

COUNTY ORDER AND SAFETY COMMISSIONS IN LIGHT OF THE REPORTS ON THEIR ACTIVITY IN THE YEARS 2007- 2009

Research Results Summary

Michalina Szafrńska M.A.

KRAKÓW 2013

I. Methodology and Sample

A research into county order and safety commissions was conducted from August 2011 to January 2012. The subjects of this research were **reports on activities of county order and safety commissions from 2007, 2008, and 2009**, for all 379 counties. The contents of these documents was analysed with the help of an electronic questionnaire (76 closed, single or multiple choice questions).

A total of 972 **reports** were analysed (out of 1137¹) – 810 from rural counties, and 162 from cities with county rights. The response rate is 85%.

Problems in conducting this research related primarily to:

- The preparation of an appropriate questionnaire – caused by a large variance in the volume of reports (779 – 112043 characters with spaces) and their contents;
- The possibility of drawing conclusions regarding commissions' activities on the basis of the contents of reports – reports do not necessarily fully reflect the real activity of a commission: on the one hand, not all activities of a commission have to be included in a report, while on the other hand, reports may include activities of other services and entities operating in the county, which due to imprecise wording may subsequently be wrongly attributed to the commission.

Therefore, the results of this research are **exploratory only** and cannot serve as the sole source of information about the activities of these commissions. Its findings should be treated with due caution and verified using other research methods.

II. Research Aims

Overall aim of the research: Diagnosis of activities of county order and safety commissions in light of the reports on their activity in the years 2007-2009.

Detailed aims:

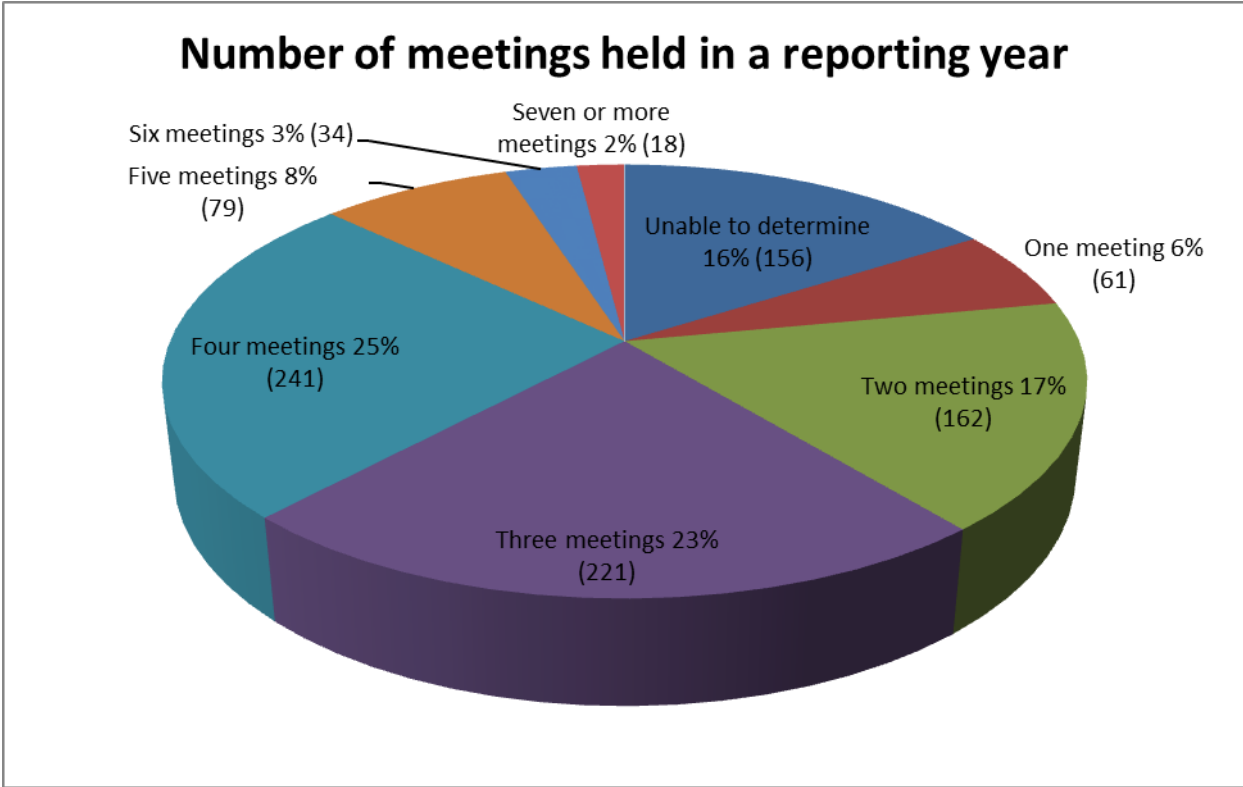
1. What do the county order and safety commissions do?
2. What part of their activities is aimed at crime prevention?
3. Do commissions use statutory powers conducive to coordination, or other extranormative ways for safety efforts' coordination?
 - broadening their composition, or inviting other entities to participate in meetings;
 - taking advantage of external expertise;
 - acquiring information about the activities of entities responsible for security, facilitating the flow of information, taking specific actions based on the information acquired;
 - issuing opinions on programmes of cooperation of entities responsible for safety;
 - cooperating with commune self-governments of the county, associations, foundations, churches and religious associations, and other organisations and institutions in carrying out designated tasks;
 - taking action to inspire cooperation between entities responsible for safety.
4. Can information regarding safety actions being taken in the county be found in these reports?

¹ It is a legal requirement that reports be published in Voivodeships' Gazettes. However, several documents were found to be unpublished. Attempts were made to obtain these documents by other means available, in order to maximize the sample, i.e. by searching the Public Information Bulletins, counties websites, electronic legal information systems, establishing contact with county representatives and other county entities active in the field of security (e-mail, telephone).

III. Key Results

ORDER AND SAFETY COMMISSIONS – BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- The majority of commissions held **3-4 meetings a year** (48%). Occasionally (17% of cases), there were only 2 meetings in a given year. In 61 cases (6%) the commission met only once a year.



Commissions in municipalities held meetings more often than ones in rural counties, but the differences are not significant. There are also no significant differences in the frequency of meetings in subsequent years covered by the study.

- A little over half of reports indicated the composition of a commission (547). Approximately **half** of those (252) indicated the **statutory defined composition** as detailed in Article 38a Paragraph 5 of the County Self-Government Act (C.SG.A.). Also, in approximately **half** of them (252) the starost exercised his statutory right to **broaden the composition** of a commission, as provided by Article 38a Paragraph 7 of the C.SG.A. Irregularities with regards to composition of commissions were found in 7% of reports (68 cases)².
- Information about an extended composition of commissions appeared more frequently (by 12%) in municipality reports than in rural county reports. Representatives of the **County Fire Department** were by far the most common addition to commissions. Other participants were representatives of **the sanitary inspection, local self-government, or veterinary inspection and commune/city police**.
- Participation of at least one entity external to the commission (statutory and extended) in at least one meeting (although usually more than one) was a relatively frequent occurrence (**45%** of cases). **Representatives of services, inspections and fire department** were frequently

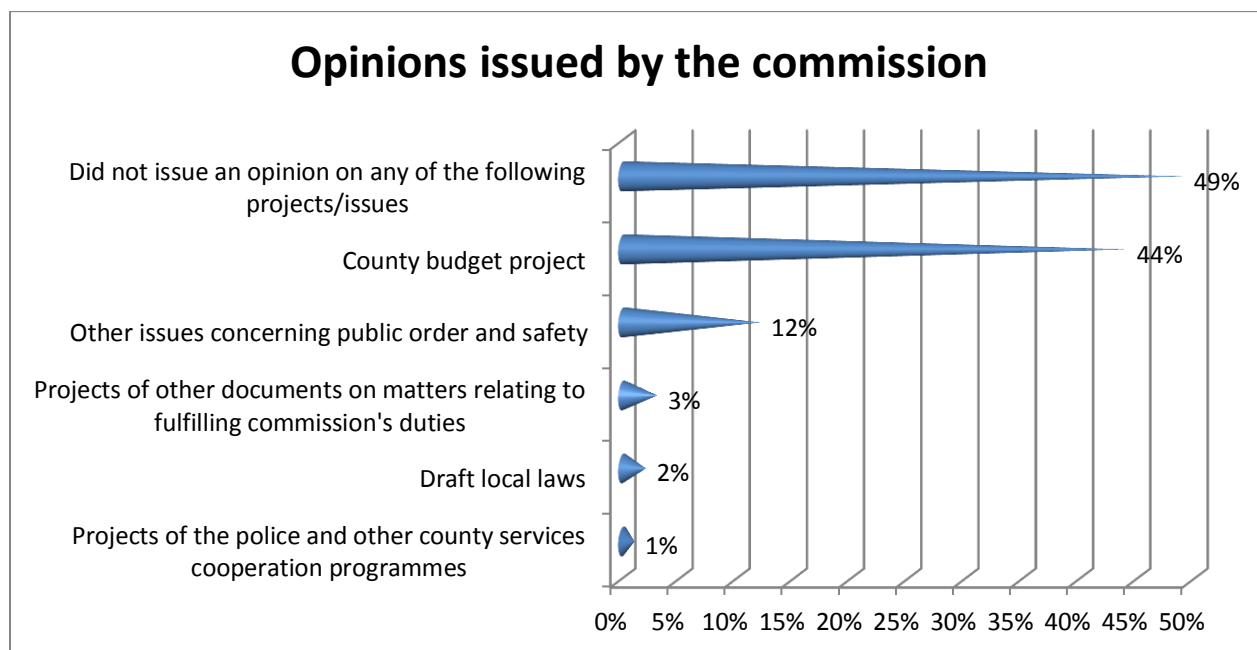
² Most often these were the result of an insufficient number of representatives of the county/city Police Commander, or the county council, or of scarcity (or abundance) of persons appointed by the starost to be members of the basic composition of a commission.

invited (in counties), as were **representatives of the commune self-government** (in rural counties).

- Conclusions regarding **commissions' cooperation with other entities** are less optimistic. Information on commissions' cooperation with other entities was found in only **11%** (117) of reports.
- Joint meetings of the commission and other entities responsible for safety in the county were a rare event, found only in **9.5%** of cases (92 reports)³.
- Even less frequent was the commission taking advantage of external expertise – **1%** of the surveyed reports.

EXECUTION OF STATUTORY DUTIES

- In the **majority of cases** (78%) the reports detailed that statement was accepted, or information obtained from entities responsible for order and safety at least once during commission meetings. The entities most often involved were the **Police** (64%) and the **County Fire Department** (52%).
- Although obtaining information or accepting statements was relatively common, it rarely coincided with the commission offering opinions on execution of duties by entities responsible for order and safety – only **approximately 1/3 of reports detailed issuing such opinions**.
- In case of commissions' duties, as statutory provided by Article 38a Paragraph 2 (offering opinions on other documents and cases relating to safety), nearly **½ of reports detailed no information on any action being taken**. In cases where commissions did offer opinions, these were predominantly on county budget projects.



³ In majority of cases joint debates concerned various institutions involved in crisis management and county commissions responsible for order and safety.

- **59%** of reports show **commissions performing** an assessment of factors threatening public order and safety in the county⁴.
- One of the most important tasks of a commission – beyond its advisory role – is to prepare the county crime prevention and public order and safety programme (Article 38a Paragraph 3 Section 3). Despite this, **more than one third of reports lacked any reference to such a county programme**.

COMMISSIONS' ACTIVITY PREATER LEGEM

- Commissions operate mainly by holding **regular meetings** (99% of reports detail such meetings). Other forms of commissions' activity are rare (away meetings – 5%, training sessions – 5%, exercises – 3%, conferences – 3%, working groups – 3%).
- Commissions' **activities resulting from participation in prevention programmes** of a varying territorial scope (national, voivodeship, county, communal, and other local) implemented in the county were also investigated. Commissions' involvement in this respect was insubstantial as indicated by data presented in the table below.

Did commissions participate in any prevention programmes?

	Programmes implemented under the county crime prevention scheme (...)	Programmes implemented under the „Safer Together” Scheme	Other programmes
Yes	6% (59)	8% (75)	34% (333)
No	94% (913)	92% (897)	66% (639)

- Only **27% of reports** showed commissions engaging in action promoting cooperation of other entities involved in the provision of safety. Furthermore, only 43% of this activity was cooperation inspiring and only 21% was coordination.
- Also, commissions rarely (16%) took **action to address sudden, ad hoc needs**.
- Commissions' activity, in terms of sending other entities motions related to the scope of their activities in the area of public order and safety, was also analysed. Only **a quarter of reports** included information on **at least one instance of such motion being issued by the commission to another entity**.

COOPERATION FOR THE SAFETY OF OTHER ENTITIES

47% of reports (456) contained information on **at least one instance of safety action cooperation** between parties other than the commission. A total of **1146 instances of cooperation** were found in all surveyed reports.

Among the most frequently mentioned are:

- co-financing of safety actions and equipment purchasing;
- joint patrols of services responsible for public order and safety;

⁴ It should be stipulated that "to assess" is taken here in the broadest sense. Therefore, even a brief mention of an assessment or a one-sentence assessment set out in a report is sufficient for positive qualification.

- co-operation of different actors (police, fire, municipal police, local county or commune self-government) with educational institutions in the education of children and adolescents;
- co-organization of preventive actions, information campaigns, competitions, and events to promote safety;
- joint information campaigns by the media and entities responsible for safety;
- joint exercises in preparation for emergencies and disasters;
- establishment and cooperation of interdisciplinary bodies devoted to a particular security problem;
- joint audits (e.g. recreation centres – against the sanitary and hygiene requirements, alcohol outlets – for compliance with the provisions of the Upbringing in Sobriety and Counteracting Alcoholism Act, guarded and unguarded bathing sites, coaches transporting children and adolescents).

IV. CONCLUSIONS AND FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS

CONCLUSIONS:

1. Commissions' reports are **extremely varied** – in terms of their spaciousness and content (probably due to a lack of template or standards for the formal and substantive requirements to be met by such reports) – as well as **imprecise language**. Therefore, it is not easy to reconstruct the actual activity of commissions on this basis alone.

2. Reports which allowed for commissions' composition to be established featured extended composition (46%) as often as the statutory one (46%). However, since 140 of the 252 reports featuring an extended composition came from the same counties, in actuality, the extended composition featured at least once in only 112 counties. It seems that starosts exercise their right to broaden the composition of a commission relatively rarely. On the other hand, participation in meetings by other entities responsible for safety is relatively frequent. Therefore, there is – in terms of entities – a **certain coordination potential**, which – it seems – is **rarely taken advantage of**.

3. Commissions **very rarely use other approaches fostering coordination** of actions for safety, i.e.:

- cooperation with other entities (12%)
- joint meetings with other bodies responsible for safety (9%)
- using external expertise (1%).

4. The **execution of statutory tasks assigned to commissions** – based on the content of reports – usually appears to be **negligible**. Commissions mainly accept reports and listen to information from other entities, and provide opinions on the budget.

5. Also, commissions very rarely take any other action (not delineated directly in the Act), including those that could facilitate coordination, i.e.:

- dealing with cooperation of other entities (27%)
- issuing motions to other entities, as a result of commissions' meetings (25%).

FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS:

- 1. Whether and to whom reports on activities of commissions are useful? Is there a reason behind their mandatory publication in the Voivodeships' Gazettes?**
- 2. Is there a need for introducing a normative or organizational format of the report?**
- 3. To what extent are these research results a true and fair reflection of reality, and to what extent are they a result of an unsatisfactory quality of reports?**