

## THE ROLE OF CRISIS MANAGEMENT IN THE FUNCTIONING OF BORDER REGIONS

Marie GABRYŠOVÁ<sup>1</sup>, Wiesław CIECHOMSKI<sup>2\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Marie Gabryšová, Hornoslezská vysoká škola obchodní, Zahraniční fakulta v Ostravě (Katowice School of Economics, Ostrava branch); gabrysova@gmail.com, ORCID: 0000-0002-7273-4762

<sup>2</sup> Uniwersytet Ekonomiczny w Poznaniu; w.ciechomski@ue.poznan.pl, ORCID: 0000-0002-2310-8378

\* Correspondence author

**Abstract:** The paper is devoted to the importance of crisis management in improving the safety and security of border areas residents and the development of border regions. The authors first present the essence and stages of the crisis management process, and then describe several programmes implemented jointly by the Police, Fire Brigade, Border Guard and other uniformed services. These include such joint Polish-Czech projects as “Safe Borderlands”, cross-border cooperation between the Fire Brigade and the Police, combating drug crime and cybercrime, as well as the “Joint Facility in Chotěbuz”. The article contains fragments of three in-depth individual interviews conducted personally with the commander of the District Police Headquarters in Cieszyn, the deputy director and an employee of Hasičský záchranný sbor Moravskoslezského kraje, and the head of the Chotěbuz centre.

**Keywords:** crisis management, border region.

### 1. Introduction

The aim of this paper is to present selected aspects of partner cooperation between services responsible for crisis management in the border regions of Poland and the Czech Republic. The cooperation of uniformed services should not be considered solely in the context of dealing with the consequences of natural disasters or combating organised international crime. It must be planned in advance and systematically practised. In other words, it cannot only be *ex post facto* cooperation. Such cooperation is all the more important in the case of border regions in view of different legal regulations and communication systems in each country, as well as the language barrier which may appear when communicating with people who need help from the emergency services.

Excellent examples of strengthening this cooperation are joint Polish-Czech projects which aim to improve the safety and security of residents and tourists in border regions. The article describes five such programmes: “Safe Borderlands”, cross-border cooperation between the Fire Brigade and the Police, combating drug crime, combating cybercrime, and the creation of the “Joint Facility in Chotěbuz”. The paper is based not only on the study of the literature, but also on the results of direct in-depth interviews conducted with four Polish and Czech officers responsible for implementing these programmes and improving the cooperation between Polish-Czech crisis management services.

## **2. The essence and stages of the crisis management process**

The crisis management process consists of four stages: prevention, preparation, response and reconstruction. Prevention is understood as a set of activities that aim to eliminate or reduce the likelihood of a given threat and limit its adverse effects. This should be a continuous process, and any mistakes made at this stage may have a destructive impact on the entire crisis management cycle.

The preparation phase comprises such elements as forecasting the effects of potential threats; planning how to react; as well as actions aimed at gathering the manpower and resources necessary to effectively respond to a crisis situation. Another very important element of the preparation stage is the organisation of training exercises aimed at checking the preparation of the entities involved in the crisis management process, such as the Police, the Border Guard, the State Fire Service, medical services and others. The main tasks of these services in the response phase include implementing appropriate procedures, organising medical assistance, securing endangered areas and evacuating people who are in danger. Incorrect organisation of the prevention and preparation phases leads to the accumulation of adverse phenomena which may appear in the response phase and which, in extreme situations, may make it impossible to implement coordinated actions.

The reconstruction phase consists of a set of measures aimed at restoring the pre-crisis situation in the shortest possible time, or even improving it, in the light of the experience gained, in order to prevent a recurrence of the crisis. This process includes, among others, estimating damage and loss, restoring and replenishing resources, restoring operational readiness, as well as modifying crisis management plans and procedures.

Threats caused by natural forces that result in crisis situations include floods, snowstorms, thunderstorms, hurricanes, epidemics, fires and more (Wiśniewski, Kaczmarczyk, 2012b, p. 110). These very dangerous phenomena, such as the African swine fever epidemic (ASF), often occur simultaneously in two or more countries and can be effectively controlled only if the cooperation of services between these countries is real and not only declared. Therefore, the

issue of crisis management requires clarifying the principles of cooperation and defining the limits of each partner's autonomy. This applies to each of the crisis management phases and to all the links in the system in relation to specific threats (Gołębiewski, 2015b, p. 7).

A very important attribute of the crisis management system is a rational coordination of actions in emergencies (Gołębiewski, 2015a, p. 40). This issue is all the more important when it concerns the cooperation of services from different countries, for example with regard to flood risks or forest fires. Nature does not know and does not respect national borders, and effective flood prevention in large areas of, for example, Lower Silesia, requires efficient cooperation between Polish, Czech and German services. The organisation and functioning of local flood warning systems, for example, is based on the implementation of an integrated system, also referred to as a total system, which includes not only activities ensuring a correct response in emergency situations, but also the integration of national and local actions, including the border regions. The system of international crisis management is primarily a set of warning, information and education measures aimed at creating a climate of cooperation (Wiśniewski, Kaczmarczyk, 2012b, p. 28 et seq.).

It is also worth noting one more issue related to international crisis management. One of the important consequences of the rapid integration of states is the need for being able to efficiently deal with crisis situations (Molendowski, 2012, p. 29 et seq.). The implementation of the European Union's regional policy necessitates the creation of certain administrative capabilities with regard to managing programmes and projects, including infrastructure projects connected with crisis management (Życki, 2010, p. 86). In addition to internal security, the priorities of the EU's regional policy include the restructuring and modernisation of rural areas, the development of human resources, and an increase in the competitiveness of enterprises in the food sector, among others (Sługocki, 2013, p. 187).

The majority of the specialist literature on integration processes is devoted to the absorption of financial resources from EU funds, placing particular emphasis on the vision and strategies for the development of border regions. Unfortunately, the issues of crisis management and the cooperation of uniformed services are not given a lot of attention in these documents even though ensuring the cohesion of activities in this respect is of the utmost importance (Sługocki, 2016, p. 187 et seq.). The multifaceted nature of international cooperation and its impact on the development of regions, including border regions, are discussed in more detail by Kowalewska-Borys and Chomicz (2015, p. 13 et seq.).

Analysing the fundamental objectives and determinants of international cooperation, it is also worth emphasising that while excessive diversity can be intriguing or even irritating, overcoming barriers between countries and societies can be quite fascinating (Gabryšová, Ciechomski, 2018, p. 101). A great achievement of contemporary Western European civilization is that national borders are no longer a reason for division or isolation. Currently, the international relations of the countries that make up the European Union tend to focus more strongly on what connects rather than what divides. Building a modern Europe is a process of

discovering and appreciating its differences and the richness of its cultures (Gołoś, Kasińska-Metryka, 2011, p. 87). With such an understanding in the philosophy of the co-existence of states and nations, creating and implementing crisis management systems in border regions proves much easier.

Furthermore, the European Community is making intensive efforts to strengthen the economy and social fabric of peripheral areas, including border areas, which are often at risk of marginalisation. This also involves building friendly mutual relations based on partnership, which are the basis of the philosophy and strategy of relationship marketing (Rudolf, 2016, p. 78 et seq.). Development opportunities in these areas are equalised, among others, with the help of the structural funds, which also serve to finance the strengthening of safety and security in border areas. Fire-fighting units operating in the Polish-Czech border area took advantage of this opportunity. They have prepared and are implementing a joint project called “Safe Borderlands”. The subsequent part of the paper describes examples of Polish-Czech cooperation between the Fire Service, the Police, and the Tax Administration.

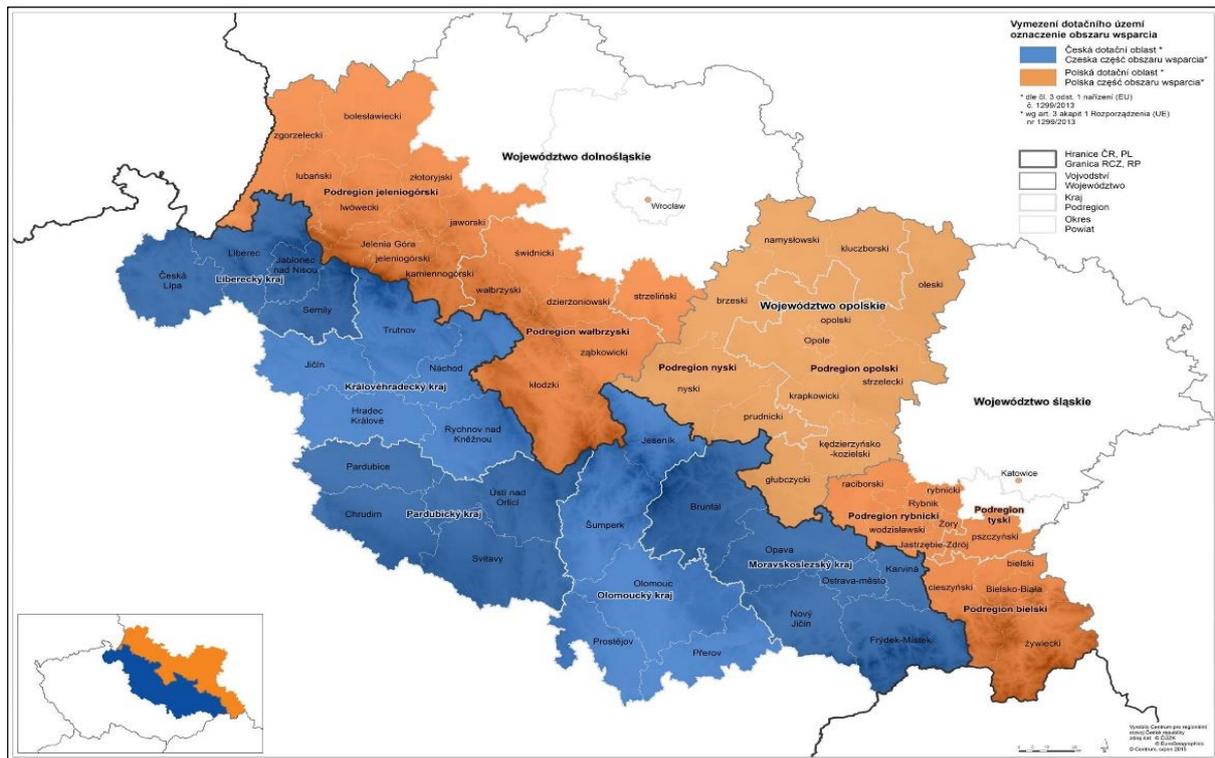
### **3. Polish-Czech cooperation of fire service units within the “Safe Borderlands” project**

The “Safe Borderlands” project is a joint Polish-Czech undertaking involving 5 Czech (Liberec, Pardubice, Olomouc, Ostrava, Hradec Králove) and 3 Polish (Katowice, Opole and Wrocław) Regional State Fire Service Headquarters, serving 7.1 million residents of the 47,000 km<sup>2</sup> Polish-Czech border area<sup>1</sup>. This area is shown in Figure 1.

The project is a result of past cooperation between rescue services and institutions from Poland and the Czech Republic. The concept and material scope was prepared jointly by the partners, based on the analysis and conclusions drawn from cross-border rescue operations and exercises, which revealed different levels of cooperation along the border and different levels of security. The aim of the project is to increase cross-border operational readiness for resolving crisis situations by strengthening the cooperation of all the services responsible for security in the border area, which will lead to improving safety and security in the Polish-Czech border area and consequently increasing the attractiveness of the entire region.

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<sup>1</sup> The “Safe Borderlands” project is implemented as part of the Interreg V-A Czech Republic – Poland Programme: implementation in the years 2016-2019; project value 7,987,790.65 €; funding from the European Regional Development Fund 6,789,621.54 €. The Czech Republic: project value 4,002,540.65 €, including 3,402,159.01 € from the ERDF; Poland: project value 3,985,250 €, including 3,387,462.50 € from the ERDF.



**Figure 1.** Area covered by the “Safe Borderlands” project (Czech Republic – bottom; Poland – upper). Source: <http://www.bezpecnepohranici.eu/pl/?newspage143=2>.

The project includes purchasing equipment and conducting joint cross-border training and exercises in six thematic areas:

1. Communication, information exchange and crisis management systems;
2. Cooperation in fire-fighting;
3. Cooperation in water and flood rescue;
4. Traffic accidents;
5. Cooperation in technical rescue and environmental protection;
6. Analysis and assessment of the current state of cooperation between different services and institutions responsible for the safety and security of border areas.

The project primarily comprises such activities as training, conferences, joint exercises and experience exchange. The proper functioning of an integrated system of training aimed at improving safety and security is a very important element of crisis management because it serves not only to standardise the procedures and rules of operation, but also to improve the so-called defensive readiness (Falecki, 2016, p. 272). The cycle of training includes training for commanders; training and exercises in rescue operations in border areas; rescue operations in fast-flowing waters; training for drivers of emergency vehicles moving in difficult conditions; training in firefighting in multi-storey buildings; simulations of chemical, biological, radiation or nuclear disasters; internships for crisis centre dispatchers; language training for rescuers; educational activities for residents and tourists in the border area. Another part of the project consists of expert panels, the aims of which are to identify problem areas, adapt good practices

and conduct promotional activities. The range of activities is so wide that it cannot be described in one article. For this reason, the authors will describe only selected activities that are implemented under the “Safe Borderlands” project in the region on the Czech side and in the regions bordering it on the Polish side; i.e. Opole and Silesian Voivodeships.

#### **4. Cross-border cooperation of the Fire Service in the Moravskoslezský, Opole and Silesian regions**

The cooperation of fire-fighting units in the Moravskoslezský, Silesian and Opole regions is based on bilateral agreements as well as agreements signed for the purpose of performing specific tasks<sup>2</sup>. An excellent example of joint crisis management is the identification of the so-called weak points, which means that units from both countries determine those places which in the event of a fire are difficult to access for the local fire rescue services, whereas access from the partner country is more convenient and faster. Based on the appropriate arrangements and contracts, the unit which can respond fastest takes over the responsibility for a prompt response in this area. The responsibility for quickly responding to accidents on the A1 motorway which require the intervention of firefighters has also been divided in this way.

In border areas, callers often get connected with a foreign mobile operator, so if a person calls the 112 emergency number the call may be taken by the services of the other country. Forwarding the call to the right service would mean losing valuable time when immediate assistance is needed. Thus, an agreement was signed, under which immediate assistance is provided by the unit that receives the call, and only later are the appropriate authorities of the other country informed.

The exchange of experiences between different fire service teams brings enormous benefits in terms of improving the security of the Polish-Czech border area. Experience exchange takes place during conferences, workshops and joint exercises. During these meetings, common methods of operation are developed, which guarantee better and more efficient actions. One example of such a meeting was an international conference entitled “Emergency electricity supply”, which was attended not only by firefighters from both countries, but also by representatives of electricity and water companies. Also, experts who had to deal with such problems during a power failure in Slovenia shared their experiences.

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<sup>2</sup> Information on cooperation was obtained during an interview with the deputy director of Hasičský záchranný sbor Moravskoslezského kraje colonel Miloš Střelka, MSc, and Marek Gašparin, Msc, and from the information materials provided.

## 5. Cooperation between Polish and Czech police

Cooperation between the Polish Police and the Czech Police is regulated by the Agreement between the Republic of Poland and the Czech Republic on cooperation in combating crime, the protection of public order and cooperation in border areas, which was signed in Warsaw on 21 June 21 2006. Another important document regulating this matter is the Agreement between the Chief Commander of the Border Guard of the Republic of Poland, the Chief Commander of the Police of the Republic of Poland and the Police Presidium of the Czech Republic on joint patrols, signed in Warsaw on 17 December 2007.

The proximity of Poland and the Czech Republic promotes frequent contacts between the police of both countries<sup>3</sup>. Mutual exchange of experiences with regard to combating crime is highly desirable and is implemented through personal meetings of the representatives of the Provincial Police Headquarters in Katowice with their Czech counterpart from Ostrava. The accession of Poland and the Czech Republic to the Schengen area intensified the frequency of contacts and resulted in expanding the list of discussed topics to include such issues as cooperation in surveillance and cross-border pursuits.

In 2008, the first joint international preventive patrols appeared on the Polish-Czech border. This cooperation is a result of an agreement signed by the Polish and Czech parties. At least three police officers take part in each mixed patrol, including two from the country in which the patrol operates and one from the partner country. On the Polish side, police officers from Cieszyn, Racibórz, Jastrzębie Zdrój and Wodzisław Śląski take part in the patrols; also Polish policemen participate in patrolling towns and cities in the Czech Republic – Hawirzów, Třinec, and Český Těšín. The best example of the effectiveness of this form of international cooperation is the fact that after just a few days of their presence in the Czech Republic, Polish police officers participated in arresting a Polish citizen who was wanted under a European Arrest Warrant and who for 11 years had lived in the Czech Republic working on a casual basis, as well as being homeless.

In addition to joint patrols, police units from the Silesian region and from Ostrava in the Moravian-Silesian region are conducting three other important projects: police bicycle patrols, an anti-drug project, and a project aimed at combating cybercrime.

“Police bicycle patrols at the service of the Polish-Czech borderland” is an interesting and socially important project implemented by the Provincial Police Headquarters in Katowice in cooperation with a Czech partner – the Regional Police Headquarters in Ostrava<sup>4</sup>. The area

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<sup>3</sup> Information on cooperation was obtained at the District Police Headquarters in Cieszyn during an interview with Commander Rafał Domagała. The article also makes use of police information materials. For more information on the role of the Czech Republic Police in crisis management, see: Wiśniewski and Kaczmarczyk 2012b, pp. 92-97.

<sup>4</sup> Total project value is 45,381.00 € (22,951.00 € on the Polish side and 22,430.00 € on the Czech side), which includes 38,573.85 € of EU funding (respectively 19,508.35 € and 19,065.50 €).

covered by the project includes on the Polish side the city of Cieszyn and the villages of Jasienica and Jaworze; and on the Czech side Český Těšín, Karviná, Jablunkov and Třinec. The project aims at increasing the sense of safety and security on both sides of the border and minimising threats in those public places that are difficult to access for motorised police patrols. This aim was achieved by equipping officers from the District Police Headquarters in Cieszyn and the Independent Police Prevention Sub-unit in Bielsko-Biała, as well as Czech police units from the supported area with bicycles, appropriate equipment and uniforms. Bicycles make it possible for police patrols to move faster and thus more quickly get to hard-to-reach places, as well as enabling them to visit those places more frequently. The organisational and tactical efficiency of the officers participating in the patrols will be increased through exercises and specialised training.

The project also involves preventive actions regarding the safety of bicycle path users. Leaflets prepared by police experts are distributed to the residents and tourists in the areas covered by the project. The final stage will be a conference summarising the project, organised by the Regional Police Headquarters in Ostrava, which will be attended by police officers and local government representatives from both sides of the border.

The three-year Polish-Czech flagship project “Drugstop – cross-border cooperation of police units in combating drug crime” is co-financed from EU funds<sup>5</sup>. The total value of the project is nearly 2.5 million EUR. The “Drugstop” project is the first such large joint undertaking with a broad social impact, aimed at raising the level of knowledge and social awareness among the inhabitants of the Polish-Czech borderland with regard to the issues connected with the use of narcotic substances.

The project covers in a comprehensive way several areas related to the fight against drugs. The first area is prevention, addressed to parents, educators, children and young people. The second one is training for police officers from the border areas of Poland and the Czech Republic regarding prevention and combating drug-related crime; and the third area concerns the acquisition of specialist equipment for detecting illegal substances. A total of 120 police officers, 60 from Poland and 60 from the Czech Republic respectively, involved in combating drug crime, were trained at the International Training Centre for Combating Illegal Drug Laboratories in Legionowo. In addition, 30 officers from Poland and 30 from the Czech Republic participated in training aimed at preparing them to conduct preventive meetings.

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<sup>5</sup> The lead partner of this project is the Provincial Police Headquarters in Wrocław, and the project partners on the Polish side are the Provincial Police Headquarters in Opole and the Provincial Police Headquarters in Katowice. On the Czech side, the partners include the Regional Police Headquarters in Liberec, Regional Police Headquarters in Hradec Králové, Regional Police Headquarters in Pardubice, Regional Police Headquarters in Olomouc, and Regional Police Headquarters in Ostrava. The total value of the project is 2,457,545.50 €, including 2,088,913.68 € from the European Regional Development Fund. The value of the project on the Czech side is 1,284,873.50 €, and on the Polish side 1,172,672.00 €.

To date, the cooperation of the police units participating in the project has resulted in organising numerous meetings, seminars and observations. These were attended by officers from crime investigation and prevention departments, and their goal was to improve Polish-Czech cooperation through exchanging experiences related to counteracting drug crime.

Another project which is implemented from 1 January 2019 to 31 December 2021 by the Provincial Police Headquarters in Katowice together with Police units from the Czech Republic and Poland is called “Improving Czech-Polish cooperation in the fight against cybercrime”<sup>6</sup>. Its total value amounts to 3,064,440.62 EUR. One of the partners on the Czech side is a science and research institution, namely Palacký University in Olomouc. The activities planned in the project aim to achieve two main objectives:

- developing a joint communication network in the support area,
- strengthening cooperation through implementing preventive measures and creating an online advice centre for the population.

A common communication network will connect the university with all regional and local police forces dealing with cybercrime. Using the communication network will promote systemic cooperation as well as enabling rapid transfers of data and information between the countries. As a result of creating a common network and combining the strengths of all the partners, cybercrime will be tackled more efficiently and comprehensively. This means not only increasing the effectiveness of the fight against cybercrime, but also reducing the number of victims. A large number of prevention activities conducted at schools in the border areas and expanding the online advice centre will also play a significant role in combating cybercrime. Prevention activities conducted at schools and during some outdoor events will aim to establish close cooperation with the local community, which will significantly contribute to identifying the residents’ concerns with respect to cybercrime.

The project includes purchasing highly specialised equipment and software; organising specialised training courses for police officers; implementing a range of preventive measures in the border area; creating a common communication network; and launching an online advice centre which will offer free and immediate assistance in solving the problems of cybercrime victims.

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<sup>6</sup> The project is implemented as a partnership between the Polish Provincial Police Headquarters in Opole and Wrocław, and the Czech Regional Police Headquarters in Liberec, Olomouc, Pardubice, Ostrava and Hradec Králové. Another partner on the Czech side is a science and research institution – Palacký University Olomouc.

## 6. A joint facility of the Police, Border Guard, Customs Service and Tax Administration

A flagship example of the effective Polish-Czech cooperation in crisis management in border areas is the “Joint Facility in Chotěbuz”<sup>7</sup> (Figure 2). The legal basis for its operation is established by the following documents:

- Agreement between the Republic of Poland and the Czech Republic on cooperation in the fight against crime, protection of public order and cooperation in border areas (Journal of Laws 2007.177.1246);
- Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Poland and the Government of the Czech Republic on the establishment and operating principles of joint centres in Kudowa Słone and Chotěbuz (Journal of Laws 2009.96.796);
- Memorandum on cooperation between the Customs Service of the Republic of Poland and the Customs Administration of the Czech Republic concerning prevention and detection of infringements of customs provisions of 16 July 2012;
- Decision of the Director of the Customs Chamber in Katowice 33/2010 designating a Multi-person Post for operating the Joint Facility in Chotěbuz.



**Figure 2.** Logo of the “Joint Facility in Chotěbuz”. Source: the facility’s materials.

The facility employs 37 people. The staff consists of 10 officers of the KŘP (police) of Moravskoslezský kraj Ostrava; 6 officers of Celní úřad pro Moravskoslezský kraj; 8 officers of the Provincial Police Headquarters in Katowice; 6 officers of the Śląsko-Małopolski Border Guard Department in Racibórz; and 7 officers of the Tax Administration Chamber in Katowice. The centre operates around the clock.

The arrangements and agreements signed with the Czech Republic result in obligations to the partner parties. As part of cooperation with the Czech customs administration, the facility performs the following activities:

<sup>7</sup> Information on the centre’s activities was obtained during an interview with the head of the Chotěbuz facility, deputy inspector Marian Szymaniak.

- verifying information on business entities,
- verifying information on natural persons,
- sharing data from the electronic toll collection system e-MYTO CZ,
- verifying excise stamps,
- monitoring freight transport,
- organising joint patrols as part of cross-border cooperation,
- replying to inquiries related to crime investigation and law enforcement,
- compiling periodic reports for the purpose of crime risk assessment,
- cooperation supporting nationwide actions aimed at combating organised crime.

The Joint Facility in Chotěbuz is one of over 50 centres currently operating within the EU for the purpose of the international exchange of information based on their electronic databases. Dynamic technological progress makes it possible to provide effective IT support not only to crisis management processes, but also to the work of the border guard and customs services (Wiśniewski, and Kaczmarczyk, 2012a, p. 106 et seq.).

The activities of the “Joint Facility in Chotěbuz” are important for both economic security and the safety and security of people. This centre brings together in one place all the security authorities of the partner countries<sup>8</sup>. Located in places of strategic importance for observing cross-border crime, Cooperation Centres play a key intelligence role for operational services. Applying the developed procedures, these centres are able to react quickly in all areas of border services’ activities.

One of the most important tasks of the joint facility is obtaining information from the services cooperating within the Cooperation Centres concerning the laws and the practice of applying them in the neighbouring countries. Another important task is relaying to the Tax Administration Chambers and to the Ministry of Finance information obtained from cooperating services about violations of the law outside the country that is important for performing customs and tax controls. Yet another task of the Cooperation Centre is analysing and relaying to the Tax Administration Chambers and the Ministry of Finance information from databases that is important for performing customs and tax controls. The remaining tasks involve coordinating cross-border cooperation between different services; initiating and implementing new forms and methods of cooperation; conducting training; and exchanging experiences.

Very high cross-border mobility of the residents is a result of, among other things, the lack of border controls at the internal borders of the European Union and the Schengen area (Wróblewski, 2017, p. 138). This means that it is necessary to strengthen the cooperation between the Border Guard, Customs Service and Tax Administration on both sides of the

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<sup>8</sup> The European Union recommended the document “European Best Practice Guidelines for Police and Customs Cooperation Centres”, in which it defined the principles for the functioning of Cooperation Centres within the EU.

border. In March 2013, another agreement was signed on the cooperation of a task force co-created by the Moravian-Silesian Customs Office, the Customs Chamber in Katowice and the Customs Chamber in Opole regarding the implementation of joint patrols. Under this agreement, joint patrols consisting of customs officers from both countries take place in the border areas within the jurisdiction of the Customs Chamber in Katowice and the Customs Office of the Moravian-Silesian Region. Since 1st March 2017, joint patrols have been conducted by the Tax Administration Chamber in Katowice through the Silesian Customs and Tax Office in Katowice. The patrol activities are coordinated by the Joint Facility in Chotěbuz. These patrols have already produced results in the form of detecting customs infringements on both sides of the border.

The “Joint Facility in Chotěbuz” is an active information exchange point. A considerable proportion of the information exchanged as part of the Facility’s operations concerns fuel trading, which, due to large differences in taxation levels between various EU member states, is an area of goods exchange that is particularly prone to illegal activity. Another area concerns tobacco products. The operational efficiency of the Joint Facility in Chotěbuz has contributed to uncovering, among other things, untaxed dried tobacco worth over 20 million PLN, as well as tobacco products of a similar value. The third group of goods are alcohol products, whose illicit trade not only negatively affect the State Treasury through excise duty not being paid, but also poses a threat to people’s health and lives due to the unknown origin of the alcohol. Cases of poisoning caused by adulterated alcohol are widely publicised in the Polish and Czech media.

Another task involves coordinating various operations, including the cross-border pursuit of criminals, searching for missing persons, and the movement of organised groups of people in connection with cultural events or international sports events, etc. It is worth noting that the cooperation of uniformed services concerning the organisation of mass sporting events and the need for ensuring the safety of the players and spectators, is one of the main challenges. In this regard, anticipation of potential threats (e.g. terrorist activity) and cooperation of the appropriate services from each of the countries are the basis for ensuring the safety of sporting event participants (Szromnik, 2016, pp. 4-5).

An important area is also the coordination of rescue operations related to disasters and accidents in border areas, as well as providing support for the operations of emergency services in dealing with the consequences of natural disasters. Since its foundation, the facility has made it possible to exchange a vast amount of information, contributing to the recovery of cars, construction machinery and other items that were stolen in one country and then transported to the other. The facility has also coordinated a number of cross-border pursuits that resulted in apprehending criminals, including those involved in drug offences.

The facility's officers also conduct analyses and monitor phenomena related to crime with the help of a wide range of operational and statistical information available to them. They receive twice a day updates from the services operating in the areas covered by risk management cooperation. A weekly detailed analysis of the data makes it possible to monitor the scale and dynamics of cross-border crime on an ongoing basis.

The Joint Facility does not handle cases on its own initiative or in response to direct requests. Its purpose is to facilitate communication between the Police, Border Guard, Customs Service and Tax Administration units from the Polish-Czech border area. The principles underlying the coordination and cooperation of the individual services serve the purpose of ensuring the safety and security of the residents, which is a priority task (Wiśniewski, and Kaczmarczyk, 2012b, p. 100).

Serving in the "Joint Facility in Chotěbuz" team requires not only professional competence, but also interpersonal skills related to working in an international group, which combines the cultures and customs of two neighbouring countries – Poland and the Czech Republic. The results of the team's work show that the members do have these features and that the team is very well managed; and such cooperation between Poland and the Czech Republic in the area of crisis management significantly increases safety and security on both sides of the border.

## 7. Conclusions

Summing up, the optimisation of crisis management is an important element of cross-border cooperation. Its main purpose is to properly prepare the border services to cooperate in the event of natural disasters such as floods, hurricanes, fires and epidemics. The crisis management process includes prevention, for example of the spread of the ASF virus; preparation for the implementation of procedures; as well as crisis response and reconstruction, i.e. restoring the state prior to the disaster. The effectiveness of these activities is determined by the appropriate cooperation of the uniformed services of the individual countries such as the border guard, the fire brigade, the police, as well as public health services. The efficiency of these services' operations in crisis conditions depends on previously developed and jointly practiced procedures.

It must be noted, however, that the cooperation of services should not only take place in emergency situations. Other areas of cooperation include the following:

- cooperation of rescue services in mountain regions,
- cooperation of institutions responsible for environmental protection,
- emergency electricity and water supply,
- cross-border surveillance and pursuit of criminals, e.g. terrorists,
- cooperation between national police forces in the fight against drug crime,

- exchange of information between customs services on tax crime,
- joint police patrols, e.g. bicycle patrols on tourist routes in border areas,
- establishment of a joint facility for the Police, Border Guard, Customs Service and Tax Administration.

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