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# Competence Profile and Competence Training for the Police Service



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The Security Academy of the Federal Ministry of the Interior is currently developing a competence training for basic police training on the basis of a previously compiled competence profile for uniformed police officers. The “Police.Power.Human.Rights.” project provided the impetus for this. As a comprehensive organisational development project involving civil society, it placed human rights at the centre of police action, thus providing clear orientation for the federal police and its task fulfilment. The starting point for the development of a competence profile for police officers was asking what requirement profile a police officer should correspond to in order to be able to cope with the daily routine as best as possible. The Heyse and Erpenbeck competence model formed the basis of this research. A quantitative questionnaire survey was carried out in order to develop the perspective of the employees of the Ministry of the Interior. Research on the social perspective was carried out by the queraum research institute on the basis of qualitative methods. The competence profile was developed after the amalgamation of this data. This is used as the starting point for the content-related evaluation of the basic police training. This competence profile also forms the basis of the planned competence training in basic police training, which follows a holistic training approach with the best possible cross-linking of the training contents and which should correspond to the goal of “certainty in actions and a citizen-oriented approach on the basis of human rights intervention” derived from the “Police.Power.Human.Rights.” project.

## 1. DEVELOPMENT OF COMPETENCE MANAGEMENT AT THE FEDERAL MINISTRY OF THE INTERIOR

The “Police.Power.Human.Rights.” (“P.P.H.R.”)<sup>1</sup> project provided the impetus for competence management at the Federal Ministry of the Interior. The P.P.H.R. project was a comprehensive organisational development project of the Federal Ministry of the Interior, which dealt with the nature of police work and ultimately with the reorientation of the federal police.

What was special about this project was the involvement of civil society as an equal dialogue partner in the further development of the federal police as an organisation. In addition to NGOs and human rights experts, the senior management of the federal police, domestic and international police researchers, judges, public relations representatives and employees from the regional police headquarters and their subordinate departments were also part of this project.<sup>2</sup>

At the beginning, 24 guiding principles (cf. Federal Ministry of the Interior 2009,

37–50) regarding the federal police were drawn up between the internal and external project managers, which deal with:

- ▶ the objectives,
- ▶ the principles for task fulfilment,
- ▶ the principles of cooperation,
- ▶ the organisation,
- ▶ the management,
- ▶ studying the organisation and
- ▶ personal development.

These guiding principles formed, as it were, the philosophy of the project P.P.H.R. and have since been reflected in the “Interior.Security.” strategy<sup>3</sup> as well as in all substrategies and guidelines derived from it.

It is essentially about defining the police as a human rights protection organisation, as well as putting certainty in actions and a citizen-oriented approach into the focus of police action. Even if this definition is somewhat irritating at first glance, police work, in its essence, is to protect the legally protected interests of human beings and thus their human rights – if necessary by a proportionate intervention in the rights of those who endanger these human rights. The police therefore has the status of a human rights protection organisation, and, with a total of some 27,000 police officers, is probably the largest human rights protection organisation in Austria.

After the development of the guiding principles, three sub-teams were set up in a second project phase for the areas of “personnel”, “organisation” and “deployment”. These were tasked with developing specific work packages on behalf of the project team and were always checked by the project management, as well as by employees from the police departments and regional police headquarters. In this case, the personnel subteam dealt with personnel development. In the third project phase, the three subteams were expanded into seven development teams. In the final

project phase, the P.P.H.R. project was transferred into the line structures of the Directorate-General for Public Security and the regional police headquarters, thus establishing a dialogue with civil society at the regional level at all regional police headquarters.

This development team which succeeded the “personnel” subteam also posed the logical and seemingly simple question regarding what kind of police officers are needed to meet the societal challenges and requirements in Austria. The background to this question was a work package which had previously been implemented and which dealt with addressing the “right” people as applicants for the police service. The next step was to clarify whether the “right ones” were also being selected for the police service from these applicants. But who are the “right ones”?

The purpose of basic police training is to provide the bodies of the public security service with social competence, professional skills and knowledge through the use of practical teaching whilst also taking into account scientific findings and knowledge (cf. Federal Ministry of the Interior 2012, 3). Basic police training therefore has to be geared to the needs of the federal police as an organisation, which in turn should orient itself towards the needs of the Austrian population.

Posing the question regarding an occupational profile for police officers at the commencement of the evaluation was therefore logical. The answer to this question, however, was not as simple as it initially appeared. An occupational profile had not yet been developed on a scientific basis. Prior to then, there had been no established regular evaluation circle between social expectations, organisational needs and the Security Academy as a training provider. On the other hand, the content of basic police training had grown

over the years, i.e. new priorities had been incorporated into basic police training depending on arrangement or specific events.

This is standard practice throughout Europe. Bernd Walter, retired president of a border patrol division, remarked in “Die Polizei”, a German journal for public security with contributions from the German Police University, that despite some isolated endeavours, the fact that scientifically safeguarded and generally accepted job profiles for senior police officers were still lacking remained unaltered (cf. Walter 2015, 213). Although the focus of this article is rather focused on the executive management of the police, the author will not be able to cite the state parliament of North Rhine-Westphalia insofar as there is still a lack of well-founded and sustainable job profiles for the police of the future.

However, the development team led by the current head of the Centre for Basic Training in Division I/9 of the Security Academy undertook this challenge and began looking for a suitable scientific model for the development of an occupational profile for uniformed police officers in the course of a police inspection in use group “E2b”<sup>4</sup>, i.e. at an employee level. This conceptual clarification was necessary in order to be able to determine the real target group. In addition, this use forms the common starting point for all police officers, no matter where their later career takes them.

During its research, the development team finally came across a scientific work by Thomas Gamsjäger, which he had written during the completion of his “university-type studies (LUC)”<sup>5</sup> (cf. Gamsjäger 2006). He examined a possible competence profile for police officers using staff surveys in accordance with the competence atlas of Erpenbeck and Heyse.

The term “competence” is extremely suitable for police service, because it de-

scribes the ability to act in self-organised, promising ways in complex and dynamic situations (cf. Heyse et al. 2010, 55). This definition fits the core of police work precisely. No official act is like another. Police intervention ranges from providing information through routine checks to hazardous situations, and in the worst case, with establishing compliance with the law by exercising command and force, as well as by using weapons in a lethal manner. The escalation levels in such cases may often not be foreseen. In these situations, it is insufficient to retreat to mere knowledge, even if it has been certified. In order to be successful as a police officer, there is also a need for a special personality profile, appropriate social and communication skills, and the right attitude and values. Thus, the police service is considered to be one of the most complex, as evidenced by the subsequent investigations by the Security Academy.

## **2. COMPETENCE PROFILE FOR UNIFORMED POLICE OFFICERS**

The competence profile should serve as a model for the basic training of uniformed police officers in Austria and map the competences which are needed to best cope with the profession. The “amateurish understanding of the term” can be blamed for the term “uniformed police officer” and should in no case be interpreted as a legal understanding of the term. The “amateurish understanding of the term” includes all activities and tasks of a police officer, which are carried out on a police inspection or on patrol duty. The scope of activities ranges from simply giving directions to the termination or prevention of violent offences.

The competence model of Volker Heyse and John Erpenbeck forms the theoretical foundation of the research work. The model is based on an empirically tested

grid of 64 partial competences, which can be allocated to the following four basic competences:

- ▶ Personal competences include partial competences regarding one's own person – "individual responsibility" can be mentioned as an example.
- ▶ Activity-related competences refer to one's own drive to implement actions. This includes the partial competence "resilience".
- ▶ Professional methodological competences include professional methodological knowledge about various facts, such as the partial competence "expertise".
- ▶ Social communication competences focus on dealing with other people. "Communicative ability is a partial competence of this" (cf. Heyse/Erpenbeck 2004, IX ff.).

According to Heyse and Erpenbeck (*ibid.*, XIX ff.), the individual partial competences cannot be allocated distinctly to the basic competences. Nevertheless, they assume that each partial competence lies primarily within one of the basic competences.

The competence diagnostic and development procedure (KODE®)<sup>5</sup>, which was used for the following survey of the competence profile resulted from the basis of the described model. This standardised procedure aims to develop organisation-specific competence requirements and is usually carried out in three stages: In the first phase, a team consisting of relevant representatives of the target group is formed. The assessment process determines the competences most important for the requirement field. A further step describes identification features which render the selected competences recognisable. The third step determines the target or actual profile of the competences, so that the gaps can be developed during the competence measurement (cf. Heyse/Erpenbeck 2007, 504 ff.).

Both the internal view of the ministry and the outlook of the population were used within the framework of phase 1 (the development of the competence profile for uniformed police officers). Various surveying methods were used in addition to the different perspectives.

### 2.1 Development and findings of the investigations

The survey of the internal view of the competence profile for uniformed police officers can be divided into three research phases for a better overview: Research phase I presents preliminary investigations, in which the questionnaire was designed and tested. The procedure consists of 64 items based on the competence atlas of Heyse and Erpenbeck (Heyse/Erpenbeck 2004). As the following example shows, each partial competence of the atlas was defined and had to be rated by the respondents on a 7-part scale regarding its relevance for the police:

Ability to work in a team: "Personal willingness and ability to work in groups. The ability to work in a team includes the ability to accept others' opinions and to further develop them cooperatively into workflows."

Please rate the extent to which the following competences are relevant to a police officer in order for them to be able to fulfil their general police activities, which are not assigned to the management level (0 – no relevance, 1 – very little relevance, 2 – little relevance, 3 – medium relevance, 4 – high relevance, 5 – very high relevance, 6 – highest relevance).

In addition, sociodemographic data, such as place of employment, were also queried.

The first evaluation presented the questionnaire to 18 experts, both inside and outside the police. They were then asked to discard superfluous competences from

the questionnaire. In the experts' view, no competences should be discarded from the questionnaire (Forstik 2014).

The same partial competences were queried in research phase II as in research phase I. 871 managers from the regional police headquarters were interviewed using the online questionnaire (Forstik 2014).

Reliability calculations were employed to check the test instrument. Therefore, each item that queried partial competences was allocated to one of the upper categories, the so-called "basic competences", using theory derived from the model of Heyse and Erpenbeck (Heyse/Erpenbeck 2004). The internal consistencies are satisfactory for both the "personal competence" scale (Cronbach Alpha = .86) and the "activity and action competence" scale (Cronbach Alpha = .89). The internal consistency regarding the "social communication competence" (Cronbach Alpha = .90) and "professional and methodological competence" scales (Cronbach Alpha = .92) can be evaluated as very good. On the basis of the available data, the results indicated a good measurement accuracy for the procedure and confirm the theoretical concept of the KODE<sup>®</sup> procedure regarding the basic categories and the partial competences subordinated to them.

As Table 1 shows, the basic competences are rated on average as being highly relevant to the police service. A ranking shows that social communication (MV = 4.44, SD = 0.74) and personal competence (MV = 4.43, SD = 0.70) are ranked highest, followed by activity and action competence (MV = 4.09, SD = 0.78). The professional and methodological competence comes last in the ranking with a mean value of 3.61 (SD = 0.74), this part can nevertheless be assessed as highly relevant.

A t-test was carried out on a sample to investigate whether professional and meth-

Source: Kremnitzer

Basic competences	MW	SD
Personal competence	4.43	0.70
Activity and action competence	4.09	0.78
Social communication competence	4.44	0.74
Professional and methodological competence	3.61	0.83

**Table 1: Mean values and standard deviations in research phase II**

odological competence differed significantly from the other basic competences. This made it clear that professional and methodological competence differs significantly from personal competence ( $t(583) = 154.09; p < .05$ ), thus also from the social communication competence ( $t(561) = 142.75; p < .05$ ). Significance differences were also found between activity and action competence and the professional and methodological competence ( $t(558) = 102.33; p < .05$ ). In order to explain the differences between professional and methodological competence, the authors hypothesised that knowledge fields are considered changeable by training and therefore do not have to be rated as high in the requirements for the police officer.

The survey was conducted again in research phase III within the scope of the 2013 employee survey. A total of 201 employees of the Federal Ministry of the Interior took part in this. The basic categories again achieve high average relevance ratings in an analysis by Michaela Forstik (Forstik 2014). In addition, the same ranking results were obtained as in research phase II: Personal competence (MV = 4.60; SD = 0.85) is ranked first, followed by the social communication competence (MV = 4.39; SD = 1.04). The activity and action competence (MV = 4.19; SD = 1.00) is ranked third, whereas the professional methodological competence (MV = 3.95; SD = 1.05) is ranked last.

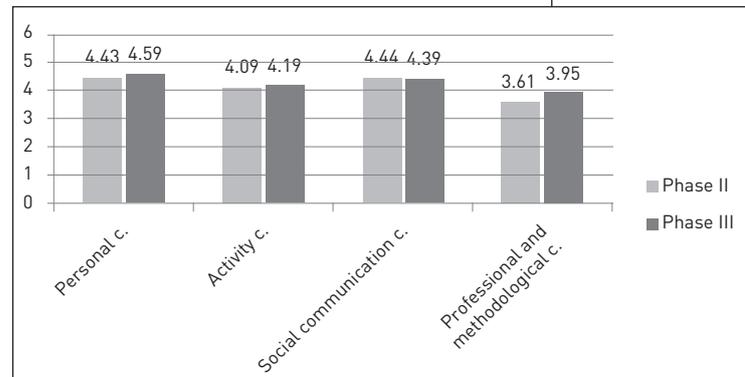
Figure 1 (see page 75) shows the graphical comparison of the mean values of the

basic categories between research phase II and III. This shows that, besides having the same ranking, the mean values are also obviously close to each other. On the basis of this, it is assumed that this is a consistent result.

After surveying the internal view, the external view of the company in relation to a competence profile was investigated with the help of the queraum cultural and social research institute. This took place as part of the KIRAS project POLIS<sup>7</sup>. Data was collected via abstraction of data material, by means of focus group surveys and interviews with the population. Since this involved the generation of qualitative data, a comparison regarding ranking with the quantitative data of the previous research phases was not possible. However, the survey of the external view's method by analysis of real, empirical situations of the police service proved extremely helpful. This was because a range of competences were opened in the course of data generation, detached from given questions and structures. Thus, competent action, in the sense of performance<sup>8</sup>, could be coded, structured and developed into a theory. The pieces data were examined, compared with each other, conceptualised and categorised during this structuring (cf. Mayr et al. 2015, 7 f.).

The competence profile of Heyse and Erpenbeck (Heyse/Erpenbeck 2004) was further developed by the interweaving of the results of the quantitative online questionnaire in the ministry with the qualitative data of the external view. The result of this further development is reflected in the fact that the four areas of competence have changed. Three core competences and two key competences emerged. This further development is due to, among other things, the 18.12.2006 recommendation of the European Parliament and the Council,

Source: Kremnitzer



**Figure 1: Graphical comparison of the mean values between research phases II and III on the basis of the data from Forstik 2014**

which forms the basis of key competences for lifelong learning in the European Qualifications Framework (cf. the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union 2008). Another reason is that the competence profile is used as the basis for the evaluation of the current curriculum for basic police training and the competences compiled in the final report of the queraum research institute had already been formulated into learning goals on the basis of the European Qualifications Framework (cf. Mayr et al. 2015).

The following competence profile is divided into three core competences and two key competences. These are interpreted in this respect as the core competences which refer to the sum of skills, abilities and knowledge required by police officers for performing their activities. The key competences are comprised of those competences which are essential to a situation-related and situation-sensitive understanding, reflection and implementation of the core competences.

The explanation of the core competences is based on the concept of Austrian education standards (cf. Bifie 2015). Moreover, they are still comparable to the content alignment of the basic competences of Heyse and Erpenbeck (Heyse/Erpenbeck

Source: Mayr et al. 2015, 9



**Figure 2: Infographic of the competence profile**

2004). The police competences include not only theoretical and methodological knowledge, but also the skills and abilities required to acquire and implement police knowledge in a self-organised manner. Individual values as well as attitudes towards society and the profession are essential elements of personal core competences. In terms of social communication competences, police officers must first and foremost be able to deal with others in an appreciative and respectful manner (cf. Mayr et al. 2015).

In the sense of the further development of the competence model through the survey of the external views, the action competence is transformed into key competences “action competences adequate to the situation” as well as “perception and reflex competences”. The key competences are understood as essential to the successful implementation of core competences in police work. They aim, on the one hand, to ensure that police officers act in situations in a manner adequate, sensitive and appropriate to the police, and on the other hand, possess the abilities and skills required to be able to constantly reflect on their actions. The following chapter will illustrate the impact of the above-mentioned aspects of the competence profile as part of the evaluation of the curriculum for basic police training.

### 3. COMPETENCE TRAINING IN BASIC POLICE TRAINING

In Austria, the training of police officers is conducted over a period of 24 months. It includes both theoretical training and police practice. This means that the trainee police officers are trained in both training centres and on police inspections (cf. Federal Ministry of the Interior 2012). The Security Academy is responsible for the matters of vocational and further training within the Federal Ministry of the Interior. The entire curriculum, in particular the current action training, is being evaluated on the basis of the competence profile at the Security Academy. The subject of “action training” is taught as part of the theoretical training at the Security Academy’s training centres. The trainee police officers should therefore be able to apply acquired theoretical knowledge in the simulation of practical situations, as well as acquired de-escalation strategies to police action (cf. *ibid.*, 37).

The current action training has a different orientation according to the specifications of the competence profile and the European Qualifications Framework and should be developed into modular competence training. This means that a concept team, consisting of full-time trainers from the training centre, was convened as a first step. The concept team contacted those responsible for police practice and developed the most significant topics for police practice as a portfolio of relevant official actions. The resulting “portfolio of official actions” mapped out main topics (modules), which should be practiced in various levels in the future modular competence training. The training modules consist of the following topics: general first aid, traffic stops, property offences, physical injury, noise disturbance and domestic violence.

A holistic, competence-oriented approach should be pursued throughout the different course variants (basic and advanced train-

ing). Holistic means that the partial competences acquired in the individual police disciplines such as law, deployment training, human rights, communication training and so on are used in simulated situations of police practice. There should be a competence orientation because a police officer is constantly challenged by different situations, needing to apply their skills and knowledge to new, complex challenges and to master these in a professional way.

The training process takes place as a carousel activity. The training class is divided into groups, where different functions are assigned. Some are classified as police officers carrying out official duties, others have to observe the situation and give feedback, man the radio station or record the sequence with a video camera. A feedback round takes place immediately after the simulated official duties. This involves those acting as police officers providing comments and receiving feedback from the trainer, who plays the role of coach, as well as from the observers.

Following the feedback round, the group receives a standardised reflection sheet. This consists of the following questions: “How did I do during the official action? Which aspects was I successful with while carrying out the official action? What suggestions for improvement did I receive through the feedback? Were human rights interfered with? If yes, which ones? Was there legal legitimacy for the intervention and did it take place with regard to proportionality and with the greatest care to the person?” To ensure that the self-image and perception by others of the police officers carrying out official duties can be reconciled and that the reflection sheet can be processed for the entire group, the group has the option to process the sequence using video analysis. In terms of the methodology of station operation, the roles in the group change. The feedback and reflection

units begin anew. After each participant in the basic police training course has played the role of the police officer at least once, the reflection sheets are discussed and evaluated for each trainee under the guidance of the trainer. The police officers are subsequently required to document their official actions according to the regulations and to manage their personal learning portfolio file.

In summary, the training concept consists of the following elements:

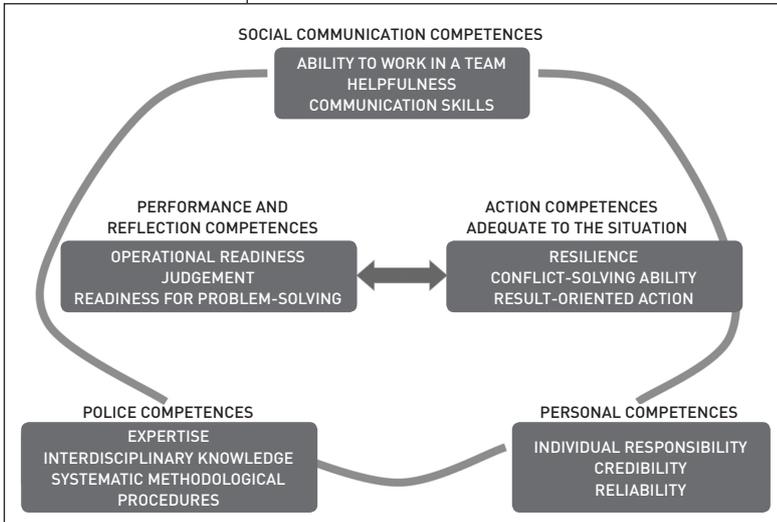
- ▶ Simulated police work (official action),
- ▶ Feedback round with the goal of reconciling self-image and perception by others,
- ▶ Reflection on the official action using standardised reflection sheets,
- ▶ Processing and analysing the results of the reflection on the basis of human rights case analysis schemas,
- ▶ Definition of the individual learning agreement,
- ▶ Transcription and documentation of the official action (learning portfolio).

In conclusion, it should be pointed out that in addition to the practice of core competences, the goal of the didactic concept of the presented modular competence training is, in particular, the acquisition of the key competences.

## CONCLUSION

Surveying the social claims on the police force (cf. Mayr et al. 2015) and developing the occupational profile of the police officers on the basis of a representative employee questionnaire within the Federal Ministry of the Interior (cf. Forstik 2014) resulted in the competence profile for the uniformed police officers. One of the objectives of generating this competence profile was the creation of a valid requirement profile for police officers, which was then used as a basis for the orientation of the

Source: Nagl



**Figure 3: Competence profile for uniformed police officers**

curriculum for basic police training. The competence profile listed below shows the resulting core competences and key competences. The most significant partial competences are found in the identified competence areas.

The formulation of learning objectives on the basis of the competence areas was achieved on the basis of the competence profile and on the basis of the European Qualifications Framework within the

course of cooperation with queraum, an external research institute. Once the competence profile was available and the learning objectives had been formulated, the adaptation of the curriculum for basic police training begun. The concept of modular competence training was based on the requirement profile and the learning objectives identified. The core competences “social communication competences”, “personal competences” and “police competences” are thereby networked and developed in a holistic approach to learning. Above all, the aims of the training sequences are to acquire and expand the two key competences: “perception and reflection competences” and “action competences adequate to the situation”. This means that officers are trained and analysed holistically from the perspective of the core competences during simulated practical police situations. The systematic reflection on the training situation as well as the meeting of learning agreements and recurrent training in different processes should be a decisive contribution to the fulfilment of the internal and, above all, social demands on the police officer.

<sup>1</sup> In Austria: *Projekt Polizei.Macht.Menschen. Rechte. (P.M.M.R.)*

<sup>2</sup> Note: The “Police Competence Training” project was awarded the Best Practice Certificate as part of the European Public Sector Award (EPSA

2015). At the national level, the “Police Competence Training” project won the 2016 Administrative Award in Category 1: Integrative design of a modern control instrument in times of effective management.

<sup>3</sup> In Austria: Strategie INNEN.SICHER.

<sup>4</sup> Special kind of police officer(s).

<sup>5</sup> The “university-type studies (LUC – Lehrgang universitären Characters)” was a training course developed by SIAK in cooperation with the University of Klagenfurt, with the pedagogical focus that was to be completed by full-time police officers as part of their continuing vocational training. The LUC was later replaced by the “Police Teaching (POL)” advanced course in cooperation with the University of Applied Sciences Wiener Neustadt.

<sup>6</sup> KODE®: Kompetenz-Diagnostik- und Entwicklungsverfahren.

<sup>7</sup> POLIS (Police and the Public: Teaching – Intensification – Security): study funded under the KIRAS security research programme.

<sup>8</sup> Performance is understood as the competent action, which is tangibly perceptible (cf. Niedermaier 2012, 7).

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