



## COUNTY COUNCIL FOR SAFETY AND ORDER AS AN ELEMENT OF LOCAL SAFETY COORDINATION

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### ABSTRACT

Ensuring safety at the local level is an element of activity of numerous public institutions. An institution aiming to coordinate activities of these institutions are county Councils for Safety and Order. The aim of this article is to present how they function and how they fulfil their obligations stemming from Art. 38a and 38b governing the abovementioned Councils in Kuyavian-Pomeranian Voivodeship.

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### INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, challenges related to safety gain a new dimension due to the dynamic evolution of the role of modern states, developing globalisation processes and the new nature of the state-citizen relation. In this context, the issue of local safety and associated preventive activities, community policing, or citizens' engagement in safety actions are becoming more and more crucial. The mentioned processes are closely associated with the rejection of "state-centric approach" to safety, even though the state still plays an important role in this scope (Leszczyński, 2013). Now, when describing the issue of internal safety, it is difficult not to mention the role played by local government entities, implementing activities for the benefit of their residents in almost all aspects of the functioning of the state. In Polish system of local safety, a key role is played by Councils for Safety and Order being an important element of local government actions coordination at the local level and cooperating inspectorates and patrols, as well as the Police. The mentioned Councils are a key element of activities aimed at safety within which knowledge is exchanged between partners, and public institutions activities are planned. It is also an issue of cooperation between given administrative sectors, commercial entities and non-governmental organisations which should be executed both vertically (between various entities), and horizontally (that is in a given area). In this context, the functioning of institutions and partnerships at the local level is a key element of creating safety systems within bottom-up initiatives

that significantly add to and adjust the central institution activities, that shape the public safety system within top down solutions adopted at the governmental administration level. The work of a Council was defined in Art. 38 of Act on Powiat Self-Government.<sup>1</sup> Its basic aim is to ensure the possibility to execute the obligation of a staroste (district governor) within order and safety in terms of authority over communal services, inspectorates and patrols. The lawmaker defined their roles in the form of a closed catalogue entrusting the county authorities with the obligation to assess the hazards in terms of order and safety, to assess the activities of the Police, to prepare a project of a county programme for crime prevention as well as public order and citizens safety, to assess the projects of other programmes of cooperation between the Police and other county services, inspectorates and patrols and to draft a budget project, legal acts projects and other issues related to safety and order.

An element of coordination of the obligations mentioned above is the composition of members engaged in the Council activities. These are, apart from county authorities or authorities of a city with county rights (that is staroste and two councillors), prosecutors appointed by the appropriate district attorney, two representatives of county police headquarters appointed by County Police Chief as well as three persons appointed by the staroste from among people knowledgeable in the issues being the subject of Council works and enjoying respect and public trust of local community, in particular of representatives of commune governments, non-governmental organisations, school officials as well as institutions dealing with social dysfunctions and unemployment. As noted by J. Czapska, the functioning of county Councils for Safety and Order, which are in fact one mandatory element of activities coordination for safety at the local level, as well as local partnerships often goes unnoticed (Czapska, 2014). The sole comprehensive publication presenting their contribution is a research conducted by Police Academy in Szczytno (Ministry of Interior and Administration of the Republic of Poland, 2008) and a scientific paper being the result of work of a research team under the academic supervision of professor Janina Czapska (Czapska, 2014).

The aim of this article is to assess the manner of functioning of county Councils for Safety and Order in Kuyavian-Pomeranian Voivodeship. The research was conducted using survey methodology. The questionnaires were sent to all chairs of the Councils that is starostes.<sup>2</sup> With their help, three groups of issues were verified, that is (1) formal aspects of Councils functioning; (2) cooperation with other entities dealing with safety and public order in the county and (3) the aspect of socialisation of Council works in the form of consultations and promotion of its work. The article ends with conclusions and recommendations concerning future actions.

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<sup>1</sup> Act of June 8, 1998 on Act on Powiat Self-Government, Journal of Laws 1998, no. 91, item 578 as amended.

<sup>2</sup> In Kuyavian-Pomeranian Voivodeship there are in total 19 counties and 4 cities with county rights, that is Aleksandrów, Brodnica, Bydgoszcz, Chełm, Golub-Dobrzyń, Grudziądz, Inowrocław, Lipno, Mogilno, Nakło, Radziejów, Rypin, Sępólno, Świecie, Toruń, Tuchola, Wąbrzeźno, Włocławek, Żnin and cities Bydgoszcz, Toruń, Włocławek i Grudziądz.

## FORMAL ASPECT OF FUNCTIONING OF COUNTY COUNCILS FOR SAFETY AND ORDER

The basics of council functioning is the already mentioned article 38a on Powiat Self-Government. It imposes on the staroste the obligation to appoint a council in every county, no matter if it is a township or a country district. However, the lawmaker allowed for the possibility to establish arrangements between councils, leaving it up for the self-government authorities to decide if such an activity is efficient and necessary. On the basis of the obtained answers, it can be stated, that the majority of the appointed Councils was appointed in 2016 - 5 of them. The remaining were appointed by the starostes in 2015 (4) and in 2014 (4). Such a difference results from the fact that not all counties fulfilled the statutory duty concerning their appointment in the year 2000. At the same time, the appointment was delayed. However, the lawmaker defined the term of office to be 3 years. Once this period expires, the Councils are re-appointed.

It is a statutory duty of the Council to prepare a plan of its work. This duty, even if it seems obvious from the perspective of work organisation, was not fulfilled by all Councils. In the case of Radziejów and Wąbrzeźno county, this duty was not fulfilled. In the remaining entities, such a plan was developed with a division into quarterly periods of activities and indication of issues that will constitute the subject of their work.

In comparison with the abovementioned research concerning the functioning of county Councils, it is worth noting that all self-government bodies decided to appoint the said entities. Even though it is the obligation of county authorities, it was not always the case. The prevailing organisational forms are Councils working independently, although in three cases an exception can be noted, being the agreements between Bydgoszcz, Toruń and Włocławek – cities with county rights – and country districts surrounding them.

## COOPERATION WITH OTHER ENTITIES FOR SAFETY AND ORDER

The implementation of activities centred around safety and public order is of government/self-government nature. It is due to the fact, that such institutions as Police, Sanitary Inspectorate, Veterinary Inspectorate and Prosecutor's Office are entities the activities of which are coordinated at the national level by government bodies. On the other hand, however, communes within their competences can govern issues related to public order and counties – issues related to safety. An additional element, important from the local safety perspective, is the necessity to engage the residents and non-governmental sector representatives dealing with initiatives and projects being a crucial element of support for preventive and educational activities. At the same time, a necessary element of the efficient implementation of these tasks is the issue of cooperation of public institutions. In the theory of organisations and public management, such areas of cooperation as knowledge exchange, joint activities, agreements concerning common strategies and plans and financial support are highlighted (Korzuch, Sienkiewicz-Małyjurek, 2013). As pointed out by the researchers, the cross-organisational cooperation in terms of safety

is not only about executing public tasks but also about certain abilities and efficiency of activities. Therefore, researching the scope and nature of such cooperation, as well as potential hazards is a key element of ensuring safety for local communities.

The necessity of cooperation within county Councils stems directly from statutory regulations contained in the act on Powiat Self-Government. What is important are elements as statutory definition of: (1) Council composition; (2) Council tasks; (3) the possibility of the staroste to request from the Police and other county services, inspectorates and patrols documents and information on their work. As noted by A. Urban, the statutory composition of the Council gives the staroste vast possibilities to create a panel to implement integrated prevention programme – prevention strategy for the county (Urban, 2016). The second part of the survey was aimed to verify to what degree these tools were used. What was particularly important was the issue of task implementation and information acquisition, as the composition of the Council due to the legal solutions remains unequivocal. The starostes were asked about the following issues: (1) Did the Council members participate in training on public safety management? (2) How often the Council members assess the level of risk of public order and safety of residents? (3) Was the work of the Police, as well as work of other institutions responsible for the safety and public order assessed? (4) Did the council prepare a project for county programme for crime prevention and risks for public order? (5) Were other projects aimed at safety and public order improvement assessed, such as cooperation between the Police and other services, inspectorates and patrols or other bodies? (6) Was the county budget project assessed in terms of providing funds for elimination of hazards for order and for improvement of residents' safety? (7) Were any ordinances or other documents concerning order and safety of residents passed?

The answers to the above questions varied. In the majority of cases, the members of the Council did not participate in trainings improving their knowledge in the fields of order and safety. 8 county offices gave such an answer.<sup>3</sup> Only for 6 counties, the members of their Councils participated in trainings organised by Police Academy in Szczytno.<sup>4</sup> There are no correlations between the size of the counties. No matter what the size of the self-government entity is and no matter whether the Council works independently or has an agreement signed with the neighbouring county, the issues of trainings and developing knowledge and competences related to safety are rated differently.

It is difficult to provide a simple answer to the question how often the members of the Council assess the level of hazard towards public safety and safety of residents of the county. From among the provided answers, it was indicated, that these assessments are made during each meeting, but they cover different subject areas. Certainly, the issue of assessment is crucial for all of these meetings, which is evident from the plans concerning the works of the Council. A key issue is, however, the answer to the following question: are the assessments cross-sectional, allowing to take into account different aspects of safety? The most important aim of the Council is to coordinate the work of different institutions in terms of order and safety

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<sup>3</sup> It concerned the following counties: Nakło, Świecie, Inowrocław, Radziejów, Wąbrzeźno, Żnin and cities such as Toruń and Grudziądz.

<sup>4</sup> It concerned the following counties: Aleksandrów, Chełm, Bydgoszcz and the city of Bydgoszcz, Włocławek and the city of Włocławek.

and not only to exchange knowledge on the works of given institutions. Such conclusions can be drawn from the answers to the subsequent questions that is the issues concerning the assessment of works of other institutions responsible for safety, and preparation on this basis a county programme for crime preventions and prevention of hazards to public order. All provided answers pointed to the fact that this task was implemented and that formal action concerning the assessment of other institutions was taken. The issue of budget assessment in terms of matters related to safety was also researched - in this case, all counties indicated such an answer. However, if we take into account the higher level of public management in terms of tasks associated with public safety meaning the development of ordinances – here the answers are negative. Only three Councils indicated such an activity. It can mean either lack of legislative activity in the scope of tasks within local safety or their omission in Council works. No matter what the answer was, it can be stated that apart from being a standard institution of works consulting and information exchange, the Council is not a platform making binding decisions or settling legal settlements. In this aspect, additional research would be necessary, with the use of which the manner of understanding and perceiving of obligations by persons managing the works of the Councils, that is starostes, could be understood. Perhaps a development and indication of good practices would be of use. It would allow to point to new possibilities of Council activities so that their actions would not be associated purely to the obligation to execute statutory tasks resulting from the act on Powiat Self-Government, but also tools and examples of efficient activities.

**Table 1** Were any ordinances or other documents concerning order and safety of residents passed?

COUNTIES	ANSWERS
Aleksandrów, Nakło, Świecie, Inowrocław, Gołub-Dobrzyń, Radziejów, Wąbrzeźno, Żnin, Rypin, cities of Toruń and Grudziądz.	No
<u>Chełm</u> , Bydgoszcz, and the city of Bydgoszcz, <u>Włocławek</u> and the city of <u>Włocławek</u>	Yes

*Source: Own work on the basis of the provided answers*

Another important indicator of cooperation are specific actions that could be seen by applying and executing safety projects. One of such opportunities was governmental programme Together we are safer carried out by Ministry of Interior and Administration.

**Table 2** Did the local government entity participate in any national programmes linked with local safety such as for example Together we are safer?

COUNTY	ANSWERS
Aleksandrów, Nakło, Golub-Dobrzyń, Radziejów, Wąbrzeźno, Rypin,	No
<del>Chełm</del> , Bydgoszcz, and the city of Bydgoszcz, <del>Świecie</del> , Inowrocław, <del>Włocławek</del> and the city of <del>Włocławek</del> , Żnin, the cities of Toruń and Grudziądz	Yes

*Source: Own work on the basis of the provided answers*

The answers provided above concerning the time needed to execute the obligations and being open to another funding initiatives for activities directed to safety indicate that a large group of counties did not participate in such a programme. Lack of activities is a characteristic of six counties. All cities with county rights from the Kuyavian-Pomeranian region participated in the Together we are safer programme. It can be seen, that the greater the county, the larger the willingness to cooperate. Surely, it is yet another research request to verify indicators that encourage the county authorities to take on other initiatives aimed at safety. All the more that such activities as the government programme Together we are safer are a tool used to gather knowledge and good practices in terms of coordination of cross-institutional safety activities.

## COUNCILS COOPERATION WITH LOCAL COMMUNITY

The last part of the survey was composed of research on the aspect of socialisation of Kuyavian-Pomeranian Councils works among the local community. Verifying to what degree the local community feels safe, informing them about potential risks and including them in the decision-making process concerning issues on order and safety is now one of the key elements of the so-called community policing idea. One must remember, that the element of social participation in matters concerning safety is not only an administrative obligation but also a key element of executing tasks by the public administration, referred to also as responsive administration or neo-Weberian conception in public management (Mazur, 2014). To verify the element of social communication between the county authorities and the residents, the starostes were asked the following questions: (1) Were hazard maps developed for particular cities and suburbs? (2) Was a research concerning the level of safety felt among the residents carried out? (3) Were the results of the research concerning the level of safety felt among the residents published in local newspapers or in other customary manner? (4) Who was the most supportive and helpful when implementing the program for hazards and pathologies prevention?

The key element of communication is to have knowledge on real hazards. It allows the public administration to objectively confront data with the residents' perception and the level of safety. It is also an issue of establishing public intervention within the knowledge based policy paradigm, that refers also to the local safety management.

**Table 3** Were hazard maps developed for particular cities and suburbs?

COUNTY	ANSWERS
Bydgoszcz and the city of Bydgoszcz, <u>Golub-Dobrzyń</u> , <u>Włocławek</u> and the city of <u>Włocławek</u> , <u>Wąbrzeźno</u> , <u>Żnin</u> , <u>Rypin</u> .	Yes
Aleksandrów, Chełm, Nakło, Świecie, Inowrocław, Radziejów and the cities of Toruń and Grudziądz	No

Source: Own work on the basis of the provided answers

The distribution of data is equal within counties that sent their surveys. It is difficult to point to any dependencies related to the size of a county or to the cooperation of township and country district. It can be assumed that it is more a matter of knowledge and being aware of the opportunities to make use of these tools in managing the safety of county authorities.

An additional element of socialisation of the issue of local safety is research aimed at the level of safety as perceived by local community. Similarly as in the above question, the distribution of data is equal. A certain type of convergence with answers concerning the hazards map for certain cities and suburbs can be seen. The difference can be seen only for two pairs of counties. In the case of the city of Grudziądz and Chełm county, even though there were no hazard maps, it was decided to conduct a research on the level of safety, and in the case of Golub-Dobrzyń and Żnin counties, it was the opposite.

**Table 4** Was a research concerning the level of safety felt among the residents carried out?

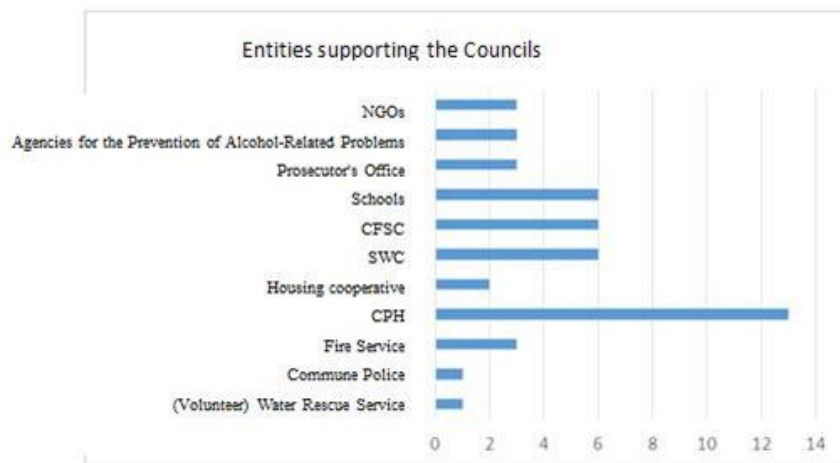
COUNTIES	ANSWERS
<u>Chełm</u> , Bydgoszcz, and the city of Bydgoszcz, <u>Włocławek</u> and the city of <u>Włocławek</u> , <u>Wąbrzeźno</u> and the city of <u>Grudziądz</u> .	Yes
Aleksandrów, <u>Golub-Dobrzyń</u> , Nakło, Świecie, Inowrocław, Radziejów, Żnin, Rypin and the city of Toruń	No

Source: Own work on the basis of the provided answers

The result of the answers provided above was the issue of publication of the results among the residents. From among 7 counties in which the decision was made to assess the level of safety as perceived by the residents, only in the case of four of them these results were published. In three cases, it was by way of public information bulletin (counties: Bydgoszcz and the city of Bydgoszcz, Włocławek and the city of Włocławek, Wąbrzeźno) and only in one case it was done in local press – Aleksandrów county.

The last element of socialising the Council works is the cooperation with various entities that directly or indirectly carry out the tasks related to order and widely understood safety (that is social, educational, cultural safety etc.) in the county. The question: Who was the most supportive and helpful when implementing the program for hazards and pathologies prevention? helped to understand this issue. The below diagram presents data comparison for the obtained data.

**Table 5.** Who was the most supportive and helpful when implementing the program for hazards and pathologies prevention?



Source: Own work on the basis of the provided answers

On the basis of the provided answers, it can be stated that the institution indicated most frequently in terms of cooperation in the area of safety are county police headquarters. It is no surprise, as it is the most important institution the obligation of which is the protection of health, life and property – thirteen answers. The next place is occupied by institutions dealing with social welfare (Social Welfare Centre – SWC), family support (County Family Support Centre – CFSC) and educational entities running its activity in the county – six answers. The third group of entities are non-governmental organisations, Agencies for the Prevention of Alcohol-Related Problems and Prosecutor's Offices – three answers. Quite probably the indicator that influenced the above answers is due to the legal regulations. The lawmaker indicated in the act on Powiat Self-Government the necessity of cooperation with the Police (in terms of assessment of documents, budget) and indicated the candidate for the position of County Police Chief in the act on the Police which makes the cooperation mandatory



and systematic. On the other hand, cooperation with other entities is subject to the decision of county authorities which results in this differentiation when it comes to its execution.

## SUMMARY

The tasks within safety and order are one of the most important obligations of the county authorities. It is due to the fact, that on one hand the county authorities are the sole entity of local government responsible for executions of tasks related to safety (the commune authorities are responsible solely for social order) and on the other hand at the county level there is a cooperation of services, inspectorates and patrols that are a major element of government and self-government administration. The aim of this article was to present the manner of functioning of county Councils for Safety and Order in Kuyavian-Pomeranian Voivodeship. From among 16 answers provided to the questions from the questionnaire one can formulate certain conclusions concerning their functioning. First of all, in all analysed counties, the Councils were appointed for 3-year term. It is a statutory duty that is the basis for activities coordination within the county.

Second of all, the Councils implement their task in different ways. The first group of counties, constituting approximately a half of those who provided answers, executes tasks stemming directly from the act on Powiat Self-Government. It is evident in the systematic assessment of necessary documents, preparation of Council work plan, submitting reports. On the contrary, the second group of counties is interested in additional activities which is present in applying for additional funds for their activities aimed at safety, preparing ordinances or other documents or plans, which translate into issues of safety and order within a county.

Thirdly, a clear differentiation can be seen when it comes to the socialisation of the Council's works. Such issues as preparation of hazard maps for particular cities, assessing the level of safety as perceived by the residents or publishing this information are not a common practice used by the local authorities. What is more, in many cases these activities are not taken at all. As a result, enhanced awareness and engagement are crucial for county authorities when it comes to the management of local safety. A characteristic element of the functioning of all Councils is the lack of engagement of partners representing entities from the commercial sector. All in all, since the beginning of political transformation, safety – just like many public tasks – was commercialised. As a result, these tasks constitute a crucial group of entities dealing with safety.

The provided answers allow to notice that actions to unify the work standards of the Councils are necessary. Safety, as one of the basic human needs, should be ensured and maintained as consistently as possible. Perhaps a huge support in this matter would be the support of national local corporations such as Association of Polish Cities or Association of Polish Counties that represent the authorities of local government and represent the local government within the Joint Central Government and Local Government Committee. It is also worth to research the formulated research requests concerning how the role of coordinator of local safety is perceived by the chairs of county Councils i.e. starostes and factors that encourage and discourage local government in terms of cooperation with external partners. To have this knowledge

would supplement the research and would constitute a crucial encouragement factor to formulate further recommendations in terms of coordination of local activities for safety.

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