



# POLICE ACTIVITY IN CRIME PREVENTION AND INVESTIGATION

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## SUMMARY

### The Relevance of the Audit

Criminal offences are one of the most important factors of insecurity of residents which may cause direct damage to their life, health and property.<sup>1</sup> The task of the police is to ensure personal security, human rights and freedoms, to maintain public order, to ensure prevention and control of violations of the law.<sup>2</sup> Crime is a social phenomenon and, according to the United Nations, crime prevention contributes to the sustainable development of the country, however, the active participation of communities and other segments of civil society is an essential part of effective crime prevention.<sup>3</sup> The Programme of the Eighteenth Government envisages that in order to ensure public security and meeting public expectations in a more efficient manner, close attention should be paid and the priority should be given to prevention of criminal offences and other violations of the law, as well as to closer cooperation between law enforcement authorities and the public in various mutual activities aimed at preventing violations of the law and eliminating favourable conditions in that respect.<sup>4</sup>

Proper performance of police functions, such as crime prevention, response to event reports and investigation of criminal offences, increases public confidence in the State and its institutions. National population surveys show that trust in the police is growing: it were 76% in 2017 and 2018; 78% in 2019 and 2020, and the trust rate is above the EU

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<sup>1</sup> Public Security Development Programme for 2015–2025 adopted by Clause 13 of the 07/05/2015 Resolution No. XII-1682 of the Seimas

<sup>2</sup> Law on Police Activities, Article 5(1)(1), Article 5(1)(2), Article 5(1)(4), Article 5(1)(5)

<sup>3</sup> Guidelines for the Prevention of Crime, Annex to ECOSOC Resolution 2002/13. United Nations, 2002, Clause 16

<sup>4</sup> The Programme of the Eighteenth Government of the Republic of Lithuania adopted by Clause 244.2 of the 11/12/2020 Resolution No XIV-72 of the Seimas

average (71%).<sup>5</sup> More and more people rate the criminogenic situation as good.<sup>6</sup> The number of recorded criminal offences decreased from 2257 offences per 100 thousand inhabitants in 2017 to 1841 offences in 2019, however, the latency of crime is not disclosed.

The police is the main institution responding to crime reports and investigating them. During the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020, the police were given additional functions to ensure the implementation of the security measures envisaged by the Government. Approximately EUR 230 million is allocated from the State budget for the execution of public services provided to Lithuanian residents each year, of which approximately 160 million are allocated to wages. The police system employs more than 9,400 workers (7,777 officers and 1,638 other employees).

In order to assess whether the police activities are effective in the prevention and investigation of crime, we carried out a performance audit.

## The Objective and Scope of the Audit

The objective of the audit is to assess whether police activities in crime prevention and investigation ensure a decrease in crime.

Key audit questions

- whether the crime prevention is being properly carried out;
- whether the management of the resources used or the prevention and pre-trial investigation of crime is ensured;
- whether the provision of an expeditious response by the police to reports of criminal offences is ensured;
- whether a pre-trial investigation of criminal offences by the police is being conducted properly.

Audit entities:

- The Police Department under the Ministry of the Interior organises, coordinates and controls the implementation of tasks of the police, as well as organises and implements the management of subordinate police bodies.<sup>7</sup>
- The Ministry of the Interior shapes State policy in the field of public security, organises, coordinates and controls its implementation.<sup>8</sup>

Information and data were collected from the Police Department, all counties' chief police stations (10) and police stations (60), all municipalities.

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<sup>5</sup> Eurobarometer survey data of 2017, 2018, 2019, and 2020. Internet access: [https://data.europa.eu/euodp/en/data/dataset/S2143\\_88\\_3\\_STD88\\_ENG](https://data.europa.eu/euodp/en/data/dataset/S2143_88_3_STD88_ENG).

<sup>6</sup> A survey "Public Opinion on the Police and Assessment of the Public Security Situation" of September–November 2019 commissioned by the Ministry of the Interior and carried out by "Baltijos tyrimai", UAB. In 2017, 65% of the population rated the situation as good, in 2018 – 63%, and in 2019 – 67%.

<sup>7</sup> Regulations of the Police Department under the Ministry of the Interior approved by Clause 10 of Government Resolution No 98 of 29 January 2001

<sup>8</sup> Regulations of the Interior approved by Clause 1 of Government Resolution No 291 of 14 March 2001

The audited period ranged from 2017 to 2019. In some cases, the data of the previous year and 2020 were used to collect audit evidence.

The audit has been performed in accordance with the Public Auditing Requirements and International Standards of Supreme Audit Institutions. The scope and methods of the audit are described in greater detail in Annex 2, Audit Scope and Methods (p. 46).

## Key Results of the Audit:

The prevention and investigation of the crime by the police should be improved in order to prevent, respond and disclose crimes in a timely manner. The police pay particular attention to providing officers with necessary supplies and responding to reports of crimes being committed. The effective prevention of crime in the country lacks an integral system. Pre-trial investigations would be faster if expert investigations were carried out in a timely manner, ensuring the participation of psychologists in the interviews and a more even distribution of the workload of officers.

### 1. An integral system is necessary for effective crime prevention

- There is no interinstitutional framework for planning and coordinating preventive activities in the country<sup>9</sup>, and there is also a lack of proper regulation of crime prevention in order to define responsible entities, their roles and responsibilities. The Centre for Crime Prevention in Lithuania was mandated to shape crime prevention policy, organise and coordinate prevention programmes and measures, however, the Centre has not been performing the coordinator's functions since 2009. The survey conducted by auditors shows that the role of the police in the crime prevention system is not clear enough for 29 police stations (48%) and 24 municipalities (40%). There is no clear role of institutions<sup>10</sup> involved in the prevention of crimes committed by minors for 58% of police stations and 87% of municipalities<sup>11</sup>, which results in the absence of conditions for systematic crime prevention (Section 1.1, pages 14–17).
- The annual plans of the county chief police stations, which provide for prevention measures, are not being updated; the same indicators and measures are set each year, although the criminogenic situation in each county is different. Without linking the general prevention activities to the criminogenic situation of the counties, appropriate measures to prevent crime will not be taken. After the case study of 353 individuals at risk, we found that in 2019 chief police stations at 3 out of 10 counties carried out less than 5 individual prevention measures per year for half and more persons at risk and this did not depend on the established risk level of an individual; the number of measures was applied to individuals at risk from 43% in Telšiai county to 86% in Utena county. Such implementation of individual prevention may have no effect on individuals at risk (Section 1.2, pages 17–22).

<sup>9</sup> 2020 Public Audit Report "Is Cybercrime Combated Effectively".

<sup>10</sup> State Child Rights Protection and the Adoption Agency at the MSSL, educational institutions, municipalities, police, etc.

<sup>11</sup> Out of 54 municipalities that answered the question.

- In 2005, a Methodology for Assessing the Effectiveness of Crime Prevention and Control Programmes and Measures<sup>12</sup> was developed, however, the police do not apply this methodology in the analysis of the impact of the existing measures. Each year the county chief police stations carry out a summary analysis of the change in the criminogenic situation. The Ministry of the Interior carries out an investigation of the sense of security of the population, the indicators of which have not been met.<sup>13</sup> Recorded crime during the audited period decreased in a steady manner (in 2017, 2,257 criminal offences per 100 thousand inhabitants were recorded, in 2018 – 2,070, in 2019 – 1,841), however, it shows only part of criminal behaviour in the country, as the proportion of latent crime has not been disclosed due to lacking victimological investigations. Lack of evaluation of the impact of crime prevention measures and not knowing the proportion of latent crime, it will not be clear which measures contribute to positive changes in the criminogenic situation (Section 1.2, pages 22–23).

## 2. Police officers' supplies are appropriate, however, the management of human resources should be improved

- The police supplies for a response each year increased: in 2017, the supplies did not meet the standard and did not reach 50%, but in 2019 it was already higher than 85%. A small part (8.2%) of the officers who participated in the audit survey (80 out of 981) indicated that they were not provided with all the necessary supplies (they lacked quality shoes, personal armour jackets, uniforms were not seasonal, etc.) or they were outdated and rarely renewed. Although according to the officers, there are shortcomings in the timely updating and quality of the supplies, the supplies provide the right conditions for officers to carry out their response function (Section 2.1, page 24).
- We found that the deviation of the workload of officers conducting a pre-trial investigation in 2019 in 41 out of 60 police stations accounted for more than 20% of the average of the county chief police stations. Due to the lack of approved methodology for calculating workloads, police stations adopt different practices in assessing the intensity of pre-trial investigations and their complexity. The maximum deviations in the workload of officers performing these functions range from + 90 to - 80.2% of the average of the chief police stations of the counties. According to the survey, workloads do not satisfy 53% of response and pre-trial investigation officers and 38% of those performing only pre-trial investigation functions. The average number of vacant officer posts during the period under audit ranged from 17.3 to 13.4%, however, in 2020 it was higher than 10% in 9 (out of 10) county stations. Uneven distribution of workload reduces the satisfaction of officers in the service (Section 2.2, pages 25–27).
- In 2018–2020, the funds allocated by the police to the professional development increased (in 2018 – EUR 212,7 thousand, in 2019 – EUR 225,9 thousand, and in 2020 – EUR 303,9 thousand), however, slightly more than half (558 out of 1033 respondents) of officers say that their needs expressed each year are taken into account. Officers

<sup>12</sup> Justickis, V., Gečėnienė, S., Čepas, A. "Methodology for Assessing the Effectiveness of Crime Prevention and Control Programmes and Measures", 2005. Internet access: [https://vrm.lrv.lt/uploads/vrm/documents/files/LT\\_versija/Viesasis\\_saugumas/Metodikos/Vertinimometodika2005.pdf](https://vrm.lrv.lt/uploads/vrm/documents/files/LT_versija/Viesasis_saugumas/Metodikos/Vertinimometodika2005.pdf) (žiūrėta 2021-01-06).

<sup>13</sup> Except 2018: part of residents that feel safe at their residence place in percentage, planned 82%, achieved 83%.

indicate that the training must be practical and that the knowledge obtained should be applicable in practice at actual workplaces. Only 15% of the respondents indicated that more than 80% of the knowledge obtained in the training were new and applicable in practice at work, and 39% of the respondents have not participated in the training. An increase in practical training would contribute to the more efficient performance of key functions (Section 2.3, pages 27–29).

### 3. Police response to events and pre-trial investigation may be improved

- During the audit period, all chief police stations at 10 counties achieved their response rates for Category A and B reports<sup>14</sup> and response time each year was improving: it was planned to respond to Category A reports within 12 minutes: within 7.15 minutes in 2017, within 6.4 minutes in 2018, and within 6.2 minutes in 2019; to respond to Category B reports it was planned within 20 minutes: within 11.27 minutes in 2017, within 9.65 minutes in 2018, and within 10.85 minutes in 2019. However, in 2019, having assessed 60 police stations separately, 28 did not reach the target police response rate for Category A events and 6 stations did not reach the target police response rate for Category B events. The main reason for the delay was the lack of response teams and officers. Not all police commissariats respond to reports in a timely manner, an even performance of the response function is not ensured (Section 3.1, pages 29–33).
- By comparing the priorities set by the Criminal Code, the Prosecutor General and the General Commissioner of the Lithuanian Police,<sup>15</sup> we can state that pre-trial investigations, which according to the Code must be prioritised,<sup>16</sup> are not given “the highest priority” by the police, and in cases when the crime is minor, investigations can be considered as of “average priority”. Thus, conditions are not ensured for all pre-trial investigations in which suspects are arrested or suspects or victims are minors to be carried out on a priority basis (Section 3.2, pages 33–34).
- The part of pre-trial investigations, which are concluded within the time limits laid down in the Criminal Code, is increasing, however, not all of these investigations are conducted within the set time limits: in 2019, 60% of serious and less serious investigations were completed in 9 months, while minor and less serious ones were completed in 6 months – 59.5%. After the analysis of the reasons for the extension of 93 pre-trial investigations, we found that 47% of the time limits were extended from 1 to 5 times, 45% – from 6 to 10, 8% – from 11 to 16 times. The most common reasons for extension are: carrying out additional procedural actions, examination or investigation of objects, obtaining data from other entities, requests for legal aid to foreign states. Long pre-trial investigation periods may not guarantee the right of the

<sup>14</sup> Category A event report: report of a very serious, serious or less serious crime which is being prepared, being committed or has been committed, where the victim's life, health or property of a high value is in danger (determined when a report requires urgent response); Category B event report: report of a serious, less serious or minor crime which is being prepared, being committed or has been committed or where the victim's life or health may be endangered, there is no information about the victim's condition, there is a danger of unlawful misappropriation of property or destruction thereof, where a person who does not have powers detains the offender, also a report about hooligan violations of public order, disturbance of public order, other violations of law which may pose danger to human life or health (determined when a situation requires urgent response).

<sup>15</sup> Description of Prioritisation of Pre-trial Investigations Performed by the Police endorsed by the 08/12/2014 Order No. I-270/5-V-106 of the Prosecutor General and the Lithuanian Police Commissioner General.

<sup>16</sup> Article 176(2) of the Criminal Code stipulates that pre-trial investigation should be a priority in cases where suspects are arrested, as well as in cases where suspects or victims are minors.

European Convention on the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms<sup>17</sup> to investigate the case within the shortest possible time (Section 3.2, pages 34–35).

- Between 2017 and 2019, 9,145 children (up to 18 years old) suffered from criminal offences<sup>18</sup> and 4,072 minors suspected of committing them<sup>19</sup> were recorded. 30% of police stations reported that there were cases when the interviews involving pre-minors and minors were conducted without the participation of a psychologist: at 28% (47 PS) of police stations – up to 10% of cases, at 2% (3 PS) of police stations – more than 10% of cases. In 2018–2019, the Police Department and the Ministry of the Interior submitted proposals to the Government regarding the organisation model for the centralised involvement of psychologists, however, the problem has not been solved so far. 16% of surveyed officers (113 out of 695) reported that they were faced with a problem of the involvement of a psychologist. In all cases, the participation of the psychologist in pre-trial investigation involving minors would help lawyers collect more objective evidence and ensure children’s rights in criminal proceedings (Section 3.2, pages 35–36).

## Changes during the audit

- As of 1 October 2020, a “Description of the Procedure for Working with Persons at Risk” entered into force.<sup>20</sup> The Description indicates that for the individuals of different risk level, different number of measures applies (the number of measures is not limited to the risk level I; at least 3 measures apply to the risk level II; at least 1 measure applies to the risk level II).
- From 2020, the Police Department has established<sup>21</sup> that the response to category A event reports in the city territory (municipal centre territory) takes no longer than 12 minutes, and in other territories – no longer than 25 minutes, to the reports of category B events in the city territory – no longer than 20 minutes, in other areas – 40 minutes.
- From 2020, in order to evaluate the previously implemented reforms, an experiment is carried out in Klaipėda and Šiauliai city, Šakiai and Plungė district police stations, during which, without changing the structure of stations, officers return to more specialised activities, apart their responsibilities.

## Recommendations

### To the Government of the Republic of Lithuania

1. In all cases established by the Criminal Code, when minors are involved in pre-trial investigations, a psychologist should participate, to take measures to improve the current model of involvement of psychologists (3rd key audit result).

<sup>17</sup> 04/11/1950 European Convention on the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, Article 6.

<sup>18</sup> Departmental Register of Criminal Offence data.

<sup>19</sup> The Lithuanian Department of Statistics data.

<sup>20</sup> Approved by Order No. 5-V-763 of the Lithuanian Police Commissioner General of 9 September 2020.

<sup>21</sup> Order No. 5-V-301 “On Responding to Reports of Events” of the Lithuanian Police Commissioner General of 10 April 2019.

## To the Ministry of the Interior

2. To develop and implement a model for the organisation of crime prevention by defining the roles and responsibilities of the coordinator, the police and other responsible authorities in order to ensure the systematic implementation and coordination of crime prevention (1st key audit result).
3. In order to know the real crime situation in the country, carry out investigations/surveys showing the latency of crimes (1st key audit result).
4. In order to assess the impact of crime prevention measures, adopt a methodology for measuring them, ensuring their practical implementation (1st key audit result).

## To the Police Department

5. In order to prevent crime in a targeted and specific manner, establish a procedure committing county chief police stations to identify at least 3 crime prevention priorities each year based on the analysis of the criminogenic situation in the supervised area and prepare situational prevention plans, including general crime prevention measures (1st key audit result).
6. In order to improve individual prevention, develop a system to manage and evaluate available data on individuals on the list of individuals at risk in one place (1st key audit result).
7. In order to ensure that all pre-trial investigations in which suspects are arrested or where suspects or victims are minors are carried out as a matter of priority, the description of prioritisation of police pre-trial investigations should be revised (3rd key audit result).
8. In order to achieve more even workloads for officers in all police stations, to establish criteria for planning the need for the number of officers in the unit (2nd key audit result).
9. In order to improve the process of professional development of officers, to increase the scope of practical training and to ensure the conditions for officers to participate in them periodically (2nd key audit result).

Measures and deadlines for the implementation of recommendations are provided in the Section Recommendation Implementation Plan of the report (p. 37).