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COMPOSITE research project

COMPOSITE – short for “Comparative Police Studies in the EU” – is a research project that looks into large scale change processes in police forces all over Europe. New types of crime, open borders, new technologies, changing public expectations and tighter financial resources are directly or indirectly affecting police forces in most European countries. These new demands require modern police forces that are managed efficiently, are capable of acting flexibly and have the means to cooperate with forces in other countries. Many police forces respond by introducing ambitious change programmes, aiming at modernising and rationalising the way policing is conducted. As such the face of European policing is slowly changing.

Some of these change projects reach their goals, but some fail or face serious problems along the way. The required amounts of time and resources often turn out to be heavily underestimated causing many projects to be deemed failures, not only by police forces, but also by politicians, the media or the general public. In addition, large scale change processes may be perceived as threatening to the police’s organisational identity resulting in resistance by police officers and the public alike. This can lead to a critical decrease in commitment, loyalty, and effectiveness and consequently a decline in the public’s perception of legitimacy.

Based around 11 interconnecting work-packages, COMPOSITE attempts to find out what factors contribute to success or failure of these change processes. Our researchers are having a close look at organisational structures, organisational identities and cultures, leadership styles, and processes in the police across ten European countries. During the initial phase, work-packages aimed at investigating the content of current change programmes in European policing by analysing the police’s external challenges and identifying the internal resources and capabilities that serve to counter such threats. Other work-packages research knowledge sharing and technology trends, providing insights into the organisational structures that promote change initiatives. The second phase of the research project will mainly focus on change processes and on understanding the role of specific organisational features, national and organisational culture, identity, and leadership in the management of change.

COMPOSITE is funded over a period of four years out of the FP 7 framework programme of the European Union. Its consortium consists of 15 partners from ten European countries. It cooperates with police forces in Belgium, the Czech Republic, France, Germany, Italy, the Republic of Macedonia, the Netherlands, Romania, Spain, and the United Kingdom. Official project start was August 1, 2010. The project coordinator is Dr. Gabriele Jacobs of Erasmus University Rotterdam. The dissemination coordinator is Dr. Jochen Christe-Zeyse of University of Applied Sciences of the State Police of Brandenburg.