, the entire consortium was called upon to share experiences, ideas and hints. An online survey about remote training, with both closed multiple choices questions and open questions, was disseminated to the project partners.

In addition, two online focus groups with experts from LEAs, European police academies and international organisations[4] were organised; after introducing the ANITA project, including the knowledge-based approach and the ANITA platform, the participants' experiences and lessons learned about training activities in the era of COVID-19 were shared and discussed. In particular, the hypothesis on if and how innovative knowledge-based and user-centred technologies – like the ANITA platform – could be used also to further build capacities, training and new curricula for LEAs on online illegal trafficking was explored and debated. In

general, these tools address actual needs in the field of investigation, monitoring and intelligence, and they require notable investments in terms of resources, time, skills and expertise. However, the ANITA experience has showed that they are likely to have a great potential also for generating contents to be used for multi-stakeholders training and capacity building, and more in general for facilitating and promoting mutual understanding and dialogue, the exchange of information and practices, not considering cooperation at different levels.

The most interesting outcomes of the ANITA experience are briefly described in the next paragraphs.

The ANITA partners' direct experience and opinions about remote training - Key findings from the consortium survey

The questionnaire disseminated to the ANITA consortium[5] mostly collected quantitative and qualitative information on the following issues: direct participation in remote training activities (e.g., number of times, type of entity organising the activities, topics covered, format, duration, overall experience, positive and negative aspects…), experience with and evaluation of the online learning environments (considering in particular the possibility to interact with the trainers and the other participants, and the overall learning outcomes), the positive and negative implications of the dramatic increase in the use of online learning environments also for training activities imposed by the COVID-19, the most important factors for a successful online training addressed in particular to LEAs and, finally, the possible use of the ANITA platform by LEAs also for training activities.

In general, the respondents have a basic experience with remote training (they attended online training sessions on average between 1 to 5 times), with a higher frequency of participation by people aged between 30 and 40. The sessions were organised mostly by their own organisations or by universities and research centres; in the specific case of the participating LEAs, the remote trainings were organised by other law enforcement agencies or by international organization (e.g., Europol, Interpol, CEPOL etc.). The formats were quite diversified, ranging from structured courses to specific modules, lasting between 1 to 3 hours or at least half-day.

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4   The first online focus group was held on April 30, 2021, with the participation of the Crime and Criminal Justice College of Policing (UK), the National Bureau of Investigation (Finland), the Police academy - Special Police Education (The Netherlands) and the Police of the Czech Republic - National Drug Headquarters. The second online focus group was held on May 18, 2021, with the participation of INTERPOL, World Customs Organisation (WCO), Pompidou Group – Council of Europe, International Narcotics Control Board (INCB), United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), European Network of Forensic Science Institutes (ENFSI).

5   The sample of respondents included 23 people (15 men / 8 women), aged mostly between 30 and 50 years.

Figure 2 – ANITA internal survey. Overall level of satisfaction with the online trainings
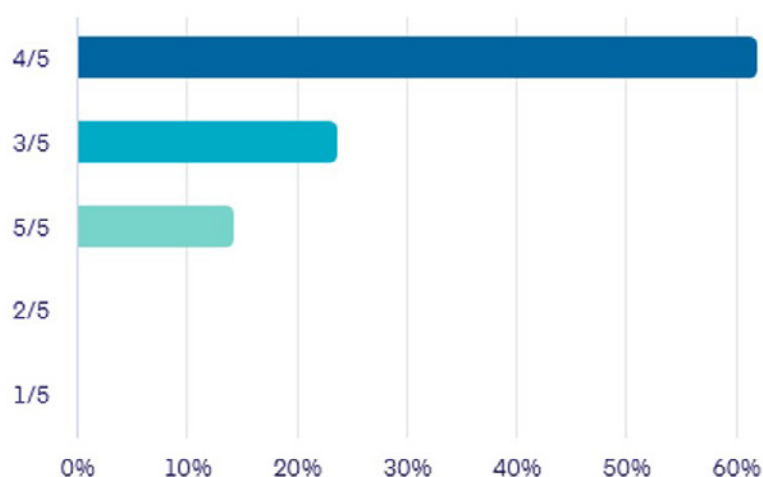
The opinions are in general quite positive. As represented in Figure 2, the overall level of satisfaction with the online training(s) attended by the survey respondents is rated around 4 out of 5 from a 1 to 5 scale (1 being 'not at all satisfied' and 5 being 'very satisfied').

The same attitude can be found when evaluating the overall experience with the online learning environment, with the 60% of the respondents choosing 4 out of 5 and 25% opting for the maximum score available.

In general, the interaction with the trainer and the networking with the other participants in the framework of the online learning environment, as well as the learning outcomes achieved through it, obtained a good evaluation, too. However, in both cases the scores refer mostly to 4 out 5 and 3 out of 5, thus showing a sort of uncertainty. The respondents perceptible hesitation towards their actual level of satisfaction with distance learning is confirmed by the comments and opinions collected in the open questions, such as: "interactions and exchanges with other participants are often difficult", "difficulties in interacting", "missing the spontaneous interaction in a group and missing the 'body language' of trainers and other participants", "with online learning you do not interact with the teacher, which makes it more difficult to ask additional questions. There is also no spontaneous consultation between colleagues", "limitation in discussions and interactions with trainer and other participants due to tool noise, network latency and not seeing others". Accordingly, these remarks confirm that interaction and networking play a pivotal role for learners and there are

still weaknesses when training is delivered remotely. This aspect should be properly addressed.

About the COVID-19 pandemic determining a dramatic increase in the use of online learning environments also for training activities, some positive and negative statements were provided in the questionnaire and the participants were asked to assign each statement with a 1 to 5 score, being (1) Strongly disagree (2) Disagree (3) Neither agree nor disagree (4) Agree (5) Strongly agree. Figure 3 shows the results with respect to positive statements.

The respondents mostly agree on the increased opportunities to participate in more trainings with respect to in-person sessions because there are no or just minor constraints related for example to travels, costs, the need to cope with other office priorities… They also appreciate the possibility to attend the courses at the time that is more convenient, especially in the case of asynchronous learning. Finally, there are increased opportunities to participate in more trainings, organised by diverse institutions and/or covering various issues.

The negative statements chosen by the respondents are schematised in Figure 4. Interaction related issues are once again reiterated.

The additional interesting issues which emerge from the answers are related respectively to the difficulties of organising practical and/or collaborative exercises during remote training and the demotivation or annoyance deriving from problems often related to the

Figure 3 - POSITIVE statements related to the dramatic increase in the use of online learning environments also for training activities imposed by COVID-19. (1) Strongly disagree (2) Disagree (3) Neither agree nor disagree (4) Agree (5) Strongly agree
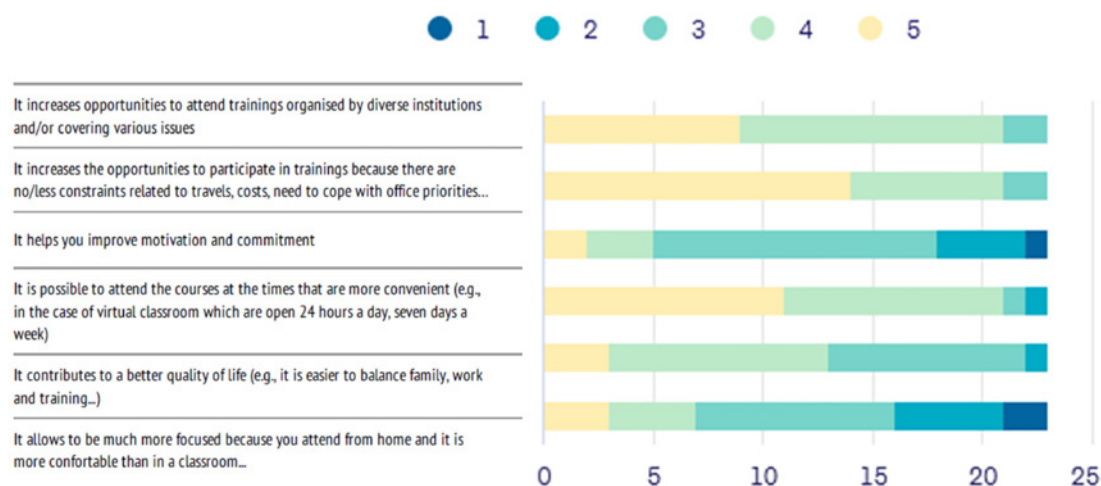
Figure 4 - NEGATIVE statements related to the dramatic increase in the use of online learning environments also for training activities imposed by COVID-19. (1) Strongly disagree (2) Disagree (3) Neither agree nor disagree (4) Agree (5) Strongly agree
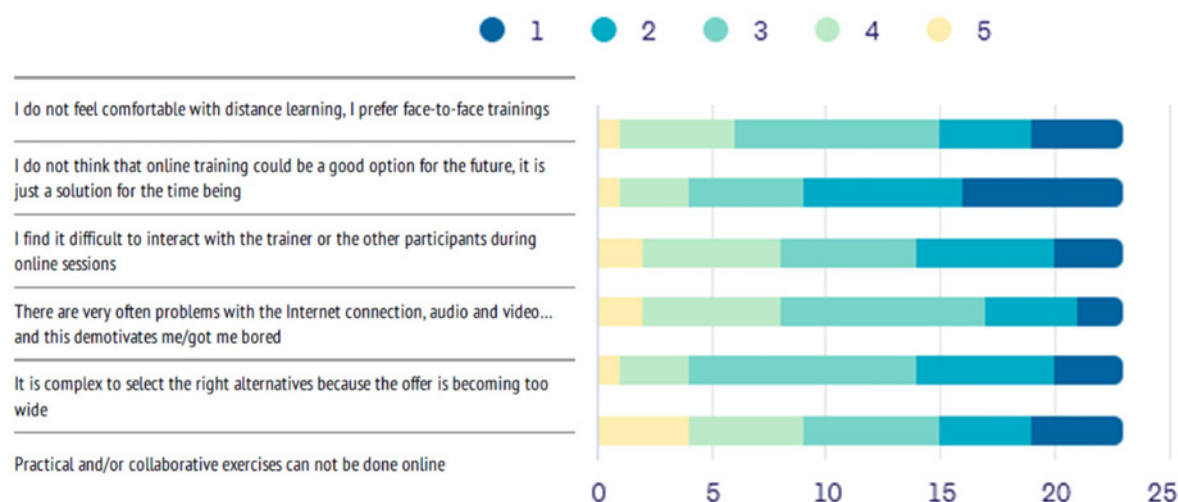
Internet connection, audio or video… Both these aspects are truly relevant for the respondents; in particular, the LEAs participating in the ANITA consortium consider the practical activities a fundamental component of training to facilitate the learning process but also to support the exchange of experience and practices among the participants, networking and possible collaboration in the everyday activities.

Focusing on the specific needs and requirements of the LEAs, the most important factors for a successful online training addressed in particular to them are represented in Figure 5.

It is interesting to observe that the "participants skills and experience on the topic(s)" is the most preferred option, so a homogeneous and harmonised group of learners is considered an asset for the law enforcement environment. The "participants good attitude towards

Figure 5 – The most important factors for a successful online training addressed in particular to LEAs.
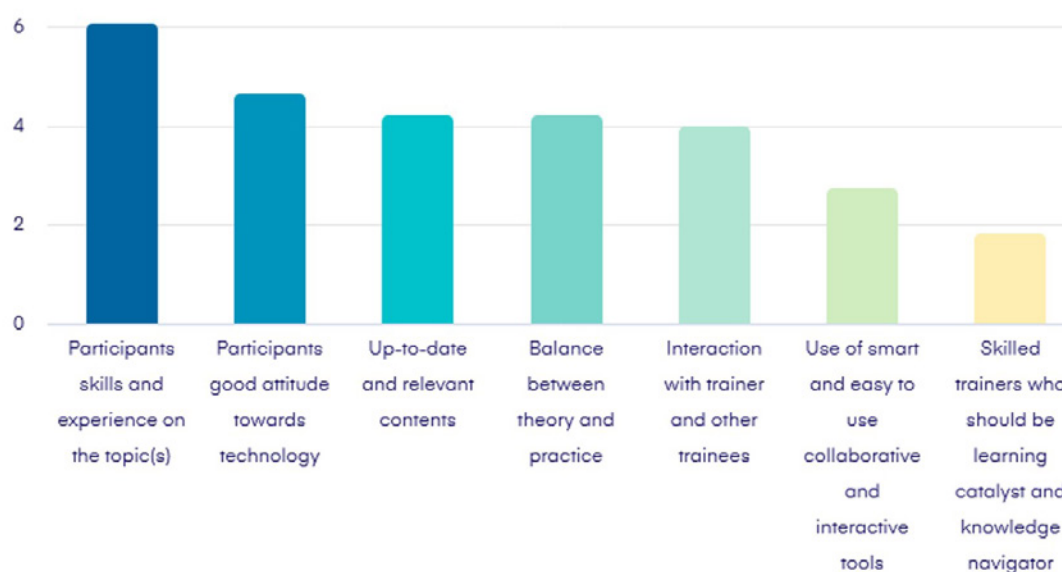
technology" is also important to minimise inactivity deriving from the lack of knowledge of online training platforms but also to enhance the use of innovative technologies and tools – like the ANITA ones, for example – also for capacity building.

The answers provided also evidence the importance of the contents covered (which have to be up-to-date and relevant), the balance between theory and practice and the interaction with the trainer and the other trainees. Surprisingly, the options suggesting the use of tools and the presence of skilled trainers were not largely selected.

The possibility to use the ANITA platform also for training purposes is largely welcome by the respondents; of course, they have been actively involved in its designing and development, as well as in the testing and validation phases, so they are aware of its configuration, usefulness and potentiality. As schematised in Figure 6, the support of experts in the field to develop relevant use-cases, scenarios and actionable knowledge is considered an asset and a requirement.

This shared indication of a specialised support to generate relevant educational material is probably connected to the knowledge-based approach experienced throughout the overall ANITA project, which has raised awareness about the importance of bridging the 'human factor' and the 'technological factor'.

In fact, the need for a redesigned role of technology (intended mostly as Artificial Intelligence and machine/deep learning) in the knowledge generation and learning process on criminal phenomena is becoming tangible. The development and use of promising tools to detect, collect and analyse big amounts of data have been the focus of several initiatives; however, in many cases, efforts do not seem to have paid off if we consider the costs, the sustainability and rapid obsolescence of the products developed and the real contribution to understanding the ecosystems of crime, especially online (Finck, 2019). Moreover, the technological component has ended up dominating activities like deep understanding, critical reasoning, assessment and evaluation, which are intrinsically human and should be further supported primarily through capacity building and empowerment. The ANITA project subverted this general approach so that technology is at the service of the LEAs and not vice versa.

Accordingly, it is not surprising that the respondents have oriented their preference also on the possibility to exploit the ANITA platform for collaborative exercises with other LEAs as well as to use the tools for internal training addressing the specific formative needs of the organisation and the participants. The capacity recognised to the ANITA platform to be flexible and effectively oriented towards the actual requirements of the law enforcement sector is highly appreciated. In particular, what emerged from the project activities

Figure 6 - Use of the ANITA platform by LEAs also for training activities. (1) Strongly disagree (2) Disagree (3) Neither agree nor disagree (4) Agree (5) Strongly agree.
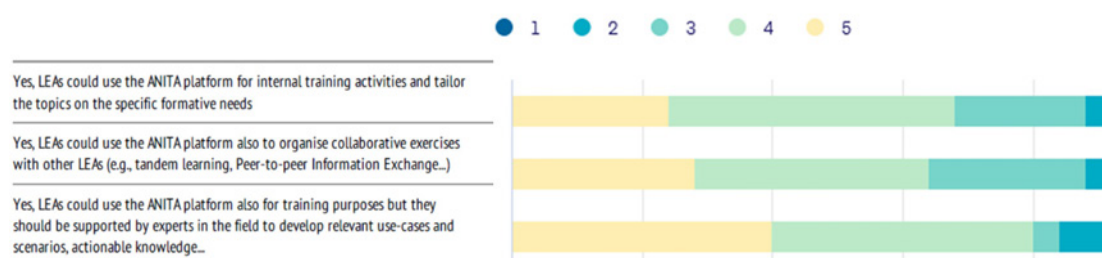
is the need for ground-breaking ideas to strengthen the synergies between knowledge generation and multi-stakeholders actions against online illegal trafficking and illicit trade, with the support of advanced technologies. It is not only a matter of developing initiatives but of reinforcing them with adequate approaches, considering nature and granularity of the intervention and the global and local ecology of online criminal clusters.

The ANITA project training model

The ANITA project is strongly committed to significantly facilitate the training process within the EU LEAs and to further improve the synergy between capacity building and law enforcement activities. For example, it aims at improving knowledge about the latest criminal scenarios and to boost the integration of advanced technologies, methods and tools into standard operations and investigations. With specific reference to the novice officers training process, the project intends to optimize the learning curve by collecting, integrating and re-using knowledge from multiple expert officers and through the development of a recommendation functionality to transfer the acquired 'know-how' to the new officers.

In the framework of the ANITA activities, trainings had to be organised for the participating LEAs in order to give them the information and directions needed to have a clear understanding of the platform so to test and validate the tools during the two pilot sessions.

The COVID-19 has forced the partners to rethink and redesign the concept and the activities related to train-

ing, while finding the suitable way to achieve the proposed goals and results. Considering the contingency and the specific internal complexities experienced by each participating LEA due to the pandemic, the ANITA project has finally decided to opt for the train-the-trainer model. Remote training sessions were organised and delivered to at least two officers per each participating LEAs, so that they could in turn train their colleagues about the features and operation of the ANITA platform. This decision was taken based on the idea that internal trainers could spread knowledge more efficiently among the colleagues with respect to project partners, also minimising possible organisational difficulties posed by the pandemic and language related constraints.

The project went through some preliminary steps related to assessing the trainees' profiles, elaborating the contents and the training toolbox to be used for the internal sessions by each LEAs.

- This approach paid off under many respects. During the train-the-trainer sessions, the participants had the possibility to learn from the ANITA team and to interact with the domain experts, thus achieving an in-depth understanding of the platform and its functionalities.

- Important feedbacks and suggestions were also collected from the learners, who pointed out the need of having case-studies and practical examples to better introduce the tools to their colleagues.

- This is a key point because once again it stresses the importance of bridging the technological developments with a thorough assessment of the possible relevance for the LEAs environment and knowledge-based examples of their functioning.

Distance learning and (remote) training through innovative tools: lessons learned from the ANITA project and conclusive thoughts

The ANITA project is currently assessing the numerous and variegated outcomes of its overall implementation, including those related to trainings – especially about distance learning – and to the use of the platform also for education and capacity building. Some key points have already emerged and are listed below:

- advanced technologies are redesigning both the knowledge generation process on criminal phenomena and the enforcement activities: the more these frameworks manage to interact in a synergic way, the better results can be obtained

- advanced technologies must be developed in close collaboration between the developers, the domain experts (in particular researchers in the field) and the end-users. Their continuous collaboration can guarantee to effectively understand and address the requirements and needs of LEAs and to develop cost-effective and priority-oriented actions

- platforms and tools which are knowledge-driven and user-centred can be used also for training purposes in addition to their primary end use in the field of investigation, intelligence and monitoring. It is still a pioneering issue and a challenging task, which needs to be further assessed and designed so to exploit the potentialities while reducing the limits and possible difficulties. Among others, one relevant feature seems to be the capacity to contribute at generating new knowledge on the latest manifestations of crime and to allow the trainees to benefit from actual contents and insight

- remote training is becoming a crucial and fundamental option also for LEAs but, in order to become a viable alternative to in-person training, a greater balance between different aspects should be found. The most relevant ones seem to be related to the technological environment to be used (which should be intuitive and allow for different types of activities), the participants' skills (which should be homogeneous and aligned), the capacity to provide innovative contents, and the possibility to combine both theory and practice

The possible combined effect of both innovative user-centred platforms – like the ANITA one – and remote training is under evaluation by the ANITA team because it looks promising. A preliminary analysis was developed to start debating about the strengths, the weaknesses, the opportunities and the threats.

About the strengths, it could be possible to develop innovative environments for learning purposes. There could be room also for a greater interaction between operational activities, empowerment and capacity building. Finally, it could be possible to improve the investigative skills on specific cases of interest for the learners as well as the capacity to assess interlinks between criminal phenomena.

On the other hand, the weaknesses to be considered and overcome are the limited occasions - or in some cases the increased difficulties - to interact, to exchange views about personal experiences and good practices, and the reduced chances to do networking. Finding a viable way to promote interaction among distance-learners should be a priority in design learning.

The opportunities which could be already envisaged are related to the possibility to set pioneering and challenging learning objectives, to adapt the contents according for example to the participants' skills, the specific local/regional dimension or the type of criminal phenomena, as well as to develop self-learning thematic courses. The flexibility which is intrinsically embedded in the combination between both advanced tools – like the ANITA platform - and remote training could become an added value under many respects involving for example accessibility, contents, activities, materials, teaching methods.

The main threats or risks could derive from the low participants' engagement caused by multiple factors such as the lack of awareness about the criminal phenomena investigated, the limited confidence or skills on the technologies used, the gaps related for example to age/generation, gender or bias, the difficulties related to interactions with the other participants and the trainers or even the problems posed by technical complications, such as the unstable Internet connection or the audio and video not working properly.

The consideration which is emerging from the ongoing assessment of the ANITA experience, which could also be read as a possible recommendation, is that digitalised and remote trainings addressed to law enforcement agencies require both a new and innovative didactic concept and a ground-breaking learning paradigm. In-person lessons are essential for their wide-ranging benefits but the COVID-19 pandemic is showing how distance learning could be also revolu-

tionary and powerful. However, in order to work, the equilibrium among the three main components represented by educating, discussing and exchanging should be established.

In the framework of the debate ongoing in the ANITA project, some inputs and hints have already been discussed. For example, distance learning addressed to LEAs should be designed around multiple and diversified options, so that each learner could find the best solution to feel motivated. A variety of activities should be offered and they should be carried out mostly in small groups to facilitate active participation, interaction and exchanges. Trainers should also become facilitators, so to enhance the link between the content to be learnt, the learning process and the critical thinking. While experimenting new solutions in the field of distance learning, synchronous and asynchronous services to support the trainees should be also improved. Feedback and evaluation should be regularly collected to keep on revising and adapting the activities to the real needs and expectations. Finally, possible issues related to ethics, human rights protection and gender equality should be considered and regularly assessed.

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CEPOL

DIGICRIMJUS and CLaER:
Effective methods of teaching criminal law digitally during the pandemic

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Abstract

In this paper we introduce DIGICRIMJUS, an EU supported higher education strategic partnership on Digitalisation and Criminal Law formed by three renowned European universities (University of Szeged - Hungary, University of Konstanz – Germany, University of Istanbul – Turkey) focusing on the *New challenges for teaching, researching and practicing criminal law in the digital age*. Digicrimjus is designed around four cornerstones: digitalization - criminal law & justice - legal comparison – teaching & learning. In this framework members of the cohort are not only focusing on traditional questions of criminal law (e.g., criminal responsibility in cases where AI has been applied), but also on other issues in the criminal justice system (such as investigating cybercrime or online visiting hours in prisons). The results of the three years research project (2020/21-2023/24) will be made widely available in the form of comprehensive study and training materials designed for future lawyers and experienced professionals. Furthermore, as a good practice example closely linked to Digicrimjus and teaching criminal law remotely and digitally during the current pandemic situation, CLaER, an online „Criminal Law Escape Room" is also introduced. It was recently developed at the University of Szeged specifically for advanced law students majoring in criminal law and future legal professionals in the field of criminal justice. This digital learning material is designed to mimic in-person simulations and moots in the digital space using gamification methods. Apart from the teachers' perspective, we also reflect on the students' experiences based on their feedback and share some of our future project plans.

Keywords: comparative criminal law, digitalisation, online education, gamification

Introducing DIGICRIMJUS[1]

The University of Szeged[2], the University of Konstanz[3] and the University of Istanbul[4] have formed a higher education partnership focusing on the new challenges of criminal law in the digital age. The three partner's application ranked first among all Hungarian initiatives and has been supported by the European Union's Erasmus+ programme of EUR 150 000. DIGICRIMJUS (*New challenges for teaching, researching and practising criminal law in the digital age*) is designed around the following four cornerstones: digitalization - criminal law & justice – legal comparison – teaching & learning. Its main topic is the applicability of criminal law in today's information society. In this framework, members of the consortium will focus on traditional questions of criminal law (such as criminal responsibility in cases where artificial intelligence has been applied) and other issues in the criminal justice system (such as investigating cybercrime or online visiting hours in prisons).

The idea and planning for this program had been developed through strong cooperation between the leading partners since 2014. Direct communication between the partners is usually seen as a key to developing and to carrying out joint research. Partner work always includes at least to some extent additional working days just for partners to discuss and to develop future activities. Already during the actual application process, these methods of communication were adapted and adjusted to the needs of application and future planning. Hereto, strong cooperation amongst the partners was necessary for brainstorming and completing the application form and for developing concrete impacts of the program for the next years. During the preparations – and because of the COVID-19 pandemic, ever since - the preferred way of communication amongst the partners was e-mail as well as conducting zoom-meetings, cloud-based documents, and a specifically allocated project management interface (adminproject.eu) administered by the

Hungarian partners. Although it all proved to be very effective and successful, all partners agree that it is important to discuss and contact each other in person to find proper solutions, whenever possible as seminars in person cannot entirely be replaced with online and web discussions.

The unique chance of DIGICRIMJUS is to conduct very important interexchange between the best young law students, from undergraduate to doctoral, coming from three very different criminal legal systems: the Hungarian criminal law with a socialistic history, the Turkish criminal law with an Ottoman tradition and many influences from Italian, French, Swiss, German, and even other influences within the past century, and the very traditional German criminal law with a tradition in philosophical and dogmatical development. While the three different legal systems also share some similarities through their past, differences, especially within the culturally dependent criminal law, prevail. However, they all are challenged by digitalization in similar ways. Artificial intelligence is used anywhere to apply autonomic systems. Likewise, people are using different online systems and applications within the clear, the deep, and as well within its darknet. Some of the users are using the internet to their advantage in illegal ways. Nevertheless, criminal laws are not prepared for digital fraud, theft trespassing, and different kinds of digitally trafficking with illegal goods, be it drugs, guns, or child pornography. Furthermore, investigators need to investigate within the internet as well as using digital means. Hereto we need to develop new rules of evidence taking and presenting in court. We are developing the methods of comparative work and research when challenged by digitalization for future law professionals. By comparing the different legal systems, we will look out for best practices and the need for change.

Our main goals include the following: conducting transnational comparative research with the specific focus on challenges caused by digitalization; providing new answers to the methodology of comparative research in criminal law as such; enhancing to understand challenges of digitalization as such within the different states; establishing a new form of teaching and learning in a multilingual, international and professionally high-quality environment; and raising digital awareness of law students, legal professionals and of the broader public. We aim to reach these objectives by preparing and developing intellectual outputs,

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1   DIGICRIMJUS: *New challenges for teaching, researching and practicing criminal law in the digital age* Erasmus+ Strategic Partnership for higher education 2020-1-HU01-KA203-078670. Co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union. www.digicrimjus.com

2   Institute of Criminal Law and Criminal Justice led by Prof. Dr. Krisztina Karsai. See (Karsai, 2020)

3   Chair of Criminal Law, Criminal Procedural Law and Comparative Criminal Law led by Prof. Dr. Liane Wörner. See Wörner, 2019; Wörner & Preetz, 2020)

4   Institute Of Criminal Law and Criminology led by Prof. Dr. Adem Sözüer

such as methodological guidelines and a studybook on digital criminal law, as well as an online knowledge hub supported by podcasts, videolectures and online self-assessment quizzes. As for the research methodology, the general rules and methods of academia and legal science apply at the authors' discretion, with the additional specifics of joint research and co-authored papers including first peer-review and internal workshops for discussing project outcomes.

The research results will be transformed into learning units and components, and it is crucial that, especially in this field, future law professionals are prepared for the challenges of the digital environment. We plan to carry out unique, entirely new teaching and learning forms in a multilingual, international, and professionally high-quality environment. By including the law enforcement authorities within our states in the program, we will also reach out to different stakeholders, amongst those the International Police Agency INTERPOL.

The development learning materials (intellectual outputs) address students of law, computational science, other subjects, and the future generation and the interested public. The project will develop skills protecting from crimes like digital theft, computer fraud, or being involved in illegally trafficking goods in clear-, deep-, or darknets. In the very long run, this will strengthen (individual) digital human rights in the states, the European Union, and beyond.

Our research addresses the following main questions categorized by the legal disciplinary fields:

a) conflicts of jurisdiction when crimes go digital, criminal responsibility for applying artificial intelligence tools, criminal responsibility of intelligent agents, due care and culpable negligence when using autonomous cars; DIN standards, State and Non-State provisions allowing autonomous driving; the risk-bearing community as a solution in dilemma-situations applying autonomous systems, criminal responsibility of cloud-operators in cases of attacks on data or data-misuse; criminal responsibility of darknet-platform operators and providers (substantive criminal law, general part)

b) criminal liability using products from 3D-printings; serious threats of hate and violence online – nationally and transnationally needs for incrimination; criminal responsibility when using drones; the spread of „fake news" as a crime; digital trespassing; money laundering online; digital theft of bitcoin – a question of computer fraud; phishing, doxxing and similar actions – a call for new crimes (substantive criminal law, special part)

c) digital preventive police work by using body cams; predictive policing; the admissibility of digital investigations prosecuting internet criminality; criminal investigation undercover – the undercover agent goes digital; admissibility of criminal investigations within the darknet; substantive criminal law for lack of evidence? – A critical analysis of creating criminal law to allow the taking of evidence; the obligation to provide information against internet service provider; the E-Evidence-Regulation of the EU and how it shapes the criminal procedure (procedural criminal law).

The results of the three year's research project (2020/21-2023/24) will be made widely available in comprehensive study materials designed for the new generation of law students and future lawyers. Apart from this, raising social awareness on digitalization and criminal law is a further important project objective. The strategic partnership also aims to design a future joint LL.M. programme offered by the three renowned universities on digitalizing criminal law and comparative criminal law.

An example of innovative learning tools within the framework of DIGICRIMJUS was originally planned as *"Quizzes on comparable cases from criminal justice globally"* already at the beginning of 2020. The starting point for this was, that some form of questioning has always been inseparable from any kind of education. In recent decades quizzes have been a common way of examination. We were also bearing in mind, that apart from educational use, a lot of people, mainly among the younger generation like to take quizzes in their spare time as well. From the combination of the two abovementioned areas of quizzes, the use of game elements in a non-game context, thus the concept of gamification was born. Not only does it encourage the participation of students in classroom activities, but it also contributes to the improvement of the general learning experience. It has been proven that implementing gamification into education increases students' engagement and motivation and has a generally positive outcome on achievement. (Wiggins, 2016) For these reasons, we thought, that a project about digitalization – such as DIGICRIMJUS, shall itself make use of digital instruments. Therefore, we decided to develop digital quizzes, which include a simple case description, whereby players are asked to guess the applicable criminal law sanction for a certain offence in the respective countries. In this context, a great emphasis is laid on stressing the abovementioned differences among the three countries' criminal law

approaches. This concept was designed to provide an easy to receive way to introduce comparative criminal law to a non-legally qualified audience.

Introducing CLaER[5] as a good example

After the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent shutdown of universities, we, just like all of our colleagues in academia have experienced significant challenges concerning our primary teaching activities, even outside the framework of DIGICRIMJUS. On 11th March 2020, the Hungarian Government declared a state of danger [Gov. Decree 40/2020. (III.11.)] and prohibited students from entering higher education institutions. [Gov. Decree 41/2020. (III. 11.)] In response to the situation, forms of digital teaching had to be implemented. One particular concern was our Criminal Justice Specialization Module offered for advanced law students and the course *"Drafting legal documents in criminal law cases and criminal law MOOT"*. This course revolves specifically around the solving and adjudication of a pre-selected real-life attempted murder case[6] and heavily relies on interpersonal exchange, which at the time seemed extremely difficult to implement in an online environment.

Partly relying on our plans in DIGICRIMJUS and also as a result of the organic and ad-hoc development of an other pre-existing original idea, the solution to the problem came in the form of an online Criminal Law Escape Room – CLaER. The aim of CLaER was to prompt the students to familiarize themselves with the facts of the fairly complex case used as the basis of the legal documents to be drafted in the course of the semester with the method of gamification. In accordance, we defined the learning outcome as better understanding of the factual elements of the case while recalling their previous knowledge in criminal procedure law.

For the platform, we decided to use genially,[7] because it offered an easy to use, free and open access environment for interactive teaching content development. Using this tool, it took approximately 50 working hours

over 3 weeks by 4 university lecturers (all legal educators, no IT or graphics experts) for the first version of CLaER ready to be tested and become operational in Hungarian.

In class, students are instructed to go to genial.ly, solve the escape room, and based on the acquired ("investigated") information, put the facts of the case together in form of a charging proposal. Finally, they are required to turn it in via the University of Szeged's online educational ecosystem Coospace. This case is then the basis for all legal documents (indictment, motions, court orders, sentences, etc.) to be drafted over the semester.

When first opening CLaER, they are presented a police report in the form of a subjective first account from the victim's perspective: *"Someone tried to kill me at work by setting me on fire. I didn't recognize them."* Then, they find multiple persons of interest to be interrogated as witnesses at this stage. Each of these provides fictional subjective statements from their perspective of the events containing crucial information relevant to the facts of the case. To receive pieces of information (witness statements, crime scene analysis results, etc.) the student players (acting as "investigating officers") first need to successfully answer a question regarding relevant sections of the Hungarian Criminal Procedure Act. They always get immediate feedback on their answer: if it is correct, they access the information needed to solve the case. Recognizing the challenges faced by students in online education and their increased need for motivation, we designed the tasks as an open book exercise and in case of wrong answer, we embedded an encouragement to further practice and repetition by always giving them the possibility to retry.

Besides the witness interviews, the players also have to visit various scenes relevant to the crime by clicking on them, where the same method applies. Upon completing almost all tasks (characterized as investigative measures), they return to the police station to reconstruct the acts of the perpetrator, construct a timeline of the facts of the case and solve it. Finally, they have to identify the suspect in a police lineup. Upon successful identification, they are given final praise for the achievement and an external link to the Coospace interface for turning in the charging proposal they drafted following the competition of CLaER. This is a formal written assignment, which is evaluated by the lecturers and the result counts towards the final marks.

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5   CLaER was originally first developed in Hungarian under the title „A tüzéptelep titka" (The Secret of The Construction Site) in 2021 by Krisztina Karsai, Zsanett Fantoly, Zoltán Ragány, András Lichtenstein at the University of Szeged, Institute of Criminal Law and Criminal Science. https://view.genial.ly/6037af88dbab-cf0daabc7a25/game-breakout-a-tuzeptelep-titka

6   Based on the following court decisions: Szolnoki Törvényszék B.557/2014/32.; Szegedi Ítélőtábla Bf.610/2015/14.

7   https://www.genial.ly/

As for the students' feedback, CLaER received generally positive reviews from members of the target group. In an immediate anonymous survey conducted in online class, 95 % found CLaER helpful for better understanding of the case and also more exciting in comparison to only reading the case file. This was also clearly noticeable from the teacher's perspective. This year's students, assigned to solve CLaER generally were more familiar with the case in class even concerning minor details of information, than previous students attending in-person classes pre-CLaER. At the end of semester Student's Feedback on Teacher's Work, opinions were also favourable concerning the course *"Drafting legal documents in criminal law cases and criminal law MOOT".*[8] For the contribution of the tasks solved during the semester for better understanding of the material and passing the course scored 4,63 on a scale of 1-5, where 5 being the best. The same score, 4,63 was reached for interactivity of the course and detailed evaluation of the assignments. In the comments, one individual praised the teachers' work for developing CLaER and highlighted its contribution to their success in completing the course. However, the same person also noted that a class was cancelled for development reasons and was later not substituted.

Closing remarks and future prospects

We are convinced about the importance of our DIGICRIMJUS project not only in including the chances for stronger communication between us, as partners of higher education, but also our students on the challenges of digitalization within the different legal systems. Our goal is to develop study plans together each year of the project's cycle, critically discuss, and create new methods of comparative research, and also extend our knowledge and teaching model on digital criminal law and digital criminal procedure.

Although we originally expected the possibility of joint seminars from the very beginning, due to the COVID-19 outbreak and the unforeseeable consequences thereof, we needed to adapt and respond to the new circumstances quickly. Such an example – apart from online meetings and seminars -, was the inclusion of CLaER like gamification methods into the main project's framework. Based on the experiences gained and feedback given, our future plan is to keep on relying on CLaER even when returning to in-person teaching or blended learning after the pandemic, while extending the use of it to other courses as well. Apart from that, we will keep working on implementing the methods of CLaER to DIGICRIMJUS as an interactive learning tool by developing case scenarios and questions specific to the challenges of digitalization and criminal law.

We take great pride in the fact that our project was ranked first among all Hungarian applications and also that approaching the first evaluation cycle our work seems to be proven successful even in the midst of a pandemic. This first year showed us that we are able to adapt well to cyberspace, as well expected from a digitalization centered project. Although we can and well keep up the online presence, we also look forward to seeing our partners, colleagues and students in person, remaining open to form new partnerships, and encouraging others to take part in our project or form similar training cooperations.

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8   https://oktweb.neptun.u-szeged.hu/OMHV/AJTK/OMHV_
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Analyses and critical perceptions

Policing South Africa's Lockdown:

Making sense of ambiguity amidst certainty?

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Abstract

Despite the progressive vision of South Africa's policy elites after the end of Apartheid, the South African Police Service (SAPS) faces such severe challenges of efficiency, accountability, and legitimacy that the institution appears under chronic siege. We sought to document the view of insiders on the SAPS's preparedness and effectiveness at fulfilling its expanded mandate in response to COVID-19. As part of a larger research project, we conducted 27 interviews with police officers and representatives of other government departments across three provinces. These revealed two narratives. The first – and surprisingly dominant – is one of strong coordinating structures, capable leadership and effective command and control under exceptionally difficult circumstances. The second, however, is of an organisation stretched beyond breaking point and placing its members under impossible strains. We conclude that the two narratives are complementary and that their co-existence reflects the opposing pressures faced by the police in this period: the consolidating logic of state securitisation under conditions of crisis and the underlying fragmenting logic of dysfunctional, kleptocratic governance.

Keywords: policing; COVID-19 pandemic; South Africa

Introduction

COVID-19 arrived in South Africa as a key institution in the fight against the pandemic, the police, was already in disarray. This stood in contrast to the vision of policy elites who, after 1994, embarked on the transformation of the state and its coercive apparatus. According to that vision, citizen security had to reverse Apartheid's emphasis on (white) state security. For the policy entrepreneurs at that time, the model of democratic policing served as a source of inspiration: the police institution had to be remodelled with efficiency, accountability, and legitimacy in mind.

Considerable thought and effort went into police restructuring. And for a short while, the South African Police Service (SAPS) enjoyed an enviable status in the region. In the late 1990s it was one of the largest, most modern, and best resourced police organisations on the continent of Africa. But neither the boldness of reform-talk nor the concerted effort of individuals, task teams, study groups, or advisory panels, offered respite against realpolitik. The latter would wreak revenge, with debilitating effect. As South African police studies is well developed, a sizeable scholarship speaks to the fault lines besetting the police organisation and the social and political influences at play. Given the focus of this paper, we turn to a brief overview of three key challenges: police efficiency, accountability, and legitimacy.

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With regards to efficiency, human resources in the SAPS have long been under strain. Decisions to rapidly boost police numbers in the early 2000s meant that the emphasis on quantity outstripped concerns with quality (Bruce, 2013). In addition, the organisation has become top heavy with a bulging and expensive cohort of office-bound generals. Staff turnover and high rates of absenteeism have long eaten into human resource capacity. Management expertise, it is widely acknowledged, is at an all-time low (Mlamla, 2021). Natural attrition, staff exodus, the too rapid pursuit of equity, as well as (more recently) nepotism in appointments have all contributed to the deficit in leadership. Such shortages have had deleterious effects on command and control in the operational field. A further systemic problem relates to the fact that the centralisation of decision-making stands in the way of initiatives to improve matters at sub-national levels. A range of fateful policy decisions that have led to the crippling of detective skills and other specialist policing capacities (for example, to engage organised crime and public disorder on the streets) have made the institutional dysfunctionality glaringly obvious (Burger, 2015).

On the accountability front, the architecture of oversight has been under attack. Internal systems of oversight remain weak. Very recently, the Commissioner of Police acknowledged before parliament that the internal disciplinary system requires drastic overhaul (Knoetze, 2021). Since their inception, external systems of oversight have struggled to make headway (Burger, 2008). More recently, the Independent Police Investigative Division[2] has been drawn into factional politics within the ruling party. This has meant that inquiries into wrongdoings have become selective. Police intelligence, like other intelligence arms of the state, has been 'captured' by political factions in cahoots with organised crime cartels. Corruption scandals involving several successive Commissioners of Police and other senior officers, exposed by investigative journalists, have rocked the organisation. An official inquiry (the Commission of Inquiry into Allegations of State Capture, or Zondo Commission) has surfaced details about corruption and politicisation on a grand scale and the corrosion of mechanisms of democratic oversight. In the light of such evidence, SAPS's claim to robust ac-

countability – both horizontally and vertically – rings increasingly hollow. To add insult to injury, recent allegations regarding massive irregular spending on personal protective equipment such as cloth masks and hand sanitisers during the COVID lockdown have implicated the police in yet another round of shady deals (Thamm, 2021).

The growth in civil claims against the police serve as a partial indicator of ill-discipline on the streets (Dereymaeker, 2015). There is also organisational reluctance to act, either swiftly or decisively, against those in uniform with an appetite for abuse of power and the use of lethal force. A public inquiry into high-handed police action against striking workers at Lonmin mine in 2012 (that left 34 workers dead) found the police uncooperative. According to the Report of the Inquiry, police officials not only withheld evidence but in several instances police officials lied before the Commission (Marikana Commission of Inquiry, 2015). No police members have been prosecuted to date.

For some commentators, the proclivities associated with an increasingly unaccountable, centralised, and paramilitary police 'machine' are linked to the 'violent' nature of South Africa's democracy (Lamb, 2021). Yawning structural inequalities make for inequality of policing on the one hand and bestow on the police the responsibility for the policing of such inequality on the other. The police organisation (together with other components of the criminal justice system) appears under siege.

This brief sketch alludes to some of the key challenges the police organisation has been negotiating over the past decade and a half. It is at this delicate point in SAPS's trajectory that the COVID-19 pandemic entered South African soil. As elsewhere in the world, Pandemic Policing (as it is now referred to) has re-engaged the politics, logistics and ethics of policing (Sheptycki, 2020; Jones, 2020; Sheldon, 2021).

Globally, debates on the challenges of policing the pandemic have grown exponentially. On-line discussions organised by a range of constituencies compete for attention. Various scholarly journals have compiled special editions on the topic, debating diverse and fascinating themes. Under the broad rubric of internal organisational challenges, debates have focused on a range of factors (Laufs & Waseem, 2020; Maskály, Ivković & Neyroud, 2021), including the impact of COV-

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2   The Independent Police Investigative Division (formerly the Independent Complaints Directorate) was created in 1997 as part of post-apartheid police reform. IPID is responsible for investigating complaints against the SAPS including death in custody, crimes allegedly committed by police officers, violations of SAPS policy, and citizen dissatisfaction with police service.

ID on crime patterns (Mawby, 2020), the expansion of policing powers and surveillance, and the effects of the adoption of an ethos of accountability in policing (Gentithes & Krent, 2020). Others have considered the effects of the criminalisation of public health on the enforcement role of the police, arguing that differential enforcement of COVID regulations entrenches long standing societal inequalities. The open-ended question, asked at the start of COVID 19, as to whether pandemic policing will yield new opportunities for policing by consent or by force, has been debated in many jurisdictions (Grace, 2021). Across a variety of regions, protracted street battles between police and protestors seem poised to push the pendulum towards adversarial police-community interactions (Mead, 2021). Media coverage of strong-arm police tactics in Africa have tipped the scale more decisively in favour of a model of coercive policing, which may arrest even the modest gains in police legitimacy and accountability (Okech, Mwambari & Olonisakin, 2020).

The Pandemic in South Africa

On Sunday 15 March 2020, a State of National Disaster was declared in South Africa in terms of the Disaster Management Act (DMA). This introduced an initial 21-day nationwide lockdown period that lasted from 21 March to 16 April, and mandated a shutdown of non-essential businesses, stay-at-home orders, a curfew, restriction on movement and the size of gatherings, compulsory mask wearing, and limits on room and vehicle occupancy. The sale of alcohol and tobacco products was temporarily banned, which resulted in 116 legal challenges incurring legal costs of at least R3.4 million (about 200,000 Euro), not including costs orders (Parliamentary Monitoring Group, 2020a). Still, the SAPS was mandated to enforce these highly controversial regulations.

The DMA regulations meant a dramatic expansion of police duties, surveillance, and visibility. The new responsibilities included vehicle check points to limit movement, issuing and checking permits for those authorised for essential travel, conducting high visibility patrols to enforce stay-at-home orders and curfew, enforcing the closure of public spaces including beaches and parks, monitoring the size of public gatherings, checking the occupancy of vehicles and businesses, policing the new black markets created by the alcohol and tobacco bans, and where necessary, imposing fines and arrests for contravention of the regulations. In the first month alone, 12,738 cases were registered

for breaching the lockdown regulations (Parliamentary Monitoring Group, 2020b). To date, over 400,000 people have been arrested for breaching the regulations, which have been amended numerous times since (BusinessTech, 2021).

From the start, there were widespread complaints about selective and heavy-handed enforcement by police and military personnel, particularly in informal urban settlements. By the end of April 2021, there had been 49 allegations of police brutality and at least six cases alleging deaths as a result of police action (Parliamentary Monitoring Group, 2021).

This article is drawn from findings from a national collaborative research project conducted by three academic research teams on behalf of SAPS, supported by the Government Technical Advisory Centre (GTAC) and the National Research Foundation (NRF). The project interviewed SAPS members and representatives of other government departments that collaborated with them before and during the first and second wave of infections. The project explored a number of themes,[3] but we focus here on the interviewees' perceptions and experiences about SAPS's preparedness and effectiveness in dealing with the unique challenges of policing the global pandemic.

Data collection took place between November 2020 and March 2021, and interviewees were selected and approached by the SAPS research division and passed on to the research team once they had agreed to participate, with the understanding that the researchers, although external to SAPS, were authorised to undertake the study. Participants were guaranteed that their responses would be aggregated and reported anonymously.

We present data from 27 interviews across three provinces: 11 interviews from the Western Cape, 7 from the Eastern Cape and 9 from the Northern Cape.[4] Three interviewees had responsibility at the Provincial Joint Command level, and one for human resources at their

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3   Broadly, these themes included: measures implemented under police lockdown and citizen compliance; co-ordinating structures, inter-agency collaboration and intra-organisational strains; the crime reduction effects of lockdown and lessons for the future.

4   Interviewees hailed from the following districts and clusters: Amathole, Douglas, Francis Baard, George, Griekwastad, Harare, Joe Gqabi, Khayelitsha, Langa, Lwandle, Modder Rivier, Namakwa District Office, Nyanga, Pixley Ka Seme, Thembalethu and Worcester.

station. Interviewees who were external to SAPS came from the Departments of Education, Home Affairs, Social Development and Economic Development and Tourism. Four interviewees held the rank of Major General, seven of Brigadier, five of Colonel, three of Lieutenant Colonel, three of Captain, and one of Sergeant.

Policing the pandemic in South Africa

Our data reveals two contrasting narratives about SAPS's preparedness and their overall performance. At first glance, the majority of respondents were impressed by the SAPS's flexibility and overall execution in what were, by all accounts, difficult circumstances. The extent of institutional approval and commendation expressed by the participants (both SAPS and external) was far greater than might be expected, given the long-standing and ongoing media coverage of disarray besetting the organisation, the dysfunctionality in SAPS leadership, the corrosive effects of corruption and media reports on the use of excessive force in the enforcement of lockdown regulations. However, lurking just below the glossy surface of strong coordinating structures, capable leadership and effective command and control, respondents also described an institution barely able to fulfil its typical mandated functions and battling to perform its new role in the context of the pandemic.

To be fair to the evidence, the two narratives did not have equal standing. Views of SAPS as a well-oiled machine engaging the operational challenges of the pandemic were far more robust than views of SAPS as an embattled machine struggling to (externally) enforce a range of unprecedented restrictions while also mitigating the impact of COVID (internally).

We present the two competing narratives, making illustrative use of quotations to capture the respondents' views. How does this glossy narrative emerge at a time when the police organisation and the wider criminal justice system were fraught with such tensions and riddled with so many problems? In the concluding section, we offer some suggestions for how to make sense of the two narratives that emerged from this research against the contextual background of current strains confronting the South African police.

Table 1: Summary of Competing Narratives

The well-oiled police machine	*An embattled machine in a 'hot' climate*
Clarity of purpose COVID seen as just another set of regulations to enforce SAPS draw on long experience – for example, Soccer World Cup, routine protests	'**Caught with our pants down**' No warning, no training – make it up they went along DMA Regulations keep changing creating a lack of clarity
Utilise hierarchy and command Invoke mindsets of centralised paramilitary institution Able to activate organisational systems (Command Council; NATJoints) Invoke routine operational practices (visible policing; surveillance; intelligence)	**Unclear regulations** Constantly changing regulations as lockdown levels shifted, often overnight. Confusion about (new) regulations within the organisation, implementing partners and in communities
Intra-organisational strengths 'Capable' leadership SAPS as enjoying 'embedded' authority 'Hands on' oversight and active legal guidance in the field Ongoing briefings and proactive troubleshooting	**Dealing with uncertainties & challenges** Invisibility of SAPS as frontline workers Rhetorical question: Does 'the machine' care about street level enforcers? The expanded mandate crowds out normal policing duties as they deal with issuing and checking permits, fining and arresting people for non-compliance, doing high visibility patrols and enforcing curfew, closing beaches and parks etc.
Adaptability of SAPS Manage their regular duties amidst a rapidly expanded mandate – they are fighting a war on two fronts: 'war on crime' and 'war on Covid' Able to 'make do' with available PPE Improvise as needed Tap into other available resources Rationalise resources – do more with less All hands on deck – cancel leave; office bound staff deployed; specialist capacity deployed Adapt shift systems and working from home	'**Health' of SAPS** Fear of the virus, fear of one another COVID fatigue and burnout – some exasperation and resentment Supply chain management of PPE problematic Constrained capacity 50/50 rotation in office occupancy, isolation and decontamination after positive tests, infections and deaths Decline in service delivery – units out of action, stations closed, call response times increase

The well-oiled police machine	An embattled machine in a 'hot' climate
Let's Collaborate! Using a 'whole of society' approach Ride on the wave of inter-sectoral collaboration Everyone comes to the party – everyone fulfils their responsibilities Involve community-based organisations, community policing structures and local leaders, traditional authorities and neighbourhood watches Also included unusual 'partners' – taxi associations, churches, usually-reluctant community members, community radio	**Ultimately responsible, risk without support** Underneath surface are misalignments and tensions Some departments 'missing in action' Courts refused to process fines – police efforts sabotaged Encountering resistance – (mis)trust of the politics of inequality In townships compliance is 'fake' – once the police leave the scene, the masks come off – playing 'cat and mouse' Urban/rural and over-time differences in how well stations are able to deal with the challenges of facing Covid.
Proactive communication up and down the chain Reports at Command Councils and Joint Command Councils WhatsApp groups at local level create connection Intelligence reports at strategic levels can be used Information as part of enforcement becomes part of SAPS's active community engagement	**Systemic problem with communication systems** Poor digital readiness Lack of integrated data management system Rural stations hard to reach with rapidly changing regulations Newly-central information dissemination role

Narrative 1: The well-oiled police machine

Our interview data projected the image of a modern bureaucracy with competent civil administrators responding with an enviable degree of professionalism to the exceptional circumstances and challenges of the pandemic. Our interviewees felt that SAPS was organisationally well equipped to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic which was, in their view, a mere variation on a familiar theme:

"As SAPS, we deal with disasters and contingencies all the time. So, we have plans in place for various [eventualities]. For example, a bomb blast, a flood, you know … natural disasters. When something happens, we are able to, within a short space of time, mobilise our personnel. We have those contingency plans. So, when this came about, it wasn't something that caught us completely off guard, although we hadn't dealt with this kind of disaster, to this extent, prior to the virus. But the principle of the plans that follow our standard operating procedures are in place". (P16)

South Africa remained in varying degrees of lockdown since March 2020, with periodic lessening, and occasional tightening of restrictions on movement, travel, work, tobacco and alcohol. As the lockdown levels shifted, so too did the DMA regulations -- sometimes overnight. This in turn required constant reorientation for both the police and citizens to what was (or was not) allowed. Despite such fluidity, the interviewees emphasised that the police organisation could rely on standard operating procedures and existing management structures in adjusting to regulatory changes. Immediately upon the release of each successive set of regulations, these were cascaded down the ordinary channels. SAPS's tight chain of communication also facilitated communication from the executive epicentre down the bureaucracy:

"An announcement is made by the President, and it is followed by a Government Gazette. We look at that Gazette… So immediately when it is distributed, it is distributed everywhere. You get it on the emails from head office, from departments, to provinces and to operatives and we operationalise all the regulations that were gazetted." (P04)

Interpretation of the regulations required active involvement of the legal department of SAPS to guide operational divisions, and such advice was said to be readily forthcoming:

"So, we took that as abnormal times. We know that in the enforcement of the regulations, there might also be trampling on the constitutional rights of individuals. And we tried to mitigate that by making sure that our legal service division is advising operatives in terms of each and every aspect of our regulation. The legality of any of the policy action is guided by the commanders on the ground and informed by our legal division." (P04)

The implementation of the DMA required that SAPS link up with a range of other stakeholders, both inside and outside government. All interviewees emphasised the critical importance of long-established operational and intelligence structures as mechanisms for uniting government departments 'under one roof' and coordinating the response to the COVID-19 pandemic. An interviewee described: "Everyone is there, you know; for purposes of planning jointly" (P15).

The existing SAPS structures operate at national, provincial and district levels and have established administrative procedures to communicate decisions, coordinate responses and operationalise strategies. SAPS co-chaired the Provincial Joint Operational and Intelligence Structures, playing a leadership role and fulfilling a number of functions like "reporting, decision-making, monitoring, and troubleshooting" (P02). These structures, which had previously met monthly to coordinate security-related responses (especially around major events or protests), co-opted additional stakeholders and began to meet daily (and later, twice a week). The familiarity between the role-players meant that it was "not necessary to re-invent the wheel, because we are actually quite used to each other" (CC P09). Interviewees described that this system worked quite smoothly and with a high level of professionalism, which made it possible to utilise capacities and limited resources as efficiently as possible. Participants felt that SAPS's leadership understood the leadership role and could operate effectively in that space. As a non-SAPS interviewee described, "I must say those generals... I was impressed by their lateral understanding of government operations2 (P26).

Especially at the provincial level, participants gave the impression of an efficient machine that operated with a sense of purpose in fighting the pandemic, and which was useful "for unlocking or unblocking blockages that would hamper the efforts" (P26). At the more localised level, too, the Joint forum was described as "really very effective as we ended up sharing ideas also relevant for the future. Everything was running quite smoothly" (P12).

The chairs of these coordinating and planning structures (in most instances held by SAPS) enjoyed an 'embedded authority' that predated the pandemic response, and created a hierarchy that could be tasked with implementation:

> *"I have been the chairperson of the Joints structure for some time. The authority that lies within the chair has never been questioned. And it's not even being questioned now. So once the Joint structure takes a decision it becomes compelling... then the execution thereof is not debated. It's got to be done"* (P09).

Many were impressed by the level of organisation and discipline they observed in the way that the police chaired these fora. A participant from outside SAPS

noted that there was "actually not much scope for negotiations... the Provincial Commissioner is not to be challenged" (P26). Another respondent marvelled at the speed at which decisions were made and the capacity that police leadership exhibited for follow up and follow through of such decisions:

> *"Issues are escalated immediately. A phone is picked up and the report is needed within 24 hours. And then the next day a report is requested on what is the outcome of whatever happened the previous day"* (P17).

Participants noted that the COVID response fostered close working relationships between SAPS and other government departments such as Home Affairs, Public Works, Transport, Health, and Justice, as well as the South African National Defence Force (SANDF), other local law enforcement agencies and provincial liquor boards. SAPS officers described the level of intra-governmental cooperation and collegiality as very high. Although there had previously been 'no proper teamwork amongst all the external role players,' during COVID they were "forced to work together" (P25). These stronger professional networks could be leveraged as the need arose as role-players knew counterparts "in person, by name. It's easy now to pick up a phone to say, I'm struggling with this and that. The responses are more positive than in the past" (P25). Interdepartmental cooperation and collaboration therefore created a degree of shared responsibility with the police, as one interviewee described:

> *"Outside of COVID when it came to regulations and crime and lawlessness, you know, it was just the police. Now you find that institutions are all taking responsibility for what is happening because they all have a role to play, [and] they now understand their role"* (P02).

The close collaboration with other government stakeholders, gave these 'outsiders' an unusually close view of police operations, and SAPS's capacity to gather intelligence around COVID related matters and to act strategically on such information. These participants felt that it was "intriguing to hear just what is going on in the police … [SAPS was] briefing everybody, and there was intelligence reporting and reports from regions about what's happening" (P14). Other interviewees also expressed a new appreciation for the structure that SAPS brought to the response:

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"Yes, I think I was quite impressed. And me and my colleague actually said to one another, you know what, we always thought a policeman is just a policeman [….] But they are very structured, and there is a clear rhythm in how they do things" (P26).

There was also extensive collaboration with stakeholders in the community, including non-governmental organisations, community policing structures and neighbourhood watches, local political and traditional authorities, and religious and business leaders to increase their reach and improve the flow of information to communities about lockdown regulations and how to slow infections. Interviewees described that under conditions of COVID they operationalised a 'whole of society' approach – something that has featured prominently in policy but has, to date, been difficult to put into practice. Enlisting the support of community-based organisations in this way created new incentives for collaboration and yielded new dividends for police -community interaction. The spirit of horizontal cooperation also encouraged community members to assist SAPS in identifying transgressors:

"I think COVID brought us together as different stakeholders […] You see those people that were assisting us to distribute pamphlets, [now] just call me directly. When they see a church that is meeting against the lockdown regulations … the taverns, the shebeens, the parties. I mean, you know, we Africans … we always respect traditional events or ceremonies, but [the community] were reporting it. They were saying we don't want these things. So, the communication, and the fact that people started to talk to us, because they could see that [COVID] is becoming very dangerous" (P21).

COVID required human resources to be maximised so as to do street level policing. All staff leave was cancelled, and, in many places, normally office-bound staff were deployed to assist with the enforcement of the new regulations. Many of the respondents commented on the support that police leaders provided in the actual field of policing. As one station commander observed: "I did not sit in an air-conditioned office. Instead, I went out on the streets myself to observe and participate" (P11). Another underlined the importance of his role in ensuring police accountability:

"As commanding officer, I am accountable to the province. And the importance of accountable leadership is to ensure police in the streets follow the rules" (P11).

All told, this narrative of policing the pandemic presented a picture of an adaptable institution that was about as well prepared as was possible under the extraordinary circumstances. The Provincial Joint structures – so key to Pandemic Policing - functioned like a security apparatus. The logic it adhered to was that of the 'war room'. Intelligence is tabled and carefully considered, operational strategies are crafted and responsibilities are apportioned. Decisions are made, instructions are given and reports received back. Decisions and strategies designed at the upper levels are cascaded down the chain all the way to the level of 'foot soldiers' on the street responsible for enforcing regulations. On the face of it, an impressive picture of the interlocking features of a 'well-oiled machine' working seamlessly in enforcing COVID regulations.

Narrative 2: an embattled machine?

A second narrative that emerged from the interviews spoke to the novelty of responding to a public health crisis of unseen proportions, the unpreparedness of SAPS and the many strains and misalignments experienced along the way. In reality, the police were placed on the frontlines of the pandemic, responsible for enforcing regulations that encroached on lifestyles more generally and on the survival of poor communities particularly. In this narrative, the organisation scrambled to make things up as it went along and struggled to meet the range of new demands made on it. From these reflections emerged an organisation stretched beyond capacity. The pandemic added a host of new duties on top of SAPS's ordinary mandate of preventing and responding to crime. By most accounts, the expanded mandate of policing during this time was a major change as SAPS' core mandate remained intact (namely detecting, investigating and preventing crime) with the added responsibilities of policing COVID-19. For some participants, COVID was not simply an 'add-on', but displaced SAPS' score responsibilities (in part because crime itself declined under stringent curfews and lockdown). As one participant described:

"You know, you could write a book about last year, because the experience changed from normal policing, and then we have to adapt swiftly to the situation that we're experiencing now in terms of the COVID virus [...] Our job is to do crime prevention and to do investigation. But now the mandate was extended …. we need

to enforce compliance in terms of the regulations" (P19).

This dual set of responsibilities made for an exceptionally difficult balancing act. SAPS members had to ensure that people were confined to their houses, monitor the size of gatherings, act on intelligence to monitor indoor activities, monitor taxi occupancy, issue permits for travel, curb the sale of liquor and cigarettes, close the beaches and other public spaces, ensure that members and the public were kept as safe as possible from infection – all while still attending to the usual police work of taking statements and attending to calls for help and the crime-related needs of the community.

At the same time, the pandemic introduced numerous constraints on the organisation's functioning. Stations were required to adopt a shift system to limit office occupancy to 50% of normal capacity. Those who could were encouraged to work from home. But incidences of suspected infection could place a vehicle, a building, or even an entire police station out of commission for days as there needed to be testing, precautionary isolation, and decontamination. This had a severe impact on service delivery.

A key challenge was finding the resources to manage the newly expanded duties. Government mandated that SAPS should oversee the issuing permits authorising movement or travel under lockdown which created major strain, as SAPS was "responsible for the crime as well now burdened by the issuing of permits now the whole day" (P24). There was also 'the great operational change' (P10) of needing to monitor the size of gatherings, enforce alcohol and cigarette regulations, staff vehicle check-points 24/7 – all while ensuring that staff were informed of, and abiding by, the constantly changing regulations. The expanded mandate of policing necessitated moving personnel accustomed to office work to outdoor operational duties, "so that they can assist in terms of enforcing the compliance on the disaster management regulation" (P19). This was a major adjustment. One participant had not worked operationally for 25 years, but suddenly had to adjust to working 12-hour night shifts.

SAPS members reported working in a climate of constant fear and uncertainty, concerned about the very real risks of illness and death as infection numbers climbed. Participants described confronting confusion,

shock, frustration, and fear among both members and the communities they serve. In dealing with the public, police members were now hyper-aware of risk. Interviewees described suddenly feeling afraid of things they had previously done without any thought, like sharing a pen that had been used by a member of the public. They described the discomfort and indignity of having to remove their uniforms at the end of a shift "in the yard or garage", in the hope of protecting their families from infection (P02). This was all in addition to the usual strains of the job, as "on a constant basis, you had to face an unknown, an unseen enemy, then, through the pandemic, in addition to criminal activity" (P08).

Colleagues were now afraid of each other, as "you might have the Coronavirus, I might have the Coronavirus" (P19). There was a reduction in collegiality and co-operation, as people were reluctant to move from their areas of comfort and safety. Both physically and mentally, police felt that "now there is this thin layer in between us" (P19). Some members were perceived to be taking "advantage of COVID because now it was justifiable for everyone, for anyone to be at home without being questioned" (P21). Widespread physical and mental exhaustion was evident, as "SAPS members are human beings, we also suffer from mental fatigue" (P08) but there was no opportunity to take leave.

Maintaining performance and morale was a strain on senior members, who had to provide emotional support and motivate their members, to "stand there and pretend as if COVID will not kill you, because had I allowed it there would not have been a police station" (P21).

While the public and other government representatives had room to complain and resist unpopular regulations, the police had no choice but to follow orders and do what needed to be done to enforce the law. However, the regulations were in constant flux, sometimes changing overnight. Many of the prohibitions and rules were also unpopular and at times even SAPS members themselves balked at their enforcement. As one participant described:

"You know, in the 38-and-a-half years that I'm in this organisation, this is the first time where I had to be on the beach … where there is a little child with a spade and a bucket... [and] I must say to that child, you can't [be on] the beach" (P16).

The enforcement of the DMA regulations caused dissatisfaction among citizens who "have to be told like kids what to do and what not to do" (P19). This was especially true of the enforcement of alcohol and cigarette regulations, where "they looked at SAPS as if SAPS was responsible for their not drinking" (P22) and for spoiling the fun, but also around movement restrictions and public gatherings. The police found themselves at odds with traditional ways of marking important events such as funerals and weddings, which often involve large numbers of attendees and may require interprovincial travel. Although curbing these events was seen as unavoidable because "drastic measures had to be taken" to save lives (P15), this was a major new cause of conflict with the community.

According to this second narrative, inter-departmental cooperation was also far from seamless. SAPS members complained that all departmental representatives took their responsibilities seriously, describing that "there were challenges, because all the role players are not always there… if those other departments are not there, then things are hanging in the air" (P25).

Inter-departmental misalignment was also an issue. For example, a number of participants (especially in the Northern Cape) note that the courts were inconsistent in terms of fines they imposed for infractions. Many courts seemed uninterested in seeing through any prosecutions under the DMA. Interviewees described that courts were "sending back all our documentation, as in they weren't going to clog the system… because people weren't appearing" (P08). Because the "courts did not take the fines seriously", and "said they were not interested" (P11), most of the cases were withdrawn by prosecutors.

Another debilitating factor was SAPS's abysmally poor digital readiness, which meant that they were not able to use technology to support communication and operations in the way that many other large organisations were able to do. Because the role-players in the security structures were so accustomed to only meeting in-person, the absence of synchronised technology capacity within the Provincial Joints hampered their ability to connect with other government departments. An external participant explained:

"I think it took awfully long for [SAPS] to move to Zoom or Teams. I found it weird and strange, because whenever there were presentations [by other departments], we didn't see it. You see the police are linked by their own sort of TV network. It was a technology thing, where it is proprietary. We don't have working cameras and things. So finally, like literally last week, which was about nine months after we started, we got into Teams." (P14)

Interviewees also described how technology proved a challenge for "far flung, the deep rural police stations" that "most of the time, they will have challenges in terms of receiving communications that are sent through the emails…. So, we had to try to minimise the gap" (P15). Given the rapidly changing regulations, the volatile policing environment and the interviewees' emphasis on timeous, up-to-date communications as critical to the success of the policing project at the time, the urban/rural deficiencies in technology are one example of the cracks that lie just below the surface of SAPS's own operational assessment.

The narrative of the SAPS as an embattled machine spoke explicitly to the challenges the SAPS, as frontline service responders, confronted in the context of the pandemic. Such conversations serve as an important reminder of the context-specific challenges COVID-19 brought into the policing field and how the police's obligations had to be fulfilled despite the existing strains of an organisation riddled with tensions, and with compromised capacities to deliver services under even the best of 'normal' conditions.

Conclusion

How best to make sense of the two narratives that emerged from the qualitative research against the contextual background of current strains confronting the South African police?

In the first instance, the dominance of the view of SAPS as an effective, accountable and legitimate actor responsible for the enforcement of lockdown regulations, must be understood as the outcome of two sets of influences. The first influence relates to the politics of a research project (conducted under the auspices of the South African government research and support agencies and executed by the research division of the South Africa Police Service) that invited senior police leaders to reflect on their own organisation's capacity to undertake Pandemic Policing. Under these condi-

tions, police officials will understandably be inclined to emphasise their strategic, managerial, and operational capacities, and point out the available capacities have been harnessed through concerted effort to operationalise a martial-type plan of action. In the second instance, the narrative of a functioning machine doing 'battle' with the virus, can be linked to the cultural mindsets embedded in paramilitary police institutions like the SAPS. This mindset, we argue, is further enhanced by the wider processes of securitisation that typically accompanies the policing of emergencies. Making 'war' on the pandemic, much like making 'war' on crime and drugs, requires a plan of action, designed at the centre, transferred through provincial and district structures, to be enforced by street level bureaucrats under the watchful eye of vigilant commanders. It is this depiction that defined the dominant narrative.

The second narrative, exposing the wide range of difficulties that frontline responders faced, surfaces a picture that shows SAPS working with constrained capacity, exasperated and fearful of the virus, the communities they serve and one another. The narrative makes visible fissures within the organisation itself, silos between SAPS and other criminal justice system actors, and a deep mistrust by the people SAPS serves. This narrative surfaces many of the same critiques that have been levelled at SAPS pre-COVID: that it is a dysfunctional organisation that has little accountability, leadership or discipline, and that lacks authority or legitimacy

in the eyes of the country's citizens. The specifics of the COVID policing narratives are therefore but a variation on an all-too-familiar theme.

We propose that the narratives be viewed as complementary rather than contradictory. Certainty co-exists with ambiguity -- more so in moments of crises. Constructions of a lean and mean machine have a particular appeal in contexts of uncertainty, when institutions dithering on the edge of a cliff are called upon to contain a deadly virus.

Furthermore, the co-existence of these views is reflective of a wider existential dilemma confronting the South African state. The yawning disparity between the grand social contract as embodied in a transformative Constitution and the messy praxis of governance that have evolved since 1994 now confronts the seemingly insatiable, greedy impulses of a kleptocracy. Caught between centrifugal and splintering dynamics, those called upon to enforce lockdown regulations are given a truly daunting task. In the process of engaging that task they project a unitary sense of overall purpose and of functional capacity that smoothes over the crumbling interior. This projection of clarity, certainty and capacity as the uniformed guardians of social order under threat run parallel to another in which ambivalence, doubt and vulnerability dominate. Those two narratives, we conclude, are but two sides of the same coin.

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Policing in Times of the Pandemic –
Police-Public relations in the interplay of global pandemic response and individual discretionary scope

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Abstract:

The emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic in Europe during March 2020 marked a fissure in many areas of the society, including policing. As a means for containing increasing outbreaks of the virus, almost every government in Europe resorted to issuing strict lockdown measures, essentially halting all public life. Consequently, the police have been tasked with enforcing novel legal rules such as mask wearing, social distancing and curfews. However, due to the nature of the pandemic crisis, the enacted measures were often issued on short notice, leaving little time for legal scrutiny, nor for adequate communication – to the public or law enforcement agencies. The proposed paper – which is based on a project currently submitted for review – specifically looks at this intersection of hastily issued laws and their enforcement on the ground level through police forces and the subsequent issues that have resulted from this. Starting from an organisational studies point of view, we consider that the problems with "policing the pandemic" might emerge as a result from a three-level governance of pandemic response – the governmental/legal level; the organisational structure of the police; ground level policing. This means that issues that ensue due to unclear legislation might trickle down onto the ground level work of police, where individual officers need to enact these measures in the interaction with the public and within their own discretionary scope. Large scale pandemic response thus rests on the shoulders of ground level police discretion, which has the potential of creating frictions in the police-public relations. Problematising this issue and understanding how this might materialise in practice can help to better understand how these issues can be mitigated – in the current pandemic as well as for future instances of crisis as well.

Keywords: police discretion; police management; COVID-19 measures; pandemic, police-public relations

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Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic and the measures taken in response have been an immense shock to routine processes and operational sequences of societies all over the world.[22] The near spontaneous implementation of measures in the early hours of pandemic-response required almost synchronous action by the entirety of society, its institutions, and the different positions in organisational hierarchies. As the virus had been largely ignored by European governments in January 2020, the need for immediate action in Austria became urgent by March of that year. The complexity of the network of agents that had to act in a short time period, is likely not only to have tested the limits of routine chains of command and law-making, but also traversed these limits, rendering the existing system of checks and balances (temporarily) inoperable and bringing to light fissures in the relationship between the state, its institutions, and its citizens.

Despite complex differences between countries affected by COVID-19, a near universal reaction was the use of police as central agents in pandemic response. Arguably, we have witnessed what continues to be the first truly global policing event (Sheptycki, 2020) as many countries introduced police measures to contain the virus and gave police new powers and resources to implement them. This rapid mobilization of police has not, however, ensued without incurring challenges and resulting in significant problems:

- the hurried implementation of countermeasures has violated fundamental rights;
- the lacking precision in laws and statutory orders has granted vast discretionary scope to the police and has led to insecurity and confusion among the citizens,
- the use of police in pandemic response has raised questions on the structural (in)efficacy of addressing a health crisis by means of policing.

Currently, the pandemic measures are slowly being lifted across countries in Europe, while at the same time projections and models consider that pandemic measures likely will return at some point or another in the upcoming months. Against this backdrop, a critical reflection on the past events is considered crucial. Within this article, we develop a framework for such a reflection, which must encompass the complex interaction between, and within, the three spheres involved during police use in pandemic response:

1. The sphere of governance, including an analysis of pandemic response strategies and communication.
2. The sphere of law and law-making, as a prerequisite for upholding democratic governance during the implementation of measures, and as the mediating instance between commands issued to police by the legislative branch.
3. The sphere of policing in practice, focusing on the organizational dynamics of police as an institution, and their relationship to the concrete actions of multi-level police work in pandemic response.

A central, cross-cutting facet of such an analysis is the scrutiny of the development of this interaction along a temporal dimension. The rapid onset of pandemic response represents a rupture of usual operational sequences, and the succession of actions and reactions in each of the three spheres also provides structural insights into their relationships and interaction. Undertaking an analysis of the complex interplay within and between these spheres along a temporal dimension will allow to address fundamental questions arising in this historic conjecture. This paper argues the necessity of adopting such an analytical approach and develops a conceptual and methodological framework that is able to address structural dimensions underlying the complex phenomenon of policing the pandemic. We will show that the sound empirical study of the development of activities on the levels of governance, laws and law-making, and police actions on each level of organizational hierarchies is necessary, to allow for the reconstruction of multi-level pandemic response and the identification of fundamental problems that occurred therein.

In our hypothesis section of this article, we consider that reflecting on the use of police in pandemic does not only provide us with learnings on how to manage a pandemic within these multi-level spheres: Particularly concerning the increase of police discretion during the pandemic, we hypothesise that this should be seen as a function of the limits of the democratic repertoire of action. The pandemic has provided a – short – window of observation into existing structures in governance and an ever-present discrepancy between law in books and law in action. We argue this discrepancy has presented both as a necessary tool for pandemic response, as well as serving to externalise problem-solving from policy level to ground-level policing.

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2   This paper is based on a national research proposal currently submitted for review at the FWF Austrian Science Fund

Unravelling the pandemic measures – evidences of limits of the democratic repertoire of action

Analysing and reflecting upon the measures that followed the rise of COVID-19 infection cases across Europe in March 2020, significant limits of the democratic repertoire of action of these procedures have become visible. Along a temporal dimension, it has become apparent that the necessity of simultaneous responses has put a strain on the traditional chains of command and checks and balances. Many of the measures enacted by the Austrian federal government throughout the pandemic seemed to be defined by a constant time pressure. This led to necessary responses by various (state) institutions, which appeared to be largely informed by the same daily governmental press conferences and communiqués, partially interpreted differently by each institution. This synchronous action on the part of a most diverse group of actors - such as management levels of the police, uniformed officers on the street, entire hospitals, individual health-care specialists and providers, schools, kindergartens, places of work, and so on - caused the discretionary scope of individual actors to rapidly expand in the initial wave of countermeasures. Chains of command, accountability and, not least, the rule of law both from above and below, lagged behind.

These strains on the normal chains of commands are insofar problematic, as they also challenge the separation of powers, in the traditional conception of western democratic nation states (Berka, 2016). The legislative, the executive and the jurisdiction are intended to function independently of each other and to control one other, politically and legally. Though this indisputably lies at the core of modern state theory, the full realization of the separation of powers in practice is never fully achieved. Instead, the constant negotiation of this ideal in its practical implementation must be the focus of scrutiny for any analysis of democratic governance.

Particularly relevant to the pandemic crisis, one result of the principle of separation of powers as it pertains to the legislative and the executive, is that the power to pass statutory orders by the executive is strictly limited by laws. For such a legal system, it is rather unusual that measures containing fundamental rights infringements as broadly as the COVID-19 measures are passed as statutory orders by ministers who are part of the administration, rather than by laws passed in parliament.

This meant that parliamentary rights of the opposition were bypassed, and statutory orders could be passed (and changed) more quickly than laws.

This applies especially to the police, who cannot act without a legal basis that determines a purpose and a concrete competence to act. The classic role of the police as an institution of the executive is to implement the law. However, due to the powers of the police, the immediacy of measures in direct contact with citizens, powers of discretion, and the need to frequently make decisions quickly on the spot, the role of the police is never purely executive. Along those lines, Benjamin (1977) posits, that the institution of the police combines an executive and legislative power (ibid., p.189). This tension within the role of police in a democratic system of separated powers and the blurring of lines and roles in the practice of policing are abundantly visible in the response to the pandemic, clearly demarcating the limits to the democratic repertoire of action. Pertinent examples for such limits are the disproportionate number, and partially wrongful issuance, of fines by police, lacking clarity and misleading communication of statutory orders (Kopetzki, 2020), brevity of time between issuance and enactment of legal measures, and the subsequent declaration of some legal measures as unlawful by the Constitutional High Court (V 363/2020-25, 14.07.2020).

The unclear and rushed law-making has also significant impact on the proper functioning of the rule of law in general, as citizens can only be subjected to laws that they can know and understand. In the course of the pandemic in Austria, multiple examples emerged in which citizens were on the receiving end of unclear and rushed law-making, with little possibilities to circumvent unlawful acting. In late August 2020, a last-minute executive order was issued, changing the requirements for entry into Austria, creating the necessity for extensive border checks. During the hight of the summer travel period citizens living in Austria as well as European travellers just crossing through Austria were subjected to excessive waiting times at the southern border in Carinthia. As both the border police as well as travellers had no chance to prepare for the sudden changes in requirements, the waiting time for entry into Austria ran up to 12 hours, with police being understaffed to check every incoming vehicle and passport, and to issue quarantine orders for citizens living in Austria (ORF.at). Similar problems occurred in May 2021, when the ease of travel restrictions was

wrongfully communicated as the necessary executive order was not yet issued, leading to congestions at the borders and people travelling back to Austria still requiring quarantining at home (Tomaselli, 2021).

The process of understanding, the communication of information, news and media takes time. This means that laws must be public and understandable before they come into effect. To fine and punish behaviour without allowing time for citizens to get to know and understand the new rules, is fundamentally unjust. As the examples above show, this has been neglected in the case of COVID-19 measures in Austria. The same need of time for the understanding and putting into practice also applies to police. Here, additional time must be factored in for each step information requires to be communicated along the organisational hierarchy. How this was handled in practice when information about new rules came first through press conferences and only days later as a statutory order, is part of the questions that must be addressed.

Further evidences of limits of the democratic repertoire of action in the pandemic measures were observed through the role of the police and their practice of policing the pandemic. The constant change of pandemic containment measures, different rules on "who was allowed to do what where", as well as the shifting epidemiological criteria have put a strain on the police, as well as their relationship with the public. Certainly, as a result of the – seemingly – novelty of the situation, it has been unclear to what extend certain containment measures would lead to positive results from an epidemiological point of view. For example, in Austria as well as elsewhere in Europe, in the early months of the pandemic, the criterion for "public health" was defined through the basic reproduction number, which needed to be kept below "1" at all costs. Later during the year, the 7-day incidence was used to provide an evidence of public health. Furthermore, the threshold of the required 7-day incidence also changed several times as means to justify measures. This example shows the – what we would call – experimental nature of the pandemic response, challenging the traditional democratic repertoire of action, where it is clear for citizens and law enforcement alike, why certain measures are issued and fined. In the case of the COVID-19 measures, the public has a hard time to follow the (il-)legality of their actions as well as the rationale behind the measures, hence also affecting the legitimacy of police intervention.

Which also appears to be connected to a mismatch between the problem of a health crisis and the actors to solve this problem in the form of the police. Police as an institution is not intended, and in many respects – like their training and focus on criminal behaviour and violent measures – ill-suited, for response to national health crises, and more so global pandemics. Nevertheless, one function of this institution makes it a logical candidate as an actor charged with policing the pandemic: Its role in the exercise of enforcing of public order. The specific, perceived necessity of social control in this historic moment appeared to relate to two functions in particular. Firstly, as a means of pandemic-response in itself, with the goal of inhibiting the spread of the virus, and secondly, its ability to deliver the maintenance of social order perceived as a particularly urgent necessity in a moment of fundamental disruption. Thus, by tasking the police as enforcers of public order and social control, governments across Europe have externalised the problem-solving to ground-level policing. The unclear laws and executive orders inevitably lead to a widened discretionary scope in policing. Again, examples have shown that this externalization has been deliberately chosen. In the policing of the November curfew ground-level police were explicitly charged with ruling over the credibility of citizens' justifications for being outside on a case-by-case basis (derstandard.at, 31.10.2020).

The increase in police discretion and the externalization of problem solving adds additional strains on the police work in practice as well as on the police-public relationship. The responsibility for ensuring public health is contradictory to the – invisible – threat to the individual police officers' personal safety and health (Alcadipani, 2020). At the same time, the public has lived through one of the rare cases of being under general suspicion, just by being outside. Again, certainly in the early stages of the pandemic, reports of individual officers fining people who were sitting outside on their own had emerged. This also shows in the number of fines issued – 17.417 fines against COVID-19 restriction measures, solely in the first three weeks, from mid-March until early April 2020 (Rösner, 2020). Many fines, that were declared unjustified upon appeal (kurier.at, 03.07.2020), and to a similar extend the declaration of some of the general legal measures as unlawful, as shown above.

In combination, all these issues have certainly put a strain on the police-public relationship, which – in its

more extreme form – has shown in the partially violent protests that had emerged against the COVID-19 measures in late 2020 and early 2021. The collection of these evidences thus serves as our rationale of why it is not only necessary to analyse both the measures and their effects, but also try to address structural dimensions underlying the complex phenomenon of policing the pandemic.

## The three spheres of "policing the pandemic" and its temporal dimension: A methodological Framework

Contemporary theories of democratic governance have developed the idea of a multi-level structure linking agents from different sectors (public and private) and levels (from European to communal) to map the complex workings of incremental policy processes. However, in a crisis situation such as the COVID-pandemic, this model, based on mutual alignment and consensual coordination of different interests and rationalities, is put under severe stress. Declaring a (European, national) state of emergency, time consuming dispersed routines of coordination can be replaced by a top-down mode of governance, expanding executive powers and curtailing the constitutional division of power. Elements of such a shift were visible in many countries, including Austria.

A sound methodological framework, able to do justice to the complexity of the developments within this multi-level structure, must include the analysis of three central dimensions of policing the pandemic (as shown in figure 1). Firstly, it must encompass the interaction between the spheres of governance, law and law-making, and policing in practice. The investigation of governing the pandemic must thereby include not only the specific response strategies developed on policy level, but also the modes of communication employed, as well as points in time and specific addresses of the communication of policy measures. Particularly in the early hours of pandemic response, the sphere of governance must be studied in its interaction with the sphere of law and law-making as a prerequisite for upholding democratic principles, and as the mediating instance for orders issued to police by the legislative branch. Only this context, can the sphere of police and practices of policing during the pandemic be adequately examined.

Secondly, an examination of the limits to the democratic repertoire of action as it pertains to police work during the pandemic, requires an analysis of the inter-

Figure 1: The three spheres involved during police use in pandemic response.
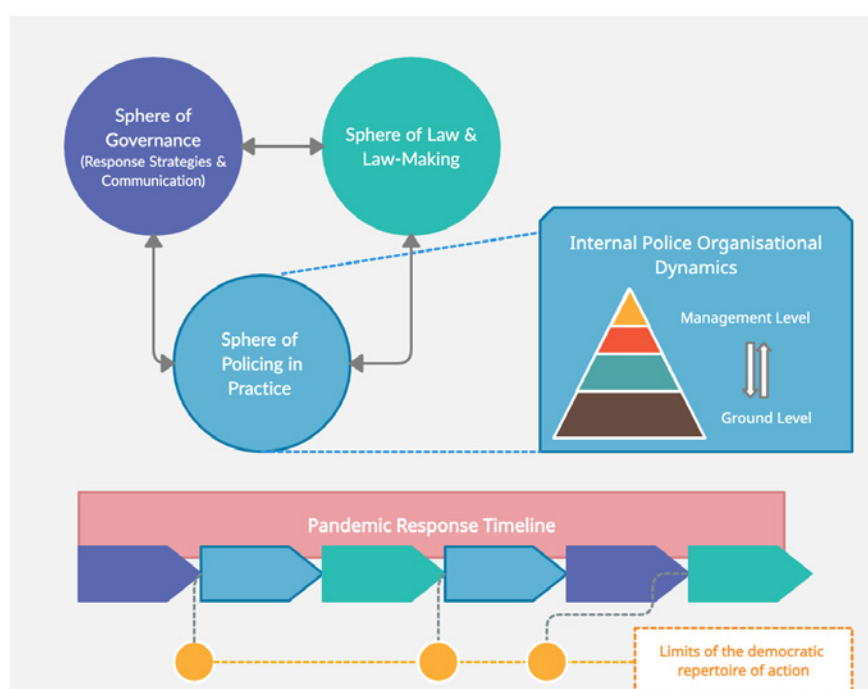
nal organisational dynamics of police as an institution. This must involve an investigation of the stress experienced by, and possible disruption of, chains-of-command and the system of checks and balances in the context of the rapid implementation of pandemic response measures. At the same time, such an analysis will afford insights into the centrality of on-the-ground problem solving conducted by police officers during the implementation of hurried response measures issued on policy level. Investigating the communication of ground-level police officers with superiors within police hierarchies, policy level and judiciary, as well as the interaction with citizens on ground-level, will make visible, not only into the structural significance of police discretionary scopes for the implementation of pandemic response measures, but also offer insights into challenges for public-police relations in times of COVID-19.

Finally, the third dimension significant to any analysis of policing the pandemic is the role and effect of temporality. This is central to an understanding of policing the pandemic, particularly in its causal relation to the limits of the democratic repertoire of action revealed in pandemic response. The synchronous action on the part of a most diverse group of actors necessitated a rapid expansion of the discretionary scope of individual actors during the initial wave of countermeasures. Chains of command, accountability and the rule of law, lagged behind. The specific condition of societies under threat by the COVID-19 virus has been a driver of "highly securitized measures, … and increased powers of police enforcement" (Stott, et al. 2020: p 1). This resulted in the contradictory simultaneous manifestation of a top-down mode of governance on the one hand, and a radically increased discretionary scope in policing on the other. We hypothesise, that a significant portion of the problems emerging within policing the pandemic may be traced back to this contradiction.

To capture this dimension, temporality must play a key methodological role. Early measures in particular left insufficient time for implementation along routine chains of command and rule of law. In this context, the autonomous exercise of the police's own power and a blurring of roles were plainly evident within the new discretionary scopes provided. As the months passed and the initial hurried reactions were afforded time for re-assessment and revision, problematic elements in the practice of policing the pandemic appeared to remain unaddressed. While the urgency of pandemic

response persisted, the necessity for spontaneity in processes waned. When working from the assumption that deficits in chains of command and the rule of law were an inevitable result of the necessary spontaneity of response, a gradual return to the democratic repertoire of actions over time would be expected. The fact that these problematic elements in the use of police remain the same during the subsequent curfews, suggests that more is being revealed than the mere result of necessary spontaneity.

An analysis of the limits of the democratic repertoire of actions must trace the progression and development of problematic elements in pandemic response over time. The focus must be on instances where such problematic elements persist, as well the question of whether this persistence reveals a limit to the repertoire of actions that cannot be explained solely through the necessary spontaneity of action. In short, the methodological application of temporality in this context reveals the origin of these limits in the structural relationship between the spheres of governance, laws and law-making, and policing within democratic rule of law.

Structural dimensions of policing the pandemic: Initial hypotheses on the role of police its effect on police-public relations

The insight into the structural dimensions of policing the pandemic afforded by such a methodological framework, makes it possible to develop a series of initial hypotheses regarding topics such as the role of police discretion during the pandemic, the status of the democratic repertoire of action, as well as the condition of public-police relations in this context.

Our initial investigations employing the heuristic outlined above, for example, have led us to develop the hypothesis, that the limits to the democratic repertoire of action revealed by the pandemic, themselves provide insight into the structural relationship between the sphere of governance and the sphere of policing. As we have seen, the experimental nature of pandemic response appears to depend heavily on the discrepancy between law as drafted on policy level and law as it is implemented in action by ground-level police. Due to the urgency of action and lack of tried and tested responses, policy decisions are made without reliable

expectations of how these will play out, how effective they will be in curtailing the spread of the virus, or what the reaction of the public will be to sweeping measures that limit customary freedoms. The reaction to the pandemic within the sphere of governance depends on being able to match the volatility of the epidemiological developments in their policy making. However, the experimental nature of pandemic response does not only play out on policy level. It depends heavily on the insight and expertise of ground-level policing, as well as a flexible implementation of policy measures that is more in tune with real time developments and the variable acceptance of measures by the general public. The rapidly expanded police discretion and challenges to the separation of power during the pandemic should, therefore, be seen as a function of the limits of the democratic repertoire of action.

The structure revealed within policing the pandemic is strongly reminiscent of one theorised by the Canadian criminologist Jean-Paul Brodeur. Brodeur describes the relationship between police and the sphere of governance as following a structure he describes with the metaphor of the *grey cheque*. The relationship characterised by such a grey cheque, issued by state authorities to police, represents a tacit understanding which allows one party to communicate its decisions and desires without having to manifestly name these, and the other party to understand the same without having to openly display this. Instructions to police by the sphere of governance are therefore neither direct and unambiguous black on white orders, nor are police issued a carte blanche to proceed entirely at their own discretion (see Brodeur 1983). Drawing on Brodeur, Didier Fassin describes this relationship as a masquerade, "… in which one side pretends not to command and the other not to obey" (Fassin 2018, p. 136 - trans. by author). The discretionary scope within police work allows actors on policy level and within police management to plausibly deny actions they effectively authorised. At the same time, these orders must be specific enough, that ground-level officers are provided with a scope of action for which they can plausibly assert that these were implicitly afforded by upper levels in the chain of command. The grey cheque thus provides plausible deniability to both parties simultaneously (see ibid.). In his own studies, Fassin observes that providing police with a wide discretionary scope within specific areas of police work has become the most effective mechanism for instrumentalization of police by the sphere of governance. Moreover, Fassin maintains that specific

historic moments lay bare this structural relationship, where "…governing powers explicitly state what they expect of the police, while police openly exercise their own power in an autonomous way" (Fassin 2018, p. 136 - trans. by author). The early hours of police use in pandemic response during the onset of the COVID-19 crisis appear to be precisely such a moment.

Two conclusions can be drawn from observations of policing the pandemic through the methodological framework developed, and in the context of Brodeur's and Fassin's theories. First, the expansion of discretionary scopes in policing must be understood as an externalization of problem-solving from the sphere of governance to ground-level policing. Ground-level officers, armed with expanded discretionary scopes, are handed the task of finding the modes and spaces in which pandemic response measures can and must be enforced. The experimental nature of this task, however, means that enforcement of these rules will on the one hand frequently traverse boundaries of equitable, democratic rule of law as well as points of resistance to disproportionality by the general public. On the other hand, the discretionary implementation will at times inevitably both fall short, and traverse, the efficacy of the measures enforced. What this leads to, is an asymmetrical distribution of responsibility for the effects of counter-measures. Pandemic response drawn up on policy level is able to shift a significant portion of its inherent contradictions to the executive sphere. The reciprocal plausible deniability characterizing the *grey cheque* results in a "blame game", in which the inefficacy of many counter-measures may be concealed behind questions of (im-)proper enforcement.

Secondly, this structural role discretion plays for pandemic response, necessarily exerts a strain on public-police relations. This stems both from the experimental nature of the counter-measures put in place, which frequently lose their credible efficacy in controlling the epidemiological developments, and from the lack of understanding of the (volatile) COVID-laws and regulations by citizens, that are currently being enforced by police. In a very real way, ground-level police frequently become the face for murky policy measures.

Moreover, the universality of police mobilization in the context of what is fundamentally a health-crisis, was visible not only geographically, but also *felt* socially across all milieus of individual societies: For large swaths of the population, the police implemented cur-

fews, intended to control the spread of the virus, where the first personal experience of what it means to be under general suspicion by the police and wider public – an experience usually reserved for marginalised groups. The novelty and uncertainty of this situation was exacerbated by the immediacy of the transition from normal, known processes to a state of emergency. And while this intention to contain the virus holds true, a differentiation must be made between the intent and the impact of measures enacted in pandemic response on a deeper level.

> *"In a society that is divided on class, ethnic, gender, and other dimensions of inequality, the impact of laws, even if they are formulated and enforced impartially and in a universalist manner, will reproduce those social divisions"* (Bowling et al., 2019, p. 16).

While the intent of police mobilisation may credibly be one of police being public health actors in pandemic response, a deeper, thorough analysis of policing the pandemic must nevertheless be sensitive to the difference between this intent and the impact of this implementation. Increased discretionary scopes also necessarily result in a wider confrontation of the public with disproportionalities in policing, particularly along the dimensions of race, class, gender and age.

Conclusion

The global pandemic has confronted democratic governance, understood as a multi-level structure linking agents from different sectors, with challenges that have revealed limits of this system, both within and between the sectors it is comprised of. Rather than studying such limits as artefacts of the current crisis, we argue that a sound analysis of policing the pandemic is a necessary step to understanding the structural relationship between policing and democracy in moments of crisis, as well as the specific role police as an institution and the discretionary scopes of individual officers are given in such moments. As we have shown, such an analysis necessitates a methodological framework that is able to capture the dynamics both between the different spheres of governance, and within organisational hierarchies of police forces, along a temporal dimension. Adopting such an analytical approach, also facilitates a more complex understanding of problems arising in the practices of policing the pandemic: The widening of discretionary scopes for police can be understood as an element of the broader, experimental nature of pandemic response. In the context of hastily implemented policy, increased police discretion is revealed to be an externalization of problem-solving from policy- to ground-level policing. This role of policing, along with the resulting confrontation of a wider section of the population with the disproportionalities in policing, are important keys to understanding the role of police as well as well as shifts in police-public relations during the COVID-pandemic, as well as possible future crises.

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Preparing for Future Pandemic Policing:

First lessons learnt on policing and surveillance during the COVID-19 pandemic

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Abstract[1]
Law enforcement organisations have faced a wide spectrum of challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic. Governments positioned police and other security actors on the frontline in enforcing compliance with an incremental series of restrictive measures, demanding a new dynamic and distribution of policing across communities and spaces. In particular, as the pandemic was subjected to a simultaneous process of crisisification as well as securitisation, public policing has suffered a set-back in terms of community-relationships and social legitimacy. For instance, marginalising the role of public police organisations in preventive policing and pushing them towards the use of coercive measures. Even though the pandemic has not yet ended, the questions we seek to answer on the basis of media and evaluation reports, include the first lessons that can be learnt for the global law enforcement theatre as well as insights into a potential paradigmatic shift in policing.

Keywords: COVID-19**,** police**,** security**,** surveillance**,** crisis

Introduction

What the world population has in common is the onslaught of the COVID-19 pandemic. By many countries, the control of the ever-mutating virus that has killed so many people thus far, has been regarded as an uphill battle. Throughout this article, we seek to share some preliminary observations about how the COVID-19 crisis has affected the relationship between governments

and their citizens, as well as between security actors and society. A predominant observation is that the COVID-19 pandemic has been subject to "crisisification" (Rhinard, 2019) as well as "securitisation" (Waever, 2007), and that the health crisis has been accompanied by several other crisis dimensions, including a socio-economic crisis, a cultural crisis as well as an educational crisis.

Except for its sheer perpetuity and the return of different waves, the pandemic predominantly seemed

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to be framed from a security lens. For many people, the COVID-19 pandemic was not a mere health crisis, but it pervaded their lives to the extent that work, education, mobility and social bonding came under severe pressure. Hence, COVID-19 can be characterised as a multiple crisis with several layers that mutually interfered. Despite the fact that many governmental authorities previously established risk assessments including the preparedness for a new pandemic, security and government authorities did not seem quite ready for COVID-19. Moreover, there was little awareness of the possibility that a health crisis would affect different other atmospheres in life, and that it could have a dramatically destabilizing effect. In a sense, COVID-19 can be characterised as a catalyst that brought to light several social tensions.

The fabric of our societies has been hit hard by COVID-19 (Christakis, 2020), as it negatively affected social-psychological connections between people. With a view to learning and sharing lessons, on the basis of early data-gathering and open sources, including media reports and preliminary evaluation studies, we analyse the way in which policing and security may have been subjected to a paradigmatic shift. First, in a paragraph entitled "extraordinary times" we share our observations on the wide range of anti-COVID measures that were imposed on entire populations with a view to gain control over the virus, including (technological) surveillance and monitoring. Second, we analyse the nature of the crisis itself by distinguishing some of its dimensions, including the "crisisification" and the "securitisation" of the pandemic, with reference to the issue of leadership and governance and the way in which governmental authorities sought to manage the pandemic. Finally, we will evaluate whether and to what extent policing and security have been profoundly affected by the pandemic, even giving rise to the question whether we are witnessing a prelude to a paradigmatic shift in policing, and whether we are heralding a transfer from policing by consent to top-down repressive policing.

An Extraordinary Era

While at the time of writing we have not yet witnessed the end of the COVID-19 pandemic, the pandemic can hitherto be characterised by its global size, its considerable duration, as well as its pervasiveness in all domains of life. The death toll of the pandemic has amounted to between 7m and 13m excess deaths worldwide, according to a model built by *The Economist*.[2] In addition, when diving deeper into the distribution of the devastating impact of the pandemic, it is noteworthy to observe that low- and middle-income countries have incurred the highest mortality rates as a consequence of COVID-19. Moreover, what has made a difference as well is demography[3]: COVID-19 has hit relatively less hard in countries with high numbers of young inhabitants. What also matters, as claimed by *The Economist*, is the system of government and the degree of media freedom.

The longevity of the pandemic provided a rather demanding space for changing dynamics with respect to democracy, rights and justice. The political and administrative management of security governance and policing during the pandemic was interesting by itself: further below, we seek to tackle questions concerning leadership as well as the role of politics.

The COVID-pandemic was marked by a series of extraordinary, unprecedented and disciplinary measures. Except for several technology-based anti-covid instruments, such as the "Corona-app", several measures were imposed by law enforcement officers:

- *Lockdown*: "By the first week of April 2020, 3.9 billion people – more than half the global population – were under some form of lockdown."[4]
- *Curfew*: the imposition of stay-at-home orders during evening, night and early morning hours. This measure was used to reduce widespread community transmission and large outbreaks in order to decrease the pressure on the healthcare system and the impact of COVID-19 (morbidity and mortality).
- *Physical distancing*: physical distancing interventions aimed at strongly reducing the number of contacts per individual and decrease transmission of COVID-19 in the general population.
- *Face masks*: The use of face masks in public served as complementary means of preventing human-to-human

2   "Counting the dead", *The Economist*, 15 May 2021. In the same issue ("The other epidemic"), *The Economist* writes that changes to the drugs market explained why more people in San Francisco died as a consequence of overdoses than were killed by COVID-19.

3   See e.g. Independent Evaluation Group in collaboration with the World Bank: *Covid 19 and aging populations*: https://www.covid19-evaluation-coalition.org/documents/Reference-Guide-COVID19-Aging-WB.pdf [accessed 6 July 2021].

4   Source: Property Crime Brief, UNODC; https://covid19.who.int/table [accessed 16 July 2021].

transmission and reducing the spread of the infection in the community. The face masks minimise the excretion of respiratory droplets from infected individuals (symptomatic, and who have not yet developed symptoms or who remain asymptomatic). The use of face masks in the community has been considered especially when visiting busy, closed spaces, such as grocery stores, shopping centres, or when using public transport.

- *Quarantine*: Self-isolation was imposed on individuals who had tested positive for coronavirus as well as on people arriving from countries considered as a high risk for transmission of COVID-19 to prevent or reduce re-importation and further spread in the population, taking place in countries where the transmission is reduced in order to prevent new chains of transmission after introduction. On top of these measures, compulsory quarantine applied to individuals who had been exposed to the virus (e.g. within one household or at work), but who were not necessarily tested positive.

- *Mobility restrictions*, national, regional and international: Movement restrictions aimed at reducing further transmission and spread of COVID-19 by limiting population mobility, e.g. through decreasing public transport, especially in confined spaces such as train, bus and metro, and reduce transmission and further spread of COVID-19.

- *Interventions in public spaces*: Interventions mandating the closure of public spaces aim to reduce the level of contacts between individuals and reduce transmission and further spread of COVID-19.

- *School and university closures*: Preventing contact among children and juveniles is a prevention measure in influenza outbreaks and pandemics. Universities and other educational institutions are considered as areas where large numbers of people congregate in confined spaces.

- *Teleworking*: Interventions recommending teleworking aim to reduce the level of contacts between individuals at the workplace and during journeys to and from the workplace to prevent spread of COVID-19.

- *Protecting vulnerable people*: Risk groups and vulnerable populations were subjected to protection measures consisting of persons at higher risk for severe disease and poor outcomes if they acquire the infection, residing in facilities such as long-term care, psychiatric institutions, homeless shelters or prisons. Measures included 'cocooning' for vulnerable persons in the community or measures taken to protect vulnerable populations in institutions such as visitor restrictions.

Governments have predominantly relied on security services, in particular public police services, for enforcing compliance with the most restrictive COVID-19 measures, including quarantine, curfew, lockdown, and to some extent also physical distancing measures. Given the apparent limits in available capacity, the public
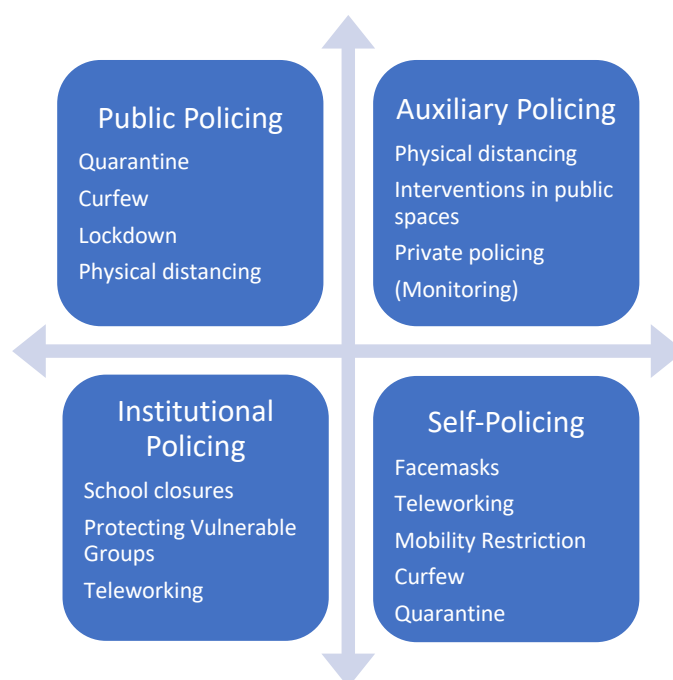
police had to rely on cooperative arrangements with auxiliary police officers (including volunteers, community police support officers and private security guards) for executing these tasks. Hence, some countries specifically promoted levels of individual responsibility and "self-policing" (e.g. Ayling, 2007). To some extent, the role of institutions and societal actors in self-policing seems to be overshadowed in the media and evaluation reports.[5] Policing, here defined as ensuring compliance with the COVID-19 measures, has been distributed among several different actors, as can be seen in the "plural policing" chart on next page.

What can be derived from this chart is that the public police forces have specifically been tasked with imposing "tougher" coercive measures in enforcing compliance with anti-COVID measures (see e.g. Ayling & Grabosky, 2006), particularly by ordering people to go home, issuing fines and by engaging in crowd and riot control during violent manifestations. For instance, in the UK, police were given new powers to enforce the anti-COVID rules, ensuring parents to do all they could to stop their children breaking the rules, issue a 60 GBP fixed penalty, lowered to 30 GBP if paid within 14 days, and issue a 120 GBP penalty for second-time offenders, doubling on each further repeat offence. Anyone who does not be can be taken to court, with magistrates able to impose unlimited fines.[6]

Auxiliary policing included imposing fines as well, but included "softer" measures such as recommending, advising and redirecting people. It should be noted that several of these measures were not codified in hard law, but subject to special emergency rules and regulations. Comparative and empirically-orientated research will have to be conducted to the question of whether certain sub-groups within the population were subject to over- or under-policing, or whether they were over-represented in the group of people who were being disciplined and/or sanctioned (Amnesty International, 2020a; 2020c; Dunbar & Jones, 2021; Stanley & Bradley, 2021.

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5 However, two months prior to "Liberation Day" on 19 July 2021, Prime Minister Johnson of Great Britain expressed the following words: "And it is thanks to your effort and sacrifice in stopping the spread of this disease that the death rate is coming down and hospital admissions are coming down. And thanks to you we have protected our NHS and saved many thousands of lives." Source: https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pm-address-to-the-nation-on-coronavirus-10-may-2020 [accessed 19 July 2021].

6 https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-52053527 [accessed 8 July 2021].

Figure 1: Plural Policing Chart during COVID-19

Omnipresent Surveillance

Several of the anti-COVID measures were paralleled by increased (health and mobility) surveillance for the purpose of prevention, mostly by disseminating preventive messages and increasing public access to health care. These measures were introduced in an incremental fashion, and certainly not all of them were imposed by members of the law enforcement community. Large-scale surveillance was introduced on the basis or the argumentation that the development and spread of the COVID-19 virus had to be monitored, in time, throughout the population, between countries and between spaces. The World Health Organisation (WHO) (2020) has been a strong proponent of these measures, arguing that surveillance aims at limiting the spread of the disease, to manage the risk and to monitor long-term developments (see also European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control, 2020). According to the WHO, surveillance measures aim at enabling rapid detection, isolation, testing, and management of suspected cases, identify and follow up contacts, guide the implementation of control measures, detect and contain outbreaks among vulnerable populations, evaluate the impact of the pandemic, monitor longer term epidemiological trends and understand the co-circulation of influenza and other viruses. In this line of thinking, the WHO has strongly advocated the bol-

stering of national health surveillance systems, as well as digital technologies for rapid reporting, data management, and analysis.

Surveillance instruments that were used throughout the COVID-19 pandemic have included:

- *Contact tracing apps*: to record inter-personal contact; most of these apps were either under development or newly introduced. In Poland, the government introduced an application prompting those under quarantine orders to upload selfies to confirm they were at home, using facial recognition combined with location data (European Data Journalism Network, 2020). In France, just 2% of the population downloaded the app and major concerns were expressed about sharing data and trusting the government to protect their personal information. Also, in Spain (57%) and in Italy (59%) the population expressed concerns about data security. Similarly, in Germany, where contract tracing apps were initially downloaded on a large scale, a minority of the population was willing to share data, and in the United Kingdom, a centralised app was abandoned amidst high levels of distrust of government to store data (60%) (European Data Journalism Network, 2020).[7] In the UK, guar-

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7   For a comparative overview of contact tracing apps in the European Union, see: https://ec.europa.eu/info/live-work-travel-eu/coronavirus-response/travel-during-coronavirus-pandemic/mobile-contact-tracing-apps-eu-member-states_en [accessed 8 July 2021].

antees were given that the data would not be shared with the police. In a tweet, the official account for the NHS COVID-19 app said the app could not be used to track one's location, for law enforcement, or to monitor self-isolation and social distancing.[8] However, in Singapore, despite previous assurances, police now seems to have access to TraceTogether App Data.[9]

- *CCTV*-networks, some equipped with *facial recognition*, as well as *thermal imaging technology*. In Russia, for instance, a network of 100,000 facial recognition cameras was installed to keep track of quarantined individuals. If people went outside to buy groceries, they were contacted by the authorities within minutes and subsequently fined (European Data Journalism Network, 2020). In Dubai, where the police has rolled out a large-scale surveillance programme with facial recognition and artificial intelligence to track down wanted criminals has been expanded with thermal imaging technology to identify rising body temperatures.[10]

- *UAV's or drones* to enforce curfew and social isolation regimes, introduced in Belgium, Croatia, France, Greece, Hungary, Poland, Spain, Turkey and the United Kingdom in order to monitor the public's compliance with lockdown regulations and social distancing. In France the highest administrative court ruled the use of drones unlawful on the grounds of privacy infringement; and drones used by Greek law enforcement were deemed to be insufficiently regulated (European Data Journalism Network, 2020). In Derbyshire, UK, the police issued a 60-second clip that was shot by the force's drone unit, showing people walking their dogs and taking photos.[11]

- *Thermal tracking*, used at airports and in other spaces to identify persons who may carry the virus: this is also called "fever-tracking" because it is one indicator of a COVID-19 infection. Temperature tracking can take place in two ways: (1) "smart" thermometers that are connected to the internet, allowing the company to collect the data when a person takes their temperature; and (2) remote temperature sensing devices (Just Futures Law, 2020).

- *Geo-location tracking* and *automatic number plate recognition* to monitor mobility: on top of increased helicop-

ter usage[12] during the COVID-pandemic, geo-location tracking and number plate recognition were intensified. Geo-location tracking is a method often used by law enforcement agencies. Criminals can be monitored and identified through GPS-tracking, but this method is now widely applied to the wider public.

- *Biometric detection technology*: in some countries, including Germany, Romania and Liechtenstein, biometric bracelets were tested on quarantined individuals, in order to verify their location and informing the authorities (European Data Journalism Network, 2020). In the US a tech company developed a smart ring that could easily measure temperature as well as other vital signs: The University of California San Francisco Medical Centre had 2,000 emergency medical workers wear these rings to identify early symptoms (Just Future Laws, 2020).

To some extent, these means of surveillance were introduced long before COVID-19. However, the combined application of these means of surveillance has had a pervasive effect on the private lives of citizens, particularly concerning the exchange of privacy-sensitive health data (see e.g. Keshet, 2020). Moreover, during times of crisis or emergency, regular checks and balances tend to be suspended, which may imply that the introduction of these health surveillance technologies and their application for law enforcement purposes has not been subject to extensive parliamentary scrutiny and privacy impact assessments. It remains to be seen in the future whether law enforcement agencies will continue to use these technologies for other purposes than health governance. Hence, the surveillance technologies mentioned above can easily be introduced for the purpose of law enforcement. However, any future application of these technologies that amounts to the consolidation of security governance should be preceded and paralleled by a sound privacy impact assessment as well as guiding principles concerning human rights and ethics.

Security Governance during the Pandemic

Global observations concerning the style of government and leadership revealed that in autocracies or weak democracies, several incidents were reported of excessive violence by the police as well as the (widespread) use of coercive powers by security forces, even beyond what was allowed under the emergen-

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8 https://www.bbc.com/news/technology-54599320 [accessed 8 July 2021].

9 https://www.cpomagazine.com/data-privacy/police-have-access-to-singapores-tracetogether-app-data-in-spite-of-earlier-assurances-will-trust-in-contact-tracing-apps-be-undermined/ [accessed 8 July 2021].

10 https://www.thenationalnews.com/uae/government/coronavirus-dubai-police-surveillance-cameras-to-be-used-to-boost-covid-19-detection-rates-1.1021168 [accessed 8 July 2021].

11 "Coronavirus: Peak district drone police criticised for 'lockdown shaming', *BBC News*, 27 March 2020: https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-derbyshire-52055201 [accessed 8 July 2021].

12 See e.g. "Helicopters to police compliance with COVID-19 restrictions in Tasmania", https://www.examiner.com.au/story/6717630/helicopters-to-police-compliance-with-covid-19-restrictions/ [accessed 8 July 2021].
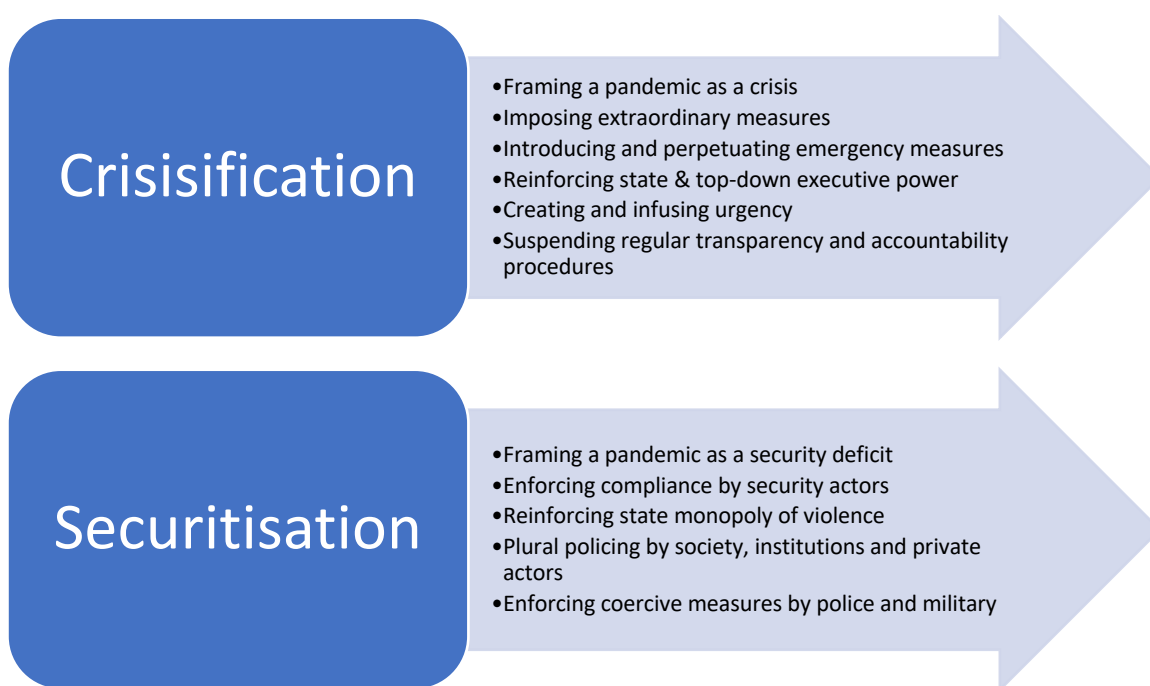
cy measures (Amnesty International, 2020-a). In the African region, excessive police brutality was reported in South Africa, Uganda and Kenya, even leading to the claim that more people died at the hands of security forces in 2020 than from COVID-19 (Amnesty International, 2020-a; Amnesty International, 2020-b). Across Latin-America, militaries were prominent in COVID-19-management, signifying a form of militarisation of policing.

Largely, the pandemic was subject to a process of "crisisification" and "securitisation" at the same time. Rhinard (2019) defines "crisisification" as a process by which "changes to collective policymaking processes in the EU", propelled by finding the next "urgent" event, prioritizing speed in decision-making, ushering in new constellations of concerned actors, and emphasizing new narratives of 'what matters' in European governance'. At national and international level, the pandemic has been framed as a common narrative requiring urgent and joint action from governmental authorities.

On the other hand, there has been a process of "securitisation". Following on from Waever (2007), we define securitisation as a discursive process in which perceived threats are (re-)framed to the extent that they amplify the need for concerted action, state power and urgency. That COVID-19 was subject to securiti-

sation can be demonstrated by the process by means of which the virus itself was turned into a crisis ("crisisification"), ensued by large-scale management of the health situation through a security lens ("securitisation"), authorizing security actors to enforce compliance with health-governance measures. In this context in particular, the monopoly of violence has been exercised in the ambiguous terrain where health management and public order have interacted. It is precisely in this grey area where citizens encountered several new definitions of non-compliance and even lawlessness.

Across the globe, governments reinforced the role of executive power, which seemed to be at the expense of parliamentary power as well as local civil power. For instance, Aston et al. (2020) observed emerging internal security action by the defence forces. Guasti (2020) found a range of varied responses to the responses to the COVID-19 crisis by populist leaders in Europe and identified two patterns: the rise of autocracy and democratic resilience. In Hungary and Poland, the state of emergency was instrumental to the increase of executive power. But at the same time, there were several examples of democratic resilience, showing that the COVID-19 pandemic alone did not infuse the rise of authoritarianism. Toshkov et al. (2020) argued that governments passed emergency measures that strengthened the executive, streamlined decision-making and delegated the daily management of the pandemic to

Crisisification
- Framing a pandemic as a crisis
- Imposing extraordinary measures
- Introducing and perpetuating emergency measures
- Reinforcing state & top-down executive power
- Creating and infusing urgency
- Suspending regular transparency and accountability procedures

Securitisation
- Framing a pandemic as a security deficit
- Enforcing compliance by security actors
- Reinforcing state monopoly of violence
- Plural policing by society, institutions and private actors
- Enforcing coercive measures by police and military

special councils and committees, away from the scrutiny of society, media and parliament.

Comparative observations in Europe showed that while France adopted a nationwide uniform application with recent regional-level measures, Spain tended to recentralise decision-making in spite of regionally autonomous and health and police systems (Vampa, 2021). Similarly, in Germany the Federal Government made all crucial decisions, not so much the *Bundestag* (Aden et al., 2020; Vampa, 2021). In Belgium, the pandemic laid bare the complex 'institutional lasagna' of the country: No fewer than ten ministers were in charge of health-related portfolios (Popelier, 2020). In the Netherlands, central authorities delegated major responsibility to manage the anti-covid measures to decentral authorities ("Safety Regions" and local mayors), and when this began to show incomprehensible friction, back again to the central level (Cavalcanti & Terstegg, 2020).

Within the European Union, there was no sense of harmony or standardisation in tackling the pandemic: it has led to a late awakening that perhaps, the EU should develop into a full-blown health union in the future. The international co-operation was rather dramatic at first, particularly as it seemed to infuse unilateralism instead of solidarity. Nevertheless, for example, Dutch COVID-19 patients were admitted to intensive care wards by German hospitals. In addition, on the most fundamental principles underlying the European Union, namely free movement and the abolition of internal border controls, the EU failed to pass the Schengen stress-test: Rijpma (2020) noted that it is hard to see the irony in commemorating the principled decision to lift checks at the internal borders at a time where most Member States have reintroduced those very checks to counter the spread of COVID-19; some even restricted the right to free movement of EU citizens. It serves as proof that Schengen should not be taken for granted.

Another observation is that political and administrative leadership changed throughout the successive waves of the pandemic (Boin et al., 2021). In the first phase leadership seemed reasonably successful, because governments had to navigate in thick fog: they could easily be forgiven for potential misjudgements. While anticipating formal evaluations[13], several ques-

tions have been raised concerning the assessment that was made by the governments, how they responded, and whether their genuine objective was to manage a health crisis or whether they used the pandemic for political gains. In the Netherlands, the complete crisis infrastructure was abolished in the course of the summer of 2020 before it had to be rebuilt in the face of the second COVID-19 wave. In the summer of 2021, history seems to repeat itself: some governments prove to be hard learners.

Impact of the Pandemic on Policing and Security

The COVID-19 pandemic has confronted us with "Unforeseen and unprecedented challenges to policing"; (Laufs & Waseem, 2020). The International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) notes that the COVID-19 pandemic has "significantly affected the operational landscape of policing", as the police has been asked to act on the frontline, tending to emergencies as well as having to respond to social consequences, "while at the same time providing safety and reassurance to their communities." (Lum et al., 2020). For instance, a survey revealed that 43% of the responding law enforcement agencies had stopped or significantly changed their response to at least twenty per cent or more of their calls for service (Lum et al., 2020).

In the domain of public order management, police had to deal with distress, tension, anxiety, civil dissent (see also Frenkel et al., 2020): some communities have been disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 crisis as they faced several crises at the same time:

> *"civilian distress and grievances after disasters may disproportionately affect socio-economically disadvantaged communities, leading to violent confrontations between police and communities (…). This is especially the case for contexts that have seen the militarisation of policing (e.g. in form of the deployment of armed forces for policing duties during a public health emergency)"* (Laufs & Waseem, 2020).

The COVID-19 era has been rife with protests and demonstrations against restrictive confinement measures relating to curfews, compulsory face masks, and social isolation measures. Several analysts believe that the COVID-19 pandemic gave rise to the expression of underlying social tensions. Moreover, a spill-over effect was rather visible as protests spread between different

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13 However, see the Audit Compendium on the Response to COVID-19, that refers to 48 audits and evaluations conducted by 10 national courts of audit as well as the European Court of Audit (ECA): eca.europa.eu [accessed 23 July 2021].

communities, not only physically but also virtually (an example are the online revolts in China).[14]

Police found themselves sandwiched between vertical governance and the duty to enforce government instructions on the one hand, and professional self-discretion, improvisation and creativity on the other hand. In several cases, law enforcement officials resorted to the unlawful use of force to impose lockdown measures on people who did not offer any resistance or constitute a significant threat, many of these occurred in the context of police identity checks. Existing data regarding police stops, searches and identity checks suggest that the enforcement of these powers has a disproportionate impact on racialised groups (Amnesty International, 2020a; Amnesty International 2020c; Dunbar & Jones, 2020; Stanley & Bradley (2020)).

Notably also, as has been identified by Amnesty International (2020a; 2020c), coercive measures were not always used as a matter of last resort. Hence the principle of proportionality as well as subsidiarity were under pressure. Legitimate civil protests as well as clashes between police and citizens attracted a vast amount of media attention, thereby overshadowing the high levels of civil compliance with and public endorsement of the anti-COVID 19 measures.

In the domain of criminal investigation, the impact of COVID-19 appeared to be rather heterogeneous, as there was significant variation across countries and the types of crime. Any significant changes were short-lived and pre-pandemic dynamics soon returned (Broekhuizen et al., 2020). Forewarnings have highlighted the potentially adverse effect the economic downturn caused by the pandemic may have, particularly on property crime. Changes in the criminal landscape seemed to be rather short-lived, according to UNODC, and Halford et al. (2020) note that:

"(…) the relatively short-term rapid changes in crime experienced during the covid-19 pandemic appear consistent with the explanation offered for the longer-term international crime drop, but so too with increas-

es in cybercrime, fraud and other new and emerging crimes that emerged as the result of increased crime opportunities."

Initial findings on crime trends during the COVID-19 pandemic indicated that "physical crime" dropped significantly, while the volume of online criminality (online fraud, phishing) rose. Robbery, theft and burglary fell by 50 per cent in most countries. The decrease was relatively larger in countries with stricter lockdown regimes, as lockdowns lower the opportunities to commit certain types of crime, such as burglary. According to UNODC, homicide underwent a short-term decline of 25 per cent or more in some countries. In others, there was no visible change or the variability in the number of homicide victims remained in the usual range. Crime-reporting was also affected, which was not only the result of a decrease in the number of crimes committed but reporting numbers were affected. Domestic abuse and gender-based violence tended to be under- or unreported in the early phases of the pandemic. Significant warning shots have been given on corruption and criminal exploitation of (post-)Corona recovery funds, but there have also been several cases concerning medical supplies, healthcare products and supplies, and insufficient compliance with public procurement legislation. In general however, the UNODC has observed a paucity of data and heterogeneity of emerging measures.

In the field of community policing, the general observation is that the COVID-19 pandemic has adversely affected police-community relations as well as relations among citizens themselves. The International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP)[15] notes that 73% of responding agencies had adopted policies to reduce or limit community oriented policing activities. However, 39% of responding agencies had adopted specific policies to increase community presence for certain locations (grocery stores, hospitals, or other public spaces) (Lum et al., 2020). Maintaining relations with the community while ensuring compliance with new regulations and restrictions has turned out to be one of the predominant challenges during a pandemic (Laufs & Waseem, 2020): on the one hand, communities may be under stress whilst on the other hand, police has to ensure compliance with restrictive measures. Thus, the Peelian Principles on Policing by Consent have been severely under pressure, negatively affecting police-community-relations:

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14 Sources: http://gettoinfo.com/news/a-rare-online-revolt-emerges-in-china-over-death-of-coronavirus-whistle-blower-the-new-york-times/; https://www.amnesty.nl/wat-we-doen/landen/china-informatieplatform/china-covid19; https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/world/china/covid-19-xinjiang-residents-protest-online-against-virus-lockdown/articleshow/77717507.cms; https://www.theverge.com/2020/2/24/21151404/china-wechat-twitter-coronavirus-critics-protest-information-share [all accessed 16 July 2021].

15 https://www.theiacp.org/ [accessed 16 July 2021].

"Trust within communities and towards governments is a key feature that underpins effective public policies; while not unique to democracies, such trust can be more easily thickened through bottom-up inclusion and pluralism" (Youngs & Panchulidze, 2020: 6).

Preliminary Lessons Learnt

One of the take-aways from policing and security during the COVID-19 pandemic is that the messaging and communication towards citizens has often been inadequate, combined with a lack of a national and internationally coordinated communication infrastructure(s). The communication toward citizens should have been far less ambiguous, not merely in the initial stages of the pandemic, taking account of the high learning curves of the population. Most communication was directive and executive in nature, not leaving much room for persuasion. The potentially pejorative character of the communication towards citizens has likely been one of the fundamental weaknesses in the pandemic.

Another lesson learnt is that there has been insufficient variation in styles of policing, whilst citizens' expectations change in time. A long-term pandemic requires a solid strategy on adaptive styles of policing. For police organisations, lessons learnt include the following:

- *Adaptivity and/or adaptability*: Law enforcement agencies were confronted with the need to adjust working schedules, deployment formations (Lum et al., 2020), but also needed to be adaptive in their response to the public. This raises a question for further reflection, namely the normative question on whether law enforcement agencies should have been more adaptive, or whether law enforcement agencies lack the type of agility that is required during testing times like a pandemic?

- *Communication*: Internal as well as inter-agency communication and external communication with administrative authorities and communities are and remain essential (Lum et al., 2020), using various forms of communication, which may improve morale as well as be a good medicine against fake information.

- *Collaboration*: The control of the COVID-19 pandemic required multi-disciplinary co-operation and 'plural policing' and it is essential to acknowledge this at the forefront (Matczak, et al., 2021).

- *Transparency:* Citizens have felt deprived of their rights, infusing stress, anxiety, frustration and anger. Not only should communities be prepared for collective resilience, but there should also be far more transparency

and accountability of why governmental authorities and police organisations make certain choices. Former community links have suffered a set-back and self-policing in terms of "responsibilisation" (Garland, 2001) has been marginalised in the discussion.

- *Professional ethics:* Police officers themselves have lived through extraordinary times and have been asked to impose a wide range of restrictive measures, potentially going against their oath and professional ethics. Moreover, law enforcement officers have endured stress at home as well as in their engagement with communities. In future pandemics or global crises, there needs to be far more awareness of the mental health as well as the moral and physical well-being of police officers. A group of nineteen Ontario police officers launched a constitutional challenge against the provincial and federal governments and several police chiefs, claiming that enforcing sweeping pandemic health restrictions puts them at odds with their oath to uphold the charter.[16] Except for these important ethical issues, the COVID-19 pandemic had a strong impact on the mental and physical well-being of police officers (Stogner et al., 2020). For instance, Stogner et al. (2020) refer to the imposition of several anti-COVID measures by the police at the same time: Law enforcement officers were expected to coordinate local shutdowns, encourage social distancing as well as enforce stay at home mandates. COVID-19 thus provided a "significant stressor for officers."

- *Equity of justice*: The equal treatment of citizens seems to have been suspended – at least temporarily - because of the disproportionate targeting of minorities. Discriminatory practices and ethnic profiling have occurred particularly in urban areas with mobile workforces and small housing: these communities have been subjected to relatively high levels of surveillance by police and law enforcement. For instance:

"The COVID-19 pandemic revealed the heavy policing and the recurrent unlawful use of force in urban areas in France with high rates of poverty and where a large proportion of the population are of North African or other minority ethnic origin. For example, in Nice predominantly working class and minority ethnic neighbourhoods were subject to a longer night-time curfew than the rest of the city. The police enforcement of COVID-19-related restrictions on movement reinforced already existing discriminatory and unlawful policing trends in those neighbourhoods" (Amnesty International, 2020c, p.20).

- *Rule of Law*: What the COVID-19 pandemic has also revealed is that the Rule of Law may rapidly land on a slippery slope. In many democracies, governments have built in concerns over privacy rights to their tracking

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16 "Group of police officers files constitutional challenge over Ontario pandemic rules", *Toronto News*, 5 May 2021 [accessed 16 July 2021].

apps; however, lack of anonymisation and information leakage. Various governments across the world have used technology for surveillance beyond the originally stated purposes. Surveillance technologies ordinarily used for counter-terrorism were now used for managing a health crisis, hence undermining one of the fundamental data-protection principles, namely that of finality. In other words, the COVID-19 pandemic has allowed function or mission creep of surveillance technologies.

- *Resilience*: Finally, if there is one profound lesson to be learnt from this pandemic is that it is crucial to be prepared at all times. For this, it is necessary to build "pathways to future resilience" (Boin et al., 2021) by anticipating, monitoring, training, preparing, and exercising. Pre-crisis training for police officers is conditional, police leadership has to be drilled in complex settings, crisis

management scenario's need to be shared and raw data and media coverage need to be collected (Broekhuizen et al., 2020).[17] During and after a pandemic, evaluations combined with empirical research are important to draw lessons for the future as well as to collect real-time intelligence in order to act promptly and professionally (Van Ham et al., 2021)

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17 Such as the CoroPol Monitor and research programme in The Netherlands, in the first six months of the pandemic, by four police researchers (Ferwerda, Bervoets, Landman and Broekhuizen). The Monitor was established in order to provide Dutch law enforcement agencies brief information ('headlines') on crime, (plural) policing and public order elsewhere in Europe and the world, specifically during the stages of a lockdown. Besides, the monitor meant to indicate what to expect and what to prepare for in The Netherlands as well as to offer an action perspective on policing the pandemic in this country. CoroPol originates from the words 'Corona and Policing'.

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Policing During a Pandemic - for the Public Health or Against the Usual Suspects?

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Abstract

It is much remarked upon that the pandemic exposed underlying tensions and weaknesses in European societies. Police attention, in enforcing lockdowns and other restrictions on movement and assembly, has tended to be disproportionately focused upon minority communities. However, middle class white people have also been policed in ways they have perhaps not previously experienced. As a consequence, the pandemic has shed light on the use of police powers more generally. While police powers to stop citizens, to check their identity and to search or otherwise detain them have long been controversial in the US and in the UK, they have now become a focus of debate in Belgium, France, Germany and beyond. In a public health pandemic, the police largely continued to discipline the working class and minorities (despite the alarm raised by middle classes). Attention was not equally distributed and there is little to connect patterns of policing with, for instance, prevalence of the virus within local populations. Instead, policing continued to act as a disciplinary instrument in particularly problematic and unruly communities. This paper draws upon a review of policing of the pandemic undertaken by an EU COST Action (CA17102) on Police Stops. In the absence of clarity and transparency, the use of police powers can undermine legitimacy in particular communities and, this presents particular threats to the social health and security of all.

Keywords: police stops; pandemic; public health; legitimacy; transparency

Introduction

It is much remarked upon that the pandemic exposed underlying tensions and weaknesses in European societies. We have discovered that key workers, including nurses, cleaners and delivery drivers, are poorly paid and work long hours, often with insecure contracts. Deaths from the virus are most likely to occur among populations living in poverty and in poor housing (e.g. Marmot, 2020; EU Fundamental Rights Agency, 2020). Police attention, in enforcing lockdowns and other restrictions on movement and assembly, has tended to be disproportionately focused upon minority communities (Etienne, 2020; Amnesty International, 2020; The Guardian, 2020a). However, for the first time in many cases, middle class white people have also been policed in ways they have not previously experienced. Suddenly, we were all conscious of the police officer's gaze turned in our direction (The Guardian, 2020b). Consequently, the pandemic has shed light on the use of police powers more generally. While police powers to stop citizens, to check their identity and to search or otherwise detain them have long been controversial in the US and in the UK, they have now become a focus of debate in Belgium, France, Germany and beyond.

This paper draws upon a review of the policing of the pandemic lockdowns by an EU COST Action (CA17102) on Police Stops undertaken during the summer of 2020 as countries were slowly coming out of the first wave of the virus. The three conclusions drawn from this review echo those to be drawn from a more general review of police powers to stop citizens: 1) that those powers must be clear, not just to the police officers exercising them, but also to those subject to them (Beetham, 1991; Brown, 2020); 2) that their purpose and their effectiveness in achieving that purpose must both be subject to thorough democratic debate and to clear popular/political consent; 3) that their use must then also be open to independent scrutiny and relevant data made publicly available. In the absence of such clarity and transparency, the use of police powers can undermine legitimacy in particular communities and this presents particular threats to the social health and security of all.

Unfamiliar Tasks

In the majority of states, new measures were introduced to respond to the pandemic, though some states had existing powers that were applied to the specific circumstances (e.g. Croatia, Poland and Spain) and, in most cases, these included a role for the police. In some countries, the military were also involved (e.g. Spain and Hungary) and some tensions/controversies arose as a result. Restrictions during the first wave ranged from 'stay at home unless you have reason' (Spain, France and Belgium), to more 'light touch' restrictions for certain age groups (Turkey) or activities (e.g. religious festivals in Israel). In most countries, there was some confusion at the margins, about what qualified as a 'good reason' for example, or about what was legally required and what was advice (e.g. the permissible distance that could be travelled from home). Over time, rules within states began to change, generally becoming more relaxed, although in Poland they became tighter and were then relaxed. This added to confusion. Breaches were punished by fines in most instances, some severe (Moldova and Norway), others less so (UK and Hungary) but rising with each repeated offence. In some contexts, criminal proceedings might also result (Spain and Belgium). Data on the fines issued or other enforcement measures taken are extensive in Scotland, limited in some countries (England, Spain and Belgium) and non-existent in others.

Policing thus confronted an unusual challenge. Officers were asked to police activity that, under normal circumstances, would not attract their attention. Those who were outdoors might be breaching regulations or they might be a 'key worker' going to work. When in small groups, how were officers to know whether individuals were from the same family or not? What businesses were allowed to continue to operate? What shopping is essential and, as suggested by one senior officer in the UK (The Guardian, 2020c), should officers police the content of shopping bags? For many officers, the constantly changing landscape of what was and was not permissible became very difficult to follow and, after a while, it was easier not to enforce the rules.

The question of geographic variation emerges as an interesting point of comparison. Restrictions placed on people tended to be nationally applied but, in some cases, specific cities/towns were locked down for a period (Helsinki in Finland) or in response to a cluster of cases (e.g. Bulgaria, controversially applied to a 'Roma neighbourhood'). Movement between cities was policed in some countries (e.g. Croatia). Borders were closed in most cases and, in some, this was the key focus of the policing effort (Portugal). More commonly, there is evidence that rules were applied more harshly in some regions (eastern and south eastern Turkey) or communities (ultra-orthodox communities in Israel). Sometimes this was a deliberate decision of local authorities (some prefects in France) or of the police (variations across police forces in England), or reflected long-standing policing approaches (the banlieue in France, working class neighbourhoods in Madrid). The patterns in the geographical variations in policing practice that emerged during the pandemic began to resemble those that might be expected in 'normal' times.

Familiar Criticisms

That these patterns were familiar, echoing the long-standing disproportionate application of laws and issuing of penalties, reveals something more fundamental about policing. In a public health pandemic, the police largely continued to discipline the working class and minorities (despite the alarm raised by the middle classes in some countries). Attention was not equally distributed and there is little to connect patterns of policing with, for instance, the prevalence of the virus within local populations. Instead, policing continued to act as a disciplinary instrument in particularly problematic and unruly communities (Choongh, 1998; Foucault, 2004 & 2009). However, this is perhaps not surprising considering that, in the main, the regulation and practice of internal control measures and judicial remedies have not significantly changed. New remedies have not been introduced, and new internal control bodies have not been established (although Scotland is an exception here). As the accountability mechanisms for policing were not altered to account for the extraordinary circumstances facing policing, it would be remarkable if they had been able to correct pre-existing bias in the use of police enforcement powers. Indeed, the state of emergency, perhaps particularly in Eastern and Central European countries, has

only strengthened these tendencies. Thus, at an early stage, evidence emerged of the disproportionate use of powers against, in particular, minority communities (e.g. BBC, 2020; Liberty, 2020)

One new (or enhanced) addition to previous policing practice was the use of surveillance technologies, especially drones (e.g. in France, Spain, Belgium or UK) or mobile phone apps designed to monitor individuals' movements or compliance to the rules of mandatory quarantine (such an app has been introduced in Poland and in Norway). The benefits and dangers of introducing such an app were widely discussed in countries where it has not yet been introduced (e.g. Austria, Croatia) or its use was non-mandatory (Denmark). The issue of electronic surveillance is thus at the heart of public discussions concerning police powers during the pandemic, especially in Western Europe (Brown and Toh 2021, Degeling et al 2020).

However, it must be underlined that the use of police powers during the pandemic became a public issue only in some countries and only in some respects. It seems that an almost clear division might be drawn between west and east. In Western European countries, public discussion was mainly focused on individual freedom of movement and risks of electronic surveillance, as well as police misconduct (that was the case in Austria, UK, Belgium, Spain and France). In countries of Central and Eastern Europe, the discussion revolved around collective freedom of assembly (e.g. in Poland, Hungary). For Western European countries, there were criticisms of police abuse of powers by some media and NGOs (for instance in France and Spain). However, the policing of the pandemic did not become a political issue as such. For Central-Eastern European countries and especially in Poland and Hungary, citizens contested a lengthy ban on public assemblies issued by the governments while they continued to work on controversial legislative projects, such as the project for a complete ban on abortion in Poland and the partial health care (hospital) reform in Hungary.

It seems that, in most countries, international and national NGOs were active in such discussions, with some exceptions (e.g. Greece or France). The common thread of public discussion in countries across Europe is the legality of introduced restrictions and the competence of particular bodies to impose them. What is also worth noting is that politics had a strong influence on the manner of the policing the pandemic in some

countries. For example, a discussion on the potentially political character of certain restrictions was held in Slovakia with relation to Roma minorities. Here, an intensified testing had been held in Roma settlements which raised concerns about the risk of increasing the prejudice against this minority. In response, the government explained that such actions were not connected with the ethnicity itself but with the higher risk of spreading the COVID-19 due to the environmental conditions in such settlements.

Conclusion

Arguments for building and maintaining legitimacy in the eyes of the public is not a new topic in policing research and practice (e.g. Tyler, 2006; Bradford, 2017). These arguments hold true, perhaps even more so, in the context of a global public health crisis. Virus outbreaks can only be contained with the compliance of the public at large. Any measures which restrict movement and contact must carry legitimacy in the form of the fullest of public and democratic discussions. This is particularly important if any enforcement measures are to be entrusted to the police. Without that legitimacy, police officers and police forces are vulnerable to criticism and hostility (e.g. BBC, 2021). When it becomes apparent that a country's law enforcement officers are not policing based on the pattern of the new threat but by virtue of their previous, often biased, practice, this will make legitimacy more difficult to achieve. This could potentially undermine efforts to protect public health.

We must acknowledge, however, that to police public behaviour in the face of a constantly changing threat and with regularly changing rules is an extremely difficult task. Any rules that police officers are asked to enforce must be clear, easily interpreted by both citizens and the police and applied in a just and legitimate manner. In the UK, the '4 Es' approach suggested officers should Engage with those they police, Explain the restrictions, Encourage compliance and only Enforce

after exhausting the first three. This was identified as potential good practice for others to use. However, with time, officers have stated in recent research interviews that they have become reluctant to explain or encourage because, after more than a year, citizens must have some understanding of the restrictions. The successive waves of infection have further added to the challenge of policing laws initially introduced in some haste.

The use of police powers should also be subject to scrutiny and review. This is true in general terms but is especially important when basic freedoms are being curtailed in a crisis. Mechanisms could include internal governance, making police data publicly available, oversight by civil society organisations, judicial remedies, and external oversight bodies. Examples of good practice include Policing Authority in Ireland[1] and the Independent Advisory Group in Scotland[2]. Data on usage of police powers, enforcement measures such as fines have an important role in understanding and scrutinising the use of police powers, and potential differential experiences.

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the central role of European policing agencies in not only keeping their populations safe from crime, but also safe from the threat posed by a deadly virus. However, as most nations were completely unprepared for the scale of the task in responding to it, the result has been many rounds of flawed legislation and vague and changing guidance for both the public at large and the policing agencies. What the pandemic has also revealed is the depth and reach of often disproportionate policing practice, which in the vast majority of cases continue to operate with weak oversight and little public scrutiny. As we have demonstrated here, this situation may have arisen from a unique context, but the patterns revealed have a long history. What we would argue is that good policing practice in one context can have beneficial impacts on others if a move towards the routine use of clarity, transparency and accountability is adopted in all policing agencies in Europe.

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1   For more information, see: https://www.policingauthority.ie/en/about-us/detail/oversight-of-covid-19-policing.

2   For more information, see: https://www.spa.police.uk/strategy-performance/independent-advisory-group-coronavirus-powers/.

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Populist Pressures, Policing and the Pandemic:

Lessons and Challenges for Police Management

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Abstract

The paper[1]* focuses on challenges that are brought to police management and leadership by populist and racializing political rhetoric (often coming from government or local government) connecting the virus and minority communities through a discourse that identifies ethno-culturally rooted reasons for higher infection rates and disobeying curfew and social distancing measures. The paper has three parts: the first begins with mapping out four distinct scenarios in how the COVID-19 virus may affect certain groups incommensurately, arguing they lead to systemic and institutional discrimination. This is followed by an overview of how - in socio-economic terms - Roma are impacted throughout Europe, and have been targeted by racialising and securitising populist political rhetoric and law enforcement measures during the first wave of the pandemic in Belgium, Bulgaria, France, Greece, Moldova, Romania, Slovakia, and Spain. The third part investigates whether the legal framework for policing multicultural communities could be used as a procedural basis for such a targeted action – and argues that, in theory, the answer is affirmative. Therefore, a special vigilance and resilience is required from the police leadership. An example from the Hungarian framework for policing multicultural communities illustrates the aforementioned possibilities. Although Hungary is not among the countries from where anti-Roma political rhetoric had been reported, its legislation on policing multi-ethnic communities arguably fits within the more encompassing model reflecting European and international standards and rhetoric. The paper introduces the concept of benevolent penal populism – endowed with a potential to be turned into malevolent action – to characterise this phenomenon and explain the respective threat in it.

Keywords: populist political rhetoric, policing, Roma, pandemic.

Systemic and institutional discrimination and the disproportionate effects of the COVID-virus

A large body of scholarly literature and public discussion targets the disproportionate effect of the COVID-virus on minorities and vulnerable social groups. For analytic purposes, there are four distinct ways in how the virus may affect certain groups incommensurately.

The first scenario is when due to biological or cultural reasons, the virus will have a stronger effect on certain groups independently from social or state actions. For example, the elderly[2], or people with asthma (see for example Raterman, 2020) are more exposed and vulnerable to the harming effects of COVID-19. Likewise, Catholics may be more prone to the exposure to the Corona virus due to attendance to the Sunday mass involving communal singing. Also people incarcerated[3] or living in refugee camps or prisons, where social distancing is impossible, will have a higher rate of exposure.

The second scenario relates to the emergency or health care measures that affect certain groups negatively. For example, for persons with a hearing impairment, mandatory use of masks reduce communication channels (Taylor, 2020). Rules for social distancing or lockdown measures can interfere with religious practices and rituals like mourning and burial within a short time after the death (e.g. Stack, 2020). Moreover, with lockdowns, people with disabilities, and homeless people will be affected more severely (Barnes & McDonnel, 2020; also Bernstein et al. 2020; Sturm et al., 2020).

The third scenario refers to situations when the virus enlarges systemic marginalization and vulnerability of certain social groups. For example, in the US, the African American and Latino population is three times more prone to Coronavirus contamination (not independently from their weaker socio-economic position, greater exposure due to job market shares, more crowded housing and commuting facilities) and twice as likely to die (also not independently from a generally worse health status, obesity and diabetes in particular) than whites (Oppel Jr. et al., 2020; also Faleiro, 2020;

United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, 2020b; Cultural Survival, 2020). As the *Economist* reports, in England a black man is nearly four times more likely to die from the disease than a white man of a similar age. In the state of New York, in the first months of the pandemic, black and Hispanic children were more than twice as likely to lose a parent or caregiver to COVID-19 as those who were white or Asian. In São Paulo, Brazil's richest state, black people under the age of 20 are twice as likely to die from COVID-19 as their white counterparts. Sweden tallied deaths early in the epidemic and found out that those born abroad were several times more likely to die from it than those born in Sweden. For Bangladeshi men, the risk for dying from COVID-19 is three-and-a-half times higher than the white men of the same age.[4] Women are also affected in many negative ways. Women have a heightened risk of unemployment (they are overrepresented at the tourism and the garment sector, (see World Trade Organization News, 2020), burdened of domestic care and labour, face a drastic rise in intimate partner or gender-based violence[5], are more exposed to forced marriages, and to more severe obstacles in the access to social services like prenatal care and crisis prevention centres – unsafe, often lethal, abortions are in a surge (e.g. Women Enabled International, 2020; Barnes & McDonnel, 2020). The virus is expected to cut off 13-44 million women from contraceptives, and lead to an additional 1 million pregnancies (CARE International, 2020). The virus also brings a setback in various facets of development, for example 2 million more cases of female genital mutilation (Archambeault, 2020), and 4 million more child marriages (for more, see Orchid Project, 2020).

The fourth scenario concerns state action that, either through over- or underperformance, disproportionally effects or targets certain groups. This could mean inappropriate access to health care services or over-policing. For example, BAME (Black, Asian and minority ethnic) people were fined more than white population under coronavirus laws Police in England (Busby & Gidda, 2020).

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2   See for example United Nations, 2020; BSG Statement on COVID-19, 2020; Ayalon et al., 2020.

3   The 'forgotten tribe': Persons with disabilities in Ethiopia and the State's response to COVID-19. The role of international financial institutions in protecting the vulnerable during pandemics: Focus on World Bank in developing economies.

4   A lack of data on race hampers efforts to tackle inequalities (The Economist 2020).

5   The UN estimates an increase of 15 million cases for every three months of lockdown, see CARE International and International Rescue Committee 2020; ERGO Network, 2020, p. 9; Interpol, 2020.

Roma targeted by racializing and securitizing populist political rhetoric under COVID-19

Social and economic vulnerability

Before the discussion of populist rhetoric targeting Roma, an overview of the socio-economic position of this group in regards to the COVID-19 pandemic is in place. The general observation is that Roma face more severe disadvantages under the pandemic, and the virus amplifies many of the long-standing disparities (FRA, 2021). For example, the European Roma Grassroots Organization (ERGO Network, 2020, p.5) points out that marginalized Roma and Travellers are amongst the most affected and impacted by COVID-19, mainly due to their devastating living conditions and exclusion, triggered by widespread anti-Gypsyism. Roma and Travellers faced difficulties in access to food, medical supplies, internet, gas, running water, garbage collection, and electricity during the confinement or quarantine, which aggravated their exposure to vulnerability. Many of them lost their daily income, since they work in the informal sector – for example in the fields or as daily labourers. In regards to education, many Roma children do not have the minimum conditions for a proper online education, having limited access to internet, electricity, or even to computers or tablets – not to mention the lack of proper housing, an encouraging home environment, or language assistance. Consequently, they could not attend online classes, sometimes for an entire school year (ERGO Network 2020, p. 7).

In healthcare, a more severe exposure or susceptibility to COVID-19 was due to the preconditions of chronic illnesses such as asthma or chronic bronchitis. 42% of the interviewed said that they did not have health insurance (ERGO Network, 2020, p. 7).

Housing is another relevant factor. Many Roma and Travellers live in overcrowded spaces and face difficulties in paying their bills, fees, and debts. Furthermore, although most states introduced a moratorium for forced evictions, many have been evicted during the pandemic. Some Roma families were also reported to have been forced to migrate (ERGO Network 2020, p. 9).

According to the report, Roma also experienced racism and discrimination, manifesting in both restrictive measures and increased anti-Roma rhetoric. Socio-economic vulnerability and discrimination have been documented by the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights 2020 pp. 141-146) and by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA, 2020) too.

As for Hungary, no Roma-specific documentation on infections or death rates are available. However, interviews report that Roma are highly affected by the COVID-19 virus (Dunai, 2021). Activists point out the mistrust to the medical system and a general perception of discrimination (Dunai, 2021). Lack of internet access surfaces not only in relation to educational participation, but, also, in the process of registration for the vaccination (Béres & Szlavkovits, 2021).

Racializing and securitizing populist political rhetoric

For many European Roma, the emergence of the COVID pandemic caused targeting and profiling in relation to curfew and social distancing measures by a rhetoric that points to ethno-culturally rooted reasons for these actions. For example, as early as in the Spring 2020, claims were made that for Roma Easter was a family tradition too important for keeping social distance (for example Berta, 2020) and this provided for essentialist rhetoric in voicing the targeted law enforcement action.

Hence, the pandemic is usurped for marginalization by utilising cultural differences for scapegoating and putting forward a new rhetorical tool for far-right nationalism and offering an operationalizing scheme for law enforcement action. Matache & Bhabha (2020) report a "…frightening escalation of populist and racist voices intent on blaming the Roma community for this pandemic". They also announce, that local and national newspapers often raged a racist, hateful, and life-threatening campaign of anti-Roma propaganda reinforced by dehumanizing, degrading, and deeply offensive fake posts and "news" on the Facebook. The latter remained unaddressed. (Matache & Bhabha, 2020.)

However, the data available is still scarce. It mostly refers to the first wave. Therefore, it is too early to draw final conclusions. Nevertheless, the sources confirm the emergence of language from politicians portraying Roma as a public health risk by labelling them as carriers of the Coronavirus. The moral panic-envisaging

rhetoric lead to targeted law enforcement action and police violence.

An overview and analysis of experiences of the first wave of the pandemic published by the European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC Report 2020) documents the most egregious human rights abuses which occurred against Roma during the period from February – June 2020, in 12 European countries (Albania, Belgium, Bulgaria, Hungary, Italy, Moldova, North Macedonia, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Turkey and Ukraine). This report exposes how these exceptional circumstances exacerbated already existing institutional racism against Roma, resulting in an increase in human rights violations by state authorities, as

> "…the implementation of curfews, bans on public gatherings, and social distancing measures provided additional contexts for law enforcement with inflated powers to brutalise Romani people with relative impunity" (ERRC Report 2020, p. 32).

It shows that although the first wave actually had not impacted directly on marginalized Romani communities in Europe in terms of numbers of infections and Eastern and Central Europe in general was for most, spared and only had a tiny number of cases compared to Western Europe. Yet

> "…whilst no one was looking, vulnerable Romani communities were being brutalised by racist police officers, forcefully evicted from their homes, scapegoated by the far-right … while a hostile media, starved of tabloid content, demonised them for cheap clicks. (…) Institutionally racist public institutions have both directly and indirectly caused additional suffering to Roma living on the margins of society in segregated neighbourhoods throughout Europe." (ERRC Report, 2020, p. 3.).

Just to provide a few examples. The Bulgarian town of Yambol was fully quarantined and blockaded for 14 days and a helicopter sprayed nearly 3,000 litres of detergent to 'disinfect' the Romani neighbourhood.[6] On the same day the National Assembly voted to declare a sense of emergency, Interior Minister Mladen Marinov

told parliament that Romani ghettos will be quarantined if necessary, should people 'lack self-awareness'; and that the Ministry will exercise its powers "to ensure compliance with quarantine". The measures were found disproportionate, unrelated to actual infection rates, and later acknowledged to have been largely ineffective (ERRC Report, 2020, p. 12).

In Edinet, Moldova, the mayor publicly voiced concerns that Roma returning from abroad and disrespecting quarantine measures constitute a public health hazard to the rest of the population (ERRC Report, 2020, p. 24). Soroca, the so-called 'Roma capital of Moldova', was quarantined by the government after a relative rise in the number of infections. Alongside the police, soldiers from the 22nd Peacekeeping Battalion and the Anti-Air Missile Regiment installed fixed checkpoints at the entrance and exit of three localities to monitor the movement of citizens and vehicles (ERRC Report, 2020, p. 28).

In Romania, "broadcast and print media commentators amplified racist tropes about 'Gypsy violence' and 'Gypsy crime' when covering incidents involving Roma and law enforcement to turn essentially localized incidents into a full-blown safety and public health emergency," resulting in an "outpouring over Romanian social media of hate-filled calls for anti-Roma violence, in some cases laced with approving references to Roma extermination during the Holocaust" (ERRC Report, 2020, p. 35). The report lists a number of violent police attacks on Romani communities, including a disproportionate use of force, tear gassing women and children, inhumane and degrading treatment of detained persons, and police attempts to prevent NGOs delivering humanitarian aid (ERRC Report, 2020, p. 35).

In Slovakia, where five entire Romani settlements were entirely quarantined, Jaroslav Polacek, the mayor of the major city, Kosice, posted a warning on social media that Coronavirus can spread because of the behaviour of "socially unadaptable people" in Romani settlements who do not respect emergency measures. Another mayor, in an open letter to the Prime Minister, called for the lock-down of all Romani settlements to prevent mass outbreaks of the virus (ERRC Report, 2020, p. 44). Counterpunch Magazin reports (Rain, 2020) how Speaker of the Slovak Parliament, Boris Kollár, when asked how he would address the perpetual humanitarian crisis of the Romani in Slovakia, suggested purchasing 700,000 plane tickets to relocate them in the UK.

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6   E. Tendayi Achiume, Special Reporter on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, and Fernand de Varennes, Special Reporter on minority issues, expressed deep concern at the discriminatory limitations (ERRC Report, 2020, 9-10; United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner 2020a).

In response to events principally in Slovakia, Bulgaria, and Romania, Council of Europe Secretary General, Marija Pejčinović Burić, expressed concern at government measures that could result in further compromising the human rights of Roma (ERRC, Report 2020, p. 49; Council of Europe Newsroom, 2020).

As mentioned above, similar reports emerged from Western Europe too. For example, Romani Travellers in Belgium were at the focus of increased police attention and subject to harassment on the pretext of enforcing emergency social distancing measures vie lice operations targeting Romani communities and seizing caravans (thereby making families homeless without being offered any alternative housing solution, social aid, or COVID-19 emergency support) (ERRC Report, 2020, pp. 6-8).

The European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights lists other examples from Western Europe as well. In Spain, as reported by the media, Roma were blamed for the increasing number of infections. In Greece, the media portrayed Roma as having no respect for the restrictive measures or the lockdowns. In France, the mayor of Voisenon asked citizens to contact the competent services "as soon as you see a caravan circulating in our village". (FRA, 2020, pp. 26-27.)

As Jonathan Lee summarizes,

> "With coronavirus lockdowns in force across Europe, the continent's largest and most marginalised minority - the Roma - is at the mercy of racist and violent police officers seemingly accountable to no one. (…) Police officers from Slovakia to Ireland, who need little encouragement to terrorise the Roma even during normal times, are taking advantage of the unprecedented public health emergency we are currently facing to abuse, beat and harass vulnerable Roma men, women and even children with complete impunity. (…) In the past month in Romania alone, we have recorded at least eight incidents where police officers used disproportionate force against the Roma. Video footage from one of these incidents… shows police officers beating eight handcuffed Romani men and one 13-year-old boy for allegedly having a barbecue outside one of their houses. Several policemen and gendarmes, in and out of uniform, take part in the collective punishment. Two officers are seen holding the arms of a Romani man screaming in agony, as a third whips the bare soles of his feet. Another officer is heard using racial slurs and threatening anyone who dares to report the incident. (…) Today we are witnessing what happens when the structures that normally hold security forces accountable - the media, civil society, and judicial systems - are paralysed by a pandemic. With NGOs, activists, and journalists unable to work in the field because of state-imposed lockdowns and social distancing measures, the only resources we can rely on to bring abusive police officers to justice are witness accounts and a few videos secretly recorded by terrified people. (…) Police violence against Romani communities does not occur in a vacuum. It comes as part of a bigger package, alongside Roma-only ghettos, segregated education, discrimination in employment and healthcare, and a lack of basic utilities and infrastructure in places where poorest communities live. This system is maintained and perpetuated by society's refusal to be confronted with the daily apartheid of Romani people, which is plain to see for anyone who just cares enough to look." (Lee, 2020.)

This rhetoric, as Ioanida Costache argues, is borne of the biopolitical ideology of white supremacy in which Roma do not make up part of the nation, in fact, they threaten it, as a contagion, spoiling its purported homogeneity. Roma bodies have long been considered a biological threat to the health of the body politic (Costache, 2020).[7]

This rhetoric, relying on deeply running stereotypes and social prejudice, generally lacks empirical evidence for ethno-culturally based heightened infection risks in the Roma communities. The argument of this paper is that political rhetoric, especially if it comes from local and national government politicians, provides pressure on police leadership to execute and transform scapegoating rhetoric to actual policing action that, at the end of the day, diverts the responsibility for a beguiling political strategy on officers and police management. To demonstrate the complexity of the challenge for the police management and officers, the subsequent section investigates whether the legal framework for policing multicultural communities could in fact be used as a basis for such a targeted action.

For this part, the example of the Hungarian framework for policing multicultural communities is used. Although Hungary is not among the countries from where anti-Roma political rhetoric had been reported,

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7   For more, see Krasimirov and Tsolova (2020), Rorke (2020), Muller et al. (2020), Carstocea (2020), Chang and Barzakova (2020), Seiler et al. (2020), Sudbrock & Mihalache (2020), D'Agostino (2020).

its legislation on policing multi-ethnic communities, arguably, follows the international standards and rhetoric. The paper introduces the concept of benevolent penal populism that carries with potential to be turned into a malevolent one, to explain this phenomenon and the aforementioned threat it includes

Policing multicultural communities

In line with international recommendations, in 2011 the chief of the national police issued two orders on policing multicultural communities and cooperation with Roma self-governments (and an adjacent methodological guideline in 2012.)[8] These documents establish local liaisons (contact points) and working groups to facilitate crime prevention and to map deviance and criminal behaviour that arises from differing cultural norms of the majority and the minorities. By applying the term 'multicultural' communities and environment, the mandatory legal text blends cultural differences pertaining to religious communities, asylum seekers in refugee camps, and the Roma, and singling out Roma self-governments[9] as institutional partners for the force. The regulations include the prevention of victimization as well as detecting criminality. Thus, culturally rooted target activity can include victimization of minorities or refugees in hate crimes, as well as victims of harmful traditional practices, say honour crimes, when perpetrators are also members of the (culturally defined) minority community. A thorough reading of the texts shows that perpetrators and not victims are at the focus of the regulations, and, particularly, those, who commit crimes against members of the majority due to their special cultural norms, that are in conflict with national criminal law.

The regulations identify three target communities: legal and illegal immigrants and asylum seekers; the Roma; and resident migrants and autochthonous (in-

digenous) national minorities who "exhibit cultural, behavioural, religious or value patterns differing from the majority." Given the practically ethnically homogenous nature of Hungarian society (apart from the Roma),[10] no literature in anthropology or criminology shows the existence of such patterns or behaviour for either the indigenous or new immigrant groups (besides an essentialist and overbroad generalization connecting terrorism with the miniscule Muslim community)[11] especially since the size of these communities is miniature.

Generally, one can follow a bona fide and a more critical approach in trying to decipher the intent of the legislator. The former would imply that the chief of the police simply wanted to implement international standards for policing multicultural communities, like the European Code of Police Ethics[12] or the Ljubljana Guidelines on Integration of Diverse Societies by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe[13], both adopted around the same time, in a politically correct and harmless, cost-free fashion, even though such communities, for the time being, do not exist.

A more critical reading[14] suggests that there is an essential, relevant link between potential criminality and being Roma. The term "Gypsy Criminality" was not coined by the government, but by the extreme far-right party, Jobbik. Although there is no straight forward commitment to it in government documents, it is strongly implied by the logic of various legislative texts.

The national document for Roma inclusion issued by the government (Emberi Erőforrások Minisztériuma Szociális és társadalmi felzárkózásért felelős államtitkársága, 2014) repeatedly mentions cultures between the majority and the ethno-nationally defined communities, and in general a deep and robust cultural difference between the Roma and the majority, that needs to be tackled via law enforcement strategies, "mutual acceptance and forming an alliance" between

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8 Instruction No 27/2011. (XII. 30.) of the National Police Chief on policing multicultural communities, Instruction No 22/2011. (X. 21.) of the National Police Chief on cooperation with Roma minority self-governments, general guidance, 29000/126311/2012 issued on January 19, 2012.

9 In 2011 a new minority law (Act CLXXIX of 2011 on the Rights of Nationalities) was adopted, preserving the earlier institutional and conceptual framework, yet bringing a change in terminology and changing 'national and ethnic minorities', to 'nationalities', making the philosophy of the law more straight forward. Roma self-governments have formally been involved in social inclusion measures, signaling that on the one hand the legislature conceptualizes Roma issues foremost as issues of identity politics, and uses cultural identity as a tool for social integration.

10 In Hungary, immigration figures are very low, and the overwhelming majority of immigrants are ethnic Hungarians from neighboring states and who do not constitute a cultural minority. With an overall population of about 10 million, the immigration authorities recorded 213,000 foreigners living legally in Hungary in 2012 (Council of Europe & ERICarts 2010).

11 According to the latest, 2011 census there were 5579 Muslims in the country. http://www.ksh.hu/nepszamlalas/tablak_vallas

12 Recommendation (2001) 10 adopted by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on 19 September 2001.

13 Adopted in November 2012.

14 The authors have no intention or proper methodological tools to guess or identify which reading is the actual, correct one, but argues that both are problematic

the majority and the Roma.[15] The workfare state propagated by Prime Minister Orbán also hints at canonizing the "culture of poverty", which can be linked to "culturalism", "new racism" (for example Taguieff, 1990, pp. 83, 109-122) and essentializing, othering, marginalizing, and scapegoating discourses, where cultural specificities are used to explain criminality and poverty, which in turn allow for securitized policies and blatant 'correctional' segregation and paternalistic and patronizing rhetoric and policies.[16]

Concluding remarks: wronging rights?

The bottom line to the previous section is that the emergence of the COVID pandemic brought a possible new angle to the scrutiny of benevolent legal and policy frameworks for policing minority communities. The contextual dimension of the case study is the discursive and institutional framework of populism, in particular penal populism and penal nationalism. These can operationalize in three distinct forms. The traditional, "classic" form of penal law enforcement and criminal policy-related populism (in rhetoric and/or in policy-making) involves singling out and othering racially, or ethno-culturally defined internal or external groups as enemies. Our recent works (Pap 2020), identified a second and third, more intricate type of penal populism. The second pertains to the proliferation of protected groups, which is arguably a form of identity-politics led populism. The third pertains to policy

and legislation that is not, and not even intended to be enforced, and mostly serves the purpose of paying "legislative lip service" to the international community, or international organisations (or the European Union, in particular), or to be used as a bargaining chip in international relations (as a point of reference in negotiating with neighboring states where large ethnic kin populations reside). The latter is exemplified by conceptualizing the multifaceted Roma community as an ethno-cultural one, and a commitment to connect ethno-cultural features with law enforcement tasks is another form of an operationally empty legislative declaration, as in the specific context, ascribing to the principles to police "multicultural communities" has few, if any operative consequences. This legislation appears to be a politically and public policy-wise low-cost, and mostly symbolic "virtue-signaling" (albeit ideologically diffuse and incoherent). Yet, lawmaking that actually lacks an actual commitment for enforcement, pertaining to non-existing subject matters is a form of desuetudo, depreciation of law, which violates the integrity of the legal system and the principle of rule of law. This arguably can be conceptualized as a form of penal populism directed towards international organizations.

The novelty in the case lies in that for the first time, actual reference was found to identify "Roma culture" as something mismatching the law and the majority (social and legal) norms. While ethnic culture based-policing is a relevant routine, if "real", culture-based incompatibility of norms exists, for example in the case of certain harmful traditional practices like FGM (female genital mutilation) and alike, but none of these were present in East Europe in lieu of the Roma.

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15 Special Roma liaisons are also to be appointed in prisons…) (Romaügyekért Felelős Tematikus Munkacsoport, n.d.

16 It needs to be added that the European Roma Rights Center raised concerns about the regulations (Novak, 2012).

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What Society Expects and Receives –
The press conferences of the Operational Group during the SARS-COVID-19 pandemic

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Abstract

Perhaps there is no dispute that during crises, and especially global crises, social crisis communication requires a high degree of commitment to the public and communities. In times of health emergencies, effective communication, which in this case means epidemic-risk communication, cannot be a one-way communication; it should be based on dialogue and has to be a process of wide-ranging, multi-stakeholder, information- and opinion exchange. Its purpose should not be solely to communicate rules and statistics data and to express expected behaviours. The pandemic-related police communication is expected to strengthen, amongst others, (public) trust, to encourage the proper behaviour, to help the civilians with their decision-making, to provide an opportunity to articulate their concerns and doubts, and to respond to them professionally and authentically. On 31st January in 2020, the Hungarian Government decided to establish the Operational Group responsible for defending and managing the coronavirus epidemic. Till now, the daily press conferences of this Unit were (and still are) the base for informing the citizens. The press conference genre has been taken to a new level by restriction of the journalists and exclusion of spontaneous questions that cannot be asked directly anymore. The Operational Group selects the questions and mediums which are worthy of answers. In this paper, the societal expectations with the experienced (governmental and police) practice will be analysed, comparing them with the general principles included in the work of theoretical experts of crisis communication.

Keywords: Hungarian Police, SARS-COVID-19 pandemic, press conference, risk communication, operational staff.

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Introduction

By the time this article is published[2], we will have passed the third wave of the new coronavirus epidemic (SARS-COVID-19) in Hungary. The health emergency that governments and societies around the world are facing has brought unprecedented communication (and crisis management) challenges. The Hungarian Government has decided to set up an operational team (Operational Staff or Operational Group in the following) to manage the epidemic and has assigned it the task of informing the public about the same. In the following, I will outline the principles and practices that guided the communication and the role of the law enforcement sector in it. The basis for the analysis is provided by the operational staff's television press conferences, which have been subjected to critical discourse analysis. (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997) A rhetorical analysis of the material of five complete press conferences, comprising of 75 minutes of media text, was carried out. Very briefly, we review the conclusion at micro, meso, and macro levels, i.e. reflecting on the content, the flow of messaging and the socio-political (historical) context (Jahedi et al., 2014).

The SARS COVID-19 pandemic and the responsibility of the media

The World Health Organization in its communication guide called the attention that the new corona virus is more than a medical crisis. It is a complex challenge, which we face on economic, social and informational level.

„Until biomedical tools such as vaccines or treatments are developed and widely available people's behaviours and their willingness to follow public health and social measures remain the most powerful weapons to stop the spread of the virus. Consequently, there is an unprecedented need to elevate the role risk communication and community engagement (RCCE) plays in breaking the chains of transmission and mitigating the impact of the pandemic" (WHO, 2020a, p. 4).

Informing citizens even in peacetime cannot be limited to informing and communicating data. The media itself and by them, organizations and public offices satisfy other demands of citizens also. Such as monitoring the environment, identifying challenges, presenting the possible social responses, mediating and passing on the cultural heritage (Lasswell, 1948), or entertainment (Wright, 1960), but meeting the need for connection or mobilization (McQuail, 2015).

The aim of crisis communication is to provide information on the subject of the crisis, commenting on and contextualising the information in a way that contributes to the opinion-forming process of the recipient. It helps them to prioritise their concerns and to disseminate content on the issue to a wide audience, encouraging debate at a societal level. (Anthonissen, 2008) All this is nuanced by additional tasks such as monitoring the environment, risk communication, uncertainty reduction, warning, evacuation calls, image reconstruction, giving explanation, experiencing grief, remembering, organisational (and social) learning, dialogue, networking and norm setting. (Sellnow & Seeger, 2013)

(Extremely) Centralized communication

The Hungarian Government has organised managing and communication of the pandemic extremely centralized. The Operational Group has become the tool for that. According to the *Government Resolution*[3], the Operational Staff shall be headed by the Minister of the Interior with the involvement of the Minister of Human Resources.[4] Centralization is not unfamiliar in crisis management, what is more, it is the main concept of responding. But centralization ought to serve the effectiveness of crisis management and the public trust via sharing reliable and authentic information (in real-time as far as possible, see Anthonissen, 2008). In

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2 An extended transcript of the oral presentation (5 minutes shout) of the 2021 CEPOL Science & Research Conference. Pandemic Effects on Law Enforcement Training & Practice: Taking early stock from a research perspective (6th of May, 2021)

3 1012/2020. (I. 31.) Government Resolution on the Establishment of the Operational Staff Responsible for the Protection against the Coronavirus Epidemic

4 Members of the Operational Staff are:
a) the Minister of the Interior,
b) the Minister for Human Resources,
c) the Director General of Public Security of the Ministry of the Interior,
d) the National Police Chief,
e) the Director General of the State Health Care Centre,
f) the Director General of the National Institute of Hematology and Infectology of the South Pest Central Hospital,
g) the Director General of the National Directorate General of Aliens,
h) the Director General of the National Directorate General for Disaster Management,
i) the Director General of the National Ambulance Service,
j) the National Chief Medical Officer,
k) the Director-General of the Counter-Terrorism Information and Crime Analysis Centre.

our case, the centralisation of government communication is accompanied by restrictions on the right of alternative sources of news (hospital directors, doctors, nurses, but also school, kindergarten, nursery school directors, managers of other social institutions, etc. to make statements) and the right of the media to document and broadcast.

The government's position is accurately reflected in the related statements by Prime Minister Viktor Orbán and State Secretary for International Communication and Relations, Zoltán Kovács, on the media:

> *"Now is not the time to go into hospitals to make fake videos or create fake news."* (Viktor Orbán)[5]

> *"Let the doctors and nurses work! Hospitals should be for healing, not for filming. The operational staff will inform the public every day."* (Zoltán Kovács)[6]

At the same time, media researcher Ágnes Urbán pointed out a year earlier that the independent media's room for manoeuvre is being eroded at a time, when people are hungrier for news than ever and have more time to consume media products, because they are at home.[7] In such circumstances, the responsibility of the Operational Group to provide information is even greater.

The Secretary General of the Council of Europe had already pointed out in April last year that:

> *"The freedom of expression, including free and timely flow of information, is a critical factor for the ability of the media to report on issues related to the pandemic. Media and professional journalists, in particular public broadcasters, have a key role and special responsibility for providing timely, accurate and reliable information to the public, but also for preventing panic and fostering people's co-operation. They should adhere to the highest professional and ethical standards of responsible journalism, and thus convey authoritative messages regarding the crisis and refrain from publishing or amplifying unverified stories, let alone implausible or sensationalist materials";*

and

> *"Any restriction on access to official information must be exceptional and proportionate to the aim of protecting public health."* (Council of Europe, 2020, p. 7)

However, the Hungarian Government has made media restrictions general, not exceptional.

Press conferences without the press

Why do we need to deal with the genre? Because, as McQuail (2015) says, genre sets basic expectations in the recipient. A genre is a class of communicative events whose elements share some common communicative goal. As Lassen (2006) pointed out, the purpose can be explicit or implicit, derived from the text or the context. Furthermore, *the main purpose of a press conference is to make officials available to the public for questions* (Ekström & Eriksson, 2017).

Nonetheless, the Operational Group excluded the journalists from their press conferences. But the media do have questions – however they need to send those to the Operational Group in writing, but most of them are not being read out and are not answered. The Operational Group has no identifiable press officer and no designated spokesperson. The Operational Group is not available by phone; they can be contacted only via a single central email address. (Dojcsák et al., 2020, Döbrentey et al., 2020) It is neither allowed to shoot films in hospitals nor at vaccination points for the time being. Journalists cannot provide visual documentation to their news materials, which are substantial limitations in their profession.

At the same time, the Hungarian Government and the Operational Group did not clarify as to why they have restricted the media, why journalists cannot ask their questions during a real-time videoconference.[8]

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5   Szalay, 2021

6   Magyar Nemzet, 2021

7   Bogatin, 2020

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8   The Fundamental Law of Hungary (2011) declares that "Hungary shall recognise and protect the freedom and diversity of the press, and shall ensure the conditions for the free dissemination of information necessary for the formation of democratic public opinion" Article IX. (2).

Yet worrying processes have begun[9]. As media researchers had already pointed out in the first wave of the epidemic, it seemed that the ruling party was taking advantage of the emerging epidemic (and the health emergency declared in its wake) to take action against the independent media (Urbán, 2020). Concerns were also confirmed by subsequent waves of the epidemic. On March 31, 2021, in the third wave of the epidemic, 28 editors wrote open letters to the Prime Minister and the Chief Medical Officer to allow objective information, including press participation in press conferences (either online or outdoors, subject to respecting the distance rules). In their argument, the WHO recommendations and the universal principles of the communication profession were included. In vain. So far, more than a year has passed by since journalists were last able to ask their questions live (March 19, 2020).

Intertextuality – The press conferences and the information running parallel

The method of discourse analysis calls the attention to the fact that texts never exist in themselves, but are embedded in contexts; they are responses to other texts and sources of further communication. The meaning of the Operational Staff's press conferences are influenced by other centralised channels of government communication, such as the Prime Minister's Friday radio interviews, his official Facebook page[10], the official Coronavirus information page[11], its Facebook page[12], and the Government Info held on Thursdays.

Press Conferences without any substantive questions are narrative pair of the coronavirus homepage. (Communicators did no more than list figures on the spread of the outbreak and police measures, several hours after the website was updated.) Recipients can listen to the data of deaths, the new infected patients, number of persons who need invasive ventilation and who broke the rules. And they can read this data on the central corona website. (See the red numbers below.)

On the coronavirus homepage, users can find daily statistics about the pandemic and many articles about the governmental initiatives in a strong political framework[13].

The "blue section", shows the numbers of police measures, it is the up-to-date statistic of the warnings, on-the-spot fines, infringement reports, administrative authority procedures, fines and closures against shops, restaurants, clubs, etc.

The Operational Group reads almost exclusively this data during the press conferences. But what messages do these numbers convey? Does it have news value? Does it have news value on the fiftieth day or the one hundred and fiftieth day? We have to admit, this type of communication without any contextual information, without the managing of the meanings, is empty. The coronavirus homepage does not provide retrievable data, shares only the current daily status reports. Users do not receive objective guidance to evaluate these. This lack of transparency has led to some media[14] and NGOs (and enterprises[15]) launching virus[16], corona[17] and other vaccine monitoring[18] applications and websites.

The shortcomings of the Hungarian corona virus information page - in international comparison - are illustrated in the figure below:

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9   According to the 2010 CLXXXV. Act on Media Services and Mass Communication § 15. In case of state of emergency, preventive defence, terrorist threat, unexpected attack, emergency, the Parliament, the Defence Council, the President of the Republic and the Government, as well as persons and bodies specified by law may oblige the media service provider to the necessary extent, they may prohibit the free publication of notices of public interest related to the existing condition or situation in the form and time determined by them, or the publication of certain notices and programs.

10 https://www.facebook.com/orbanviktor

11 www.koronavirus.gov.hu

12 https://www.facebook.com/koronavirus.gov.hu

13 According to an independent media research, nearly 20 % of the pandemic communication on the coronavirus website is governmental propaganda. It means that every sixth article is biased towards the ruling party (Bátorfy & Szopkó, 2020). It is debatable whether this is too much or too little, but the fact is that searching for the English version of the corona virus information page and clicking on the icon for the foreign language version you will land on the about Hungary page (abouthungary.hu), that is the mouthpiece of the Prime Minister's Office. There is not an English-language equivalent of the corona information page.

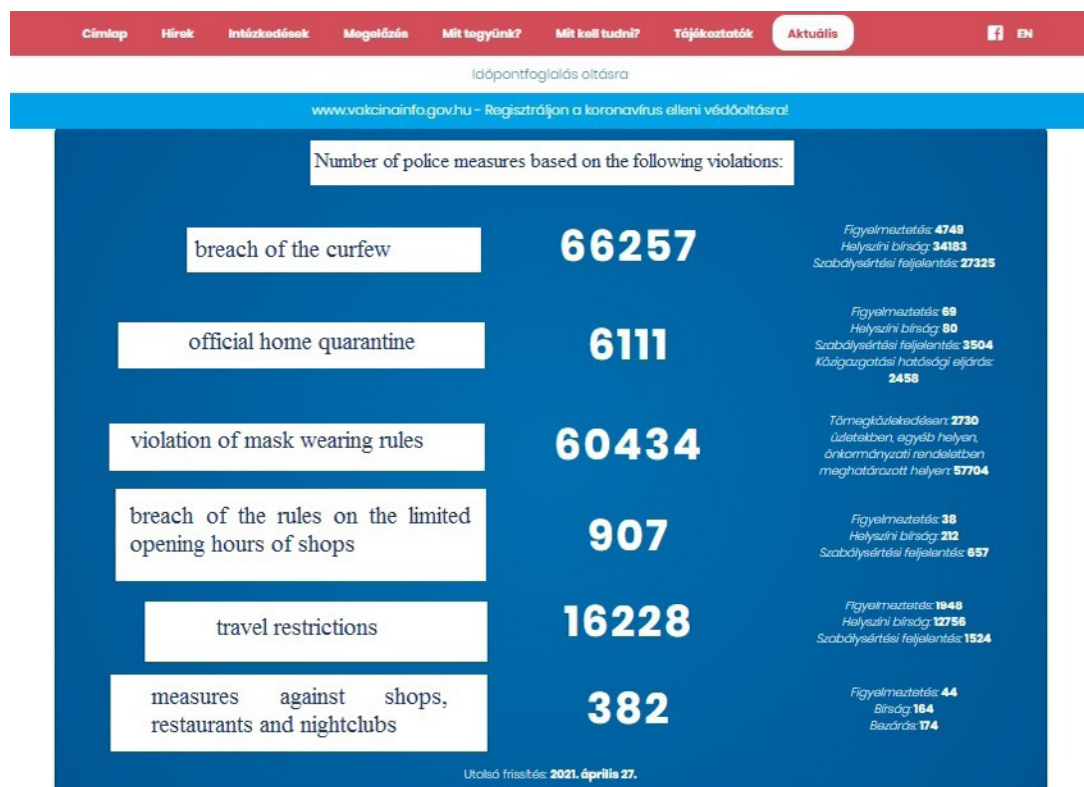14 https://444.hu/koronavirus-covid-19-jarvany-data

15 https://hazikaranten.hu/

16 http://pandemia.hu/

17 https://atlo.team/koronamonitor/

18 https://www.omnicalculator.com/health/oltasi-sorrend-magya-rorszag

Figure 1. Pandemic related data

Source: www.koronavirus.gov.hu[19]

Figure 2. Police measures

Source: www.koronavirus.gov.hu[20]

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19 Status of 27th April, 2021

20 Status of 3rd of May, 2021

Figure 3. The functionality of the Hungarian Coronavirus Information Page (Countries from the left to the right: the United Kingdom, Poland, Austria, Germany, Slovenia, Czech Republic, Ukraine, Bulgaria, Croatia, Sweden, Slovakia, Serbia, Romania, Hungary)
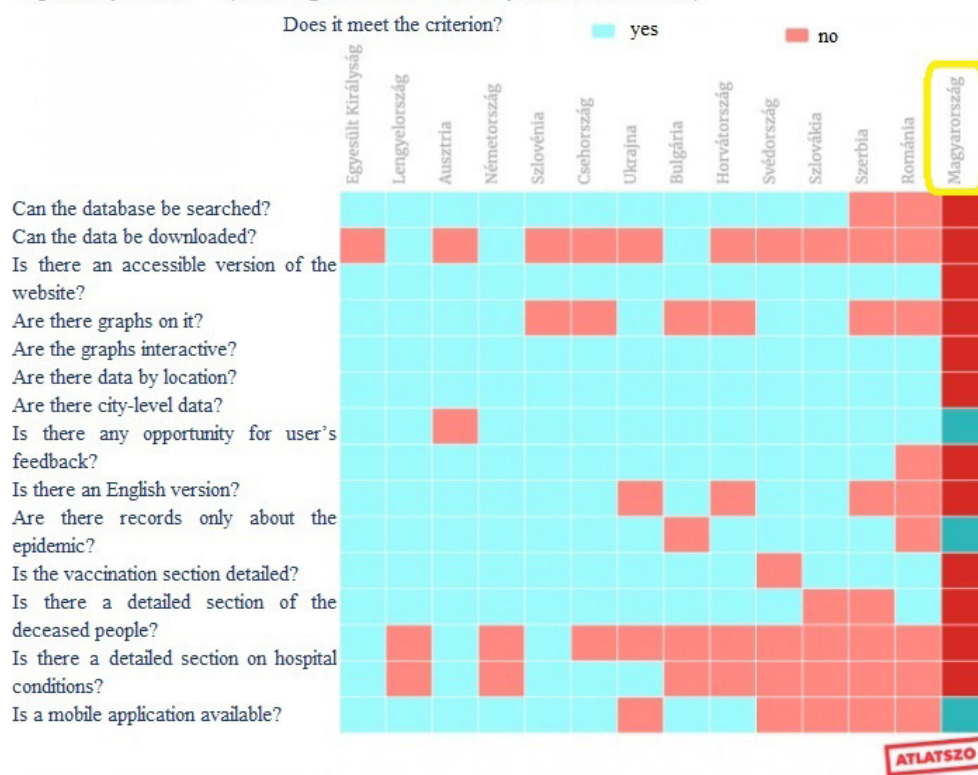
Source: https://adatujsagiras.atlatszo.hu/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2021/03/koronaportalvilagoscikk_1536x1336.png (texts reedited by the Author)

Tools and dramaturgy go against communication objectives

The World Health Organization found that people, who get tired in the first two waves of the pandemic, tend to underestimate the risks and lose confidence in government actions. Mechanical communication of pandemic data only exacerbates fatigue and does not help the community engagement, which is a key element of the successful response to the virus. The purpose of COVID-19 and vaccine communication should be none other than to empower people to make evidence-based decisions and to stimulate trust in healthcare workers and vaccines (WHO, 2020b).

The content requirements are clear. Moreover, the related tools have long been clarified. To manage a continuous, protracted crisis successfully, as Altheide (1985) has stated, the following conditions are required:

1. access to information and the location of the crisis,

2. high-quality visual materials,

3. drama and action,

4. relevance to the audience,

5. thematic unit.

What did the Hungarian public get instead? A vacant, seemingly informative, heavily uniformed character with law enforcement dominance. First of all, the police - in addition to the national chief medical officer - became the face of the crisis, three to be exact: Colonel Tibor Lakatos, (Head of the Operational Group on Call Centre) Lieutenant Colonel Róbert Kiss and (Deputy Head of the Operational Group on Call-Centre) Lieutenant Colonel Kristóf Gál (spokesperson of the National Police Headquarters).

Being a television genre, we cannot forget the power of visuality, which is illustrated by the following picture - a typical one:

**Figure 4.** The Operational Staff say Goodbye[21]

Source: MTI/kormany.hu/Gergely Botár

You cannot forget that the press conferences had been held without journalists, so the only source of images was the central state news agency, MTI. Editorial offices of newspapers and other media took over its photographs and published them uniformly. Specialised news sites, magazines, tabloids etcetera presented below illustrate the mechanical content management processes:

Figure 5. The spread of photos from the central news agency on the internet
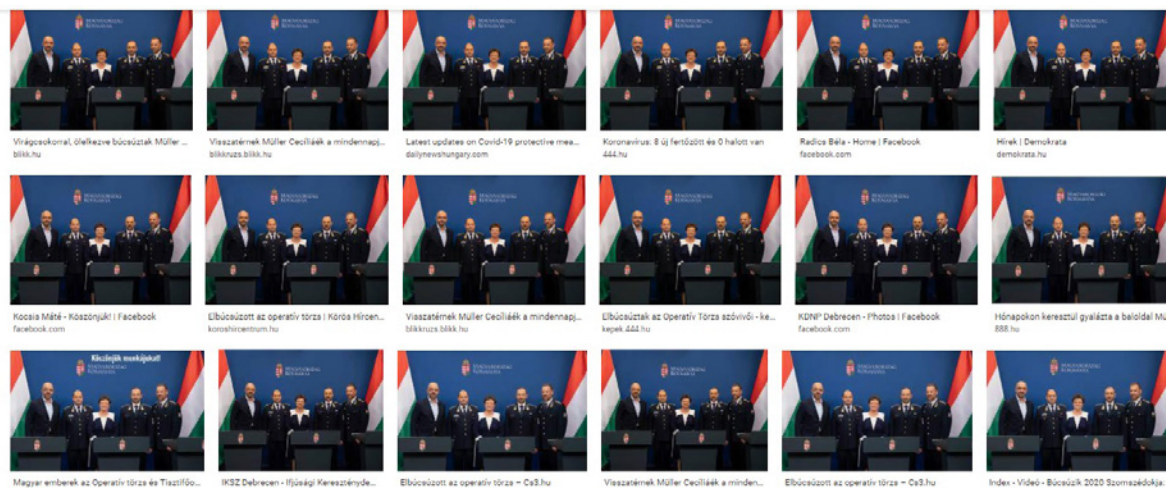
Source: image search with Google based on the MTI-photo[22]

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21 Zoltán Kovács, State Secretary for International Communication and Relations, was not a permanent participant in the operational press conferences, so we do not classify him as a face of the crisis.

22 Non-exhausted list of mediums they are republished the picture: (blikk.hu, blikkruzs.blikk.hu, dailynewshungary.com, 444.hu, facebook. com, demokrata.hu, koroshircentrum.hu, kepek444.hu, 888.hu, index.hu, vecses.hu, egeszseginfo.hu, cs3.hu, klubradio.hu, vehir.hu, szeged365.hu etc.

Access to the information for the Operational Group was granted (1.). The location in our case is difficult to interpret, as it is "everywhere and nowhere" that best expresses the nature of the virus, and the pandemic has brought a different type of crisis event to our lives. So, for lack of a better description, the place is the whole country and the venues are all its human communities in it. The government have not got any access to all of the location of the COVID-19 but can keep under control the information, and has access to the location of the epidemic- and crisis management. First requirements of Altheide is not achieved.

(2.) The briefings of the Operational Staff did not use the power of 'visuality', they did not line up substantive images, film documentation. They only use two types of infographics to present the data of affected people of the virus and the number of police measures.

(3.) The Operational Staff lacked the drama and the action. Those made the press conferences rather boring and their effect became doubtful. The dramaturgy of the press conferences showed a high degree of constancy. Kristóf Gál or Róbert Kiss greeted the audience and gave the words to the Chief Medical Officer (or the invited expert, politician), who reported on the current measures (as successes or milestones), followed by police statistics (sanctions) on protection measures and the current epidemiological situation. If there was a measure related to the crossing of national borders or new regulations came into force, this came to the forefront of the news. In such cases, the police measures took place after the invited expert's statement, and the chief medical officer closed the briefing.

(4.) The Operational Staff was unable to make good use of their strongest tools, the relevance - everyone can be affected by the epidemic, anyone can become a victim at any time - and the thematic unity (5). Thematic monotony, a flat system of tools, repeated but not penetrating messages to boredom characterized all three waves of the epidemic. What aroused serious concern, however, was not the abandonment of a significant part of the crisis communication principles, but the issues of credibility, honesty, dialogue and involvement.

Content analysis of the text showed that the Operational Staff talked much more about themselves (police officers and doctors) than about their audience:

The self-centred communication of the Operational Staff is surprising because the central theme of the third wave was vaccination. They should have talked about who, why and how should take the vaccines, what the benefits are. Instead of the former, the discourse was dominated by sanctions, police measures and epidemiological restrictions, like obligation to wear a mask.

The watchdog perspectives

In this section, we need to talk about the third party, which were not involved in the public communication of the professional public debate. Hungarian human rights NGOs called attention to how important clean hands and transparency during an epidemic are (Döbrentey et al., 2021). It is thought-provoking that:

- access to epidemiological data is still not properly provided
- communication about vaccine registration is controversial
- there are many communication anomalies related to the possibility to choose between vaccines
- communication about police measures lost its credibility (there is a contradiction in visual and verbal information provided by the media and the operational group and the testimonials by citizens e.g.: breaking the rules after the reopening, obligation to wear a mask etc.)
- Several mediums are completely disregarded by the Operational Group[23], and because of this, some journalists and major news portals collect their ignored questions weekly and present them to their readers in a bunch at weekends.

Where dialogue is entirely missing, and there is a complete lack of alternative news sources, there is a danger to all those, who do not trust government actions, who want complete information, who feel left alone with the responsibility of decision-making (e.g. to vaccinate or not to vaccinate, which vaccine is safe for which person?).

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23 Just to illustrate the magnitude of the problem, Telex, as a significant online news portal, received no answers to its 225 questions from the Operational Staff in a two-months period, and experienced the same in case of their 31 photography or filming requests, all of them were rejected (see https://telex.hu/belfold/2020/11/30/telex-kerdesek-hiaba-ertelmetlen-infografikak). The Magyar Hang (https://telex.hu/belfold/2020/11/30/telex-kerdesek-hiaba-ertelmetlen-infografikak), the HVG (https://hvg.hu/itthon/20210322_operativ_torzs_vakcina_kerdesek), and the 168 Hours (https://168.hu/itthon/koronavirus-operativ-torzs-sajto-183329) also complained about the same (all downloaded: 27th May, 2021).

Figure 6. Number of Mentions of each agent
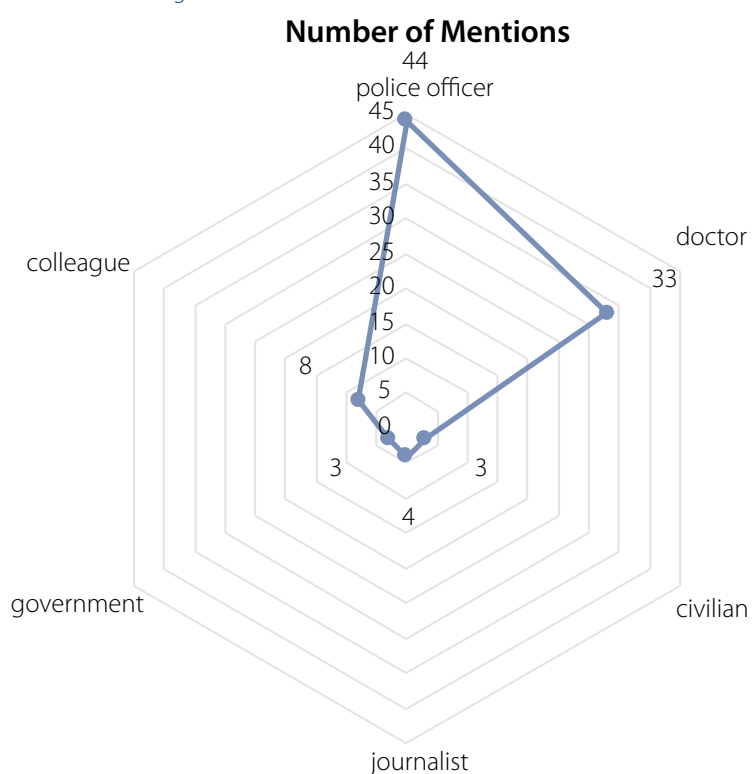
Source: edited by the Author

Figure 7. Dominant themes in the third wave
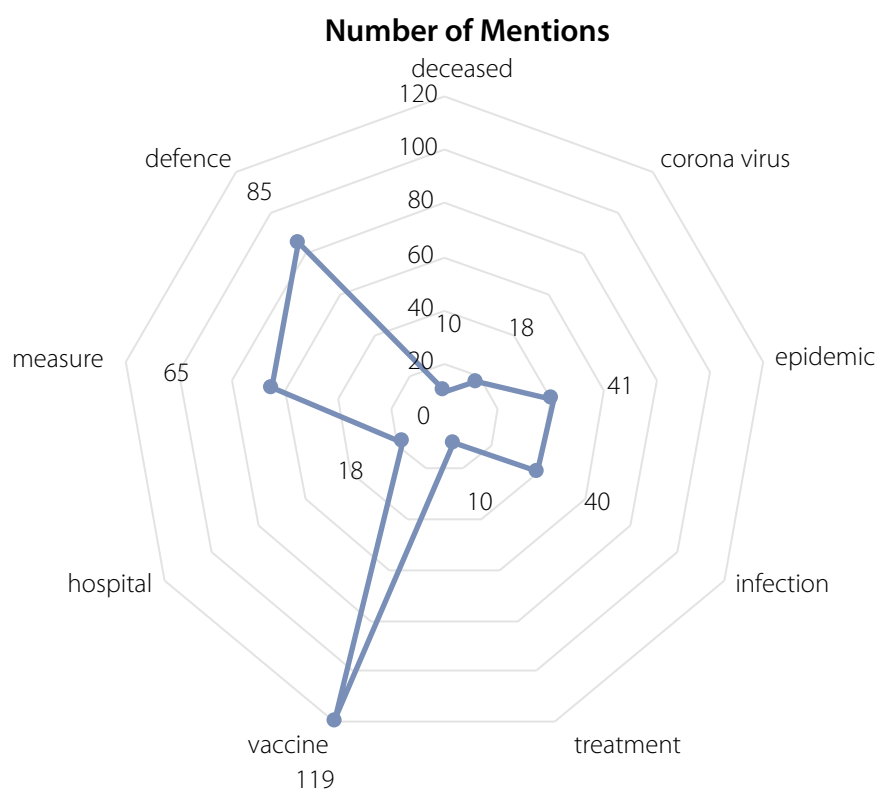
Source: edited by the Author

Conclusions

The media analysis has confirmed that the briefings - as texts, as linguistic constructs - are linguistically rather poor, reduced, schematic. The aim seems obvious: to say as little as possible in an as an impersonal way as possible. The citizens themselves appear as statistical data ("persons" or "individuals" without their gender and age and social role) in the communications, which does not help to build solidarity at a societal level either (and especially solidarity with vulnerable groups) in an epidemic situation. Press conferences are mechanical statistical releases without vivid messages. Constancy creates stability but is not conducive to achieving objectives (as emphasised by the WHO) such as outreach, mobilisation, trust-building, community engagement or overcoming apathy and indifference. (Especially when the communicators are talking about themselves, instead of their audience.) Press conferences in the third wave do not reflect the emotional needs of the recipients (mourning, attachment, uncertainty reduction). What we see is communication that serves political purposes without explicit political messages, which is mainly referred to by long silences. The communicators talk more about themselves, law enforcement, epidemiology, police and doctors (and especially data), than about the citizens. The credibility of central government communication is repeatedly called into question by the activity of alternative content and alternative news sources, which are active, despite the government's repeated efforts to cut them. However, the face of communication with uncertain credibility and statistics is the police. The reason is clear: values of law enforcement and media profession are conflicted in the public and the press conferences are under the pressure of politics.

What are the risks for the police?

The Operational Group is a political formation with strong political messages and because of that, it cannot be the tool of trust-building for a wide range of society. Police officers via representation of the Head of the Operational Staff On-Call Centre and its Deputy became political actors and this effect can be harmful to the police. Police occur as to be the partner of the government in actively hiding necessary data from the public, like vaccination plan, city-level data for proactive actions.

However, as the Hungarian police communicated about the pandemic exclusively through the Operational Group's press conferences, the genre - as is self-evident in the case of media genres - gained even stronger political influence through intertextuality. Informative genres must be objective (which also means politically neutral) but social mobilisation and commitment, requires the use of opinion genres, the evoking of emotions, the addressing of people not only as conscious beings, but as sentient, acting creatures.

Police officers need to be taught how to protect their profession from unwanted political influences and how they can/could preserve their credibility, their authenticity, and reputation of their profession. Police officers and especially the leaders should learn how they can reframe information, events, and messages to strengthen their reliability and how they can take part in crisis communication at the governmental level as an independent professional entity, which can build trust in difficult situations. It is necessary to use professionally the media genres, both the informative/factual and both the opinion delivering press genres.

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Disinformation Campaigns and Fake News in Pandemic Times:

What role for law enforcement and security forces?

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Abstract

2020 and the COVID-19 pandemic marked a turning point in peoples' information consumption habits. In an environment of extreme enforced isolation due to the COVID-19 pandemic, people have increasingly been compelled to turn to online sources for information and guidance. Online news consumption rose considerably as quarantines began. Social media, already one of the primary venues of social activity for millions of people who could no longer meet and talk in person, naturally became a primary source for news. In this environment, misinformation and disinformation has flourished enormously. For millions, they face not only the effects of long term social isolation, but also economic anxiety as they face an uncertain future in a fast-changing economy that threatens to leave many behind. All of these factors have combined to create a "perfect storm" which is making more people vulnerable to disinformation campaigns (Courtney, 2021). These "campaigns" are a threat to our democracies and our way of life. They create social unrest, alarmism, disbelief, chaos, undermine public security and ultimately erode the global standing of liberal democracies. What roles can law enforcement agencies, governments and the European Union play in countering disinformation campaigns? Are they sufficiently aware of these menaces? Are they already tackling these challenging issues? In this paper we will endeavour to explore these issues and propose potential policy actions.

Keywords: pandemic; fake news; disinformation campaigns; law enforcement

Introduction

Both pandemics and fake news and disinformation campaigns have deep roots in history. In many historical contexts, fundamental paradigm changes have taken place in the wake of pandemics. In these dramatic moments, people tend to believe rumours and lies more easily, which often in a simplistic and misleading way, suggest explanations for unexplained and frightening phenomena. During the 'black plague' in many countries in Europe, Jews were blamed for the spread of the terrible disease; the fake news then in force tried to hold the 'other' responsible, the one who was 'different', who had a 'different' religion. At present, due to circulation restrictions, confinement and social isolation, most populations have dramatically increased their use of social media. This situation has exposed the spread of fake news and disinformation campaigns on various online platforms. In some contexts, authoritarian States have profited from the COVID-19 pandemic, taking advantage of the vulnerability and credulity of populations in a time of crisis.

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A general objective of authoritarian actors has been to create confusion, chaos, social disorder and to propagate the narrative that authoritarian states deal better with crisis situations and are able to better protect their populations. In this constructed narrative, liberal democratic systems which promote civil liberties and individualism are inadequate for protecting their populations in times of crisis. One "narrative" in this context is that the Western liberal system is outdated and that in contrast authoritarian systems are better equipped, allegedly being better placed to face the threat of the COVID-19 pandemic.

This 'narrative' has obvious effects on the internal security of states and, therefore, it has to be taken seriously by security forces and agencies. The European Union has launched several initiatives and has put in place instruments to combat this threat. Several Member States - and beyond - have responded to this situation. Many agencies and security forces are now responding with various actions. The security forces, as guardians of order, tranquillity and public security, must be at the forefront in facing this challenge of disinformation campaigns in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Pandemics and paradigm shifts: Disinformation campaigns and fake news

Throughout the ages of history, Europe has been forced to confront the challenges of pandemics on many occasions. For example:

- In 430 BC, a 'plague' played a fundamental role in the defeat of Athens against Sparta in the Peloponnesian war;

- In 541 AD, another 'plague' undermined the efforts of the Roman emperor Justinian to re-unify the Roman empire;

- In 1350 AD, the 'black plague' played a fundamental role in several wars of that time and in the redefinition of demography across Europe;

- In 1917-1918 AD, 'Spanish flu' contributed to the end of World War I and caused millions of deaths worldwide:

- In 2020-2021 AD, the COVID-19 pandemic has already caused millions of deaths, and the total scope of its effects will be felt for years to come.

As described above, many of the historical pandemics cited have had significant effects on several paradigm shifts throughout Europe's history.

A trend that has previously been identified and which has gained notoriety is the use of disinformation by extremist groups and some states to foment disorder, confusion and social alarm. Such actors, have tried to convey the idea that the European Union and Western countries, in general, are not up to the task of dealing with the effects of the pandemic. Illustrations of this are 'mask and vent diplomacy' and, more recently, 'vaccine diplomacy'. Binnendijk and Kirchberger (2021) state that

> "…the pandemic did not cause European distrust toward China, but it did catalyze and exacerbate it. In particular, China's botched initial response and subsequent attempts to exploit the crisis diplomatically—through 'mask diplomacy', by 'wolf warrior' diplomats' divisive comments, and by trying to suppress the positive example of Taiwan's comparatively more effective pandemic response — have dramatically reduced trust in the good intentions of the Chinese leadership across Europe and, in particular, within EU institutions" (p. 17).

There are numerous recent examples in the literature concerning these tactics: Martin (2021), Doshi (2021) or Gokhale (2021).

In Western Balkans countries and also in some Central European countries (members of the European Union), Russia and China have made efforts to take advantage of the economic fragilities and shortages of vaccines in order to appear as 'saviors' of those countries, in a sharp contrast with the 'poor functioning' and 'lack of solidarity' of the European Union.

The alleged smooth operation of the vaccination process in Britain itself was used as an argument to demonstrate that Britain was now - outside the European Union - able to function much better on its own rather than in concert with European Union member states.

There are many reasons for these governments to promote disinformation campaigns:

- Seizing the moment to enhance international influence;
- Weaken the European Union;
- Blunt the appeal of democratic institutions;
- Sow divisions across the West;
- Create chaos and political unrest to blame democracy's inherent weaknesses;
- Promote authoritarianism and authoritarian states as more effective in protecting its citizens and their security;

- Eroding the global standing of liberal democracy and the international liberal political order;
- To create an alternative worldview designed to undermine democratic values.

Extremist movements of all sorts, have taken advantage of the COVID-19 pandemic to promote narratives and to try to convince people of the necessity for 'profound change' in the way that European societies both work and function. Bail (2021) states that "…radicals are happy to create chaos: studies in the US and Denmark have concluded that those who spread fake news have a particular taste for chaos and a desire to see the system collapse" (p.59).

The protests against the restrictive measures and the use of masks, for instance, were used as a more global protest against the 'establishment', the 'corrupt media', and fed all sorts of conspiracy theories.

On the other hand, some governments took advantage of the vulnerabilities of the civil society in order to impose more restrictive measures which would not have been tolerated in conditions outside of the COVID-19 pandemic. Restrictions on the freedom of circulation, freedom of gathering and norms that were restrictive of civic and political liberties, were imposed, oftentimes without scientific consensus and under questionable necessity. The worst is that some governments also imposed some censorship on news and liberty of expression that are total intolerable in a pluralistic and democratic society. We are not just talking about authoritarian countries or illiberal democracies, even countries that are considered completely free by all of the international standards and freedom watchdogs, have advanced on a dangerous path. The most recent example is Portugal, with the approval by the parliament of a so-called "Portuguese charter of human rights in the digital age."[3] (Some observers found that some articles were very similar to the censorship articles of the laws of the previous authoritarian Salazar regime). The arguments of the ones who voted in favor of this initiative are always the same: to protect the citizens, to increase safety and security, and so on. As Benjamin Franklin's famous quote said: "Those who would give up essential Liberty, to purchase a little temporary Safety, deserve neither Liberty nor Safety" (NPR, 2015).

Social Media importance

The importance of the digital media in our daily lives and in the society as a whole is enormous. The same can be said regarding the use of these outlets as instruments and tools of political communication. Even before the pandemic we observed a significant growth on the users of diverse social media platforms. The most recent figures by "Hootsuite We are Social" shows staggering trends that were exponentiated by the confinement measures and social isolation triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic (Kemp, 2021). According to one authoritative source, the total number of active global social media users is now at roughly 4.2 billion. Social media users as a percentage of the global population are 53,6% and the annual change in the number of global social media users, from 2020 to 2021, is +13.2% or +490 million. The world´s most-used social platforms are Facebook, YouTube and WhatsApp; all of them used by more than 2 billion users each. The main reasons for using social media are:

- In order to stay up-to-date with news and current events;
- To search out entertaining content;
- To fill up spare time;
- To stay in touch with social contacts;
- To share photos and/or videos with others (Kemp, 2021).

As the importance of the social media platforms is evident as mentioned above, by those staggering figures, so it is also the rapid spread of fake news throughout the main platforms. According to data released by Facebook itself:

> "Facebook and Instagram removed, from the beginning of the pandemic until April 2021, 'more than 18 million' of content worldwide for violating their disinformation policies and for damages related to the COVID-19" (Público, 2021).

The data was released by Facebook, as part of the fight against disinformation and harmful content related to the pandemic of COVID-19.

Aware of their importance and their social responsibility - in addition to the impacts that their behaviour has on public opinion - social media platforms have adopted behaviours to combat fake news and disinformation campaigns, removing on their own initiative false content related to the pandemic of COVID-19. However, these attempts - possibly well intentioned -

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3 "Carta Portuguesa de direitos humanos na era digital (Lei nº 27/2021).

of self-regulation are clearly insufficient to avoid this situation.

There is, however, a very difficult conundrum to resolve. Social media platforms claim that many posts and content fall within the freedom of expression and opinion protected by the first amendment of the U.S.A constitution and enshrined in the constitutional texts of liberal democracies. The withdrawal of posts can constitute, in the opinion of many, an exercise of censorship that could call into question constitutionally enshrined and protected rights, such as freedom of opinion. This is precisely the fundamental question at stake: who decides what fake news is? With what criteria? What are the underlying values? Based on what political, religious, social or moral doctrine or ideology? The answers to these questions are not easy, as it will not be easy to resolve this issue. Deep down, it transports us to the usual dilemma: who guards the guardians? This problem has been debated since ancient Greece and, as is well known, a totally adequate answer has not yet been found.

Policy-making: European Union and certain Member States responses

Social media companies, which have long been reluctant to implement any kind of censorship on their platforms, have been under increasing pressure from EU regulators to the point where many platforms have felt compelled to take unprecedented steps to address the issue of disinformation and misinformation. The European Commission, following up on its earlier Code of Practice (a set of voluntary commitments for social media platforms regarding transparency, joint reporting and regular meetings with European commissioners), adopted a new initiative in December 2020: the European Democracy Action Plan.

This initiative uses the lessons of the pandemic to chart a future direction for EU regulatory responses to disinformation.

"The integrity of elections has come under threat, the environment in which journalists and civil society operate has deteriorated, and concerted efforts to spread false and misleading information and manipulate voters, including by foreign actors have been observed. The very freedoms we strive to uphold, like the freedom of expression, have been used in some cases to deceive and manipulate. The COV-

ID-19 pandemic has brought these challenges into relief." (European Commission, 2020)

How is the EU tangibly responding to the infodemic?

Code of Practice on Disinformation
The Code of Practice is the first time that the industry has agreed, on a voluntary basis, to adopt self-regulatory standards in order to fight disinformation. The Code includes an annex identifying best practices that signatories will apply to implement the Code's commitments. The Code of Practice was signed by the online platforms Facebook, Google and Twitter, Mozilla, as well as by advertisers and parts of the advertising industry in October 2018 (European Commission, n.d., 'Code of practice').

Digital Services Act
The Digital Services Act (DSA) is a regulation intended to create a safer and open digital space across the European Union. The goals of the DSA are to protect the rights of digital service users and to create a more level playing field that will encourage innovation and growth in the European Single Market and across the globe (European Commission, n.d., 'The Digital Services Act').

European Democracy Action Plan
The European Democracy Action Plan sets out measures around three main pillars:

- Promote free and fair elections
- Strengthen media freedom and pluralism
- Counter disinformation

The Commission currently plans to gradually implement the European Democracy Action plan through 2023 (European Commission, n.d., 'The Digital Services Act').

The European Digital Media Observatory (EDMO, n.d.)
Established in June 2020. The activities of the EDMO are based on five pillars:

- Mapping of fact-checking organizations in Europe;
- Mapping, supporting and coordinating of research activities on disinformation at the European level;
- Building a public portal with information aimed at increasing awareness of online disinformation;

- Design of a framework to ensure secure and privacy-protected access to platforms' data for academic researchers working to better understand disinformation;

- Support to public authorities in the monitoring of the policies put in place by online platforms to limit the spread and the impact of disinformation.

In addition to these institutional responses by the European Union, some member-States also tried to tackle this issue (Funke & Flamini, 2021):

- In Portugal: Some law enforcement agencies (PSP) launched press releases and campaigns on social media, (Facebook and Instagram), with alerts to the population on the dangers of fake news;

- In Belgium the government created an expert group and a Media literacy campaign;

- In Italy an online reporting portal was created and the Polizia Postale, a unit of the state police that investigates cybercrime, it was empowered to pursue legal action against offenders;

- In the Netherlands the government launched a public awareness campaign about the spread of misinformation online.

Tatlow (2020) states that Sweden's plan for a Psychological Defense Agency should be replicated in each EU country and connect to Brussels. This would identify and counter disinformation and other malign influences, support open-source research and tracking. As a Swedish government report noted, "…psychological defense should be viewed as a natural part of safeguarding the open society, freedom of opinion, and the freedom and independence of Sweden" (p.9).

Conclusions

As most of these menaces (disinformation campaigns and misinformation) can cause social alarmism, chaos, mistrust and even political unrest, they should be on the radar of European law enforcement services and agencies that act within the respective member states' borders. Responding to fake news and disinformation campaigns is, thus, an imperative; if social media posts have a potential to undermine public safety, then they should not be ignored. Any response will need to be

thought out and implemented on a case-by-case basis. Public safety professionals must be alert and aware of trending disinformation and misinformation that can have the potential to affect public order. They must be prepared and have a plan on how to counter it when necessary.

There are some authors who think that there is no silver bullet to tackle this menace (Aral, 2020: p.305). According to them the battle against this phenomenon should be won, primarily, by platforms and people. They proposed a combination of approaches that, together, could mitigate this peril:

"The first approach is labeling (…) Prompting people to think about the information they consume can change whether they believe and share it. Second, we must address the economic incentives behind creating and spreading false information. Third, (…) Media literacy is designed to teach people (…) to think critically about the information they consume and share. Fourth, we should pursue technological solutions to the spread of misinformation. Fifth, platform policies also help" (Aral, 2020: p.305–309).

At present, many European member state governments are sensitized to the dangers and perils of the disinformation within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. In response, many European member states have launched campaigns on media literacy, created task forces to deal with the problem and have created laws to criminalize such offences. However, at present, the role of law enforcement actors in these processes can and should be augmented. As the frontline guardians of public safety and order, law enforcement agencies should arguably play a more significant role in combatting disinformation and misinformation within their respective jurisdictions.

Media and digital literacy, as well as raising awareness for the perils of disinformation and misinformation phenomenon, should be learning objectives in the formation and qualifications of the law enforcement agents, and in particular those who work in the relevant 'cyber' divisions of their respective institutions/agencies.

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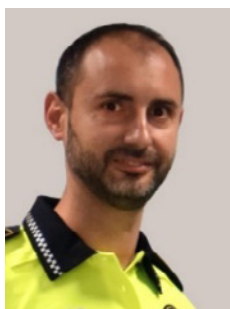
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Recent Publications:

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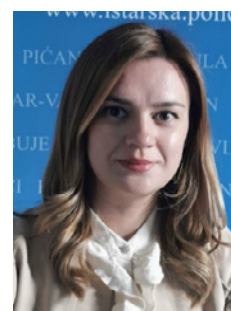
Impact of stress caused by the COVID-19 pandemic on the work and conduct of police officers in stressful emergency situations

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Preparing for Future Pandemic Policing - First lessons learnt on policing and surveillance during the COVID-19 pandemic
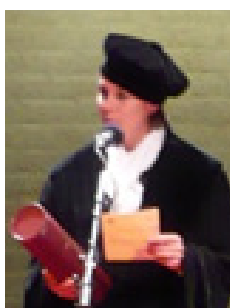
Monica den Boer was appointed as Professor of Military Policing Operations at the Netherlands Defence Academy on 1 June 2020. Prior to this appointment, she held a Parliamentary seat for the social-liberal party D66 since 31 October 2017. She was employed at the Netherlands Police Academy in Apeldoorn, The Netherlands (2003-2016), largely in combination with a Chair of Comparative Public Administration at the VU University Amsterdam (2004-2012). She published widely on European justice and home affairs and police co-operation and engaged in research, teaching, coaching as well as supervision.

Recent publications:
- Den Boer, M. (2019) Policing and prosecuting transnational terrorism: a comparative European perspective. In: Mitsilegas V. et al., Research Handbook on Transnational Crime. Elgar Publishing, pp 81-97.
- Den Boer, M. (ed.) (2018) Comparative Policing from a Legal Perspective, Edward Elgar Publishing.

Frankowska, Iwona Agnieszka

Capability Officer, Capability Programming Office of Capacity Building Division, Frontex

Towards common values and culture - Challenges and solutions in developing the basic training of the European border and coast standing corps category 1 in pandemic crisis.

Ms Iwona Frankowska holds the position of the Capability Officer, in the Capability Programming Office of Capacity Building Division at Frontex. Prior to that she was the Training Project Officer in the Training Unit of Frontex since 2016. She was the project manager of the Basic Training for the European Border and Coast Guard Standing Corps Category 1, being responsible for the design, development, and delivery of the training for the very first iteration. The training was conducted simultaneously in two training centres in Poland in 2020. Currently she is managing the extension of the Basic Training Programme to respond the needs of recruits without previous law enforcement background. Moreover, was the project manager of the Common Core Curriculum for Border and Coast Guard Basic Training, and Mid-level Management Training in the EU (CCC Basic and CCC ML). Based on the EU legislation, these two curricula are setting the standards for the national border and coast guard training in the EU Member States. The responsibility covered all phases of the curriculum: development, implementation, evaluation, and update. The evaluation mechanism, Common Core Curriculum – Interoperability Assessment Programme (CCC-IAP) falls into Ms Frankowska portfolio. Prior to working at Frontex she was a Polish border guard officer and held the position of lecturer in the Border Guard Training Centre in Kętrzyn, Poland. She has two master's degree, being a graduate of Nicolai Copernicus University in Torun, of Warsaw University and Gdansk University in the field of philology, education and training, and the European Studies. Ms Frankowska has proven academic competences and professional expertise in the fields of border security and management, and training with more than 18 years of professional background. Furthermore, she has certified experiences in project management and application of Kirkpatrick's model into training design.

Fuchs, Micha

Department of Police Training and Education, Bavarian Police

Challenges for police training after COVID-19 - Seeing the crisis as a chance
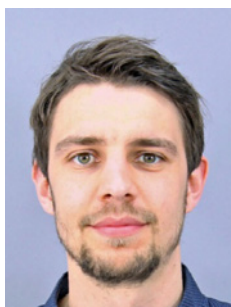
Micha Fuchs joined the Department of Police Training and Education of the Bavarian Police in 2018. His area of operations includes the development and evaluation of the police training, especially in the field of digitalisation and teacher training courses. Aside from his job, he is also working on his dissertation to become a PhD in Educational Science.

Before joining the Bavarian police, he obtained a master's degree in Educational Sciences at the Free University of Berlin, a bachelor's degree in Pedagogy and Psychology at the University of Jena and worked three years as a counsellor with young adults.

Godfrey, Barry

Professor, School of Law and Social Justice, University of Liverpool

Responding to Domestic Abuse - Policing innovations during the COVID-19 pandemic

I began my academic career at Keele University, joining in 1995 as a junior lecturer and leaving as Professor of Criminology in 2011. Since joining Liverpool University, I have worked with colleagues across the Faculty, with the International Criminology Research Unit, and with the Risk, Security and Crime Research Cluster. My research focus lies in comparative criminology, particularly international crime history; desistence studies; and longitudinal studies of offending. Funding from the AHRC, ESRC, Wellcome Trust, The Leverhulme Trust, Nuffield Foundation, the British Academy, and other funders, has allowed me to build a team of established academics who work on digital histories, longitudinal studies of crime and imprisonment, the history of health, and resistance from offending. I have supervised twenty doctoral students, and welcome

applications to work with colleagues at doctoral, and post-doctoral level in the future.

Recent publications:

- Godfrey, B., Homer, C., Inwood, K., Maxwell-Stewart, H., Reed, R., & Tuffin, R. (2021) Crime, Penal Transportation, and Digital Methodologies. *Journal of World History*, 32(2), 241-260. doi:10.1353/jwh.2021.0023.
- Godfrey, B. (2021). The Rise and Fall of the Rehabilitative Ideal, 1895-1970. *Criminology & Criminal Justice*, 21(2), 258-259. doi:10.1177/1748895820914421.
- Walklate, S., Godfrey, B., & Richardson, J. (2021). Changes and continuities in police responses to domestic abuse in England and Wales during the Covid-19 'lockdown'. *Policing & Society*. doi:10.1080/10439463.2021.1896514.

Gomes, Paulo

Lieutenant Colonel at Guarda Nacional Republicana

The health and well-being of Portuguese Military Academy cadets during the COVID-19 pandemic

Lieutenant Colonel at Guarda Nacional Republicana (GNR), currently responsible for GNR Cadets education at Military Academy.

Grutzpalk, Jonas

Professor of Sociology and Political Sciences at the University of Applied Sciences for Police and Public Administration in North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany

Porous Passivity - How German police officers reflect their organisation's learning processes during the pandemic.

1991-2003 Studies Law, Political Science, Sociology and Religious Science Münster, Bonn and Oxford / 2002 PhD in Sociology Bonn University / 2003-2009 office for the protection of the constitution (interior intelligence service) of the Land Brandenburg / since 2009 professor for sociology and political science at HSPV NRW (university for applied science for police and public administration). Publications on knowledge management, political extremism, sociology of religion.

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Hak, Linda

Researcher, Bureau Bervoets

Preparing for Future Pandemic Policing - First lessons learnt on policing and surveillance during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Herbinger, Paul Luca

Researcher, Vienna Centre for Societal Security

Policing in times of the pandemic

Domestic abuse during the pandemic - Making sense of heterogeneous data

Herbinger, Paul, MA (Sociology - Friedrich Schiller University, Jena), is a researcher at the Vienna Centre for Societal Security. His research in socio-legal studies and criminology includes policing the pandemic, European projects on multiagency interventions into cases of high-risk domestic violence, as well as national projects on forensic cryptocurrency investigations. His previous work in the field of HIV/Aids prevention involved the development of monitoring systems for the HIV-intervention Join-in Circuit, Zambia for the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit and Afya Mzuri. He is currently an editor for Mosaik-Blog and a lecturer on qualitative research on domestic violence interventions at the University for Applied Sciences.

Hoffman, István

Professor, Senior Research Fellow (TK JTI), Department of Constitutional and Administrative Law, ELTE

Policing During a Pandemic - for the public health or against the usual suspects?

Jantea, Andreea

Sociologist, Research and Crime Prevention Institute

New Challenges for Police During the Pandemic and Specific Actions to Counteract them in Romania
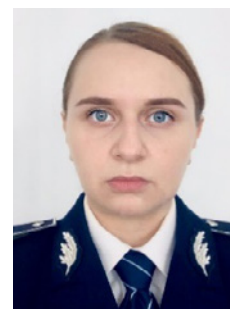
Andreea Jantea is currently working as a sociologist at the Research and Crime Prevention Institute within the General Inspectorate of Romanian Police. She holds a master's degree in Organised Crime, Terrorism and Security from the University of Essex.

Kaleta, Patrick

Junior Research Engineer, Austrian Institute of Technology GmbH, Center for Digital Safety & Security, Cooperative Digital Technologies

The role of law enforcement agencies and the use of IT tools for a coordinate response in pandemic crisis management

Gained his degree in Computer Science at the University of Vienna and is currently employed by the AIT as Junior Research Engineer since 2018, where he has taken the role of software developer for ICT in Crisis and Disaster management. He focuses on environmental and public safety topics including climate change adaptation, public awareness and emissions & air quality. As part of his work, he contributed to the development of web-based applications for EU-funded projects like DRIVER+ (EU Grant Agreement 607798) and CLARITY (EU Grant Agreement 730355).

Recent publications:

- Havlik D., Schimak G., Kaleta P., Dihé P., Leone M.F. (2020) CLARITY Screening Service for Climate Hazards, Impacts and Effects of the Adaptation Options, In: Athanasiadis I., Frysinger S., Schimak G., Knibbe W. (eds) Environmental Software Systems. Data Science in Action. ISESS 2020. IFIP Advances in Information and Communication Technology, vol 554. Springer, Cham.

Karsai, Krisztina

Full Professor, Head of Unit, University of Szeged

DIGICRIMJUS and Clear. Effective methods of teaching criminal law digitally during the pandemic

Krisztina Karsai is full professor in criminal law at the University of Szeged and is specialized in European and international criminal law, and criminal policy. Since 2000, she has been a member of the expert group of the Ministry of Justice for combating drug problems and, since 2005, for crime prevention. She is active in international networks of criminal sciences; she prepared more times the Hungarian reports for the world congresses of the AIDP, of IFCCLGE, of ISSD, of EAK+. She is guest professor of three universities (University of Istanbul, University of Oradea, Shanghai University of Political Science and Law), and she gives many guest lectures in German and Spanish universities. She delivered reports as contracted expert of European projects (since 2012) in granted project with relevant subjects (sanctioning system, the disposal of confiscated assets, organised crime etc.). Her position as independent expert of the Commission (DG Justice; Fields of justice, freedom and security; criminal justice, prevent and combat criminality) allowed her to take a part also in evaluation procedures of tenders (since 2013). Krisztina Karsai is author of many books and articles on Hungarian and European criminal law and policy; she is editor and co-author of the new Commentary on the new Hungarian Criminal Code of 2012. A native Hungarian speaker, also fluent in German and English. She is the Honorary Consul of Austria in South-East Hungary.

Kovacs Szitkay, Eszter

PhD student at Ludovika University of Public Service and a junior research fellow at (formerly Hungarian Academy of Sciences) Centre for Social Sciences, Institute for Legal Studies

Populist pressures, policing and the pandemic - Lessons and challenges for police management
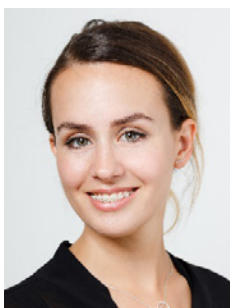
Eszter Kovács Szitkay is a PhD student at Ludovika University of Public Service and a junior research fellow at (formerly Hungarian Academy of Sciences) Centre for Social Sciences, Institute for Legal Studies. Her research interest includes access to justice, law enforcement, and the conceptualization of race and ethnicity.

Recent publications:

- Kovács Szitkay, E. (2021) Egy lépéssel közelebb az igazságszolgáltatáshoz való teljesebb hozzáféréshez [One step closer to a fuller access to justice] In: Harmati, B.; Kovács Szitkay, E.; Pap, A. L.; Papp, B. (eds.): Honestas, Humanitas, Humilitas. Budapest, Magyarország: L'Harmattan Kiadó, pp. 115-125.

Kriegler, Anine

Research Associate, University of Cape Town

Policing South Africa's Lockdown - Making sense of ambiguity amidst certainty?

Anine is a researcher and postdoctoral fellow with the Centre of Criminology at the University of Cape Town. Her research focuses on the measurement of crime and victimisation, and on illegal drug policy.

2015–present Researcher, Centre of Criminology, University of Cape Town 2014–2015 Research associate, Institute for Justice and Reconciliation

Recent publication:

- Crime statistics show South Africa's lockdown 'crime holiday' is over (August 30, 2021) https://theconversation.com/crime-statistics-show-south-africas-lockdown-crime-holiday-is-over-166785

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Kriskó, Edina

Assistant professor at the National University of Public Service Faculty of Public Governance and International Studies.
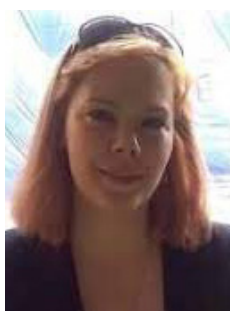
What society expects and receives. The press conferences of the Operational Group during the SARS-COVID-19 pandemic

She is currently working as an assistant professor at the National University of Public Service Faculty of Public Governance and International Studies. She graduated from Communication (BA, MA) at the University of Szeged and (summa cum laude) defended her doctoral essay bearing the title of „Social Function of the Police and Police Communication" at the University of Pécs in 2013. As a trainer, she has been taking part in further studies of public officers and leadership development programs for 10 years. She has been researching police communication for 15 years and publishes her results in the national leading academic journal. As a researcher, she is interested in the social embeddedness and responsibility of the police with its historical perspective and the use of related communication tools. Her publications are available in the Hungarian Scientific Database on the following link: https://m2.mtmt.hu/gui2/?type=authors&mode=browse&sel=10021869

Kutnjak Ivković, Sanja

Professor, School of Criminal Justice, Michigan State University

A comparative study of police organizational changes in Europe during the COVID-19 pandemic

Sanja Kutnjak Ivković is Professor at the School of Criminal Justice, Michigan State University. She holds a doctorate in criminology (University of Delaware) and a doctorate in law (Harvard University). Dr. Kutnjak Ivković is currently serving as Chair of the International Division, American Society of Criminology. Her research focuses on comparative and international criminology, criminal justice, and law. Dr. Kutnjak Ivković received the 2017 Mueller Award for Distinguished Contributions to International Criminal Justice, Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences

International Section. Her recent books include Police Integrity in South Africa (2020), Exploring Police Integrity (2019), and Police Integrity across the World (2015). Her work has appeared in leading academic and law journals such as the Law and Society Review; Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology; Criminology and Public Policy; Law and Policy; Stanford Journal of International Law; Cornell International Law Journal; Crime, Law, and Social Change; European Journal of Criminology; Policing and Society; Policing: An International Journal of Police Strategies and Management; Police Quarterly.

Leonhardmair, Norbert

Researcher, Vienna Centre for Societal Security

Domestic abuse during the pandemic - Making sense of heterogeneous data

Norbert Leonhardmair is a researcher and project manager at the Vienna Centre for Societal Security. His research on policing and internal security includes national and European projects on countering extremism, mental health, community policing, and forensic practices. Currently, he is working on domestic violence and coordinating the DG Just project FAIR on rights of the accused. He has consulted for data analysis for the Ministry of Justice, City of Vienna and GIZ projects. 2011-15 Research Assistant at Institute for Sociology of Law and Criminology. 2011-12 Scholarship at Institute for Advanced Studies. 2010 Project Assistant at Democracy Centre. 2008-11 Project Assistant at the Institute of European Culture Industry-Studies. Education: Sociology, University of Vienna (2011). Currently MA, Sociology (emphasis: Social Studies of Science), University of Vienna. 2012-13 Erasmus, Criminology & Sociology, Royal Holloway, University of London. Teaching: 2011-2013 Guest Lecturer, University of Applied Sciences Wiener Neustadt, Empirical Research Methods, Bachelor level, Dr. Gregor Kastner.

Recent publications:
- Herbinger, P., Neunkirchner, M., & Leonhardmair, N. (2020) European Legislation to Fight Domestic Violence. European Law Enforcement Research Bulletin, (20). https://bulletin.cepol.europa.eu/index.php/bulletin/article/view/415

- Kersten, J., Leonhardmayr, N. & Kreissl, R. (2019) Brave New Apps: An Essay on Community Policing and Social Media, in: Security Informatics and Law Enforcement, Akhgar, B. et al. (Eds): Social Media Strategy in Policing, Springer International Publishing.

Levi, Michael

Professor of Criminology,
Cardiff University

Fraud, pandemics and policing responses

Michael Levi graduated from Oxford, Cambridge and Southampton universities, and has been Professor of Criminology at Cardiff since 1991. His main work has been making sense of the linkages and differences between white-collar and organised crime and their public and private sector controls, intersecting with corruption and money laundering locally and transnationally. This and his efforts to improve corruption and economic crime prevention and criminal justice has previously won him major research prizes from the British and American Societies of Criminology, the first lifetime Tackling Economic Crime Award in the UK in 2019, and the Rule of Law Committee/UNODC Corruption Research and Education prize in 2020. His current projects include Fraud and its relationship to Pandemics and Economic Crises from 1850 to the Present; The impact of technologies on criminal markets and Transnational organised crime; and cyber-enabled fraud and money laundering projects.

Lichtenstein, András

Lecturer in Criminal Law and Procedure at the University of Szeged

DIGICRIMJUS and Clear. Effective methods of teaching criminal law digitally during the pandemic

András Lichtenstein graduated in Law with a major in Criminal Justice, and holds a joint Master's (LL.M.) in German Law and Legal Translation from the Universities Potsdam and Szeged.

Mr. Lichtenstein has held multiple scholarships for his academic excellence over the past years (e.g., Hungarian Ministry of Justice Students' Scholarship, New National Excellence Scholarship, and Young Talents' Fellowship) and has 13 published research papers. For his most recent work, "The Independence of the Prosecution Services and the ECJ's Interpretation of the Term Judicial Authority" he won the I. Prize Award by the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Regional Committee in Szeged. He is currently finishing his PhD dissertation focusing on public prosecution systems in Europe, including the role and organisation of law enforcement agencies and police-prosecutor relationships. He is also committed to the research of the new challenges and opportunities faced by criminal justice as a result of digitalization within the framework of the Erasmus+ Strategic Partnership for Higher Education „DIGICRIM-JUS: New challenges for teaching researching and practicing criminal law in the digital age".

Löfgren, Hans O.

Med.PhD, Assistant Professor, Police Education Unit, Umeå University, Northern Sweden

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on police officers' mental health

Special interest in psychology and psychiatry.

Recent publications:
- Christiansen, F.; Ahlqvist, V. H.; Nyroos, M. &Löfgren, H.O. (2021) Physical activity through a classroom-based intervention: A pragmatic non-randomized trial among Swedish adolescents in an upper secondary school. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, MDPI 2021, Vol. 18. DOI:10.3390/ijerph182111041
- Löfgren, H O.; Hansson, J.; Sjöberg, D.; Åström, J. (2021) Kaliber.22: en systematisk studie kring faktorer som kan påverka polisstudentens skjutresultat. Polisutbildningens skriftserie nr. 12. http://umu.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1608122/FULLTEXT01.pdf

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Malheiro, Luís

Captain, Guarda Nacional Republicana, Professor, Portuguese Military Academy and Vice-President, Military Academy Research Center (CINAMIL

The health and well-being of Portuguese Military Academy cadets during the COVID-19 pandemic

Luís Malheiro (malheiro.lcr@gnr.pt) is a Captain in the Guarda Nacional Republicana, Professor at the Portuguese Military Academy and Vice-President of the Military Academy Research Center (CINAMIL). He obtained his PhD in Public Policy from ISCTE-Lisbon University Institute. His main areas of research are Public Policies and Armed Forces and Society. He has been working on the topic of WPS, Green Mobility and the role of information technologies in criminal investigation in the Gendarmerie.

Recent publications:

- Alonso, R. & Malheiro, L. (2021) Border management in the Western Mediterranean. Iberian Journal of Information Systems and Technologies, Nº E43, pp. 140-152.
- Malheiro, L. (2020) A questão do género e os instrumentos de regulação internacional: a agenda Mulheres, Paz e Segurança na GNR. Lisboa. Fronteira do Caos.
- Bessa, F., & Malheiro, L. (2020) A agenda MPS: um olhar sobre as Forças de Segurança. Nação e Defesa, N.º 156, pp. 123-143.

Maskály, Jon

Assistant Professor, Criminal Justice, University of Dakota

A comparative study of police organisational changes in Europe during the COVID-19 pandemic

With a Ph.D. in Criminology received from the University of South Florida, Jon worked at the University of Illinois at Chicago and the University of Texas at Dallas before moving to his current position. Policing, Police-Community relationships are his main areas of research interest.

Recent publications:

- Donner, C., Maskály, J.; Jennings, W. & Guzman, C. (2021) Using criminological theory to explain police misconduct: a state-of-the-art review. *Policing: An International Journal*, 44 (5).
- Maskály, J.; Kutnjak Ivkovich, S. & Neyroud, P. (2021) A comparative study of the police officer views on policing during the COVID-19 pandemic in the United States. *Policing: An International Journal*, 44 (5).

Meško, Gorazd

Professor of Criminology and Head of the Institute of Criminal Justice and Security Research at the Faculty of Criminal Justice and Security, University of Maribor, Slovenia

Crime Investigation during the COVID-19 pandemic in Slovenia: Initial reflections

Gorazd Meško is a professor of criminology and Head of the Institute of Criminal Justice and Security Research at the Faculty of Criminal Justice and Security, University of Maribor, Slovenia. His research interests include local safety and security, policing, victimology and penology. He has recently conducted a study on crime during the covid-19 pandemic and edited a special issue of the Journal of Criminal Investigation and Criminology on crime, covid-19 and social control in Slovenia. He has been active in a group of international scholars who studied crime and social control during covid-19 pandemics internationally, headed by Manuel Eisner from the University of Cambridge, UK. His recent books include Handbook on policing in Central and Eastern Europe (Springer, 2013), Trust and legitimacy in Criminal Justice. European Perspectives (Springer, 2015), Mapping the Victimological Landscape of the Balkans (MPI Freiburg, 2020) and Local Safety and Security – between Urban and Rural Perspectives (in Slovene, 2021). He received a national award for excellence in social sciences for his research on environmental criminology in 2014 and recognition from the National Research Agency of the Republic of Slovenia for his research on legitimacy and criminal justice in 2020. His e-mail: gorazd.mesko@um.si

Mignone, Mara

PhD, Criminologist, Scientific Coordinator, RISSC-Research Centre on Security and Crime

Training and Education during the Pandemic Crisis - The H2020 ANITA project experience

Legal background and PhD in Criminology. She has consolidated experience in education/training, research activity and research coordination within national/international research projects, mostly co-financed by the EU Commission and public/private organisations. Her priority thematic areas of interest are ICT facilitated crime, with a special focus on illegal trafficking activities (e.g. medicines, drugs, NPS, firearms, tobacco) and economic organised crime.

Mihai, Ioan-Cosmin

Professor, Researcher, Cybercrime training officer, European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Training (CEPOL)

The impact of COVID-19: Cybercrime and Cyberthreats

Ioan-Cosmin MIHAI is a researcher, professor, trainer, and conference speaker, with an experience of more than 16 years in cybercrime and cybersecurity. He is a cybercrime training officer at the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Training (CEPOL), associate professor at "Al. I. Cuza" Police Academy, visiting professor at the University Politehnica of Bucharest and "Carol I" National Defence University, Romania, honorary professor at CT University, India, and vice president of the Romanian Association for Information Security Assurance (RAISA).

Moult, Kelley

Associate Professor of Criminology, University of Cape Town

Policing South Africa's lockdown: Making sense of ambiguity amidst certainty?

Kelley Moult is an Associate Professor of Criminology at the University of Cape Town. She was, until recently, the Director of the Centre for Law and Society at UCT. Kelley holds a PhD in Justice, Law & Society from American University. Her work focuses on gender-based violence, law reform and implementation in South Africa, and includes empirical studies on criminal justice personnel (particularly court clerks), discretion and the administration of justice. Other recent projects include a Southern African regional projects on child marriage, and on sexual and reproductive rights and the law. She is interested in the intersections of state and non-state justice systems in terms of gender-based violence. Kelley was a Fulbright Fellow from 2004-2006, and received the 2020 Law and Society Association Stanton Wheeler Mentorship Award for outstanding mentorship of graduate, professional or undergraduate students working on issues of law and society. It is the first time that the award has been given to a scholar from the global South. She teaches Theories of Crime and Social Order (PBL5820F/4820F); Law in Action: Research Methods (PBL5849F/4849F) and Forensics and the Law (PBL5847S/4847S) at the postgraduate level; and co-convenes Crime and Deviance in South African Cities (PBL2800F) with Elrena van der Spuy for undergraduate students in the Humanities and Law.

Neyroud, Peter William

CBE QPM PhD, Associate Professor in Evidence-based Policing, Institute of Criminology, University of Cambridge

A comparative study of police Organisational changes in Europe during the COVID-19 pandemic

Dr Peter Neyroud is Director of the Senior Leader master's degree Apprenticeship in Applied Criminology

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and Police Management and an Associate Professor in Evidence-based policing in the Jerry Lee Centre for Experimental Criminology at the Institute of Criminology, University of Cambridge. In 2018 he completed a PhD at Cambridge which focused on the implementation of field experiments in policing. His research focuses on experimentation, police diversion of offenders, crime harm, police ethics, community policing, the impact of COVID 19 on policing and police leadership and management. He was a police officer for more than 30 years, serving in Hampshire, West Mercia and Thames Valley (as Chief Constable). He set up and ran the National Policing Improvement Agency (as Chief Constable and Chief Executive).

In 2010, he was commissioned by the UK Home Secretary to carry out a fundamental "Review of Police Leadership and Training" which led to the establishment of the new National "College of Policing" in 2012 and radical reform of the qualifications and training of police officers, creating the new "Police Education Qualification Framework".

Nogala, Detlef

Research and Knowledge Management Officer, European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Training (CEPOL)

Pandemic Effects on Law Enforcement Training and Practice – Introduction to conference findings and perspectives

Before joining the agency in his current position, Dr. Nogala had been a post-doc research fellow at the Max-Planck-Institute for Foreign and International Criminal Law at Freiburg i.Br., Germany and had worked in research projects at the University of Hamburg, Germany. He also held a position as lecturer at the Police Academy of Hamburg. He has obtained university-diploma in psychology and criminology and has obtained his doctoral degree from the Freie Universität in Berlin.

Recent publications:

- Konze, A., Nogala, D., (2018) Higher Police Education in Europe: Surveying Recent Developments, in: Rogers, C., Frevel, B. (Eds.), Higher Education and Police – An International View. Springer International Publishing, pp. 155-177.

- Nogala, D., (2021) Disruption, Isolation, riskante Konfusion – Anmerkungen zur kriminalpolitisch relevanten Pandemiepolitik in europäischer und internationaler Perspektive. NK 33, 421-436. https://doi.org/10.5771/0934-9200-2021-4-421
- Schröder, D., Nogala, D., Failla, S., (2021) Training Contra Terror(ism) – CEPOL's contribution in a European law enforcement perspective, in: Höhn, C., Saavreda, I., Weyembergh, A. (Eds.), La Lutte Contre Le Terrorisme: Ses Acquis et Ses Défis - The Fight Against Terrorism - Achievements and Challenges. Liber Amicorum Gilles de Kerchove. Bruylant, Brussels, pp. 281-296.

O'Neill, Megan

Reader in the School of Social Sciences at the University of Dundee and an Associate Director of the Scottish Institute for Policing Research (SIPR)

Policing During a Pandemic - for the public health or against the usual suspects?

Megan O'Neill is a Reader in the School of Social Sciences at the University of Dundee and an Associate Director of the Scottish Institute for Policing Research (SIPR). Her work focuses on aspects of police culture, stop and search, community policing, public sector pluralisation in policing and surveillance practices of the state.

Pap, Andras Laszlo

Research Professor and Head of Department for Constitutional and Law at the (formerly Hungarian Academy of Sciences) Centre for Social Sciences Institute for Legal Studies.

Populist pressures, policing and the pandemic - Lessons and challenges for police management

András László Pap is Research Professor and Head of Department for Constitutional and Law at the (formerly Hungarian Academy of Sciences) Centre for Social Sciences Institute for Legal Studies. He is also Professor of Law at the Institute of Business Economics at Eötvös University (ELTE) and at the Law Enforcement Faculty of Ludovika University, as well as Research Affiliate at

CEU Democracy Institute, Rule of Law Research Group in Budapest, Hungary. He is also Adjunct (Recurrent Visiting) Professor in the Nationalism Studies Program at the Central European University in Vienna. A former SASPRO-Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellow at the Institute of Sociology of the Slovak Academy of Sciences in Bratislava, his research interest include comparative constitutional law, human rights, law enforcement, in particular hate crimes, discrimination and the conceptualization of race and ethnicity. In 2018 he founded the International Association of Constitutional Law (IACL) Research Group on identity, race and ethnicity in constitutional law.

*Recent publication***:**

- Pap, A.L. (2021) Academic freedom: A test and a tool for illiberalism, neoliberalism and liberal democracy, *The Brown Journal of World Affairs*, Spring/Summer 2021 • Volume XXVI, Issue II.

Pavia, José Francisco

Associate Professor, Lusíada University, Portugal; Visiting Professor, Sciences Po, Grenoble, France; Invited Professor, Higher Institute of Military Studies of Portugal

Disinformation campaigns and Fake News in pandemic times-What role for law enforcement and security forces?

José Francisco Pavia is Associate Professor at Lusíada University, Portugal, Visiting Professor at Sciences Po, Grenoble, France and Invited Professor at the Higher Institute of Military Studies of Portugal in the Course of African Studies. He is "National Defense Auditor" by the Institute of National Defense and he holds a PhD in Political Science and International Relations. He is associate researcher at CERDAP2 and Editor-in-chief of the journal "Lusíada – International Policy and Security". He has published extensively in several journals and publications and presented papers in national and international conferences.

Recent publications:

- Pavia, J.P. (2021) Nation State and Armed Conflicts. In: *Academia Letters*, July 2021, Article 1633. DOI: https://doi.org/10.20935/AL1633;.

- Teixeira, A.G. & Pavia, J.P. (2021) East Asia: The Systemic Disorder and the South China Sea' Dispute. An International Law Prospect. *Conflict Studies Quarterly*, 34 (January) 2021, Babes-Bolyai University, pp. 66-83. DOI: https://doi.org/10.24193/csq.34.4.

- Pavia, J.P. (2020) On the Phenomenon of Piracy and Responses from the International Community, in: Saraiva, Luís e Fernandes, Sandra (Coord.): Após as Novas Guerras: Repensar a Violência em Relações Internacionais. Coleção "ARES", 35, Lisboa: Instituto Universitário Militar, pp, 101-116.

Reno, Timothy

Director, IPLI Foundation

Disinformation campaigns and Fake News in pandemic Times - What role for law enforcement and security forces?

Timothy Reno is the director of the IPLI Foundation, an organization based in Brussels, which is dedicated to the support of academic and applied policy research within the fields of human security and development. Within IPLI, he is responsible for the strategic development of IPLI's activities internationally. Timothy is a founder of the European Public Policy Conference (EPPC), an initiative started in 2009 that is organized yearly by the Hertie School of Governance in Berlin. He graduated from the Institute for Political Sciences of Paris (Sciences Po) and he is currently a doctoral candidate pursuing research in the field of public policy, specifically concentrated on migration policies. In addition, He is also an associate researcher with the Lusíada University Research Center on International Politics and Security (CLIPIS).

Riccardi, Michele

Deputy Director, Transcrime – Joint Research Centre on Transnational Crime

Organised Crime infiltration of the COVID-19 economy
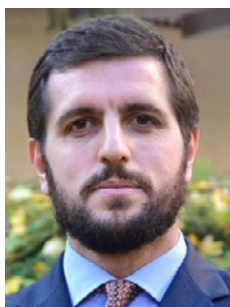
Michele Riccardi (michele.riccardi@unicatt.it) is Deputy Director at Transcrime and Adjunct Professor of Financial information analysis at the Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore and of Risk assessment methods at the University of Palermo. His research focuses on organised crime, money laundering and financial crime. In this domain, he has coordinated numerous research projects, at national and international level, and has authored numerous publications. He is member of the group of experts of the Supranational Money Laundering Risk Assessment (SNRA) of the European Union, of the United Nations working group for the measurement of illicit financial flows (SDG 16.4) and of the EU Asset Recovery Offices' Platform. He has been consulted by FATF and World Bank on money laundering and risk assessment initiatives, and lecturer in CEPOL financial crime courses. He holds a PhD in Criminology, a MSc in Accounting and Financial Economics (with Distinction) at the University of Essex (UK) and a MA in International Relations (Cum Laude) at the Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore (Italy).

Recent publications:
- Riccardi M. (2021), Money laundering blacklists, Routledge.
- Aziani, A. Bertoni G., Jofre M., & Riccardi M. (2021) COVID-19 and Organized Crime: Strategies employed by criminal groups to increase their profits and power in the first months of the pandemic. *Trends in Organized Crime*, https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s12117-021-09434-x
- Bosisio A., Jofre M., Riccardi M. & Carbone C. (2021) Developing a Tool to Assess Corruption Risk factors in firms' Ownership Structure - Final Report of Project DATACROS. Milano: Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, ISBN 978-88-99719-25-8, https://www.transcrime.it/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Datacros_report.pdf

Richardson, Jane

Researcher, Shadow Pandemic project, University of Liverpool

Responding to domestic abuse - Policing innovations during the COVID-19 pandemic

Dr Jane Richardson is currently researcher on the Shadow Pandemic project at the University of Liverpool, looking at police and court responses to domestic abuse during COVID-19. She has worked in health and social science research and teaching for over twenty years, with a particular focus on using qualitative methods to explore people's experiences.

*Recent publications***:**
- Richardson, J., Godfrey, B. & Walklate, S., (2021) Rapid, remote and responsive research during COVID-19. *Methodological Innovations*, 14(1).
- Walklate, S., Godfrey, B. & Richardson, J., (2021) Changes and continuities in police responses to domestic abuse in England and Wales during the Covid-19 'lockdown'. *Policing and Society. DOI:* 10.1080/10439463.2021.1896514.

Rosić – Jakupović, Alica

Head of the prevention section of Police directorate of Istria, Croatia

Impact of stress caused by the COVID-19 pandemic on the work and conduct of police officers in stressful emergency situations

Alica Rosić-Jakupović holds a Master's degree of the Police College. Employee of the Ministry of the Interior since 1998, she has been working as police officer, police inspector, police officer for public order, and now Head of the Prevention Section of Police directorate of Istria, Croatia. She has specialized in crime prevention, victim support and protection, domestic violence and femicide, sexual abuse of children, prevention of violence between children and youth. Participated in some professional papers, waiting to be published in the country.

Rowe, Mike

Lecturer in Public Sector Management, University of Liverpool

Policing during a pandemic - for the public health or against the usual suspects?

Mike Rowe is a Lecturer in Public Sector Management. He is an ethnographer who has recently finished a six-year observational study of police officers and their exercise of discretion. He has published extensively and his most recent book is Police Street Powers and Criminal Justice (Hart Publishing, 2020). He is the Vice Chair of the EU COST Action on Police Stops, from which network this paper emerged. He is editor of the Journal of Organizational Ethnography.

Recent publications:

- Rowe, M. & Rowe, M. (2021) Understanding the Quiet Times: The Role of Periods of "Nothing Much Happening" in Police Work. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 50(6), 751-774.

- Pearson, G. & Rowe, M. (2020) Police Street Powers and Criminal Justice - Regulation and Discretion in a Time of Change. Bloomsbury.

- Rowe, M. & Søgaard, T. (2020) 'Playing the Man, not the Ball': Targeting Organised Criminals, Intelligence and the Problems with Pulling Levers. *Policing and Society*, 30 (2), 120 - 135.

Schotte, Tamara

Head of Unit Analysis and Strategic Coordination, Europol

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the serious and organised crime landscape

Tamara Schotte is leading the Analysis and Strategic Coordination Unit at Europol. Overseeing the coordination, standardization and quality of the analysis products delivered by the Operational and Strategic teams. The Analysis and Strategic Coordination Unit is also responsible for the implementation of a diverse portfolio of projects and initiatives such us EMPACT, and CEPOL projects. The Unit also looks after relations with Europol stakeholders and the operational cooperation with key European actors and International Counterparts. Prior becoming Head of Unit at Europol Mrs. Schotte was a Senior Policy Advisor in the Cabinet of the Commissioner General of the Belgian Federal Police, and a Senior Advisor for the Executive Director at Europol. From 2005 to 2017, Mrs Schotte led the Strategic Analysis team at Europol. Mrs. Schotte has a master in Criminology and Advanced Master's Degree in European Criminology and Criminal Justice Systems.

Schröder, Detlef

Director of the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Training (CEPOL)

Pandemic Effects on Law Enforcement Training and Practice – Introduction to conference findings and perspectives

The Executive Director of CEPOL, Dr. h.c. Detlef Schröder was appointed in this position on 16 February 2018. Before, he was Acting Executive Director from 1 September 2017 and Deputy Director of CEPOL since August 2009. He is responsible for the overall management of the Agency and the implementation of its Annual Work Programme. Prior to joining CEPOL, he was a Senior lecturer at the German Police University in Münster, with over 100 publications in national and international police and police science journals and six book publications on Criminology, Crime Prevention and Victimology. Before taking up this position he had a long career within the Police of the Federal State of North Rhine-Westphalia, starting as Police Officer in August 1980, then rising through the ranks to Chief of the Crime Investigation Departments. Dr. h.c. Schröder has a Master's Degree in Social Science, Law and Psychology, a Master's Degree in Police Management and a BA in Public Administration.

Scioneri, Valentina

Project Manager, Research Assistant and Community Manager, RISSC -Research Centre on Security and Crime

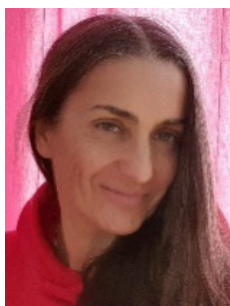Training and Education during the pandemic crisis - The H2020 ANITA project experience

Project Manager, Research Assistant and Community Manager at RiSSC - Research Centre on Security and Crime. Fields of expertise: illicit drug trafficking, NPS and traditional drugs, terrorism funding, hate speech/ hate crime.

Silva do Rosário, Teresa Cristina

Associate Professor of Criminology, Head of the criminology subject, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Mid Sweden University

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on police officers' mental health

My background is in psychology and health sciences, and I have always had a special interest in studying victims, offenders, and professionals who work with them. Since 2000, I have been researching in three areas of knowledge, (a) public health, (b) psychology/psychiatry, and (c) criminology. The main topics on which I focused my work were, chronologically: 1) physical and psychiatric problems, and criminality in young individuals with alcohol and substance misuse problems, 2) the application of 4th generation tools for risk assessment and case management of young offenders and its efficiency in preventing violence and reoffending, 3) psychopathic traits and their association with delinquency and violence during adolescence and young adulthood, 4) childhood maltreatment and different parenting dimensions as risk factors for antisocial behaviour among adolescents, 5) design, implementation, and evaluation of crime prevention strategies, and 6) environmental risk factors for psychopathology among police officers during the COVID-19 pandemic. Finally, in 2021, I debuted in the victimology field by studying male victims of intimate partner violence.

Recent publications:

- Silva, T. C. (2021) Assessment of credibility of testimony in alleged intimate partner violence: A case report. *Journal of Forensic Psychology Research and Practice*, (online). https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/2473285 0.2021.1945836
- Silva, T. C. & Andersson, F. (2021) The "black box" of treatment: Patients' perspective on what works in opioid maintenance treatment for opioid dependence. Substance Abuse Treatment, Prevention, and Policy. http://doi.org/10.1186/s13011-021-00378-7
- Silva T. C., Lind, M. (2020) Experiences of the Member States performing evaluations in projects and activities aimed at crime prevention. MIUN studies in Criminology No.1. https://eucpn.org/document/research-report-experiences-of-the-member-states-performing-evaluations-in-projects-and

Sola Zurriaga, Susana

València Local Police, European Projects Department

The role of law enforcement agencies and the use of IT tools for a coordinate response in pandemic crisis management

Susana Sola has a Degree in Industrial Relations and Human Resources from the University of Valencia. She has broad experience in the Valencian Public Administration and in European affairs. She worked assisting the General Director of the Valencian Regional Office in Brussels from December 2003 until September 2007, acquiring a wide knowledge of European institutions, lobbies, and regional delegations in the European capital city. Since October 2007 until February 2012 she worked in the European Projects department of the Fundación Comunidad Valenciana – Región Europea in Valencia, promoting the Valencian civil society's participation in the EU initiatives and programmes. She has wide experience in the management of European projects, which includes the organisation of conferences and meetings, dissemination, and the economic justification. She is currently working as a civil servant in the European projects department of the Valencia Local Police.

Urbas, Vojko

Director of the Criminal Investigation Department, General Police Directorate, Ministry of the Interior, Republic of Slovenia

Crime Investigation during the COVID-19 pandemic in Slovenia: Initial reflections

Vojko Urbas was born in 1962. His career in the police organisation service began in 1986 when he started work in the Communications Department (today's IT and Telecommunications Office). He became head of the section in charge of portable and security systems in 1995. In the same year, he enrolled in part-time study at the Faculty of Organizational Sciences, graduating in 1999. At the end of 2007, he took the helm of the Special Assignments Division of the Criminal Police Directorate, General Police Directorate. He was awarded a gold police shield in recognition of his longstanding contribution to the research and development in the police domain. After 19 years of service in the Criminal Police Directorate, he joined the management team of the Operational Technical Systems Division within the IT and Telecommunications Office in 2016. His work involved extensive cooperation with representatives of many European police authorities and included active participation in seminars and lecturing. He shared his experience and knowledge in-house and as an expert lecturer in the context of many projects implemented in the countries of the Balkan region.

van der Spuy, Elrena

Associate Professor in the Department of Public Law, Deputy Dean of Post-Graduate Studies in the Faculty of Law at the University of Cape Town

Policing South Africa's lockdown: Making sense of ambiguity amidst certainty?

Elrena van der Spuy is an Associate Professor in the Department of Public Law, a member of the Centre of Criminology, and Deputy Dean of Post-Graduate Studies in the Faculty of Law at the University of Cape Town. She has a PhD from the University of Cape Town,

a Masters degree in Sociology from University of Stellenbosch and has taught Sociology and Criminology at a number of Institutions. Elrena has published on crime and policing in South Africa, Africa and internationally. More recently she has begun to explore the role of police in peacekeeping on the one hand, and the role of the South African police in the border conflict of the post-1976 period of South African history on the other.

Recent projects include:
- Police in the context of Peacekeeping - an exploration of the way in which the transnational space of peace missions places new demands on pockets of national police.
- Policy transfer - on-going engagement with debates on policy transfer and emulation.
- Policing conflict: challenges and dilemmas - an investigation into the politics and logistics of policing conflict and the conflict of policing through the examination of national and regional case studies.
- Social history of criminal justice reform - exploring through a series of case studies the social histories of South African criminal justice reform with the view to documenting through oral histories the perceptions and experience of elites situated in policy networks, bureaucratic institutions and/or civil society structures of post-Apartheid reconstruction of criminal justice.

Recent publications
- Van der Spuy, E. (forthcoming) Crime and Justice in South Africa, *In Oxford Bibliographies Online: Criminology*. Ed. Richard Rosenfeld. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Van der Spuy, E. (2021) Vagaries and challenges confronting police accountability in the South African post-colony as revealed by recent Commissions of Inquiry. International Journal of Comparative and Applied Criminal Justice 45 (3), 329-343.
- Van der Spuy, E. (2011). 'Police and the Policing of Conflict Reflections from Africa', *African Security Review*, 20(4): 1-4.

Viedma, Julia

Head of the Operational & Analysis Centre, Europol

The impact of the COVID-19 crisis on law enforcement practice

Ms Julia Viedma hosts the post of Head of the Operational & Analysis Centre at Europol. This Centre pro-

vides Europol Member States, operational partners and internal operational and strategic stakeholders with a set of cross-cutting services and capabilities to support police investigations and information sharing. Her 30 years as Law enforcement senior officer started in 1991 serving the Spanish National Police as investigator in counter terrorism, drugs and organised crime. She joined the international policing arena late 1998 at the Interpol's General Secretariat in Lyon, France, where she run senior manager positions as responsible for the INTERPOL Regional Bureaus located in Africa, Asia and the Americas, the reinforcement of global public private partnerships and the implementation of capacity building projects and police training for all the 194 INTERPOL's member countries. She leaded the INTERPOL Global Complex for Innovation Transition Support Office in Singapore between 2012 and 2016, assuming also the responsibilities of Director of Police Services and Resource Management and later Director of Capacity Building and Training. In 2019 Ms Viedma was promoted to the rank of Police Commissioner in Spanish National Police. She fluently speaks Spanish, English and French and holds a master degree in Spanish Language and Literature and a degree in Police Sciences.

von Laufenberg, Roger

Researcher, Vienna Centre for Societal Security

Policing in times of the pandemic

PhD (completed 2020), University of St Andrews, School of Management; Thesis: Big Data Surveillance in Marketing. BA (2013) & MA (2016), Sociology, University of Vienna; Emphasis: Science and Technology Studies – Thesis: Incorporating Data Protective Behaviour. Researcher at IRKS (2013-2014) and at VICESSE (2015-2017). Re-joined VICESSE in 2020. Lecturer at the University of Applied Sciences Technikum Wien.

Walklate, Sandra

Eleanor Rathbone Chair of Sociology (Liverpool, UK), conjoint Chair of Criminology (Monash, Australia); President of the British Society of Criminology

Responding to domestic abuse - Policing innovations during the COVID-19 pandemic

Sandra Walklate is currently Eleanor Rathbone Chair of Sociology (Liverpool, UK) conjoint Chair of Criminology (Monash, Australia). She is also President of the British Society of Criminology. Internationally recognised for her work in victimology/criminal victimisation, this has over the last 10 years become focused on policy responses to domestic abuse. Her most recent publications include: 2020 Handbook of Feminism, Criminology and Social Change (Co-edited with K. Fitz-Gibbon, JM Maher and J. McCulloch) Emerald Publishing and also published in 2020 Counting the Costs Towards a Global Femicide Index (Co-authored book with K. Fitz-Gibbon, JM Maher and J. McCulloch) London: Routledge. She is currently the PI on an ESRC funded project examining policing and criminal justice responses to domestic abuse during the covid pandemic.

Wall, David S.

PhD, Professor of Criminology in the Centre for Criminal Justice Studies, School of Law, University of Leeds, UK

The transnational cybercrime extortion landscape and the pandemic - Changes in ransomware offender tactics, attack scalability and the organisation of offending

David S. Wall, PhD is Professor of Criminology in the Centre for Criminal Justice Studies, School of Law, University of Leeds, UK where he conducts interdisciplinary research into CyberCrimes in the Cloud, Ransomware, Policing Cybercrime, and Organised Cybercrime and Cybersecurity. He has published a wide range of articles and books on these subjects over a 25-year period. He is currently researching the impact of Ran-

somware and Big Data Crimes upon the cybersecurity threat landscape and is modelling the cybercrime ecosystem for various research projects. He works with economists, psychologists, lawyers, computer scientists and software engineers on AI and Machine Learning as well as various agencies across Europe and their various practitioner and policy communities. He has been a member of various Governmental working groups on Cybercrime and more recently with the UN-ODC Expert Groups on various cybercrime initiatives.

Recent publications:

- Musotto R. & Wall D.S. (2020) More Amazon than Mafia: analysing a DDoS stresser service as organised cyber-crime. *Trends in Organized Crime.* https://doi.org/10.1007/s12117-020-09397-5.

- Wall D. & Musotto R. (2019). The online crime-terror nexus: using booster services (stressers) to weaponise data? In: Ruggiero V (ed.) Organised Crime and Terror Networks. Routledge.

- Wall D.S. (2017) Cyberspace Crime. Routledge

EUROPEAN LAW ENFORCEMENT RESEARCH BULLETIN

Special Conference Edition Nr. 5

Pandemic Effects on Law Enforcement Training & Practice: Taking early stock from a research perspective

Online Conference in cooperation with Mykolas Romeris University, 5-7 May 2021

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