Measuring the Effectiveness of Implementing Community Policing in Slovenia

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Community policing is a relatively new concept of contemporary police work in local environments, and as such, it is a part of the strategy of Slovenian policing. Those who study community policing explain that the desired outcome of effective community policing results in successful crime prevention, citizen satisfaction with the quality of life in the community, successful problem solving, the legitimacy (and legality) of police work, and low levels of fear of crime. This approach to policing represents an alternative to traditional reactive and repressive policing, with emphasis on proactive activities in terms of tackling crime, local problems and other disturbing circumstances that concern community members. The aim of community policing is to improve the quality of life for residents in terms of security issues. In this paper, the authors draw a sample of people from different environments in Slovenia (n = 1506) to assess the quality of community policing in their local environments. For purposes of this research, a questionnaire was developed and evaluated, which consisted of four interdependent areas of measurement: (a) Quality of contact with police, (b) Perception of crime and disorder, (c) Personal fear, and (d) Community cohesion. The questionnaire proved to be a valid and reliable instrument, which provided feedback to practitioners and researchers. Furthermore, a questionnaire such as this is suitable for use in the Slovenian cultural environment, where evaluation of community policing is needed. The measurement instrument can be used to calculate the index of community policing implementation in each of the evaluated local communities. As the security issue of most concern, respondents highlighted the problem of accumulation of garbage and worthless goods in their local environment, while almost one-third of them believe that police officers are not impartial, objective and fair in carrying out police procedures. Nevertheless, the results show that in general people feel safe in their communities, and that after a decade of planning this new approach and strategy concerning community policing, begun to yield some positive results.