DELIVERABLE 2.2
Unity – Report on the Social and Cultural Limitations of an ICT Tool for Community Policing Executive Summary

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Executive Summary Report on the Social and Cultural Limitations of an ICT Tool for Community Policing

1. Introduction

For any nation the relationship which exists between its police and the communities they serve is an important one. The police, as agents of the state have the ability to deny people their liberty and freedom, whilst having the legitimate ability to use physical force to do so. The management and delivery of effective local policing is therefore fundamental in building trust between the public and the police. Local policing, delivered in a consistent way, by familiar officers in specific geographical locations supports strong and positive relationships between the two groups.

2. Aims and Scope

The aim of this deliverable is to support the previous work produced in Work Packages 2 and 3 which included an overview of community policing and how it is viewed across the eight partner countries. As described in these previous Work Packages a core element which underpins community policing is the sharing of information. In terms of the overall focus of the Unity project, which includes the development of an information communication technology (ICT) tool which can be utilised to enhance communications between the police and the communities they serve, it is important to assess how specific social and cultural limitations from each partner country could potentially impact on the use of the ICT tool.

In order to meet these aims, qualitative structured interviews took place with a specifically targeted "purposive sample" of participants who fitted the criteria framework given. The criteria were:

- 10 Young members of a minority groups
- 10 participants from an additional community of the country's choice (optional)
- 10 members of an intermediary i.e., an organisation or group that supports the community group
- 10 members of the local law enforcement agency that are involved in community policing for and with the main target groups and the additional community.

This resulted in a total of 243 interviews being conducted.

3. Findings

This report has sought to unpick the social and cultural implications of collecting and sharing data via online communication between the police, the public and key stakeholders involved in local community safety across the partner countries taking part in the Unity project. The main themes which emerged from the data collection and analysis relate to data security, data protection, maintaining confidentiality and anonymity and information sharing. These will be discussed in turn below.

1. One of the largest themes to emerge from the data was regarding of data security. Participants from the three groups (police, intermediaries and young minority members) from across the partner nations highlighted their concerns on

where the data would be stored and who would have access to it to ensure there was no potential for personal information to be abused or misused.

2. In terms of sharing information with other organisations, overall the police were less likely to share than other participant groups.

3. There was a consensus amongst many of the police organisations from the partner countries that sharing information with others could lead to the misuse or abuse of that information.

4. In contrast non-policing participants raised concerns regarding the police's ability to maintain data security with some participants suggesting that the police may also intentionally misuse or abuse the personal information collected.

5. Data protection was another large and almost universal theme which emerged from the data collected from all groups of participants from all partner countries. Themes based around data protection included individuals being aware that data protection legislation was there to protect them and their personal information in a positive way.

6. However, both intermediary participants and police officers suggested that they have experienced times when they were unable to share important information due to the restrictions placed on them by current data protection legislation.

7. Data protection legislation, therefore, is viewed as both a help and a limitation with some police and intermediary participants claiming that current EU legislation may require amendments to support information sharing between organisations.

8. The ability to report incidents or share information with the police in an anonymous manner was also a dominant theme extracted from the data. In the main comments relating to anonymity were raised by minority and intermediary participants and focused on keeping witnesses safe from persecution.

9. Concerns around a perceived lack of protection for witnesses was highlighted by participants from Croatia, Macedonia and Bulgaria who also made the most comments related to perceptions of an "unprofessional police" and "lack of trust" in the police.

10. The general consensus from minority participants from across all partner nations what that in principle they would be very likely to share almost all types of information with the police. However, this was qualified when they provided a large number of replies which related to anonymous reporting, with many young minority members using the term "snitch" in reference to their peer groups discovering they had shared information with the police.

11. Many intermediaries from across the partner countries also discussed their responsibility in maintaining their client or service user's privacy and confidentiality in relation to sharing information with police, and argued that for them the priority would always be maintaining the confidential relationships with service users.

12. The intermediaries who took part in the project mirrored the general consensus of the young minority members in terms of stating that they would be likely to share all information with the police. Overall the most negative replies were found in relation to sharing personal information, images and videos and issues with licenced premises.

4. Suggestions for the ICT development

The data reported here suggests that the following should be taken into account then designing the ICT component of the Unity project:

1. Terms and conditions displayed

2. Anonymous reporting is required. This would involve allowing members of the public who use the ICT system to do so without creating an account (or login), as well as options to create an account (in order to receive replies) but to keep their information confidential from the police and intermediaries.

3. However, anonymous reporting does not mean that this should be an impersonal system. As trust-building is a goal of Unity, keeping the platforms in a friendly style is also important, such as faces and names of local police officers as well as their contact details. This may help encourage information sharing.

4. Separate platforms for the police, intermediaries and the public are also required. This will allow the police and intermediaries to share sensitive data with each other (which is allowed under data protection legislation), but to keep this away from view of the public.

5. The ICT tool should not be 'branded' (or should come with the option of not being branded) a police tool. Some young minorities (as well as the German football fans) are currently so distrustful of the police that they would never use a 'police' technology application. However, users will need to be made aware which agencies and intermediaries will have access to their data. This could perhaps be provided in a separate page when users first come to use the system. Trust between users and the police may develop as the two-way communication progresses through the tool.

6. The training and education components of Unity will need to present to police officers the evidence-base of the value in sharing information with other agencies and the public in order to build trust and improve police community relations.

7. Conclusion

In conclusion, the above report has shown how police personnel, young members of minority communities and intermediaries who work with these groups view information sharing in local policing. The report has attempted to unpick the social and cultural implications of collecting and sharing information with and by the police. Overall, there were more similarities than differences between each nation state, with the exception of trust in the police which was reported in a more negative context in Macedonia, Bulgaria and Croatia. Any lack of trust in the police organisation will have a detrimental impact on the likelihood of any group or organisation sharing information with the police, whilst also having the potential to

create challenges for the introduction of the proposed Unity information communication tool.