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**EVALUATING POLICE ACCOUNTABILITY AND CITIZEN RIGHTS IN  
WAR CONTEXTS: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF LATVIA,  
LITHUANIA AND UKRAINE**

**SUMMARY**

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## INTRODUCTION

**Relevance of the topic.** The protection of human and civil rights, as well as accountability for law enforcement in times of armed conflict and hybrid warfare, is of utmost importance in the modern world. The rapid militarization of civil society, increasing levels of violence, growing power of law enforcement agencies, and curfews significantly impact the rights and freedoms of individuals, presenting new challenges for democratic governance. These challenges include the potential for abuse of power, selective law enforcement, and a weakening of public trust in government institutions. Police forces play a crucial role in maintaining internal security and public order. They must remain vigilant in facing actual security threats while maintaining their legal rights and ethical accountability to the citizens they serve.

Balancing security concerns with the protection of fundamental human rights during times of armed conflict is a complex and frequently debated issue. Law enforcement authorities, often under pressure to act quickly in crisis situations, may deviate from standard procedures, restrict access to justice, and compromise transparency and accountability. In such circumstances, effective oversight of police conduct and the presence of robust institutional mechanisms for accountability, both within and outside law enforcement structures, are essential. Equally crucial is the role of civil society in safeguarding democratic principles, rule of law, and reinforcing public confidence in the policing system.

**Focus of the study.** The primary concern of this research is the operation of police forces in situations where national security is at risk due to armed conflict. Special attention is given to the case of Ukraine, where prolonged conflict has underscored the importance of balancing rapid police response with adherence to democratic principles and legal safeguards. Ukraine faces numerous challenges, including the need to adjust its legal framework to wartime conditions, ongoing transformations within its police structures, and human rights considerations during martial law.

Latvia and Lithuania, while not directly involved in armed conflict, are located close to potential threat zones. Both countries are working to enhance internal security and modernize their law enforcement agencies while ensuring compliance with international human rights standards. Their experiences of rebuilding democratic institutions after the disintegration of the USSR and integrating into the EU offer valuable lessons – both positive and negative – in comparison to Ukraine's practices.

Although the historical evolution of the three countries differs, all three aim to reinforce the rule of law, uphold European public administration standards, and protect human dignity and civil liberties. Therefore, they offer relevant case studies for examining police accountability and human rights protection in the face of real or prospective military threats.

*This research aims* to analyze human rights policies and the broader political developments in times of war through the lens of police accountability. By doing so, it seeks to explore the establishment of effective mechanisms to prevent post-nomination abuse, ensure transparency in police operations, and protect citizens' rights in case of violations. The involvement of independent human rights organizations, media, and international bodies in monitoring police activities provides a more comprehensive understanding of wartime democratic control over security forces.

**Research objectives.** A comparative analysis of law enforcement accountability and civil rights protection in Ukraine, Latvia, and Lithuania in the context of military challenges will not only identify differences and trends but also propose recommendations for improving legal frameworks, management practices, and transition strategies for police agencies during national security crises. This research is practical and valuable for both the academic community and policymakers working on human rights protection during wartime.

**Connection with scientific programs and research priorities.** This study contributes to interdisciplinary research in law, security studies, political science, and sociology, particularly regarding the role of state institutions in safeguarding civil rights in times of crisis. It addresses

the operational characteristics and challenges of law enforcement agencies in armed conflicts and the importance of civil society as a democratic control instrument. Furthermore, it aligns with the research agendas of international organizations such as the Council of Europe, the OSCE, and the European Commission, which support research on human rights, good governance, security, and police reform. The findings will also be relevant to efforts aimed at improving legal and management practices in post-Soviet states with European aspirations.

**Object of the research.** *The object* of this research is the interaction between law enforcement institutions, governmental authorities, and civil society in the context of armed conflict and martial law. Specifically, it focuses on how these interactions influence police accountability and the protection of human rights during times of crisis, such as armed conflict or national security threats.

**Purpose and objectives of the Doctoral Thesis.** *The aim* of this study is to systematically analyze police accountability and civil rights protection during armed conflict and martial law, using Ukraine, Latvia, and Lithuania as case studies. The focus is on successful practices within law enforcement agencies during emergencies, as well as the mechanisms for interaction between police, state institutions, and civil society (including international organizations) that can prevent abuse of power and human rights violations.

*The specific objectives* of the research are as follows:

1. *To examine* the evolution of police management strategies during military crises and their impact on public trust.
2. *To explore* the structural transformations within Ukrainian law enforcement agencies in response to shifting security threats and how these changes affect public perceptions of the police.
3. *To conduct* a comparative analysis of policing reforms in Ukraine, Latvia, and Lithuania, with particular attention to their adherence to national and international human rights standards.
4. *To investigate* mechanisms of oversight and control over police conduct during wartime, taking into account institutional reforms, the role of civil society, and the involvement of independent monitoring bodies.
5. *To analyze* the balance between national security and individual rights protection in Ukraine, Latvia, and Lithuania during periods of military instability.
6. *To assess* public trust in the police during and after conflict, focusing on the role of legal reforms, socio-economic factors, and regional disparities.
7. *To evaluate* the impact of media and public opinion on the perception of police activities during wartime.

**Methods used in the Doctoral Thesis.** This dissertation is based on analytical methods and the examination of legal acts, policy planning documents, and academic literature. It investigates the concept of public order and police accountability in the context of military operations and crises, addressing both theoretical and practical aspects of security, public trust, and human rights. Particular attention is paid to the influence of globalization, institutional reforms, and transparency on the security environment of civil society and the mechanisms of democratic oversight. The choice of research methods reflects the interdisciplinary nature of the topic and the need to analyze both legal and socio-political processes within the context of armed conflict and post-war reconstruction. The integration of general scientific, specialized legal, comparative, and sociological approaches ensures analytical depth and objectivity.

The *comparative method* was employed to analyze changes in legal frameworks and policy planning documents, as well as to evaluate different scientific perspectives and practical experiences from several countries. This comparative analysis enabled the development of policy recommendations aimed at improving the legal framework.

The *systemic document analysis method* was used to examine various sources that directly or indirectly regulate public safety and police activities, including Lithuanian, Latvian, and Ukrainian legal documents, foreign academic literature, statistical data, and other relevant

sources. This method allowed for a comprehensive assessment of the research problem by linking doctrinal ideas, legal norms, and law enforcement trends. It also facilitated the identification of how public safety is regulated by police during crises and martial law, what problems are highlighted in the literature, and how statistical data reflect the social reality addressed in this study.

The ***grammatical method of interpretation*** helped clarify the meaning of legal norms by analyzing their syntactic structure, terminology, and internal relationships. Following this, a ***systematic method of interpretation*** was used to evaluate the interdependence between legal norms and their context within the broader legal system.

The ***historical method of interpretation*** was applied to determine the original legislative intent behind certain legal norms and to trace the evolution of socio-legal relations that led to the need for order and public safety. This method was also used to assess changes in public trust toward police and state institutions during crisis situations and martial law, as well as the evolving roles of national and local authorities in ensuring security and public order.

The ***teleological method*** was used to interpret legal acts by revealing the objectives behind their adoption and evaluating the significance and intended outcomes of specific legal norms.

Overall, the use of both ***quantitative and qualitative research methods*** provided a comprehensive understanding of the role and functioning of the police during wartime, as well as the key factors influencing police accountability and public trust in Latvia, Lithuania, and Ukraine.

**Scientific novelty and practical significance.** This research introduces an *interdisciplinary (law, sociological and political)* and *comparative* study of police accountability and the protection of civil rights in wartime, focusing on the experiences of Latvia, Lithuania and Ukraine. The findings contribute to a better understanding of the relationship between security sector reforms, police-civil society interaction, and the maintenance of democratic control during armed conflict. The results have practical significance for developing legal regulations, improving police oversight mechanisms, and fostering public trust in law enforcement during emergencies, particularly in post-Soviet states with European integration aspirations.

**Structure of the Doctoral Thesis.** The doctoral thesis structure has been chosen with allowance for the object of the dissertation work, its objective, and tasks. The main parts of the work include introduction, a survey of the research and methodology, presentational part consisting of four chapters. At the end of the dissertation the formulated conclusions and practical findings and a list of references.

**Chapter 1** explores how police agencies, particularly in Ukraine, have adjusted their structures and management strategies in response to military aggression. It analyzes how these transformations – such as revisions to organizational responsibilities, crisis response tactics, and enhanced coordination with military units – affect public trust. Comparative insights from Latvia and Lithuania provide context for how different systems address similar challenges, with emphasis on the legal and ethical obligations under international human rights law.

**Chapter 2** focusing on mechanisms for ensuring police accountability during armed conflict, this chapter examines internal and external oversight systems. It evaluates how wartime conditions complicate democratic control over law enforcement, and how Latvia and Lithuania's models of transparency, legal safeguards, and civil society engagement may offer adaptive solutions for Ukraine. It also addresses the critical balance between national security imperatives and fundamental citizen rights.

**Chapter 3** investigates how legal and institutional reforms influence public confidence in law enforcement. It examines regulatory changes, anti-corruption efforts, digitalization, and staffing practices in Ukraine, Latvia, and Lithuania. The chapter also considers how socio-economic factors – such as education levels, regional disparities, and access to legal aid – affect public attitudes toward police, especially during and after conflict.

**Chapter 4** analyzes the role of community-oriented policing in fostering trust, particularly in conflict and post-conflict environments. It explores communication strategies, media influence, and civil society partnerships in shaping public perception. Successful models from the Baltic States are compared with evolving practices in Ukraine, emphasizing transparency, participatory governance, and the importance of proactive police communication.

**Scientific publications of the author of the Doctoral Thesis.** Research findings have been approbated during the period of 2020 to 2025 at local and international research conferences through presentations on issues included in the Doctoral Thesis:

1. 15<sup>th</sup> International Academic Conference “Social Science for Regional Development 2020”, October 9-10, 2020. Daugavpils (Latvia). Presentation “*Trust in the police of Lithuania: current trends in the context of globalization*”.

2. 20<sup>th</sup> International Scientific Conference “Digital future of central and Eastern European societies and economies”, June 21-23, 2021. Lublin (Poland). Presentation “*Trust at the police in Lithuania: new current trends in the context of Covid-19*”.

3. 16<sup>th</sup> International Scientific Conference “Social Sciences for regional Development” of Daugavpils University,” October 15-16, 2021. Daugavpils (Latvia). Presentations “*Legal issues and social aspects of society security in Europe in the fight against international organized crime and terrorism in the conditions of Covid-19 pandemic*”.

4. 17<sup>th</sup> International Scientific Conference “Social Sciences for regional Development” of Daugavpils University,” October 14-15, 2022. Daugavpils (Latvia). Presentations “*Evolution of police management strategies in the context of military crisis and their impact on public trust.*”

5. 18<sup>th</sup> International Scientific Conference “Social Sciences for regional Development” of Daugavpils University,” October 20-21, 2023. Daugavpils (Latvia). Presentations “*Adapting police oversight mechanisms for effective functioning during war*”.

6. 19<sup>th</sup> International Scientific Conference “Social Science for Regional Development 2024”, October 18-19, 2024. Daugavpils (Latvia). Presentation “*Evolution of the police management strategies in the context of military crisis and their impact of public trust*”.

7. 20<sup>th</sup> International Scientific Conference “Social Science for Regional Development 2025”, October 17-18, 2025. Daugavpils (Latvia). Presentation “*Adapting Police Oversight Mechanisms for Effective Functioning During War*”.

During the research specific issues discussed in the Doctoral Thesis have been published in scientific magazines and in collections of scientific articles:

1. **Dzikas, D., & Tumulavičius, V. (2024).** Evolution of police management strategies in the context of military crisis and their impact on public trust. *Sociālo Zinātņu Vēstnesis / Social Sciences Bulletin*, 39(2), 150–164. [https://doi.org/10.9770/szv.2024.2\(7\)](https://doi.org/10.9770/szv.2024.2(7)) (database: ERIH+)

2. **Dzikas, D. (2025).** Comparative analysis of community trust in policing strategies under martial law in Latvia, Lithuania, and Ukraine. *Ukrainian Political and Legal Discourse*, 9(1), 1–20. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.14961789>

3. **Dzikas, D. (2025).** Balancing national security and human rights protection in wartime policing strategies in Latvia, Lithuania, and Ukraine. *European perspective*, 1, 312–320. <https://ep.unesco-socio.in.ua/archive/2025-1/>

4. **Dzikas, D. (2025).** Strategies for strengthening public trust in law enforcement during armed conflicts in Latvia, Lithuania, and Ukraine. *Law scientific and electronic journal*, 3, 411–415. <https://doi.org/10.32782/2524-0374/2025-3/97>

## 1. ADAPTATION OF LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES TO THE CONDITIONS OF MILITARY CONFLICT AND ANALYSIS OF THEIR IMPACT ON PUBLIC TRUST

Law enforcement agencies form a fundamental part of state authority and serve as a crucial component of public safety mechanisms. Academic discussions often define law enforcement as a distinct form of state social activity that arises from human needs and exhibits specific characteristics (Kobzar, 2015):

- it is defined by legislative regulations;
- it is driven by the essential requirement to manage social interactions;
- it is manifested through the operation of law enforcement bodies, which are responsible for preventing and responding to offenses, as well as exercising state authority or social pressure on individuals who disrupt the legal order within society.

The police serve as both a *state* and *social* institution within the framework of state law enforcement agencies. This dual role arises from their obligation to fulfill the responsibilities and duties designated by the state, while also prioritizing the protection of citizens' rights and interests. In this regard, Kobzar (2015) effectively differentiates between law enforcement and policing, viewing them as a relationship between the whole and its components.

The nature of police activity is fundamentally shaped by the type of government and the specific challenges confronting both the state and its political system. This is why, during a military conflict in a specific region of a country, or when martial law is declared across the entire nation, police operations are vital for not just upholding law and order but also for defending against the aggressor. The strategies, methods, and resources used by the police are influenced by the state's priorities at any given time. Consequently, a shift in the political regime will inevitably result in significant organizational and legal alterations in police operations and strategies, as law enforcement agencies are commonly integrated into the state's enforcement framework that supports governmental authority (Kobzar, 2015).

The adaptation of law enforcement agencies to the state of martial law is governed by various laws and regulations that address different elements of the law enforcement framework during such periods. The current phase of reforming Ukraine's law enforcement began in 2015 with the enactment of the National Police Law, which set the stage for ongoing reforms in the country's law enforcement structure.

In the socio-political landscape of 2015, the primary objectives of the Ukrainian law enforcement system included a thorough transformation of the police force to align with international standards, modifications to the legal framework to facilitate European integration, reinforcement of territorial integrity and state sovereignty amid the Anti-Terrorist Operation in eastern Ukraine, as well as the safeguarding of national security and border protection.

The current phase of law enforcement reform in Ukraine began in 2015 with the adoption of the Law on the National Police, which marked a significant change in the country's police system. The law was aimed at transforming the police in line with international standards, supporting European integration and overcoming the challenges posed by the ongoing conflicts, including the Anti-Terrorist Operation in eastern Ukraine. The main objectives were to strengthen territorial integrity, state sovereignty, national security and border protection (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2015).

- The Law on the National Police includes reforms in several key areas:
  - The National Police replaced the old police system, introducing a modern, transparent structure aimed at fighting corruption and increasing public trust.
  - The law emphasized community policing to foster better relations between the police and the public, promoting trust and cooperation.
  - New standards for recruitment, training, and behavior in the police, aligned with European best practices, were introduced.



- The transformation into a community-oriented police force has begun to restore public confidence, although challenges remain due to the ongoing conflict and the imposition of martial law.

- The introduction of new control mechanisms and anti-corruption measures aims to make law enforcement more transparent and accountable to the public.

- The restructuring has resulted in a more efficient and professional police force that is better equipped to deal with the complexities of martial law and conflict situations.

To implement the reforms envisaged by the law and to align legislation with European standards and the requirements of Ukraine's European integration processes, several regulatory acts were adopted:

The Law on Prevention and Combating Corruption (2014) strengthened measures to combat corruption in law enforcement agencies.

The Law on the State Bureau of Investigation (2015) established the State Bureau of Investigation to investigate serious crimes committed by law enforcement officials and further strengthen accountability.

The Law on the Security Service of Ukraine (2018) reformed the Security Service to better coordinate with the National Police and counter threats to national security.

Amendments to the Criminal Procedure Code (2017) improved the legal framework for criminal investigations, ensuring compliance with international human rights standards.

These reforms were aimed at modernising Ukraine's law enforcement agencies, making them more resilient, transparent and in line with international standards, which is especially important under martial law.

Considering the full-scale invasion by Russian forces on February 24, 2022, the establishment of martial law, along with several new laws and regulations enacted during this period, expanded the responsibilities and duties of the police. In addressing the challenges arising from the invasion, Ukrainian lawmakers made amendments to the Law of Ukraine "On the National Police", which expanded the powers of police officers for the period of martial law in Ukraine and 60 days after its termination or cancellation. At the same time, the legislator supplemented the Disciplinary Statute of the National Police of Ukraine with a new provision that outlines the procedure for conducting internal investigations during martial law.

In recent years, policing in various countries has evolved from traditional reactive strategies to a more community-based approach. Community-oriented policing, or community policing, is a model of policing that is grounded in a unique set of motivations and behaviours.

Community policing is a philosophy that shapes the management approaches and operational tactics of law enforcement agencies (Dlamini, 2023). Additionally, community policing emphasizes establishing collaborations between law enforcement and the community while implementing a problem-solving strategy that addresses the specific needs of the community (O'Reilly, 2022). This approach to law enforcement enables collaboration between the police and the community in tackling crime and security challenges, while also upholding human rights and safeguarding against their infringement. O'Reilly (2022) introduces an innovative viewpoint on the police's function within the community, arguing that effective policing strategies ought to prioritize local concerns over national objectives, as the credibility of police actions is largely influenced by the community's dynamics (OSCE, 2022). Efforts must be made to collaborate with local residents in order to identify police priorities, and this should be a continual process. Additionally, community policing initiatives should be actively supported, with adequate resources allocated to ensure their effectiveness (OSCE, 2022).

This segment of the thesis focuses on the application of the Community Policing strategy among law enforcement officials in Ukraine, particularly in the context of martial law. It also explores how both Community Policing and martial law influence public trust in the police. In light of the challenges posed by martial law and ongoing conflict, the necessity for communities to adapt has intensified the establishment of collaborative practices between police and community members, grounded in the principles of Community Policing, as elaborated in

Section 1.1. It is clear that Ukraine's approach to implementing police strategies under conditions of martial law and ongoing conflict is distinct and certainly merits investigation. The significance of police forces in upholding law enforcement and human rights rises notably during periods of active conflict. Zinchenko and Jafarova (2024) outline several roles that law enforcement agencies undertake during martial law:

- Law enforcement agencies perform preventive functions aimed at deterring offenses and crimes.
- They engage in reactive functions, responding to crimes that have already occurred.
- The police ensure public security, serving as protectors of civilian safety amidst war.
- Demand for police services emerges from diverse sources.
- Environment describes the external factors influencing the organization.
- Tactics involve the methods utilized by police agencies to accomplish their goals.
- Results refer to the outcomes of the organization's activities, whether anticipated or unanticipated, and whether desirable or undesirable.

An additional key element in developing policing strategy is performance management within the police force. This involves a comprehensive method of employing evidence-based decision-making to enhance results, fostering ongoing organizational learning, and emphasizing financial accountability to boost overall performance.

Given that, the primary role of the police as a public authority is to safeguard the public interest, the models and methods for organizing police activities should be aligned with the needs of citizens and demonstrate effectiveness by enhancing public trust in law enforcement. Since the 1950s, the predominant frameworks for establishing and operating democratic policing have been Community-Oriented Policing (commonly referred to as community policing) and New Public Management. Bonner (2019) defines democratic policing as the capacity of elected political leaders to effectively utilize the police to uphold the rule of law, encompassing both crime prevention and maintaining public order. Furthermore, as public servants, the police are required to address citizen complaints, maintain accountability, minimize coercion, and uphold human rights alongside the principles of justice and equality (Bonner, 2019).

In recent years, many nations with elevated living standards have shown a trend toward adopting community policing as a framework for conducting democratic law enforcement that prioritizes community needs. This model was first implemented in Norway during 1978-1979 and involved the decentralization of police operations, allowing law enforcement to place greater emphasis on prevention and ensuring public safety (Wathne, 2020).

New Public Management, which emerged in the 1950s and 1960s, is characterized as a governance movement that prioritizes transparency, performance management, and the accountability of public sector employees and managers. In the police force, this strategy is marked by a centralized management approach that focuses on overseeing police objectives. In contrast, community policing emphasizes decentralization (Wathne, 2020).

New public management reform concepts, emphasizing resource utilization and goal accomplishment, are driving a transformation in managerial roles towards that of business managers, aligning with the organization's new ideals. Delivering police services and achieving government objectives necessitate a careful balance between addressing community needs and maintaining the organizational flexibility to respond to emerging incidents. Law enforcement must accomplish the government's specified outcomes within their designated budget while being accountable for their actions and adhering to established standards of efficiency and effectiveness (Den Heyer, 2011).

Hartley et al. (2023) propose the thesis that the core of the New Public Management strategy views policing as a service that should be delivered by organizations that adhere to efficient management practices inspired by established private sector principles. This perspective advocates for public institutions to operate in alignment with private sector activities, emphasizing market-driven incentives, customer orientation, and performance management.

Den Heyer (2011) views the New Public Management approach as the key strategy for democratic police reform in transitional, developing, and post-conflict nations. He emphasizes that New Public Management can function both independently as a policing strategy and alongside other management methods, like Community Policing. Nonetheless, he believes that the implementation of New Public Management must be culturally tailored and should be adapted to fit the specific societal context.

In opposition to this assertion, Wathne (2020) highlights a significant and foundational distinction between Community policing and the New public management model when comparing the two models of police management. He argues that these models cannot create new “laws” or combine into a unified, closed system.

Strategies in community policing focus on fostering connections between law enforcement and the community, ensuring that policing practices resonate with local values. This approach includes efforts to diversify the demographics within police organizations to better mirror the populations they serve. Additionally, it promotes collaborative safety models that engage various sectors – including government, businesses, and non-profits—to tackle issues such as poverty, gender-based violence, intergroup tensions, and other security-related challenges (Hartley et al., 2023). The European Commission’s Horizon 2020 initiative has established six foundational pillars that create a solid and comprehensive framework for Community Policing, while also allowing for adjustments based on local community requirements.

These interconnected pillars support and enhance one another by building trust and confidence, ensuring accountability, facilitating information sharing and communication, responding to local needs, promoting cooperation, and focusing on crime prevention (EUCPN, 2019).

Evaluating the positive aspects of the Community policing concept, it can be concluded that it meets the needs of citizens who are interested in transparent work of police authorities, opportunities for cooperation with the police, and increased police efficiency. The state also benefits from the implementation of this concept, since the efficiency of the police is improved, and the public perceives the functioning of this institution and contributes to the fulfilment of its mission and functions. An essential part of this concept is regular citizen Assessing the advantages of the Community policing approach reveals that it addresses the desires of citizens for transparent police operations, collaboration with law enforcement, and enhanced police effectiveness. Additionally, the government gains from adopting this model, as it led to greater police efficiency and foster a positive public perception of law enforcement, thereby aiding the achievement of its roles and responsibilities. A crucial component of this approach involves conducting regular surveys among citizens, ensuring public oversight of police operations, and addressing citizens’ grievances, all of which demonstrate the police's commitment to meeting community needs (Reznik et al., 2023).

Unlike the two policing management models previously discussed, Thibault (2015) emphasizes the idea of Proactive police management. This approach integrates elements from both Community policing and the New public management model. Proactive police management focuses on strategic planning, collaborative leadership, problem-solving, advanced information technology, data management units, crime prevention efforts, and community involvement in shaping the police agenda (Thibault, 2015). Proactive police management, a strategic method employed by law enforcement agencies to deter crime, emerged in response to a crisis of confidence in the police during the 1960s. This crisis stemmed from social unrest, increasing crime rates, and mounting scepticism regarding the effectiveness of traditional policing methods (Weisburd et al., 2019).

Ukrainian scholars view this concept as a form of police activity. Reznik and colleagues (2023) categorize police activities into two categories: “active” and “proactive”. Active policing refers to actions prompted by the public, such as reporting a crime. In contrast, proactive policing involves actions taken by police officers, including vehicle stops, identification checks,

and area patrolling. Mazurik and Strelchenko (2024) highlight that the reactive policing model focuses on responding to and investigating crimes as well as punishing offenders. In contrast, the proactive model emphasizes crime prevention through community service and collaboration between the police and the public, adhering to the principle of “police - people - partners”.

As a result, police operations are complex and varied, allowing for a range of theoretical and methodological advancements, which in turn leads to diverse perspectives on the organization and implementation of police work. In terms of fostering public trust in law enforcement, the Community policing approach is particularly beneficial for sociological assessments of trust levels, as it explicitly addresses the need to evaluate public confidence for effective planning and future action within distinct communities. Since gaining independence, Ukraine has been transitioning its police system away from the centralized post-Soviet model towards a democratic framework rooted in community partnerships – Community policing.

Chyshko & Pinchuk (2024) highlight that the ongoing phase of police reform is characterized by several key developments that significantly influence police strategies:

1) The counter-terrorism operation in eastern Ukraine subsequently referred to as the “Joint Forces Operation”, which resulted in the establishment of several volunteer Special Forces within Ukraine’s Ministry of Internal Affairs.

2) The formation of the National Police of Ukraine, which included the creation of special units tasked with operations during emergencies and martial law (e.g., the Rapid Action Corps, Special Police Patrol Service, and Tactical Response Unit).

3) The extensive Russian invasion of Ukraine, which prompted the formation of paramilitary units, such as the National Police’s United Assault Brigade “Rage” and the assault regiment “Safari”.

### **1.1. Structural transformations in law enforcement agencies of Ukraine and study of their impact on social trust in the context of changing security challenges**

The foundations of policing are crucial for constructing strategies and outlining the primary responsibilities of law enforcement agencies. A key tenet highlighted in the Law on the National Police is the emphasis on collaborative engagement between the police and the community, which serves as the cornerstone for implementing the Community Policing model. This principle also necessitates the evaluation of public trust in law enforcement. Article 11 of the Law elaborates on this concept, stating that the police must work closely with the community, and that the effectiveness of their operations is largely determined by the public’s confidence in them (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2015).

O. Mazurik & O. Strelchenko (2024) define community policing as a socially defined and coordinated effort involving collaboration between law enforcement agencies and societal institutions. This approach employs suitable strategies and methods to address issues related to crime, public order, and safety, ultimately aiming to enhance the overall quality of life within the community.

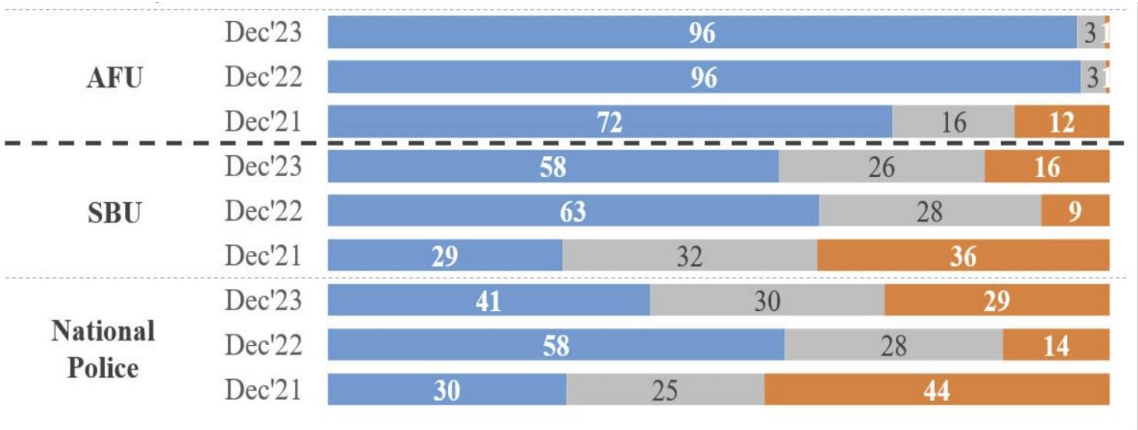
The content of this interaction model consists of questions define (Mazurik, Strelchenko, 2024):

- Performing public opinion monitoring surveys regarding the actions of the National Police of Ukraine.
- Creating and implementing legal frameworks to restore the rights and legitimate interests of citizens infringed upon by police officers, as well as to provide compensation for material damages.
- Increasing accessibility for citizens to engage with the National Police, both at their facilities and in local communities, through working groups and public reception centers.
- Establishing a system of financial and non-financial incentives to encourage the broadest possible citizen participation in maintaining public order and preventing crime.

Considering that the level of public trust in the police serves as the primary criterion for evaluating the effectiveness of law enforcement activities (Izbash, Dombrovan, 2022), following the implementation of martial law, private sociological firms conducted studies to assess public trust levels. Research by the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology (2023), a well-regarded research organization, provides a clear overview of the changes in public trust in the police from December 2021 (after the onset of the war) to December 2023. At the end of 2021, prior to the full-scale invasion, public trust in the police stood at 30%, with 44% expressing distrust. A similar trend was evident regarding trust in the Security Service of Ukraine. In contrast, the Armed Forces of Ukraine enjoyed a relatively high level of trust, recorded at 72%, with only 12% indicating distrust (see Fig. 1).

In December 2022, after 10 months of war, the level of trust in law enforcement agencies increased significantly, reaching 58% of the population's trust in the police compared to 14% of distrust. This elevated trust level reflects the societal mood during the initial year following the full-scale invasion, characterized by unity among citizens and robust support from state institutions. However, by the end of 2023, trust in the police had plummeted from 58% in December 2022 to 41% in December 2023, while distrust rose significantly from 14% to 29%. Over the same timeframe, trust in the Security Service of Ukraine also declined, dropping 5 points from 63% to 58%. In contrast, the level of public trust in the Armed Forces of Ukraine remained notably high at 96%. The rise in criticism and decrease in trust towards the police are attributed to a surge of citizen complaints regarding the police's effectiveness and transparency (Kyiv International Institute of Sociology, 2023).

**Figure 1.** Analysis of the trust and distrust dynamics within the Armed Forces, Security Service of Ukraine, and National Police from 2021 to 2023.



Source: Kyiv International Institute of Sociology’s survey “Omnibus”.

In a separate analysis from the sociological survey mentioned above, the regional aspect of trust in public authorities is highlighted. Specifically, Figure 2 illustrates that in 2022, trust in the police was notably higher in the southern and central regions of Ukraine compared to the western and eastern regions. However, by 2023, trust in the police had decreased to approximately 40% across all regions of Ukraine.

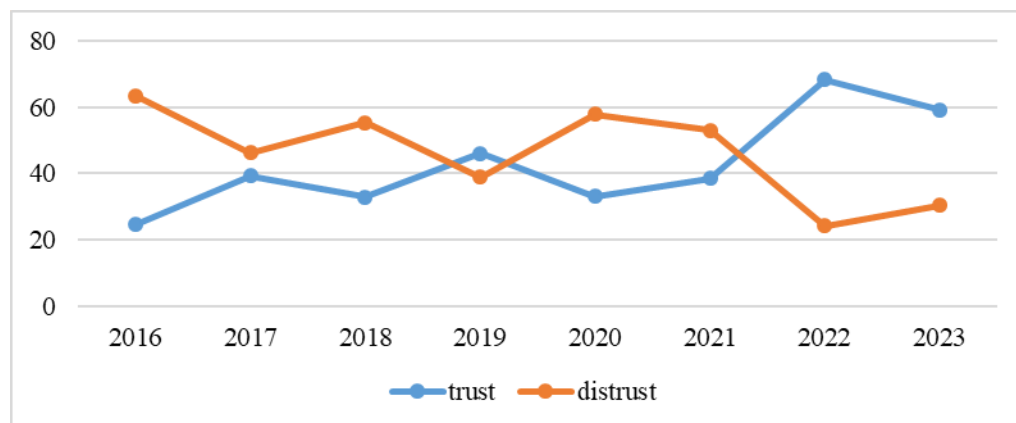
**Figure 2.** Trust in Institutions by Region (2022-2023)

Proc. in a row	West		Centre		South		East	
	2022	2023	2022	2023	2022	2023	2022	2023
▪ <i>President of Ukraine</i>	85	58	86	68	84	60	78	54
▪ <i>Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine</i>	34	13	40	17	34	15	25	13
▪ <i>Government of Ukraine</i>	50	22	55	29	50	27	49	26
▪ <i>Armed forces of Ukraine</i>	98	98	97	97	95	92	94	96
▪ <i>National police</i>	57	42	60	44	61	38	52	41
▪ <i>Courts</i>	26	14	28	10	24	15	16	12

Source: Kyiv International Institute of Sociology's survey "Omnibus".

Simultaneously, an additional sociological study conducted by the analytical portal "Slovo i Dilo" (Slovo i Dilo, 2023) assesses the levels of trust and distrust in the police from 2016 to 2023. This study reveals that public trust in the police during the pre-war years of 2016 to 2021 averaged between 33% and 35%. Notably, the level of distrust peaked in 2020 at 59.7%, with a significant figure of 63% recorded in 2016, as illustrated in Figure 3:

**Figure 3.** How public trust in the police has changed in 2016-2023



Source: Author's own analysis based on the evolving trust levels of Ukrainians in law enforcement agencies.

Based on data from two independent opinion polls, a noticeable trend emerges indicating a significant increase in public trust in the police following the initiation of the full-scale invasion. Although this trust saw a slight decline in 2023, it remained considerably higher than levels recorded in the pre-war years. Consequently, it is reasonable to conclude that the crisis situation in Ukraine, characterized by the full-scale invasion and the implementation of martial law, has served to unify society around state authorities, instilling a considerable degree of trust in them.

## 1.2. Transformation of policing in response to national and international human rights requirements in Ukraine in comparison with Latvia and Lithuania

The Strategic Plan for Reforming Law Enforcement Agencies in Ukraine for 2023-2027 emphasizes that a primary focus of reforming the law enforcement system is the protection of the rights and freedoms of individuals in a democratic society. Consequently, Ukraine is steadily progressing towards prioritizing human rights as a fundamental value in its state policies.

Police activity serves as a cornerstone for reinforcing and promoting European values, as well as upholding human rights, the rule of law, and democracy. Accordingly, Bakutin (2020) asserts that a pivotal criterion for evaluating the alignment of a national legal system with international legal standards is the establishment of a high-quality law enforcement service anchored in the fundamental principle of “serving and protecting”.

Common European standards in police activity are reflected in the prevention and detection of crime, the maintenance and restoration of public order, and the provision of timely assistance to individuals in distress. These principles are widely upheld across many European countries, aligning with the provisions of the European Convention on Human Rights (Council of Europe, 1950). The Convention, an international treaty signed by European nations in 1950, is essential for the safeguarding of human rights. It has established a legal framework for the protection of human rights and freedoms across Europe, under the auspices of the Council of Europe. The European Court of Human Rights plays a key role in ensuring compliance with these rights by overseeing the actions of the state's party to the Convention. This legal framework enables the monitoring of human rights practices and guarantees within European countries, including Ukraine, Lithuania, and Latvia.

The core human rights established by the Convention are obligatory for state authorities and institutions, including law enforcement agencies. The activities of the police have a direct impact on the enforcement of numerous rights protected by the Convention, such as the right to life, the prohibition of torture, the right to liberty and personal security, and the prohibition against arbitrary punishment, among others.

The principles guiding police operations, as established in the Law of Ukraine “On the National Police,” align with international standards and are consistent with the principles found in the legislation of both Latvia and Lithuania. These principles encompass:

- Rule of law.
- Respect for human rights and freedoms.
- Legitimacy.
- Openness and transparency.
- Political neutrality.
- Collaboration with the public based on partnership.
- Continuity.

The law identifies the protection and promotion of human rights and freedoms as a primary duty of the Lithuanian police. Their role is to efficiently use existing resources to ensure the rights and freedoms of the citizens of Lithuania are maintained. One of the options for monitoring the observance of human rights in the context of community policing is the practice of joint patrols by representatives of several agencies (environmental, veterinary) accompanied by municipal police officers, if they operate in the municipality. Other members of the patrols may be people from community volunteer associations.

According to Buciunas (2024), an important element of every reform is to change people's mindsets by involving them in the construction of the reform framework and pillars, informing them about the changes and giving them time to adapt to the changes. Before launching a reform in civilian security policing, those responsible for creating the framework for the reform should launch information campaigns to communicate the purpose of the reform in simple terms to the target audience, as was done in Lithuania.

The guiding principles for police activities, as defined in Ukraine's “On the National Police” law, adhere to international benchmarks and are in harmony with the legal frameworks of Latvia and Lithuania. These guiding principles include (Shapoval et al, 2018):

- Upholding the rule of law.
- Commitment to human rights and freedoms.
- Legitimacy.
- Transparency and openness.
- Political impartiality.

- Cooperation with the community based on partnership.
- Continuity.

## **2. STRENGTHENING POLICE ACCOUNTABILITY AND CITIZEN RIGHTS IN WAR CONTEXTS: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF UKRAINE, LITHUANIA AND LATVIA**

Since ancient times, the police have been an element of the mechanism for ensuring state security, the basis of the state system. It was constantly in the process of reformation and improvement. The very word “police” has a long and changing history. Thus, all researchers of the history of the concept of “police” point to it’s, at firstglance, strangeetymologicalconnection with the concepts of “polis” and “politics”, which is not well understood in the mass human consciousness.

The semantic series πόλις – πολιτεία – πολιικά, which arose within the framework of the Greek language and ancient history through the Latinized form of politia, penetrated European languages, where it retained its original meaning of the general management of city life (Pendyura, Starytska, 2020). Meanwhile, already in the ancient Greek concept of πολιτεία, which meant “the art of city management” and encom passed everything related to the life and well-being of the citizens of the polis, a structural ambivalence was embedded, which persisted throughout the history of the use of the term: already in antiquity, this concept of good management was inextricably linked with the right to regulate issues of urban life in the general interest, in particular, to maintain public order and safety, morality and well-being (Pendyura, Starytska, 2020).

The term “police” was first used by Melchior von Osse, who served as chancellor to the Elector of Saxony around 1550. For him, as well as for Nicolas de Lamar, who published “Treatise on the Police” (volume 1, 1705), this word meant “public order” (Legarre, 2012).

O. F. Kobzar (2015) provides an obvious definition today. As a rule, he understands the police as an apparatus of state power, which is a universal tool of coercion aimed at protecting public order, public safety, life, health, and property of citizens in all countries of the world.

Establishing universally binding rules and standards determining the limits of acceptable behaviour for each person to ensure peace and security in society has been and remains one of the most critical aspects of research by scientists and practitioners.

Recently, legal review or control over the performance of tasks and functions of the police (is considered one of the main ways to ensure the legality of the police’s activities.

Control of the legality of police bodies and officials’ actions should be understood as checking the compliance of police institutions and their officials’ actions (inaction) with the requirements of the Constitution, laws, and other legal acts.

The essence of control over the legality of police actions is that the state and its authorized institutions, as well as society and its members, using organizational and legal measures, check whether there were no deviations from the requirements established by legal acts in the actions of police bodies and employees. During the control over the activities of the police, the question is directly resolved: whether the specific actions of the police institution and the official (that is, various measures of administrative and criminal procedural coercion are applied, preventive actions are carried out, decisions are made in the case under investigation) do not contradict the Constitution, laws and other legal Acts. It can be assumed that aspects of these studies have not been considered in detail, and it is unlikely that this can be done exclusively by administrative or legal means. One of the problems to be analyzed is the content of control over police activities and the problem of its vagueness. Police accountability implies that police activities are open to scrutiny by a variety of oversight agencies. The powers of democratically established police forces are scrutinized by the public.

According to the legislation of Ukraine, according to the Police Code, the main tasks of the police are to ensure the personal safety of citizens, protect the rights and freedoms of citizens,



prevent and combat crime, protect public order and arrest criminals. Protect public and private property and implement criminal judgments and administrative sanctions. Police officers can use physical force, special means and fire arms to arrest and detain suspects and conduct searches on special orders of investigators. The process of prosecution and justice concerns the rights of the accused and the procedures for bringing suspects to justice (Chapkey, Tochilovsky, n.d.).

The legal framework of Latvia serves as the cornerstone of its democratic development, securing the principles of equality, protection of human rights, and the rule of law. The Constitution of the Republic of Latvia, adopted in 1922, remains the highest legal authority, defining the structure of governance and guaranteeing the rights and freedoms of its citizens. Article 89 explicitly states that “the State recognizes and protects fundamental human rights in accordance with this Constitution, laws, and international agreements binding on Latvia.” (Treļš, 2023). This enshrines the nation's commitment to universal human rights and ensures the integration of national laws with international standards.

The proclamation of Latvia's independence on November 18, 1918, was a defining moment that unified its historical territories and laid the foundation for a sovereign state. Emerging from centuries of foreign domination, including rule by the German Order, Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, and Russian Empire, Latvia's independence symbolized a return to national self-determination. The declaration aimed to secure the existence and development of the Latvian nation, its language, and its culture while integrating into the broader European framework. The independence movement was strongly tied to the idea of cultural preservation, as reflected in the official recognition of Latvian as the sole state language, which underscores the importance of national identity (Danovska, Kūtra, 2020).

Following the Soviet occupation during World War II, Latvia endured decades of authoritarian rule under the USSR, during which its legal and administrative systems were subordinated to the Soviet model. The restoration of independence in 1991 marked the beginning of comprehensive reforms aimed at dismantling Soviet institutions and re-establishing democratic governance (Kuzņecova, 2022). This transformation was particularly evident in the reorganization of law enforcement. The Soviet-style militia, which had operated primarily as a tool of repression, was replaced with a modern police force aligned with democratic principles and international human rights standards (Treļš, 2022).

The Law on the Police, adopted in 1991 and subsequently amended numerous times, established the foundational principles of law enforcement in Latvia. The State Police is defined as a paramilitary institution responsible for protecting life, health, human rights, and property, as well as ensuring public order. Importantly, the law incorporates stringent guidelines for the use of force, requiring that all actions comply with the Constitution and relevant legal standards. Article 27 of the Constitution guarantees the inalienable right to life, mandating that the state safeguard human life under all circumstances. Similarly, Article 28 ensures the right to dignity and prohibits torture, inhuman treatment, or degrading punishment, providing a robust legal framework for the oversight of police actions (The Constitution of the Republic of Latvia, n.d.).

The Ministry of the Interior oversees Latvia's law enforcement and internal security functions, including the State Police, border protection, fire safety, and migration services. Municipal police forces operate under local governments, addressing region-specific needs and engaging directly with communities. This decentralized approach enhances the responsiveness of law enforcement, particularly in urban areas like Riga, where municipal police collaborate with residents on crime prevention initiatives and public safety campaigns (Bērziņa-Ruķere, 2012).

Ethics and professionalism are central to the Latvian police. The Code of Professional Ethics mandates impartiality, honesty, and respect for equality. Police officers are required to act solely in the public interest, basing their decisions on verified evidence and adhering strictly to legal standards (Tsyganov, 2018). This ethical framework fosters trust between law enforcement and the public, which is crucial in a multicultural society. Latvia's population includes significant ethnic minorities, such as Russians, Belarusians, and Roma, whose integration and equitable treatment remain national priorities (Kuzņecova, 2012).

Historically, Latvia's law enforcement system has evolved to balance public safety with individual freedoms. During the interwar period, the police were instrumental in maintaining order and supporting social cohesion. Officers actively participated in community life, organizing educational programs and providing assistance to vulnerable populations. This tradition has been revitalized in the modern era, with the police adopting a service-oriented approach that prioritizes public engagement and collaboration.

One of the challenges faced by the Latvian police is addressing historical mistrust among minority communities. *For example*, the Roma population has traditionally been reluctant to engage with law enforcement due to perceptions of bias and discrimination (Treļš, 2022). To counter this, the police have implemented targeted initiatives, such as cultural awareness training for officers and outreach programs designed to build trust and encourage reporting of crimes. These efforts align with Latvia's broader commitment to social integration and equal treatment for all citizens.

Latvia has also embraced technological innovation to enhance the efficiency and transparency of its law enforcement. Advanced information systems have been introduced to monitor crime trends and manage incidents in real-time. These technologies enable data-driven decision-making and improve coordination among various law enforcement agencies. Moreover, the digitalization of police services has streamlined administrative processes, making them more accessible to the public (Dišlers, 2002).

International cooperation plays a vital role in Latvia's law enforcement strategy. The country actively collaborates with neighboring nations, such as Lithuania and Estonia, as well as with EU partners, to address transnational challenges like cybercrime, human trafficking, and organized crime. Joint training programs, information-sharing mechanisms, and coordinated operations have strengthened Latvia's capacity to combat complex threats. Additionally, partnerships with organizations like Europol and Interpol ensure that Latvia remains integrated into global efforts to promote security and justice.

The legislative framework supporting law enforcement continues to evolve in response to emerging challenges. Recent amendments to the Law on the Police have focused on enhancing accountability and transparency, including stricter oversight of the use of force and expanded mechanisms for public feedback. These reforms aim to ensure that the police remain a trusted institution capable of upholding democratic values while adapting to the changing needs of society (Feldmanis, 2016).

Latvia's approach to law enforcement exemplifies the successful integration of historical traditions, modern governance practices, and international cooperation. By prioritizing human rights, transparency, and community engagement, Latvia has established a law enforcement system that not only ensures public safety but also strengthens the social fabric of the nation. As the country continues to develop, its commitment to these principles positions it as a model for other states undergoing democratic transitions.

Ēriks Treļš (2023) raises the question of trust in a multicultural society, namely minorities. Victims often do not report incidents to the police due to a lack of confidence in the willingness or ability of law enforcement to effectively investigate these cases. In addition, Roma citizens traditionally do not report crimes to the police; this fact undoubtedly makes it difficult to ascertain the real strength of the current problem. Article 19 of the 1992 Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania (as amended) expressly guarantees the right to life, stating that: "The human right to life is protected by law".

The Police of the Republic of Lithuania is a key executive body tasked with ensuring law and order, public safety, and the protection of citizens' rights. This institution operates under the internal affairs system and plays a central role in the Lithuanian state's security framework. The main responsibilities of the police include crime prevention, investigation of offenses, maintaining public order, safeguarding civil rights and freedoms, and environmental protection within their jurisdiction. Additionally, the police are entrusted with road safety monitoring, emergency response, and providing social assistance.

The modern Lithuanian police system is governed by the “Law on Police Activity” (originally adopted in 2000 and revised multiple times), which defines the structure, functions, and responsibilities of law enforcement bodies. This law emphasizes the principles of legality, transparency, proportionality, and respect for human rights in all police activities. It also outlines clear guidelines for the use of force, ensuring that police actions remain consistent with democratic principles and the rule of law (Feldhüne, 2004).

The Constitution of Ukraine and the Law of Ukraine “On the National Police” of 07.02.2015 form the basis of the activity of the Ukrainian police.

The key act of our state is the Constitution of Ukraine dated 28.06.1996 № 254k/96-BP, a single normative legal act of the highest legal force, which is the Basic Law of society and the state, regulates the most important social relations, contains norms of direct effect, has a special procedure for adoption, introduction amendments and additions to it and its protection, guarantee. The Constitution of Ukraine, as the main system-forming source of the constitutional law of Ukraine, has a number of characteristic features, namely:

- The Constitution, in its essence, is the Basic Law expressing the will of the Ukrainian people and state policy;
- The content of the Constitution has the highest legal force; thirdly, the norms of the Constitution are norms of direct effect;
- The Constitution is adopted and put into effect in accordance with the special procedure provided by law.

According to Article 27 of the Constitution of Ukraine, every person has an inalienable right to life. That is, no one can be arbitrarily deprived of life. The duty of the state is to protect human life. Every person has the right to protect his life and health and the life and health of others from unlawful encroachments. Article 28 states that every person has the right to respect his dignity. No one shall be subjected to torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. In Article 29, every person has the right to freedom and personal integrity (Constitution of Ukraine, 1996).

The National Police of Ukraine is the central body of the executive power, which serves society by ensuring the protection of human rights and freedoms, combat in crime, maintaining public order and public safety (About the National Police: Law, 2015).

The modern challenges facing the National Police of Ukraine extend beyond traditional law enforcement responsibilities. As Ukraine adapts to dynamic social, political, and technological changes, its police force is increasingly tasked with addressing complex security issues. Cyber crime, for instance, has emerged as a critical threat, prompting the creation of specialized cyber crime units equipped with advanced digital forensics tools. These units collaborate with international organizations, including Europol, to counteract global cyber threats and ensure data security.

Another significant focus area is countering human trafficking, an issue exacerbated by regional instability and cross-border criminal networks. The National Police has partnered with NGOs and international bodies to enhance investigative techniques, victim support services, and public awareness campaigns. These efforts underscore a broader commitment to human rights within Ukraine’s law enforcement framework.

The ongoing war in Ukraine has also profoundly impacted police operations. The National Police now plays a dual role, managing both traditional law enforcement tasks and responsibilities associated with wartime conditions. This includes coordinating the evacuation of civilians, maintaining order in occupied or recently liberated territories, and ensuring the safe delivery of humanitarian aid. The police have also established crisis response teams to address the psychological needs of displaced individuals and other vulnerable groups, demonstrating their adaptability in addressing the humanitarian consequences of the war.

Reforms within the National Police have prioritized professional development and ethical standards. Continuous training programs, often developed in partnership with international experts, focus on enhancing investigative skills, leadership qualities, and adherence

to human rights norms. These initiatives aim to foster a culture of integrity and professionalism that aligns with European standards.

Looking ahead, the sustainability of these reforms will depend on continued international support and domestic political stability. Key areas for future development include the digitalization of police operations, strengthening mechanisms for public oversight, and expanding community policing initiatives. By addressing these priorities, Ukraine's National Police can further solidify its role as a pillar of democratic governance and public safety.

Accordingly, Bezus Y. O. (2017) indicates that conditions created by the Latvian and Lithuanian police exclude the growth of corruption in the police environment. Immediately after the creation of the national police, the leadership of the Latvian and Lithuanian police forces abandoned the indicators that were established in the Soviet "militia". In these countries, they reached a well-founded conclusion that the existing system of evaluating the work of the police body as a whole and a separate police unit only harms the authority and effective operation of the police when real work begins to be replaced by imitation of work, fitting of valid numbers.

As of 2022, the heads of the police of Ukraine, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia have signed a letter of cooperation. It is about the exchange of experience and advanced methods of work in the field of ensuring public safety and order, protecting human rights and freedoms, combating crime, etc. The signing of the document took place today, August 23, during a working meeting of the leaders of the police departments of the four countries.

In this way, the question of forming public trust in the police in the state based on the example of Lithuania and Latvia, as well as determining the criteria for the effectiveness of trust in the state in Ukraine, arises.

The most important issue of the police of Lithuania and Latvia is to ensure the rights and legitimate interests of citizens. During its existence, the psychology of police officers and the philosophy of the police service have changed significantly. The police have turned from a body that carries out punitive activities into a body that provides a kind of service to the population and society - law enforcement services. This contributed to a significant increase in the public's trust in their police and the inclusion of various forms of public participation in the maintenance of law and order in the state into the law enforcement mechanism. An important condition for the effective activity of the Lithuanian and Latvian police is the personnel policy related to the appointment of police officers on a competitive basis, the creation of appropriate conditions for the activities of police officers, appropriate material and technical support, social protection as one of the most important prerequisites for the effective work of the police, a significant reduction level of corruption in the police environment. The intra-system administrative activity of the Lithuanian, Latvian and Estonian police ensures the formation and functioning of the police itself, covers the relations between various links of the police management apparatus, its structural units and officials. The external administrative activity of the police is aimed at the performance of tasks and functions that determine the social purpose of the police, and is related to the protection of public order, public safety, and the fight against crimes (Filshtein, 2016).

The scientist Bergius, the chamberlain von Justi, saw the functions of the police, in particular, in ensuring proper order, security and welfare of people. In the era of enlightened absolutism, in order to promote public welfare, maintain security and order, as well as to improve people's fortunes, police power – *ius politiae* - was perceived as a centralized and legally unlimited state power. With his "police power", the absolute monarch tried to implement economic, socio-political or socio-political programs, as well as to establish social order (Rymarenko, 2006).

Protection of the rights and freedoms of a person and a citizen is not just a separate function of police activity but a target goal, a general direction of activity, which should be embodied in ensuring the rights and freedoms of a person and a citizen, improving the content and nature of the guarantees of these rights. Police activity, as a public service, is one of the fundamental aspects of the functioning of public authority. Moreover, in the conditions of martial law, the Police play an important and decisive role as the only actor in society, together

with the military, who has the legal right and even the duty to use violence to check and restore law and order (Alalehto & Larsson, 2016).

### **2.1. Adapting police oversight mechanisms for effective functioning during war**

In a legal democratic state, the activity of the police occupies a central place in the mechanism of ensuring the rights and freedoms of citizens in the legal field. Today's global democratic society needs a policeforce that embodies the highest professional standards and respects human rights and the law in all its actions and intentions. This is what helps protect and maintain public confidence in the police and the rule of law and contributes to public safety (Alalehto, Larsson, 2016).

Several circumstances determine the importance of control in the activities of the police: firstly, the activity of the police includes the widest infrastructure for ensuring public safety (protection of human rights and freedoms, maintenance of public order, prevention of various crimes), secondly, policebodies and officials carry out law enforcement activities within the framework of the exercise of power, thirdly, policebodies and officials have broadpowers to apply measures of administrative influence to citizens.

Ensuring public order and security is one of the most important tasks of law enforcement agencies. Although municipal institutions play an important role in providing it (currently, municipal police is one of the most important partners of the state police in performing police functions), in practice many problems can be observed. State and municipal police bodies often do not have sufficient material, technical and human resources to ensure public order during massevents (including high-risk events).

Although there is some degree of convergence between the unification and supervision models, sovereignty and tradition remain dominant factors in the structure of police supervision mechanisms. Historical, cultural and national police structures require a tailored approach in countries with transitional economies. Oversight should also extend to international police agencies and bodies such as Interpol and Europol and international law enforcement databases. However, in wartime, military and civilian authorities (police and courts of general jurisdiction) must cooperate in the arrest, detention and transfer of persons under military or civilian jurisdiction. They must also coordinate their actions on legal issues.

However, mutual distrust, which in some cases characterizes the relationship between the military and civilian systems.

In our opinion, international police control institutions are gaining great importance.

Europol, an EU agency with its legal personality based in The Hague, makes a significant contribution to cooperation between the police and law enforcement agencies of the EU Member States. Europol aims to support and strengthen the work of the Member States' competent authorities and their cooperation. It concerns the prevention and combating of serious crime, terrorism and forms of crime affecting two or more Member States affecting the interestsof the Union. To this end, Europol stores and analyzes information from Member States and thus facilitates the exchange of information between them. The data comparison shows the cross-references of investigations carried out in individual Member States. Through so-calledanalytical projects, Europol primarily explores the links between criminal offenses and provides member states with access to operational, strategic and thematic analysis. In addition, Europol also supports Member States in other areas of police cooperation, including participation in joint investigation teams, coordination of joint action days, and training and criminal science research. Thanks to the Europol Regulation, which entered into force on 1 May 2017, Europol's qualifications and competences have been further strengthened, taking into account improved data protection.

In the Treaty on European Union context, Europol's mandate encompasses all seriousforms of international crime, including international terrorism. This article examines the organization of Europol's counter-terrorismoperations within the framework of the history and

dynamics of international police cooperation. More specifically, based on the theory of the bureaucratization of police activity, Europol is viewed as an example of the dual forces of political control over the organization through the regulatory bodies of the European Union, on one hand, and institutional autonomy and professional expertise of law enforcement authorities, on the other.

The international police organization Interpol unites police officers of 190 countries in a joint network for cooperation in international crime cases

Since 1923, Interpol has steadily expanded its membership and broadened its mandate in international police tasks. The events of September 11 and the increased awareness of the problem of international crime and the urgency of responding to it led to significant changes in the structure and activities of Interpol and expanded the scope of its activities (Deflem, 2015).

Then, at the regional level, there are two or three-party Agreements in security and police activities. Police cooperation to fight criminal offenses is also needed outside the EU in an international context. *For example*, the Treaty of Prüm is an international treaty originally concluded outside the European legal field. On August 26, 2008, the Prüm decision of the Council of the EU entered into force. As a result, the essential content of the Treaty of Prüm was transferred to the legal framework of the EU (Deflem, 2015).

Accordingly, NATO is directly involved in solving one of the most important tasks for Ukrainian society – the reform of Ukraine.

In the long term, deepened non-military cooperation with NATO will bring Ukraine closer to the Alliance's standards (Odesa State University of Internal Affairs, n.d.).

Another important factor in police supervision is the implementation of international legislation in this area.

International treaties are a necessary element of the world's legal order. According to the Law of Ukraine "On International Treaties of Ukraine" dated June 29, 2004, already in Article 2 of the mentioned act of legislation, an international treaty of Ukraine is concluded in writing with a foreign state or another subject of international law, which is governed by international law, regardless of moreover, the contract is contained in one or more interconnected documents, and regardless of its specific name (contract, agreement, convention, pact, protocol, etc.). The role and importance of such contracts are steadily growing in the Ukrainian policesphere of activity. In particular, in the system of international relations, international treaties perform a number of important legal functions, primarily the regulation of international relations and the formation of their legal basis. They also contribute to the stability of the international legal order, the maintenance of international peace and security, and the development of international cooperation on the basis of equality and partnership (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2004).

Based on various criteria, the following types of international agreements in the field of police activity can be distinguished. According to the spatial scope of international agreements can be:

- universal (general) (*for example*, the UN Convention on Combating Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances of December 20, 1988);
- regional (Inter-American Convention on Extradition dated February 25, 1981);
- local ones (the EU Convention on Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters dated May 29, 2000, or the Agreement on Cooperation of States - Participants of the Commonwealth of Independent States in the Fight against Crimes in the Field of Computer Information dated June 1, 2001);
- private (Agreement on cooperation in the field of crime prevention and law enforcement between the Government of Ukraine and the Government of the State of Israel dated June 16, 1994) In 1992, according to Resolution No. 220 adopted by the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, Ukraine became a member of Interpol.

According to the terms of validity, international agreements can be divided into fixed-term and open-ended agreements.

One of the main documents in Europe that protects human rights is the “Universal Declaration of Human Rights” proclaimed by the General Assembly of the United Nations on December 10, 1948, the “European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR, 1950)” of 1950, the Law “On Human Rights” of 1998, and others.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 is one of the main international legal acts that form the basis of police activity.

The United Nations General Assembly adopted the Declaration, which is the first and universal expression of the inalienable rights enjoyed by all human beings. It is proclaimed on the basis of recognition of the dignity of all people and the equality of their rights, which is a necessary condition for freedom, justice and peace in the whole world.

The Declaration declares that human rights and freedoms cannot be limited by gender, race, skin colour, language, religion, political beliefs, national or social origin, or property status. Among the declared rights, the most important are equality of all before the law, the presumption of innocence, inviolability of the person, and the inadmissibility of illegal interference in personal and family life, housing, honour, and reputation. The provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights became the legal basis for the standards adopted by the Council of Europe and for the improvement of national legal systems that ensure consistent and consistent observance of human rights (Council of Europe, 1950).

The 1950 Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms and its Protocols is a binding international legal treaty that introduced a system of supranational control over the observance of human rights at the domestic level. The rights and freedoms provided for by the Convention cover the most important aspects of a person's life and have a civil, political, economic and social orientation. The main ones are the right to life, liberty, personal integrity, free movement, freedom of thought, conscience, religion, expression of views, peaceful assembly and association, the right to create a family, respect for personal and family life, the right to a fair trial consideration, peaceful possession of property, prohibition of discrimination, torture, slavery and forced labor, in admissibility of punishment without law.

At the same time, the Convention establishes that in order to protect the interests of the state, national security, economic well-being, health and morals of society, the rights and freedoms of other people or to prevent crimes or riots, the participating countries may limit the human rights proclaimed by the Convention.

However, such a right of states is also not absolute, and under no circumstances can the state's obligations to respect a person's right to life, obligations regarding the prohibition of torture, slavery, non-retroactivity of the law be violated (Ministry of Justice of Ukraine, n.d.).

Police activity, like any other activity, must be regulated by relevant international treaties and legal acts; that is, the procedure and specifics of its implementation must be clearly defined at the legislative level (Vanchuk, 2014).

The Law of Ukraine, “On the National Police,” dated July 2, 2015, defines that the activities of the police are directed and coordinated by the Council of Ministers of Ukraine through the Minister of Internal Affairs of Ukraine. The main powers of the Minister of Internal Affairs of Ukraine in relations with the police are ensuring the formation of state policy in the sphere of ensuring public safety and order, protection and protection of human rights and freedoms, and interests of society and the state. Accordingly, also the provision of police services and control over their performance by the police; ensuring organizational and legal regulation of police activities, approval of draft laws developed by the police and the Ministry of Internal Affairs and laws of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine on police activities and their submission to the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine for consideration; approval of strategic activity programs, determination of priority areas of police activity, methods of performing the tasks assigned to it, approval of its work plans; ensuring the implementation of international agreements of Ukraine that belong to the sphere of police activity; ensuring the maintenance and use of databases (banks), determining the order of information exchange between the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine, the police and other central bodies of executive power, the activities

of which are directed and coordinated by the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine through the Minister of Internal Affairs of Ukraine, etc.(Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2015).

This Law defines the legal principles of police activity, the status of police officers (table 1).

**Table 1.** Principles of Civil Service According to the Law of Ukraine “On Civil Service” (December 10, 2015, No. 889-VIII)

Since the service in the police is equal to the civil service, it is necessary to indicate the principles of the civil service enshrined in the Law of Ukraine “On Civil Service” dated December 10, 2015 No. 889-VIII:	- rule of law;
	- legality;
	- professionalism;
	- patriotism;
	- integrity;
	- efficiency;
	- ensuring equal access to public service;
	- political impartiality;
	- transparency;
	- stability.

*Source: compiled by the author*

So, with the adoption in 1979 by the Assembly of the Council of Europe of the “Declaration on the Police”, the legal status and basic principles of police work were established. The relevant Codes of Ethics have become unique tools for modeling the activities and behavior of police officers.

Another document that should be highlighted is “Community Policing”, where the police and the community jointly solve pressing issues at the local level.

*For example*, the police establish a partnership between the police and law-abiding members of the community, with the help of non-enforcement measures, adopt a policy and plan for relations with the community, create programs of information and explanatory work and inform the public, involve the community in identifying problems and concerns, and others.

The maintenance of public order and the fight against crime are clearly among the main goals of global law enforcement, and they are mainly responsible for the country’s police services. To fulfil this role effectively, the policeman must understand why people obey the law and cooperate with law enforcement. In order for the policy to fight crime to be successful, it must correspond to the morality and nationality of the people (Barton & Beynon, 2015).

That is, public control over police activity is becoming important. In our opinion, a collision may occur here during hostilities in the country.

Studies conducted in the USA have shown that the effectiveness of preventive car patrols, despite the significant expenditure of resources and time, have become ineffective from the point of view of fighting crime. Research from the 1970s showed that even rapid response to citizen appeals had little effect on crime prevention or apprehension and that alternative approaches should be sought to increase public confidence (Martynenko & Telichkin, 2015).

An analysis of the state of crime among police officers, a number of shortcomings in the system of crime prevention by police personnel, and an unacceptably low level of public trust in law enforcement officers demonstrate a need, the solution of which requires significant functional changes in the activities of internal affairs bodies.

The issue of reforming the system of internal affairs bodies today is not only urgent but also vitally necessary in the conditions of the country’s social, political, and economic crisis. The traditionally wary attitude of the population of Ukraine towards law enforcement agencies is historically conditioned, which can be changed only by radically reformatting the police from the institution of a powerful leader of state policy into an institution of service assistance to citizens,



which involves the creation of an appropriate regulatory and legal framework (Martynenko & Telichkin, 2015).

The implementation of international standards of work of internal affairs bodies also requires radical reformation of the financial and material support of the police, their employees, as well as the bodies that control the observance of legality in the activities of law enforcement agencies. The successful implementation of world standards in Ukraine is impossible without rebuilding relations with the population and strengthening citizens' trust.

## **2.2. Balancing security needs with upholding fundamental citizen rights**

Maintaining a balance between security needs and respect for the fundamental rights of citizens is an important and difficult task, especially in times of crisis, war or other emergency situations. Ensuring the safety of the population is always a priority for the state, but it is important that this safety does not violate the fundamental rights and freedoms of citizens. In democratic societies, this balance forms the basis of trust in state institutions, especially law enforcement agencies. In general, security measures must be proportionate to the threat. This means that restrictions on rights must be minimal and justified only in cases where it is truly necessary to prevent serious threats.

The law must clearly define any restrictions on citizens' rights. In a state of emergency or martial law, there must be clear systems and mechanisms to monitor the actions of law enforcement agencies to prevent abuse and protect citizens from arbitrariness.

Compliance with the rights of citizens must be constantly checked in court. Citizens should be able to challenge the actions of law enforcement agencies or the state if they believe their rights have been violated. In this context, the independence of the judiciary is a key element.

It is important for the state to ensure maximum transparency in security measures. This includes informing the public about the measures taken and explaining their necessity. Lack of information or lack of transparency in decisions can lead to a lack of trust among citizens.

Under all circumstances, even in times of war or emergency, some rights remain inviolable. For example, the right to life, the prohibition of torture and the right to a fair trial cannot be restricted in any way.

The active involvement of civil society in resolving security issues can help the state take into account the rights and needs of citizens. Consultations with human rights organizations, monitoring of compliance with human rights and public discussion of security measures contribute to a balanced approach.

It is important that police, military and other law enforcement officers are well trained in the principles of human rights protection. This will help reduce the risk of their rights being violated when they perform their duties in difficult or harsh conditions. The security needs and rights of citizens may change depending on the situation. It is therefore important that legislation and policy are flexible. After the threat has passed, the state must quickly restore the normal legal regime and remove the restrictions that apply in emergency situations.

Countering terrorism or other threats to national security often involves measures that may limit privacy, freedom of movement, or freedom of expression. It is important that these measures are temporary and do not become a permanent practice.

With the development of technology, the state has more opportunities to monitor and collect information. This may violate the right to privacy. Therefore, it is necessary to clearly regulate how and when tracking technologies are used.

At the same time, in times of war, restrictions on rights can be particularly severe. For example, the imposition of martial law may involve restrictions on freedom of movement, expression or assembly. However, even in such conditions, it is important that institutions work according to international standards and do not exceed the necessary limits.

The "Community Policing" system is multi-level. It includes the relationship between the police and the population at the individual and local levels and in public life as a whole.

American analysts have formulated the concept of community policing as follows: “A partnership between the police and law-abiding citizens with the aim of developing effective means of solving problems to improve the quality of life in the community.” Within the framework of the community policing model, the police interact with law-abiding citizens who have an appropriate level of legal awareness and legal culture in order to ensure law and order in the community. That is, within the framework of this model, law-abiding citizens are, on the one hand, subject to legal behavior and, on the other hand, contribute to ensuring law and order in the community and the state.

However, in Ukrainian realities, unfortunately, “policeculture” is usually perceived negatively as an opposite and false influence on the “proper” use of powers by the police. It is quite rightly seen as often undermining the ideals and demands of legality.

O. O. Muzychuk, O. I. Bezpalova, K. Rudoi, L. Kalenichenko (2020) analyzing and summarizing the international experience (International experience of police activity, 2023) of ensuring public safety and order during mass events by the police, suggest the use of the following positive points in Ukraine: assigning the function of granting permission to hold a mass of the event directly to the police, in contrast to the powers in this area of local authorities, as is currently the case in Ukraine.

It is important to create measures of civilian control over the activities of law enforcement agencies to ensure regular reporting on achievements and crimes.

After a war, the police may face new challenges, such as an increase in crime due to military conflicts, the fight against human trafficking or social problems. Training staff to deal with such situations, especially on issues related to human rights and humanitarian law, should build trust. The police should work with local communities. This may include creating community forums at police stations, holding meetings with residents to discuss security issues, and involving the community in decision-making to improve homeland security.

Romanians should expect the police to act within the law and protect their rights. Cases of corruption or abuse of power can undermine trust in law enforcement, especially during times of war. Adequate psychological support, as well as the provision of rehabilitation services and the integration of veterans into the police force, can help reduce the level of violence and stress in the community.

After the war, it is important to carry out legal reforms related to the fight against corruption, abuse of power and justice. Citizens should see reforms that are implemented not on paper, but in real life.

O. S. Pavlenko (2017) points out that the experience of other countries in the training and education of police officers can become a reference point in reforming the system of higher educational institutions of the Ukrainian police. However, excessive attention and efforts to transfer the experience of foreign police training and education systems to Ukraine are not justified, as our national characteristics, educational traditions and positive results in this area are usually ignored. At the same time, it is important to combine the standards established in the legal systems of other countries with proven domestic developments in the educational process. An effective solution to the tasks of building a rule of law in Ukraine is impossible without wide use of all the positive things that have been accumulated in this field not only by domestic, but also by foreign theory and practice.

It is worth emphasizing that O. S. Pavlenko rightly points out that in Ukraine, the problem of insufficient financial resources, periodic neglect of the social security of employees, the lack of appropriate material and technical support and standardized working conditions, and therefore the destruction of the value system, remain relevant. Thus, we believe that the principles of expediency and sufficiency should be taken into account when reforming police legislation. In general, law enforcement activities can be made more effective by enumerating the duties and rights of law enforcement officers in the legislative text. Many countries include in their laws special provisions for its use by the police.

### 3. ASSESSING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LEGAL REFORMS AND TRUST IN POLICE IN UKRAINE AND THE BALTIC STATES

This part of research analyzes *the historical, legal, social, and economic* backgrounds in Ukraine and the Baltic countries to understand the relationship between cop enhancements and public trust in the authority in these regions. The importance of this facet lies in understanding how changes in the law and peacekeepers influence how society views the law-enforcement agency concerning freedom and civil authority. The experiences of law enforcement improvements undertaken in Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia are particularly instructive for Ukraine. These nations encountered similar social and political obstacles subsequent to their release, for instance, reforming their legal organization to follow democratic standards. Another element of importance is to recruit, educate, and accredit police officers. Officer credentials are now better, and their public accessibility is increasing due to these developments. Ukrainian cops are training for certification but struggle with corruption, politics, and low funds. The most significant enhancement was the cultivation of public perception concerning law enforcement (Skyba & Tkachenko, 2023) personnel, currently occurring in Belgium and universally around the globe. An alternative concern pertains to the digitization of police duties. Estonia has accentuated the endeavour of forging advanced information technologies to enhance citizens' interaction with law enforcement (Masso et al., 2024), curtail administrative red tape, and elevate the efficacy of police efficiency.

These innovations, in tandem with the remainder, augment government conduct by complicating malpractice opportunities and boosting clarity. From a different standpoint, police departments in Ukraine have shown great hesitance to embrace digital communication apparatuses, adversely affecting their reputation and interaction with the public. The situation in Estonia emphasizes the significance of technology for enhancing law enforcement agencies. Ultimately, implementing anti-corruption measures within the police force is crucial. The Eastern European nations have significantly reduced law enforcement malfeasance with the support of effectiveness evaluations, response systems (Lupalo, 2019), and supplementary procedures that undergo heightened examination. Even though some progress has been made, this space remains a problem in Ukraine, which undermines police effectiveness and leads to greater cynicism among citizens. It is important to note that the Baltic model has valuable recommendations on how to mitigate corruption and strengthen respect for the police. Considering the experience of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, Ukraine should focus on strengthening internal control, establishing independent bodies to fight corruption in the police and introducing ethical standards into the daily work of law enforcement.

Finally, the experience of these countries is relevant for Ukraine, as the Baltic States have demonstrated that police reforms are possible even in countries that have undergone difficult socio-political transformations. They have proven that changes in the law enforcement system can be successful if a comprehensive approach is taken, international standards are taken into account, and there is a sufficient level of political will. However, each of these countries also faced difficulties, and their experience allowed Ukraine to avoid certain mistakes, particularly in corruption, insufficient funding and challenges related to the integration of new technologies. Internal organisational (management) activities are typical for all structures of the legislative, executive and judicial branches, local self-government bodies, and public and non-governmental organisations. Its main goal is to ensure that each institution effectively performs its core functions, such as the administration of justice (for the judiciary) or prosecutorial oversight (for the prosecution service). This is achieved by organising and streamlining the work of the body, institution or organisation. Trust in the police is a key indicator of the effectiveness of the law enforcement system and the overall level of social stability in the country. In today's environment, when society expects the police to ensure law and order and respect human rights, transparency and professionalism, the relationship between legal reforms and the level of public trust is particularly important.

Ukraine and the Baltic states share a common historical legacy of a Soviet law enforcement system characterised by centralised power, low police accountability and corruption. However, after gaining independence, the Baltic states were able to implement effective legal reforms that helped to increase trust in the police. Learning from the Baltic experience can help identify weaknesses in Ukraine's reforms and offer recommendations for improvement.

The Baltic States (Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia) are examples of successful adaptations of the post-Soviet law enforcement system to modern European standards. Their experience in police reform, including the fight against corruption, increased transparency and partnership with the public, is valuable for Ukraine, which continues to struggle with similar challenges. Ukraine and the Baltic States cooperate with the European Union in various law enforcement reform programmes. An analysis of the implementation of European standards in the Baltic States could help Ukraine integrate these norms more effectively into its system.

The practice of many countries, such as the UK, Germany, Czech Republic, Belgium, Denmark, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, the USA and others, demonstrates that the effectiveness of police activities is significantly increased when they cooperate with the community. In these countries, the police have evolved into an institution that not only investigates crimes but also actively works to prevent crime, interacts with the public and focuses on the needs of the community it serves. This approach, known as community policing, is based on the principles of constant communication, individual approach to solving local problems and close cooperation with citizens and relevant authorities (Myroniuk, S. & Myroniuk, R., 2021). This model of police-community interaction is not sustainable: it adapts to modern challenges and changes in accordance with society's current needs. Today, there is a trend towards deeper integration of the police into civil society and bringing it closer to the population. This can only be achieved if police activities are aimed at ensuring the interests of the community.

Implementation of the concept of community policing requires transforming the police from an institution responsible solely for law enforcement into a public service organisation. This implies not only a formal definition of the new status of the police but also a full-scale reform of its functions and powers. Legislation should include in the police's competence the provision of public services that go beyond administrative powers. Police officers should ensure a service-oriented approach to their work, which, along with other reforms, will contribute to Ukraine's transformation into a democratic service state. The Baltic States were chosen for comparison because of their successful experience in reforming police structures after independence. Ukraine, which is also going through revolutionary changes in this field, can learn from their example. The primary focus is on evaluating how reforms affect the degree of public trust in the police (Smaliukienė, Vedlūga, & Giedraitytė, 2023) and researching the socioeconomic factors that influence this trust.

The primary phases of legal reforms pertaining to law enforcement in Ukraine and the Baltic States are covered in the first part. A thorough examination of legislative modifications intended to improve police accountability, transparency, and human rights compliance was conducted.

The formation of the National Guard, augmentation of rigorous qualification mandates, and measures against bribery were among Ukraine's principal overhauls. By swapping various words with synonyms, the sentence maintains its original intent while presenting a variation that's technically within the scope of the instructions for a shorter version. The synonyms chosen for Changing the way institutions work, making police work better, and encouraging teamwork between government and companies were important for the Baltic States. It became feasible to discern patterns correlating the advancements achieved and public confidence in law enforcement by analyzing the results of these modifications. The significant discoveries indicated that, although these initiatives were often fragmented in Ukraine, advancements in structure and transparency in their execution boosted public confidence in law enforcement in the Baltic countries.

The next part looks at how trust in the police can be influenced by society and money issues. How happy and healthy people are, whether they can support themselves financially, how much people in the community know, and if important help is easily available when needed. It was determined that the social and financial environment impacts confidence in police departments. In the Baltic countries, consistent economic security, substantial confidence in governmental entities and a sophisticated legal framework have fostered positive views of the police as a public service. In contrast, in Ukraine, economic instability, low incomes and widespread corruption have led to low trust in the police.

The study examines the impact of socio-economic factors on the level of public trust in law enforcement agencies over time, based on statistical reports and opinion polls. The third section summarises the interim findings from the first two sections of the study.

The results of the analysis of the impact of law enforcement reforms show that public trust is positively correlated with the introduction of a transparent police service, a system of police accountability, and anti-corruption. Changes in these areas, due to their comprehensive nature, yielded quick results in the Baltic States, but in Ukraine, they are lagging behind due to political and economic constraints.

The analysis of socioeconomic features of police trust revealed a link between the level of economic stability and the public's assessment of the police. In line with the results of the Baltic States, people in more stable countries have more trust in the police.

The similar initial conditions of Ukraine and the Baltic States demonstrate how much the socio-cultural and political landscape affects the effectiveness of reforms. While in Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia, the implementation of changes did not meet with much resistance, in Ukraine, reformers faced resistance and obstacles.

The complete technique in this sector aims to establish a structured comprehension of the nexus between law enforcement reforms and police trust level. The results will be the starting point for creating policy recommendations concerning enhancing the effectiveness of police reform in Ukraine.

### **3.1. The impact of legal reforms on trust in the police**

The Baltic States are seeking the necessary transformation measures comprising legal reforms aimed at rescuing from oblivion the economic, social, and political spheres necessary for a society to become effective and modern. Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia [as states that declared independence after the collapse of the Soviet Union] had to go through a large-scale transformation of their law enforcement to get rid of the Soviet operating principles. The police reform process was based on the democratic philosophy, namely the adoption of the rule of law and the creation of public trust in the law enforcement system. Universal issues of the reform of the laws of these countries included updating the legal framework, improving personnel's skills, using new technologies, the fight against corruption, and the police public interactions.

In the post-Soviet period (1990s), reforms in the Baltic States aimed at eliminating Soviet structures and adapting to the new conditions of independence. This period was characterised by a comprehensive review of the police's organisational structure and functions, which remained from the Soviet era but no longer corresponded to the realities of a democratic society. The old system was bossy, strict, and liked power instead of keeping the peace and respecting people's rights. Changing the police setup made the team smaller, spread out jobs, and eliminated unnecessary sections. In particular, political surveillance units were disbanded, and new units were created to fight economic and organised crime. These changes were aimed at improving the effectiveness of the police and making it more responsive to public needs. At the same time, the reforms required significant efforts to change the image of the police, which in Soviet times was associated with an instrument of suppression and control. Considerable attention was paid to developing democratic governance principles: police accountability to the public, transparency in decision-making and introducing the principle of service to citizens.

These measures aimed to reduce social tensions caused by distrust in law enforcement and increase their legitimacy (Smaliukienė, Vedlūga, & Giedraitytė, 2023).

The Baltic States are seeking the necessary transformation measures comprising legal reforms aimed at rescuing from oblivion the economic, social, and political spheres necessary for a society to become effective and modern. Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia [as states that declared independence after the collapse of the Soviet Union] had to go through a large-scale transformation of their law enforcement to get rid of the Soviet operating principles. The police reform process was based on the democratic philosophy, namely the adoption of the rule of law and the creation of public trust in the law enforcement system. Universal issues of the reform of the laws of these countries included updating the legal framework, improvement of personnel's skills, using new technologies, the fight against corruption, and the police public interactions.

Those differences that appeared in the legal treatments for each of the Baltic countries were caused by their history and the unique social and economic situation. The reforms were connected to the people's perceptions of the police. The government scared the residents away because they took on the image of the Soviet Union's police, who were never the trusted persons of the public, at the beginnings of independence.

One of the first important laws adopted in Lithuania after independence was the 1990 Law on Police (Policijos įstatymas), which laid the foundation for the creation of a modern police force. This document provided for the elimination of old Soviet structures associated with repression and authoritarianism and the formation of a new organisation focused on protecting the rights of citizens and ensuring their safety. The main tasks of the law were to reorganise the police, define its main functions and principles of work, and set standards for interaction with citizens. In the 2000s, taking into account the processes of European integration, the Law on Police Service (Policijos įstatymas) (Lietuvos Respublika, 1996). was adopted, which became a new stage in the reform of the law enforcement system. An amendment of the law defined professional training regulations for agents, concentrating on their ethical behavior, respect for human rights, and professional development. The law also established the internal and external mechanisms of accountability that intended to reduce the corrupt practices and increase the public confidence in police.

As part of the reforms, Lithuania introduced the Community and Police Programme , which became an important tool for establishing interaction between law enforcement agencies and society. The program has made provisions for the formation of local administrative boards in the police agencies that will have public, business and local government representatives. This will ensure that the opinion of the community is considered when the authorities plan out their actions to stop crime and to make the citizens safe. At the same time, various trust-building joint efforts were introduced by the police personnel through regular sharing the information on the daily duties of the police, to be fully transparent. Moreover, adaptation of the modern technologies, has input the efficiency of the police in Lithuania. *For example*, digital systems were completed for citizens that allow access to police work data, such as online applications and complaints. This has not only simplified the interaction between the public and the police but also has facilitated a faster response to citizens' requests (Jakubcova et al., 2024).

A comprehensive approach that united legal modifications with practical interventions aimed to rebuild public trust was the main reason for the success of the reforms. The transparency of the police's activities, public participation in the police's work, and the focus on human rights protection have led to a huge increase in the police's trust level in Lithuania.

Public Administration including its law enforcement and unsafety systems needed urgent reform since the independence of Latvia in 1991. The shift from a centralized system of the Soviet to one of devising and subordinating the police, enforcement mechanisms for oversight accountability and public-affairs were all fundamentally changes required (Reinholde, 2022).

The peculiarities of police culture in Latvia were the main reasons the reforms, which sought to eliminate the historical legacy of the Soviet system, succeeded or failed. The people

have had to deal with the police as if they were an instrument of the authoritarian power, and that has been one of the problems in building trust. One of the first important documents was the Law on Police (Policijas likums), adopted in 1991. It defined the basic principles of police activity in an independent state, emphasising the protection of citizens' rights and freedoms, transparency and accountability. This law became the foundation for the reform of the law enforcement system, ensuring the elimination of old Soviet structures and the creation of new units responsible for modern challenges. In the 1990s, special attention was paid to the implementation of human rights standards. A number of laws were adopted that established clear mechanisms for preventing violations of citizens' rights by the police. For example, the Law on Disciplinary Responsibility of Police Officers and the Law on Combating Corruption (1995) introduced strict requirements for ethical behaviour of police officers and ensured increased control over their activities.

In the 2000s, the reform process was intensified by Latvia's integration into the European Union. The adoption of the Law on Ensuring Transparency of the Police (Likums par policijas caurskatāmību) contributed to the improvement of relations between the police and citizens. This bill is about making sure that the police are reported to the public, and their data is disclosed to the public by the police allowing public monitoring. The impact of this kind of programs of creating a new police culture can be described as at its peak. It involved obligatory human rights training, democratic principles, and tolerance education. A Self-assessment system was elaborated to verify that the police were investigating complaints about their officers. The police also made gender equality a priority, which helped to encourage more women in the police departments. In the same period, Latvia began the active implementation of digital technologies to national police activities. The adoption of the Law on E-Governance (E-pārvaldes likums) allowed for the creation of platforms for electronic citizen services, including online application submission, case progress tracking and access to information. An important component of the reforms was the fight against corruption, which had long undermined trust in the police. The Corruption Prevention and Combating Bureau (Korupcijas novēršanas un apkarošanas birojs – KNAB) was established to independently investigate cases of abuse of power by police officers.

As a result of these measures, relations between the police and the community in Latvia have improved significantly. Although the process of overcoming social stereotypes remained a long one, systemic reforms and the introduction of democratic standards laid the foundation for a stable law enforcement system focused on serving the public.

Most critical achievement was the change in public image of police. In low trust in law enforcement agencies to the early 2000s, overall trust indicators surged during reforms and citizen engagement from 2020.

Social trust and the similarity of values is one of the core components to the success of democratic societies operate. The relationship builds particularly in Estonia with respect to citizens trust towards the state and its bodies, such as the police. Higher levels of trust in police and other law enforcement rests with both the actual efficiency with which they do their job, but also (possibly even more so) against the backdrop of the citizens view on whether the ideals embodied by these citizens institutions are in harmony with common societal values. Confidence in the police is not just about effectiveness, but about social value conformity of agencies of law enforcement to society. This is consistent with the argument that social trust is promoted when we see state-regulated practices as representing our ownhesitation to sanction appearances (Beilmann, Lilleoja, 2017).

Estonia has become an example of successful implementation of digitalisation in law enforcement, which has earned the country a reputation as one of the leaders in e-governance. The introduction of modern technologies has not only improved the efficiency of police work, but also created new approaches to interaction with citizens. One of the key documents that laid the groundwork for such changes was the Law on Information Systems (Infotehnoloogia süsteemide seadus), adopted in 2000 (Eesti Vabariik., n.d.). The text describes the formal

guidelines (framework) that outline the development and use of unified digital systems within government operations, specifically for police forces.”The text discusses the established rules for setting up connected digital networks in government services, focusing on police departments.” The legislation inaugurated the pioneering Cyber Gendarmerie in Estonia, harmonizing information repositories, indices and communicative devices for swift intervention.

The Cyber security Law (Küberjulgeoleku seadus) enacted in 2008 was a critical stride, furnishing an all-encompassing measure to safeguard electronic information and wage against internet offenses. Consequently, in adherence to this statute, the Estonian Cyber Security Center commenced its operations and collaborates with law enforcement and global entities to thwart diverse cybersecurity threats. A significant transformation during the Estonian restructuring initiated the advent of digital forums for inhabitants, allowing their involvement in administrative affairs. For instance, the e-Politsei system enables citizens to apply, make complaints, access police reports, and follow the progress of investigations in real time. This has been achieved by transparent police work, less paperwork, and gaining the trust of the public.

In 2014, the Law on Electronic Identification (E-identiteedi seadus) was adopted, which allowed the use of electronic IDs to interact with the police. For example, citizens can remotely confirm their identity, pay fines, or receive consultations. Estonia has also paid considerable attention to international cooperation in law enforcement. The 2015 Law on International Cooperation in Combating Cybercrime (Rahvusvaheline koostöö küberkuritegevuse vastu seadus) allowed integration into global data exchange systems such as Europol and Interpol and facilitated the country’s participation in operations to counter cyber threats (Boyte, 2019).

Digital Training Programme (Digitaalse politsei õppeprogramm) was a very important part of the police department's work in Estonia. It is an educational initiative designed to train the police officers how to use technology and analyze digital data. This programme has become the basis for the formation of highly qualified personnel capable of working in the new environment. The integration of digital solutions has not only made the police more transparent, but has also significantly reduced crime through rapid response and prevention. Today, Estonia is an example for many countries in implementing e-governance in law enforcement, demonstrating how innovation can change the approach to public safety.

The Estonian police today is considered one of the most efficient in Eastern Europe and keeping high popularity for the level of public safety stimulus. Further digitalisation, more advanced preventive safety measures and closer alignment to European law enforcement is foreseen as the future (Suve et al., 2016).

This instruction is complex due to it dealing with language simplification, but it does not involve multiple-step reasoning or generating information, making it similar in difficulty to the original instruction. Public trust in Lithuanian policing grew markedly post-reform, transitioning from prior doubt due to the adoption of contemporary service policies and openness. Latvia faced a tougher challenge in altering deep-rooted public views of law enforcement, but endeavors to enhance official police standards have set the stage for enduring confidence.

The impact of societal, financial and governmental elements was equally critical in the revamp sequence. In Lithuania, efforts were made to meet European standards, supported by people and the government's policy. Latvia had many different types of people and places, so changes happened in different ways everywhere. Estonia lacked the requisite financial assets and political backing necessary for creating a thriving judiciary, nonetheless it resourcefully utilized alternative benefits in the progression. Nevertheless, both authorities and global benchmarks, in addition to domestic circumstances, were crucial for the triumphant transformations in the Baltic States.

In particular, the countries have undertaken reforms on a very broad scale, which not only comprised of modifying the political and economic landscape, but also on enhancing public trust in the police (Smaliukienė, Vedlūga, & Giedraitytė, 2023). Through a number of key laws and initiatives, including changing police culture, developing professionalism, improving



accountability and introducing modern technology, the Baltic States have been able to transform their law enforcement agencies. The table below compares the main stages of legal reforms in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia and their impact on trust in the police (table 3.1).

**Table 3.1.** Comparative analysis of legal reforms that have affected trust in the police in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia

Country	Legal reforms	Key laws and initiatives	Impact on trust in the police
<b>Lithuania</b>	The reforms are aimed at dismantling Soviet structures and creating new police standards focused on human rights and accountability.	Police Act (1990), Police Service Act (2000), Community and Police Programme.	Reduced distrust through reorganization, increased trust through partnership with the community and transparency of police work.
<b>Latvia</b>	Focus on professionalization, ethical standards and changing police culture.	Law on Police (1991), Law on Legal Protection (2003), Human Rights Training Programmes.	The ethics and professionalism of police officers have been improved, but the process of changing social stereotypes has been long.
<b>Estonia</b>	Digitalization of the police, integration of electronic systems and a focus on cybersecurity.	Law on Information Systems (2000), Law on Cybersecurity (2008), Law on International Cooperation in Combating Cybercrime (2015).	Increased trust through transparency, reduced bureaucracy and the creation of integrated electronic platforms for interaction with citizens.

*Source: created by the author on the Giedraitytė, V., Smaliukienė, R., & Vedlūga, T. (2022).*

Legal reforms in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia show that each country has undertaken major steps to boost police efficiency as well as overall confidence in law enforcement by the public. Lithuania: community partnerships, Latvia: police culture and professionalization is driven change and Estonia – digitalization with the application modern technologies in public service. No matter the success or failure of reforms across countries, they tend to address the efficacy of security force, transparency and interaction by citizens. While reforms associated with improved police, legitimacy has not been far reaching, the process of changing social perceptions and images takes time and the police must work on it consistently so that they build their credibility.

Nevertheless, in Ukraine, meanwhile somewhat momentous, reforms in themselves have run into a variety of obstacles which seriously limited their effectiveness. A big difficulty remained unresolved after the launch of the National Police – corruption. Old chains of corruption and connections have not been broken down long enough to root out today, in some cases police officers are still being bribed and confidence in this honest is constantly being shaken. This has affected somewhat the outcome of reform, as citizens did not immediately receive tangible changes on the level of law enforcement. The main issue was a total shortage of money for these reforms. As a result, many important aspects of the reform were not implemented to their full potential, reducing the effectiveness of the reform as a whole. Police

officers often lacked the necessary resources and technical support, which made it difficult for them to perform their functions (Table 3.2):

**Table 3.2.** Key challenges to police reform in Ukraine

<b>Challenge</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Impact on the reform process</b>
Corruption in the police	Corruption schemes within law enforcement agencies, including bribery and abuse of power.	It reduces the effectiveness of reforms, impedes the implementation of changes and undermines trust in the police.
Political instability	Frequent changes in governments and political forces that change reform priorities.	Lack of sustained political will to implement reforms, which slows down the process.
Low qualification of staff	Insufficient professional training of police officers, lack of motivation to work.	It limits the effectiveness of the police and reduces the level of public trust.
Social tension and mistrust	High levels of social inequality, conflicts between the police and certain groups of the population (especially in areas with high crime rates).	Worsens police interaction with citizens, which reduces the effectiveness of reforms.

*Source: created by the author*

Summing up the above challenges, we can conclude that police reform in Ukraine requires a comprehensive approach that takes into account both internal and external factors. More particularly, the issue of corruption must be tackled and introducing a normal political environment which enables reforms to be saved from such a danger of frequent changes in the plans. Staff upskilling, equipment modernisation and judicial independence are essential pillars for good reform. But only when we get rid of those obstacles, can lasting results be achieved and public confidence in the police improves.

Overall, while police reforms in Ukraine have demonstrated considerable potential for positive change, they have not been entirely successful due to fragmentation and inconsistency in their implementation. They have demonstrated that in order to achieve sustainable results, it is necessary not only to initiate reforms, but also to ensure their consistency, transparency and long-term support. The obstacles faced by the police in Ukraine, such as corruption, underfunding and insufficient public support, indicate that deeper and more comprehensive changes are needed to make reforms truly effective and deliver the desired results for citizens (table 3.3).

**Table 3.3.** Legal reforms that have influenced trust in the police in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia and their benefits for Ukraine

Country	Key legal reforms	Impact on trust in the police	Recommendations for Ukraine
<b>Lithuania</b>	The Law on Police (1990), which established a new human rights-oriented structure of the police. The Law on Police Service (2000), which established standards for police training and ethics. The Community and Police programme (involving the public in law enforcement).	Increase police transparency and openness in interaction with the public through the establishment of an ombudsman. Reducing corruption and improving ethical standards among police officers.	Ukraine could introduce an ombudsman system for the police, which would help ensure transparency and protect the rights of citizens. Modernizing the HR policy and programme to improve police ethics.
<b>Latvia</b>	Establishment of certification commissions consisting of independent experts and representatives. Creating a new police culture based on democratic principles.	Increasing the level of professionalism and ethics among police officers. Improved relations between the police and the community, increased trust in law enforcement.	Establishment of independent attestation commissions, including civil society, to help cleanse the police of corrupt elements.
<b>Estonia</b>	Establishment of an interactive security management system. Introduce online platforms for filing grievance and tracking incidents and monitoring investigations. Emphasizing cybersecurity and fighting of cybercrime.	Transparency of police work thanks to technologies that allow citizens to control processes. Improving the efficiency of police work through digital tools.	Ukraine could introduce electronic platforms to improve citizens' access to information on police activities and monitor investigations.

*Source: created by the author based on Smaliukienė, R., Vedlūga, T., & Giedraitytė, V. (2023).*

A study comparing legal changes in Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia shows that each country has taken important steps to make policing better and boost its trust among the people. Lithuania has worked on building partnerships with local communities, Latvia has focused on shifting police culture and making police work more professional, while Estonia has aimed at using digital tools and modern technology in law enforcement. Although the outcomes of these reforms differ by country, they all share a goal of enhancing police effectiveness, transparency, and engagement with the public. These efforts have slowly raised trust levels in the police, yet altering public views and stereotypes takes time and ongoing efforts to improve law enforcement. Evaluating how these reforms affect trust in the police is a key objective to judge their effectiveness and fine-tune the reform process.

Trust in police is a multi-dimensional indicator of the citizens' assessments of how efficient, honest and transparent in serving the interest of the public the police are. Sociological research methods and statistic data analysis is used for an elaborated approach in studies whether or not police reforms do have an influence on how much trust public has in its police.

Public opinion on the police is primarily measured through sociological research. Currently in Ukraine there are both state and independent institutions for this research: Kyiv International Institute of Sociology (Kyiv International Institute of Sociology, n.d.) (KIIS), Ilko

Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation etc. and international organisations like Transparency International and some research is done by national statistical offices of Baltic States (relevant research from European institutions, as Eurobarometer).

*For example*, according to KIIS, at the time of the creation of the National Police of Ukraine in 2015, there was a temporary increase in the level of trust in the police, which reached 40-50% in large cities (Kyiv International Institute of Sociology, n.d.). However, in the following years, trust began to decline due to a number of factors, including dissatisfaction with the pace of reforms, persistent corruption and lack of efficiency of law enforcement.

In the Baltic States, according to Eurobarometer data, trust in the police has increased significantly since the implementation of reforms. In Lithuania, for example, in 2020, 70% of citizens expressed trust in the police, which is significantly higher than the average in the European Union. In Estonia, this level reaches over 80%, which is the result of comprehensive reforms and transparent law enforcement (European Commission, 2020).

Statistical data complement sociological surveys and allow us to assess the real impact of reforms on police performance. This is done using indicators such as the crime rate, the frequency of citizens' calls to the police, the number of cases solved, and the rate of corruption offences among police officers.

For example, data from the National Police of Ukraine show positive developments in the implementation of patrol police, including a reduction in traffic violations due to increased control. However, the high level of unsolved crimes and complaints against the police suggests that systemic changes have not yet reached the desired level (National Police of Ukraine, n.d.).

In the Baltic States, statistics show a steady decline in crime and improved case solving. Estonia, for example, makes extensive use of digital tools to monitor police performance, allowing for rapid response to problems and accountability to citizens.

Thus, the use of public opinion polls and statistics allows us to assess the effectiveness of law enforcement reforms and their impact on public trust in the police (Smaliukienė, Vedlūga, & Giedraitytė, 2023). The analysis of these data helps to identify key problems and positive experiences that can be used to improve the situation in Ukraine.

Law enforcement reforms in the Baltic States have been clearly orientated towards European standards from the very beginning. Membership in the European Union and cooperation with international organisations have significantly accelerated the process of adapting best practices in law enforcement. The European Union played a key role in setting the standards that police services had to meet. The main requirements were related to human rights, transparency of law enforcement, anti-corruption and personal data protection. The EU has also contributed to financing reforms in the Baltic States through technical assistance programmes, such as the PHARE (Programme for Financial and Technical Assistance) mechanism and other instruments that supported police modernisation.

International organisations (UN, OSCE, TI) were also pressing for reforms in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. They have given expert guidance police training and reform monitoring. The public trust in law enforcement agencies (to be specific, corruption problems are reduced greatly) increased substantially thanks to TI as an active anti-corruption programmes implementer.

For the Baltic States, their entry in the Schengen area especially had special significance since Schengen required compliance with stringent criteria in law enforcement and border security. The Schengen criteria necessitated the establishment of a police force that could cooperate with other police forces (in member states) as well as the authorities within the EU. This pushed Baltic States into better training police, e-introducing modern information system and more strengthening their international cooperation.

The impact of international standards is manifested by high trust in police of the Baltic States. As implementing these standards improves the work of law enforcement and makes it transparent for the public. Police reform in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia proves that international standards can be highly effective for achieving excellent results in a well functioning democracy for the law enforcement system.

This is a good lesson for the Ukraine who also interacts in EU and international cooperation on law enforcement reforms. By following a similar methodology, Ukraine may be able strengthen the trust in police and deliver large scale changes of law enforcement system (International experience of police activity in the context of ensuring public security, 2023).

Dishonesty and financial gaps are linked issues that affect how much the public trusts the police. When individuals view law enforcement as untrustworthy, it damages their faith in the police's capability to operate justly and competently. This issue is especially serious in environments with significant financial divides, where deceit often crosses over social and economic lines, further weakening trust.

This incoherence creates a sense of imbalance between fair and engaged, which creates a police vs. The police are then perceived through and through as sentinels of a system that creates injustice they are police for adversarial. In order to surmount these hurdles, we must make material changes to begin tackling corruption and economic issues that will eventually means law enforcement institutions and ultimately a foundation of trust, if not friendship with the community.

A complex and multi-disciplinary issue; the level of trust in the police is linked to various socio-economic aspects. The trust in cops is not only from cops doing their jobs properly but also from the socio-economic environment they are operating within. Security presence, crime rates on the one hand and things like educational background, cultural norms status all tied together with the economy are all interrelated social factors that feed into how much trust the individual / group / population provide law enforcement as.

Trust in the police varies across different socio-economic status of a country. What research has found is that in countries with well-functioning economies, low levels of corruption and social and economic stability such as the Scandinavian countries, public trust in the police (Smaliukienė, Vedlūga, & Giedraitytė, 2023) is extremely high. It is because in such countries police is properly equipped, people are comfortable and police has a good image. Also the police are open and out in the open, responsive and performing their duties properly in these countries. Furthermore, communities in these countries are also proahibitive the bond of relationship and development between citizens and police.

Corruption of police for lack of the social inequalities and economic bases in police force is common to the countries described below, eroding the public trust in police for law and justice. Furthermore, low police rewards and inadequate budgets lead that police cannot deliver adequate security/ order, leading the public to lose trust in a state.

A nice case is Germany, where the cops often have a lot of trust because of their good work, openness and shared work with everyday people. High amounts of money growth, wealth, and aid for society make it easier to build public faith in safety workers. But in places like Italy, money gaps and cop wrongdoing have changed this trust. The power of crime groups and bad acts inside law enforcement has caused some folks to feel let down, hurting how people see the police's skill and honesty.

The times of places like Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary, which saw big changes in society and money after the end of communist rule offers a lot of good ideas. In communities where incomes are higher and social inequality is lower, people tend to have more trust in law enforcement agencies. Thus, promoting economic and social stability is essential for creating a reliable and effective policing system. This is largely because, in such environments, the police are seen as an organization that carries out its duties fairly and competently, free from corruption or bias. Additionally, a strong economy enables governments to allocate sufficient resources to the police, enhance officer salaries, and improve their training. This, in turn, enhances the effectiveness and credibility of law enforcement agencies.

In societies marked by significant social inequality or low income levels, public trust in law enforcement often declines. In these situations, many people may view the police with skepticism, linking them to corruption or oppressive actions instead of safety and justice.

Insufficient economic development worsens these issues, as a lack of funding for law enforcement agencies hampers their ability to perform their duties effectively.

Police reforms can only be effective if they are part of a broader context of economic and social change that reduces inequality and improves the overall living conditions of citizens.

Socio-economic conditions also determine the success of specific law enforcement reforms. For example, in countries with high levels of economic development and strong political will for change, police reforms can be successful due to growing public support and government efforts. In such countries, reforms usually focus on improving the professionalism, efficiency and transparency of the police, allowing citizens to feel more trust in law enforcement agencies.

In countries with low incomes and significant social inequality, reforms may have limited effect unless they are accompanied by reforms in other economic and social sectors. If citizens do not see improvements in their living conditions, they may be sceptical about changes in the police. Therefore, for law enforcement reforms to succeed, the broader socio-economic context must be taken into account to ensure that the police are able to operate effectively and build trust.

Dramatic shifts in socio-economic components can greatly boost public trust for police, since the trust in law enforcement is at many times based on them confirming to perform necessary functions effectively and make public feel safe and fair. Many changes are required to improve the work of police and also restore the image of police in public. One of the things we need to do to gain public trust in police, is begin by making police officers work in better environment this starts from having just fair pay. Scarce pay necessitates political correctness, since police abuse and corruption is fueled when cops do not make enough money. Proper remuneration not only builds the morale of the police but brought in experienced men to serve as leaders and aids efficiency and honesty. Moreover, providing a range of social support (health insurance; pension plans, family assistance programmes and other such benefits) makes the officers hopeful and secure; so they can work more rationally and with commitment towards their responsibilities.

Police corruption needs to stop in order to regain trust. There is no public confidence when corruption exists because it reflects misbehavior in justice and the rule of law. Problem-solving initiatives can include, for example an independent body to receive complaints about misconduct by members of police and when hiring/promoting/evaluation the police need to be transparent. Also regular anti-corruption capacity building of police officers, Prompt police trainings at all levels can add more muscle to 'justice is fairness and accountability'. Moreover, it is crucial to provide modern equipment and all needed tools for them (the cops) to carry out their functions properly. Modern gear, technology and continued on the job training can enable police officers to fully serve their purpose. These measures do not only improve law enforcement operational capacity, but by evidencing to the public that the police are the best occupied to protect & serve than ever before, they will also build more confidence in their ability. Initiating these reforms will set the stage for a best practice, well-respected and accountable part of law enforcement. The legal reforms of these nature can substantially boost police-public relationship, making clear norms & standards that police are firstly agents for human rights issue and also participate into public groups.

Police-community relations has to be strengthened as well. Community participation in police matters is fostered by having police invite community members and facilitate community meetings where police are seated with citizens. Without additional training, police are not only the guardians of the law but also engaged in crime solving and thus contributing to civil relations, which in its turn developing apartxis are more positive viewed by citizens. One critical next step is to elevate the education and training of police officers. Beyond their professional education police training, should include ethics, for example how to manage stress; how they are supposed to communicate and how they should interact with specific kinds of social groups.

These skills will assist the police in better understanding the needs of different parts of society and better interact with citizens so they can trust and accept them.

Public confidence in law enforcement is built on the socio-economic dimension. The police are not only the most prevalent domestic institution with socio-economic repercussion but also how citizens see the police. A great development level, better job opportunities for police, anti-corruption measures and adequate finance are the major pre-conditions of efficiency in law enforcement. By paying police officers what they deserve, as well as substantial social benefits positively affects the way a law enforcement official can enforce the law, but also communicates that society understands and appreciates the treatment of all its peoples, with specific regard due to our fellow citizens whom wear the uniform and community ties. While citizen trust is mortally wounded however as social inequality, economic insecurity and police corruption are on the rise. If citizens think police are working for only some interests or that they are not able to stop crime, trust in law enforcement erodes. Also the education level and attitude towards human rights as well as legal guarantees of citizens can sway their diplomatic ways with the police. Active citizenry is more likely to prosecute law enforcement agencies and foster a relationship with them as opposed to being sanctions heavy. A police trust-building has to be multi-pronged in nature to include the socio-economic variables that feed into the manifest weakness of police effectiveness. Better compensation for police, creating police oversight that is open & effective and supporting police officers on many levels will also help. This will not only go a long way in improving police on ground efficiency and morale but also show the strength of commitment to equality and justice. Also, resilient programs that promote mutual respect and police-community cooperation through public educational efforts have a supporting place. Law enforcement builds trust through openness and friendliness, not hostility Transparency must come from the top down in law enforcement and allow for a natural development of mutual respect between those agencies and the communities they are sworn to serve. This is creating relationships, and police will be better able to deal with the challenges facing communities today while maintaining public safety all with it. To sum up; All Overcoming Unequal Socioeconomic disparities as well promoting transparency, Police Trustability and Community presence are needed in trust relationship. Such initiatives open the door for police to collaborate more with communities, do justice to serve a need of the people and provide safety and justice.

### **3.2. Police reform in Ukraine and the Baltic States: a comparative analysis of socio-economic and legal determinants**

Understanding the commonalities and differences between Ukraine and the Baltic States is crucial from an academic perspective, as it allows for the identification of both shared and unique factors influencing reform. In this regard, it is of significant importance to contrast the Ukrainian experience with that of the Baltic States, where law enforcement reform has been based on similar preconditions and varying degrees of state control. This comparison serves as a valuable model for other former Soviet regimes. By considering the factors that enable or hinder these reforms, it is possible not only to assess the extent to which Ukraine's reforms can be adapted within the existing context but also to propose directions for future reforms based on these findings.

Since police reform and its success are heavily influenced by factors such as income levels, corruption, and economic development, it is essential to examine these conditions closely in order to develop constructive policy strategies that promote police professionalism. Building on previous discussions, this chapter will consider key insights from various scholars and focus on critical problem areas aimed at strengthening public trust in the police (Smaliukienė, Vedlūga, & Giedraitytė, 2023) through legal reforms and improvements to the socio-economic framework.

The preceding chapter examined the impact of legal reform on law enforcement in Ukraine and the Baltic States, particularly in terms of reducing corruption, enhancing police effectiveness, and restoring public trust. The core argument presented in the report is that Baltic police forces have undergone substantial transformation. This success story is the result of long-

term efforts to align police organisations with European standards and implement best practices in security management. Reforms in countries such as Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia have led to the establishment of a new legal framework, the restoration of public trust, and a significant reduction in corruption. These changes have contributed to the increased effectiveness and reliability of police agencies.

In Latvia and Lithuania, for example, political and administrative reforms, along with the implementation of robust monitoring mechanisms and police accountability measures, have proven to be effective in reducing corruption. These reforms have resulted in lower levels of corruption, a reduction in the discretionary powers of law enforcement agencies, and increased independence, particularly at the political-administrative level. Furthermore, these measures have enhanced operational efficiency, ensuring a safer working environment for law enforcement officers and boosting public confidence.

#### **4. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND TRUST BUILDING IN POLICE FORCES IN UKRAINE AND COMPARATIVE STUDIES WITH LITHUANIA AND LATVIA**

One of the important factors in establishing stability, law, and order, as well as in carrying on the governmental work in a democratic state, is building trust in law enforcement agencies. In the present-day setting, the police protect security and bridge-building partnership between the state and society. Interaction with the police is starting to be one of the most important factors in trust, which has been proven to accurately affect the efficiency of law enforcement operations.

This post is particularly topical for Ukraine, which is moving through a very difficult process of reforming its law enforcement system under martial law and general socio-political understatement. Community involvement in crime prevention is one of the main methods for achieving efficient cooperation between law enforcement agencies and the general public. Community Policing (COP) principles are being emphasized more frequently in the Ukrainian police force, encouraging citizens' participation as partners for joint contributions and decisions from a security perspective.

The case experience of Lithuania and Latvia with law enforcement agency reforms aimed at creating efficient police interaction with the population might be useful for Ukraine in the future. After gaining independence, both countries carried out large-scale reforms of their law enforcement systems, focusing on European standards and adapting the best international practices to their national conditions. The study of their experience allows us to assess the possibility of applying similar approaches in Ukraine, considering socio-cultural, legal and political peculiarities.

In peacetime, local self-government bodies organise and coordinate activities aimed at the social protection of children, meeting their educational, medical, cultural and recreational needs. An important aspect of their activities is the creation of specialised social support programmes for children from families in difficult life circumstances, orphans and children deprived of parental care. Local councils and executive committees provide funding for measures to ensure access to quality education, leisure, recreation and prevention of negative phenomena among young people. In the context of martial law, the role of operations and local governments in the development and implementation of juvenile policy is significantly enhanced due to the need to provide additional social protection for children affected by military internally displaced persons and children from conflicts. The main tasks of local governments during this period are to humanitarian organise aid, and provide housing, medical and psychological assistance to children who have lost their parents or found themselves in difficult life circumstances (Baimuratov et al., 2022).

In addition to direct interaction with citizens, the media significantly impacts building trust in the police. Mass media, social media and citizen journalism play a crucial role in creating law enforcement agencies' image, spreading both positive and negative narratives about their



activities. It is important to examine how the media influence public opinion about the police in Ukraine, Lithuania, and Latvia, as well as consider communication strategies that help law enforcement agencies effectively engage with society in the digital age.

This section will analyse the main approaches to community in Ukraine, policing Lithuania and Latvia, identify key factors that facilitate or impede the building of trust in law enforcement agencies, and consider the role of the media in this process. In addition to the theoretical framework, the results of empirical studies reflect the current level of public trust in the police and the effectiveness of different cooperation models between law enforcement agencies and the public. The comparative analysis will help identify promising development areas in Ukraine's police and develop recommendations for improving the level of trust in law enforcement agencies in the context of European integration.

#### **4.1. The role of community engagement in building trust in the police**

Public safety, and therefore public trust in the democratic legitimacy of society, cannot be maintained unless relationships of trust are established between law enforcement and the citizens of a democratic society. The police-community relationship is not only fundamental to maintaining law and order but also serves as a crucial lever for social cohesion, crime prevention, and enhancing police effectiveness.

Community-Oriented Policing (COP) is particularly relevant in this context, as it embodies the principle of including the community in security processes. Police Community-Oriented Policing (PCOP) is based on openness, cooperative activities, and partnerships between the police institution and society. It represents a shift from reactive law enforcement to proactive crime prevention and community-driven problem-solving. This framework involves fostering deeper dialogue with citizens, assessing public needs through data analysis, and engaging civil society organisations and local competent authorities in decision-making on law enforcement matters.

In Ukraine, the implementation of a community policing operational structure has become particularly relevant since the launch of major law enforcement reform projects in 2014. A key objective of these reforms was to establish a police force that serves the interests of citizens, aligns with international standards, and fosters high levels of public trust. Several initiatives were introduced to enhance police interaction with the community, including the Dialogue Police, Neighbourhood Watch, and other cooperative mechanisms aimed at promoting community safety.

One of the key elements of implementing Community Policing in Ukraine was the reform of the patrol police, which involved a change in approaches to law enforcement and a new level of communication between police officers and citizens. Training programmes for police officers played an important role in developing skills in public relations resolution, non-violent conflict, and working with vulnerable groups. However, implementing this model faces several challenges, including insufficient human resources, limited persistence of Soviet practices in law enforcement, and low levels of trust in the police in some regions.

Comparing the situation in Ukraine with the experience of Lithuania and Latvia, we can see both standard features and significant differences in approaches to implementing Community Oriented Policing. In these countries, law enforcement system reforms took place in the context of integration into the European Union, which involved adapting best European practices to national legislation and law enforcement standards. Much attention was paid to raising the qualifications of police officers, expanding partnership programmes between the police and civil society organisations, and introducing digital technologies to improve communication between law enforcement agencies and citizens.

The police must be able to communicate with citizens, which builds successful security management strategies and a reasonable belief in law enforcement. When police and the public have open and honest conversations, transparency in law enforcement rises. This enables citizens

to gain in-depth knowledge of police work and the principles and bases of some of its decisions. A more transparent police service helps to reduce corruption and abuse, which boosts the trust in the police. This, in turn, means active communication of all kinds so that police cannot only react against crime but to prevent crime from happening. Social media, information campaigns and public forums are examples of how law enforcement can communicate to determine possible threats and work toward solving them at a more granular or local level. Ultimately leading to the enhancement of security and public order. Clear communication is critical to building trust, which is necessary for police-community relations. When citizens feel that their needs are acknowledged and drawn on police practice openness and fairness, they are more likely to support the police force in tackling crime. This nexus is the foundation of community, where both police and community work together to make living and human life more humane (Meershoek, 2023).

Including citizens in decision-making on security issues leads to more user-friendly and accountable policing. Citizen interaction with law enforcement agencies is essential for providing information about security in their communities, as well as sharing their concerns and suggestions for improvement. This engagement enables the police to refine their strategies and better address the genuine needs of the public.

When the police actively communicate with citizens, explaining their actions and decisions, it reduces the risk of conflicts and misunderstandings between law enforcement and the public. People are less likely to engage in protests or other forms of resistance when they understand the rationale behind police actions and feel that their voices are heard. A trusting relationship between the police and citizens facilitates better information-sharing and more effective crime response. Citizens can provide valuable insights into unlawful activities, enabling law enforcement to respond more swiftly and efficiently. Ultimately, communication is the foundation for building trust between the police and the public. It enhances the effectiveness of law enforcement and contributes to a safer society.

When analysing the process of implementing Community Oriented Policing in Ukraine, it is important to assess successful practices and problems that arise in the reform process. Studying the experience of Lithuania and Latvia allows us to identify opportunities to improve the Ukrainian model and adapt effective methods of interaction police with the public in the context of the country's further European integration.

The experience of Lithuania and Latvia in implementing effective mechanisms of community policing is an important source for analysing best practices that can be adapted in Ukraine. In these countries, Community-Oriented Policing (COP) is a key tool for increasing trust in law enforcement agencies, ensuring local security and strengthening partnerships between police and society.

An important component of the Lithuanian and Latvian models of interaction between police and citizens is the active involvement of the population in decision-making in the field of public safety. In particular, Lithuania has widely developed security advisory councils that operate under municipalities and provide a platform for discussing pressing issues related to law and order. Also, there are active educational programmes to foster a culture of legal responsibility and preventive measures among young people. Similarly, Latvia has a "Friendly Police" initiative, which involves regular meetings of law enforcement officers with representatives of local communities, civic activists and social workers to discuss ways to strengthen security in the regions (Blair et al., 2021).

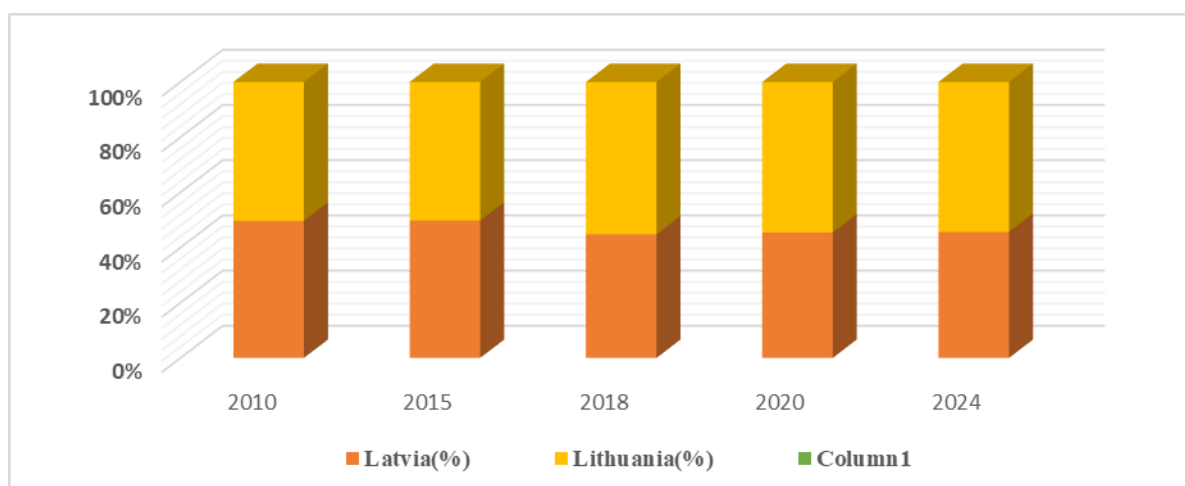
In both countries, digital technologies are important to build trust and improve communication between police and citizens. Lithuania actively uses mobile applications to collect information about offences, which allows citizens to report security threats quickly and the police to respond to incidents quickly. Latvia, in turn, has interactive online platforms that facilitate effective feedback between law enforcement agencies and society. In Latvia, for their part they have interactive on-line platforms that are useful in feeding law enforcement agencies with immediate feedbacks as well from public. On what concern and respect for the police

profession Mr Armands Ruks (2020) note the top level of each Latvian police officers must be in order everyone respects the profession. This requires tearing down corruption which annihilates all good activities in few moments. However, even the tiniest bit of a police officer committing a crime sparks huge scrutiny and tears to all the police building reputation efforts. That being so, we have to make our work transparent, truthful and honest to rebuild confidence on police and enhance the credibility of the police in public. This needs at all times self discipline, a continuous professionalism also and ready to adapt due to living more with modern digital platforms.

The interaction between the police and vulnerable groups, including women, children, the elderly, and people with disabilities, is becoming increasingly important. Law enforcement agencies conduct specialised training to raise awareness of the needs of these groups, establish dedicated units to support victims of violence, and provide round-the-clock assistance. Such initiatives help build trust among vulnerable populations and improve the public perception of law enforcement agencies.

Public participation is emerging as a key tool for strengthening trust in the police, as it ensures transparency in law enforcement activities, facilitates public feedback, and enhances community safety. Active citizen involvement in police cooperation programmes, preventive initiatives, and situational monitoring contributes to the development of social capital and fosters a culture of mutual trust between the state and the population (Asquith & Bartkowiak-Théron, 2021).

Building social trust is a key factor in the stable development of democratic societies, especially in transition countries. The Baltic States – Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania – faced large-scale socio-economic transformations after gaining independence in the 1990s. This directly affected the level of trust in state institutions, including law enforcement agencies. Trust in the police is an important indicator of social capital, as it reflects the level of citizens' perception of the state's ability to ensure security and protection of rights and freedoms. The study of the relationship between trust in law enforcement and social capital allows us to assess the effectiveness of state reforms and identify the main factors that contribute to strengthening civil society in the Baltic Sea Region (Figure 4):



**Figure 4.** Dynamics of social trust in law enforcement in the Baltic States (2015-2024)

*Source:* created by the author on the

An analysis of the dynamics of social trust in the Baltic States between 1990 and 2018 shows a gradual increase in trust in law enforcement agencies, especially after the countries joined the European Union in 2004. The highest levels of trust were recorded in Estonia, which may be due to the successful implementation of digital technologies, transparency of government agencies and the effectiveness of anti-corruption measures. Latvia and Lithuania also show positive dynamics, but less pronounced due to the impact of socio-economic crises and

insufficient law enforcement. It has been found that a high level of trust in the police correlates with the growth of social capital, increased civic engagement and strengthening of democratic institutions. The results can be used to develop strategies to increase trust in law enforcement agencies in countries undergoing democratic transformation. The success of Lithuania and Latvia in implementing Community Oriented Policing is largely based on a systematic approach to police reform, focusing on building trust between law enforcement and citizens. An important element of this process is the police communication strategy aimed at creating a positive image of law enforcement agencies, openness to dialogue and willingness to consider society's interests.

For Ukraine, an analysis of the best practices of Lithuania and Latvia allows us to identify effective models of interaction in the police community that can be adapted to the national context. Particular attention should be paid to developing mechanisms of feedback, the use of digital technologies, support for local security initiatives, and increased police accountability to citizens. Building trust in law enforcement agencies should be one of the key priorities of the reforms, as trust is the basis for an effective partnership between the police and society (Kochel & Skogan, 2021).

In Ukraine, the role of volunteers in public safety and crime prevention is growing. Volunteer organisations are actively engaged in street patrols, crime prevention education campaigns, and support for victims of crime. Volunteers became an important part of the community protection system during the war, and their cooperation with the police became even closer. The police are increasingly engaging citizens in policing. In particular, policing programmes are being established in communities where citizens can report suspicious situations or become part of organised crime prevention initiatives. Ukraine is also actively developing a system of public councils under the police, which help to maintain communication between the public and law enforcement. One of the areas of public participation is educational activities. With volunteers' help, run campaigns to raise public awareness of legal issues and teach prevention methods, such as self-defence, emergency behaviour, etc. Volunteers help ensure security and actively support the police in investigations and crime prevention activities. For example, volunteer groups can search for missing persons or detect illegal activities beyond the scope of day-to-day law enforcement functions. Social media and mobile applications, through which citizens can report crimes or suspicious situations, are becoming increasingly popular. This allows for a quicker response to crimes and increased efficiency of law enforcement agencies (Dzhuzha et al., 2024).

One of the key mechanisms is the establishment of community councils within law enforcement agencies, which facilitate effective dialogue between the public and the police. Such councils can act as intermediaries between law enforcement and the public, enabling residents to voice their concerns, propose initiatives to improve security and assess the effectiveness of law enforcement. Interaction between community councils and the police also allows for greater transparency and accountability of law enforcement to citizens and promotes police activities (Rudhanto, 2022).

An important mechanism is the introduction of community policing programmes, which involve the active participation of local community members in law enforcement activities. Such programmes exist in many European countries and involve joint patrols by police and volunteers and their cooperation in crime prevention. Such initiatives not only help reduce crime but also create a sense of responsibility for the safety of their environment, which has a positive impact on trust in law enforcement agencies.

The use of digital technologies plays a significant role in strengthening public participation in law enforcement. In particular, the introduction of mobile applications for communication between the police and the public, online platforms for the prompt reporting of offences, and interactive services can enhance the effectiveness of law enforcement responses to community issues. The use of technology increases civic engagement, enables law enforcement to better understand societal needs, and allows for real-time responses.

## **4.2. Media and public perception of the police**

One of the most effective ways to engage the community in law enforcement is through educational and prevention programmes. Informing the public about their rights, mechanisms for interaction with the police, and crime prevention measures helps foster a culture of public responsibility. Educational activities may include training sessions for young people, legal literacy seminars, public discussions on security, and crime prevention programmes in educational institutions.

The involvement of school and university students in crime prevention initiatives is particularly effective, as it strengthens their understanding of the role of law enforcement and fosters a positive attitude towards the police.

An important factor in strengthening community participation in law enforcement is the implementation of communication strategies between police and citizens. Open dialogue, transparency of the work of law enforcement, and regular meetings with residents and the public on the reporting results of police activities help to build trust between society and law enforcement agencies. Using social media and other media to disseminate up-to-date information about the police, conduct awareness campaigns and discuss security issues helps to increase public trust in law enforcement agencies. The effectiveness of the participation community in law enforcement also depends on institutional support for these processes. An important role in this is played by the availability of appropriate legislative regulation that defines the mechanisms of cooperation between the police and citizens, as well as provides opportunities for implementing initiatives to ensure public safety. Government agencies can facilitate such cooperation by creating financial mechanisms to support civic security initiatives, introducing programmes encouraging civic engagement and empowering local authorities to ensure law and order.

An analysis of international experience shows that comprehensive approaches that combine different mechanisms of citizen engagement in law enforcement are the most effective. For Ukraine, it is imperative to develop models of public engagement that are already successfully used in European countries, taking into account the national context and the needs of society. Increasing participation in law enforcement processes will help improve the effectiveness of police activities, create a safe environment, and strengthen public trust in law enforcement agencies.

One important aspect of the influence of traditional media is the editorial policy and political preferences of media company owners. In Ukraine and other countries with a high level of media politicisation, it is often content about activities police presented with the interests of specific political forces in mind, which can distort the accurate picture and contribute to manipulating public opinion. For example, in political crises or protests, the coverage of police actions differs dramatically depending on which media outlets report them: some may portray law enforcement as protectors of order. In contrast, others portray them as a repressive body.

With the development of digital technologies and social media, the information landscape has undergone significant changes. Social media, news sites, blogs, and online forums have become important platforms for discussing law enforcement activities. They allow for the rapid dissemination of information, facilitating rapid response to public inquiries. At the same time, digital media significantly increases the risk of spreading false information, manipulation and fake news. Video footage of events shared on social media can have a strong emotional impact on the public but often presents events without context or in a distorted way.

Digital media is also changing the way police communicate with citizens. Many law enforcement agencies use official social media pages to inform the public about their activities, search for witnesses to crimes, or even establish a direct dialogue with the public. This openness can help to increase trust, especially if the police demonstrate a willingness to engage, transparency and responsiveness to the concerns public.

At the same time, negative content related to law enforcement misconduct tends to go viral quickly. Scandalous materials, exposés of corruption, and videos of abuse of power often attract more attention than positive news about police successes. This can create a distorted perception, and even isolated cases of abuse create a general perception of the entire law enforcement system as corrupt and ineffective.

Another challenge is the problem of disinformation and information attacks. In hybrid warfare and information operations, police activities may become the target of planned campaigns to undermine trust in state institutions. This is especially true for Ukraine, where destructive information campaigns are used as a tool to influence public opinion and the political situation.

Despite numerous risks, the effective use of traditional and digital media can be a crucial tool for building public trust in the police. The implementation of communication strategies aimed at increasing transparency in law enforcement activities, active engagement with the public through social media, and combating disinformation are key elements in shaping a positive police image.

Another important area is the expansion of media literacy, which will enable citizens to critically evaluate information and resist the influence of manipulative news. Thus, the media plays a significant role in shaping public trust in the police. While negative content and disinformation can present serious challenges, a well-developed communication strategy, transparency in law enforcement agencies, and effective cooperation with the media can enhance the police's image and increase public confidence.

The experience of Ukraine, as well as studies on the influence of media on the perception of law enforcement agencies in different countries, helps to identify the mechanisms that shape public trust in the police and determine key factors that either strengthen or undermine their legitimacy. The cases of Lithuania and Latvia illustrate both common trends and differences in the portrayal of police work in traditional and digital media, which, in turn, influences public opinion (Table 4.1):

**Table 4.1.** Main differences in media coverage of police activities in Ukraine, Lithuania and Latvia

<b>Criterion</b>	<b>Ukraine</b>	<b>Lithuania</b>	<b>Latvia</b>
<b>Level of trust in the police</b>	Low or unstable due to corruption scandals, political influence and individual cases of abuse	High, due to effective reforms and transparent police activity	High, due to the emphasis on public partnerships and preventive measures
<b>Media Focus</b>	Sensational events, scandals, criticism of actions police	Transparency of activities police , crime prevention	Coverage of positive initiatives, interaction police with the community
<b>The role of social media</b>	Influential, but often used to spread negative content and manipulation	It is actively used by the police for direct communication, clarification of situations and combating fakes	The police actively cooperate with the public through social media and disseminate reliable information
<b>Police communication with the media</b>	Reactive, lack of a systematic approach to informing citizens	Proactive, regular press conferences, operational updates	Proactive, open communication channels, participation in public initiatives
<b>The impact of</b>	High, media is often	Minimal emphasis on	Low, media focuses

<b>politics on media coverage</b>	used to criticise or support the government	police professionalism	on socially important issues
<b>Examples of information campaigns</b>	Cases of police violence, corruption scandals, lack of effective investigations	Campaigns to raise public awareness of security, police cooperation with the public	Public programmes safety, initiatives to improve relations police and community

*Source:* created by the author.

In Ukraine, the image of the police is largely shaped by the political and social context in which law enforcement agencies operate. Following the police reform in 2015, there was an increase in positive media coverage, particularly regarding the newly established patrol police. However, as public concerns over corruption scandals, the ineffectiveness of investigative bodies, and individual cases of abuse of power have intensified, critical assessments have begun to dominate the media landscape.

Ukrainian media often focus on high-profile incidents, such as cases of police violence, ineffective investigations, or corruption schemes within the law enforcement system. This emphasis contributes to the formation of a negative public perception of the police even though the overall level of offences within law enforcement agencies is not higher than the European average.

Social media plays a special role in Ukraine in the coverage of police activities, where the rapid dissemination of video footage from the scene can significantly influence public opinion even before official proceedings take place. *For example*, incidents of police mistreatment of suspects or the unjustified use of force often go viral instantly, creating a negative image of law enforcement agencies. Meanwhile, positive cases, such as successful crime-solving or citizen rescues, typically do not receive the same attention.

In times of war, the Ukrainian police increasingly face information attacks and discrediting campaigns used as tools of hybrid warfare.

In contrast to Ukraine, law enforcement agencies in Lithuania and Latvia generally enjoy a higher level of public trust, partly due to a different approach to communication between the police and society. The Lithuanian and Latvian media are less likely to focus on police scandals and instead emphasise their role in maintaining public order, preventing crime, and engaging with the public. Both countries actively promote information transparency, with police authorities proactively initiating communication with the media and social networks to disseminate reliable information. This approach helps to minimise the risks of manipulation and negative interpretations.

While citizen journalism is also significant in monitoring the police, its intervention in Lithuania and Latvia is less aggressive than in Ukraine. Civic initiatives in these countries work with law enforcement within the context of public safety programs, which aim to prevent conflict situations and foster constructive dialogue between police and citizens. For instance, in Latvia, there are dedicated portals where citizens can file reports on offenders or criminal quirks of law enforcement.

For all the good social media and citizen journalism do, they complicate police work. Even when followed to the letter within the law, the manipulation of information, fake news and intentional distortion of facts can erode confidence in law enforcement agencies. Too much focus on individual negative cases may further muddle public perception of police effectiveness, which does not equal the bottom line. So, social media and citizen journalism both harm trust in police and construct it, creating a mirage of performance monitoring. Ukraine: Here, these tools serve the function of a whistleblower, by primarily critical means, Lithuanian/Latvian – it's police-public partnership-problem-solving-platform. Central aspects of creating a trusted police force in Ukraine include mobilising the same communication strategy, fostering information transparency, and launching partnership-based public monitoring mechanisms.

One of the most pressing challenges to national security in the contemporary world is the threat of cybercrime, which is a fact that modern countries, without exception, including the Baltic States and Ukraine, face. With this geopolitical situation internationally, these countries are easy targets of cyber-attacks and attacks from different actors such as states, organised crime gangs or cyber-criminal organisations. The Baltic nations – Latvia and Lithuania lie at the crossroads of Russia and the European Union, making them prime candidates for internet interference. Countries like this have been targeted several times by cyber-attacks, particularly Russia, which leverages cyber weapons to erode trust in governments and mount propaganda campaigns. Take, for example, the large-scale cyber attack in 2007 when Estonia shut down its government sites so the citizens could not view them.

However, Ukraine – a nation under Russian aggression ever since 2014 is at the most obvious end of that stick due to a phone-per-capita ratio of underhat. Ukraine: Cyber-attacks on crucial sectors (energy, transport and utilities) have become common. The 2015 attacks are also one of the most notorious cyber outages, causing an estimated half million citizens to lose power for days. The very first attack of its type caused physical injury to civilians. This severe national security concern attempts to destabilize the internal order and destroy the state as an organic whole. In addition, increased digitalization throughout the Baltic and in Ukraine creates new ways for cybercriminals because more and more systems and services are becoming digital. Infrastructure facilities are becoming targets for hackers, leading to serious economic losses, breaches of national security and loss of government public trust. Cyber espionage is particularly important and is becoming increasingly relevant in the context of current geopolitical conflicts. The states of the Baltic and Ukraine have been the targets of numerous attacks, including attempts to steal strategically important information, influence elections or spread propaganda through social media. In Ukraine, for example, there have been attempts to interfere in the presidential and parliamentary elections through the use of fake news and disinformation campaigns, which have a direct impact on political stability.

Protecting national security from cybercrime requires significant efforts to create national cyber units and systems for monitoring cyber threats, particularly in the state. The Baltic States invest in cybersecurity by developing specialised bodies and cooperating with international partners such as NATO and the EU. Ukraine has also strengthened its cyber defences by creating relevant structures, such as the State Service for Special Communications and Information and Protection, and cooperation with international partners, including the Ukrainian Cyber Police. However, even governmental efforts are not always sufficient to fully combat cybercrime, especially in large states or organised cybercrime groups. In such circumstances, international cooperation in the fight against cybercrime is important, including information exchange and coordination. At the same time, strengthening national cyber defence, developing cybersecurity, and actively promoting education programmes that support innovative technologies are necessary to counter cyber threats effectively and ensure national security in the Baltic States and Ukraine. Countering disinformation and stereotypes about law enforcement agencies is crucial to building trust between the police and the public. In the context of the growing information influence and the expansion of digital platforms, the issue of disinformation is particularly significant, as inaccurate information and negative stereotypes can severely undermine the legitimacy of law enforcement agencies and complicate their interaction with society.

In Ukraine, disinformation about police activities is a pressing issue, especially in the context of military conflict and social instability. Disinformation campaigns may have internal and external origins, aiming to discredit law enforcement agencies, erode public trust in state institutions, and exacerbate social tensions. The spread of false information on social media, messaging apps, and online media is often accompanied by manipulative headlines and facts taken out of context, creating a distorted image of police activity.

Young people with low digital literacy and socially vulnerable groups are particularly susceptible to such influences.



Stereotypes about law enforcement agencies, such as corruption, incompetence, or excessive use of force, are often reinforced by both actual violations and information manipulation. A negative perception of the police hinders communication with citizens, reduces public willingness to cooperate, and contributes to alienation between law enforcement and society.

To address these challenges, a transparent information policy for law enforcement agencies is essential. This includes the timely refutation of fake news, the publication of objective information about police activities, and active engagement with citizens through official communication channels.

In Lithuania and Latvia, countering disinformation is a key component of state information security, extending to law enforcement agencies. The police in these countries work closely with national media, local fact-checking platforms, and civil society to identify and debunk fake news.

An example of this is *Demaskuok.lt*, a Lithuanian fact-checking portal that verifies claims and refutes disinformation about government agencies, including the police. Similarly, in Latvia, *Re:Baltica*, an independent investigative journalism and fact-checking platform, plays a crucial role in countering false narratives.

Information and educational programmes designed to enhance public media literacy are particularly critical in the fight against disinformation. In Lithuania and Latvia, these campaigns are conducted in collaboration with NGOs, academic institutions, and the media. Such initiatives contribute to developing citizens' critical thinking, helping them independently assess whether information is true or misleading by considering it in full context.

While similar initiatives are only beginning to gain traction in Ukraine, their importance is growing amid hybrid warfare and information confrontation. Programmes such as *Filter*, run by IREX, empower media literacy by incorporating modules to combat disinformation and verify sources. Meanwhile, the Ukrainian police are gradually implementing PR mechanisms to enhance transparency and refute false news as soon as it emerges.

Social media is another crucial tool in the fight against disinformation, facilitating genuine information sharing and direct engagement with citizens. Unofficial police accounts on platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Telegram enable immediate responses to information attacks and explanations of controversial situations and promote a positive image of law enforcement agencies. However, an effective communication strategy requires a coherent approach, balancing reactive measures to counter false information with proactive efforts to educate the public about the role and activities of the police.

Fighting disinformation and dismantling stereotypes about police forces is a complex process that requires a synergy of openness, effective communication, and increased media literacy among the population. The experiences of Lithuania and Latvia demonstrate the success of integrative efforts that combine government action with civil society and media initiatives. Implementing similar programmes in Ukraine could help restore public trust in the police, enhance its reputation, and foster constructive dialogue with society.

A study of community engagement and public trust in the police in Ukraine, Lithuania, and Latvia highlights the importance of inclusive, transparent, and participatory approaches to policing. A comparative analysis shows that Community-Oriented Policing (COP) plays a crucial role in fostering mutual trust, strengthening public cooperation, and enhancing the overall legitimacy of police institutions.

The concept of Community-Oriented Policing (COP) has gained significant attention as an effective strategy for improving police-public relations. In Ukraine, the implementation of COP is still in its early stages, requiring ongoing reforms and alignment with European standards. The key components of this model include active dialogue with local communities, joint problem-solving, and the establishment of community policing initiatives. However, the practical application of COP in Ukraine remains inconsistent, as limited institutional capacity and a lack of public awareness hinder its full implementation.

Best practices in Lithuania and Latvia demonstrate the positive impact of community engagement on public trust and crime prevention. Both countries have successfully implemented programs such as neighborhood watch, community liaison officers, and community safety councils. These initiatives have not only improved communication between the police and citizens but also fostered a collective sense of responsibility for public safety.

Trust is a key factor in determining the effectiveness of police-community relations. The level of public trust in the police directly affects the willingness of citizens to cooperate with law enforcement agencies, report crimes, and participate in community safety initiatives. In Lithuania and Latvia, sustained efforts to increase transparency, accountability, and responsiveness have resulted in higher levels of trust compared to Ukraine. Integrating mechanisms for citizen feedback, independent oversight bodies, and regular public consultations has further contributed to building trust. R. Ruddell emphasizes that cross-national comparisons show that trust in the police is strongly influenced by institutional transparency, procedural fairness, and the degree of community involvement.

Mechanisms for enhancing public participation in law enforcement include the establishment of advisory councils, forums for joint problem-solving, and youth engagement programs. These mechanisms allow citizens to voice their concerns, participate in decision-making, and collaboratively develop security strategies. However, in Ukraine, the lack of sustainable funding, bureaucratic inertia, and weak institutional support present significant challenges to the effective implementation of these mechanisms.

Challenges and obstacles to effective community engagement in Ukraine include historical distrust of law enforcement agencies, limited public awareness of opportunities for participation, and the lack of a comprehensive legal framework to support policing. In addition, the ongoing armed conflict and socio-economic instability have exacerbated the fragmentation of social ties, making it difficult to establish lasting partnerships between the police and communities. The impact of traditional and digital media on public trust in the police is significant. In times of crisis, the media play a pivotal role and have a tremendous impact on how the public perceives law enforcement. When officers are depicted positively in police-community cooperation, it reinforces trust, while negative stereotypes and the erosion of trust in the police are more likely if there is over-sensationalized or biased coverage.

Examples from Ukraine, Lithuania, and Latvia illustrate the media's impact on the public image of law enforcement agencies. In Lithuania and Latvia, active media engagement and transparent communication have contributed to a more favorable perception of police activities. In contrast, the Ukrainian media landscape is often polarized, with conflicting narratives undermining trust in police institutions.

Social media and citizen journalism have become powerful tools for monitoring police activity and holding authorities accountable. Real-time reporting of police conduct through platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube has fostered greater openness and accountability from the police toward the public. However, the unbridled power of social media also carries risks, allowing fake news and skewed interpretations to proliferate rapidly. To counter disinformation and negative portrayals of the police in the media, multi-pronged strategies such as media literacy campaigns, fact-checking initiatives, and enhanced media relations at the local level by law enforcement are essential.

Working with independent media organizations and civil society will enhance the credibility of police messages. Crisis communication is crucial to maintaining public confidence, especially during crises (whether natural or man-made) or security incidents. A crisis is a situation where information needs to be transmitted quickly, accurately, and transparently to communities directly or indirectly affected. Ukraine is still in the process of developing a template for effective crisis communication.

A study on community-police engagement and trust in Ukraine, Lithuania, and Latvia suggests that participatory, transparent, and engagement-based measures are essential. Comparative research highlights that community-oriented policing (COP) plays a key role in

building and maintaining public trust, cooperation, and the perceived legitimacy of police institutions.

Community-oriented policing (COP) has increasingly been recognized as a promising practice for improving relations between police and citizens worldwide. In Ukraine, however, the implementation of COP is still in its early stages, requiring continuous reform and alignment with European standards. The core of this model is collaboration with local communities, community problem-solving, and the establishment of peace police units. However, the practice of COP in Ukraine remains limited due to insufficient institutional capacity and low community awareness, which prevent its full implementation.

Lithuania and Latvia's best practices demonstrate how community involvement contributes to increased public trust and crime prevention. Both countries have implemented various programs, such as neighborhood watch initiatives, citizens' security councils, and community liaison officers. These efforts have not only improved communication between the police and citizens but also fostered the perception that the community shares responsibility for public safety.

Currently, trust is playing an increasingly significant role in shaping the effectiveness of police-community relations. The level of public trust in the police is a major factor in determining whether citizens will assist law enforcement agencies, report crimes, and engage in community safety initiatives. In Lithuania and Latvia, efforts to increase transparency, accountability, and responsiveness have resulted in higher levels of trust compared to Ukraine. The combination of citizen feedback channels, independent oversight bodies, and regular public consultations has contributed to this increased trust.

In the Baltic States, efforts to engage citizens in crisis response are focused on rebuilding public trust and improving perceptions of law enforcement. Public trust is crucial for maintaining public order, as effective police-community cooperation not only helps reduce crime but also promotes social stability and security, particularly during times of crisis. Volunteer initiatives are increasingly common in these countries, especially in response to crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic or heightened security threats like military conflicts. Citizens often organize volunteer groups that operate in parallel with the police and other state institutions to maintain public order. Volunteers assist with tasks such as spreading information, supporting evacuations, coordinating humanitarian and medical assistance, and restoring critical infrastructure after emergencies. A key aspect of this engagement is that it helps build trust between the police and citizens, as volunteering allows individuals to take direct responsibility for maintaining order in their communities.

During crises, the Baltic States make extensive use of social media to communicate with the public. Real-time updates about security measures, advice, and instructions are posted on official social media accounts of police and other relevant authorities. This method ensures the efficient dissemination of critical information and facilitates prompt feedback from the public. This approach is also being adopted in Ukraine, where citizens can now directly reach the police to ask questions or submit complaints.

## CONCLUSIONS

This doctoral thesis, *“Evaluating police accountability and citizen rights in war contexts: a comparative analysis of Latvia, Lithuania, and Ukraine,”* explores how law enforcement agencies adapt to military conflict. This process is multifaceted, involving both organizational changes and shifts in management strategies to address public order and citizen behavior. A key focus is the efficiency of law enforcement, which requires careful monitoring during times of external threats and internal instability. Based on the analysis of relevant legislation, legal acts from Lithuania, Latvia, Ukraine, the EU, and other sources, we conclude:

### **1. Evolution of Police Management Strategies and Public Trust**

The study confirms that police institutions in Ukraine, Latvia, and Lithuania have undergone critical transformations in their management strategies in response to military crises. These changes – primarily technical and organizational – have allowed for basic continuity in policing functions. However, public trust is not achieved through structural shifts alone. It also depends on transparency, consistent communication, and demonstrable adherence to public service values. Effective management during war requires a dual focus: operational efficiency and legitimacy in the eyes of the population.

### **2. Structural Transformations in Ukraine**

Ukrainian law enforcement has experienced substantial organizational restructuring due to security threats, including the establishment of decentralized units and collaboration with local volunteer groups. Positive outcomes are evident in regions where reforms were implemented locally and were community-oriented. These transformations, though uneven across the country, have increased public engagement and improved the image of police forces in affected areas. Nevertheless, challenges remain in terms of consistency and long-term sustainability.

### **3. Comparative Analysis of Reforms and Human Rights Standards**

While all three countries have implemented police reforms, Latvia and Lithuania have been more consistent in aligning their practices with national and international human rights standards. These include institutional safeguards, legal protections, and citizen-oriented policies. In contrast, Ukraine’s efforts, although improving, are often hampered by wartime constraints, regional disparities, and political instability. A clear need remains to harmonize reform strategies with international norms and to ensure civilian oversight, particularly during emergency governance.

### **4. Oversight and Control Mechanisms**

All three countries have introduced institutional oversight bodies; however, their development and effectiveness vary significantly. Latvia and Lithuania benefit from mature, independent mechanisms that facilitate accountability and enhance public trust. Ukraine’s oversight system, while evolving, lacks sufficient transparency and citizen involvement. Strengthening independent monitoring institutions, broadening civil society participation, and creating accessible complaint channels are essential for Ukraine to close the gap.

### **5. Balancing National Security and Individual Rights**

A recurring theme in the study is the inherent tension between maintaining national security and upholding individual rights. This dilemma becomes particularly acute in conflict settings, where emergency powers may overshadow civil liberties. The research shows that excessive policing, without adequate legal safeguards, risks violating fundamental rights and eroding public confidence. Striking a balance requires continuous judicial oversight, a clear legal framework, and regular evaluations of police actions in wartime.

### **6. Public Trust and Legal Reform**

Public trust in law enforcement during and after conflict is influenced by several factors, including legal clarity, socio-economic stability, and regional implementation of reforms. In Latvia and Lithuania, steady progress in legal reform and rights-based policing has yielded higher levels of trust. Ukraine, while making notable progress, must ensure that legislative

efforts are not only well-intentioned but also effectively implemented at all administrative levels, especially in conflict-prone regions.

### **7. Impact of Media and Public Opinion**

Media and public communication play a crucial role in shaping perceptions of the police. Latvia and Lithuania have leveraged traditional and digital media to portray law enforcement as transparent and accountable. Ukraine, meanwhile, has made increasing use of digital platforms and social media for real-time citizen engagement. However, public responsiveness, especially in terms of addressing feedback and complaints, must be strengthened to reinforce the credibility of these initiatives.

This research confirms that the successful adaptation of law enforcement to wartime conditions requires more than reactive restructuring. It necessitates a comprehensive, rights-based approach grounded in transparency, community cooperation, and independent oversight. Latvia and Lithuania provide instructive examples of institutional resilience and rights-based policing, which Ukraine can adopt and tailor to its complex wartime context. Continued reform efforts in Ukraine – supported by legal harmonization, public participation, and media engagement – are vital for restoring public trust and ensuring the long-term legitimacy of law enforcement institutions in post-conflict society.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of this thesis lead to a set of practical recommendations aimed at enhancing the effectiveness of the police accountability system, strengthening human rights guarantees, and improving law enforcement practices during states of emergency or martial law. These proposals focus on the legislative changes needed to ensure better transparency, human rights protection, and law enforcement effectiveness under extreme conditions.

### **UKRAINE: Strengthening Police Accountability and Human Rights Protection**

#### **1. Establish an independent oversight body for police actions.**

**Draft Amendment to the Law of Ukraine “On the National Police” – Article 18.**

**Current Article 18** (summary):

*“Outlines general rights and duties of police officers during normal and extraordinary situations”.*

**Proposed revised wording of Article 18 (new version):**

#### **Article 18. Actions of police under special legal regimes (amended).**

(1) During martial law, a state of emergency, or other special legal regimes, police officers shall act strictly within the framework of the Constitution of Ukraine, this Law, and international treaties ratified by Ukraine concerning human rights and humanitarian law.

(2) The National Police shall ensure that all operations involving civilians are based on the principles of legality, necessity, and proportionality. Any use of force shall be duly documented, and access to independent human rights monitors shall be provided.

(3) The Parliamentary Commissioner for Human Rights (Ombudsman) shall be granted the right to conduct unscheduled visits to police institutions and temporary detention facilities during special legal regimes.

(4) The Ministry of Internal Affairs shall develop and maintain crisis communication protocols and digital monitoring systems for real-time reporting, documentation, and oversight of police conduct.

**Justification:** The establishment of such an oversight body would align with Ukraine’s commitment to transparency and accountability in law enforcement, as outlined in the Overarching Strategic Plan for Law Enforcement Reform (2023–2027).

#### **2. Enhance whistleblower protection and incentives**

**Draft Amendment to the Law of Ukraine “On Corruption Prevention” – Article 53.**

**Current content of Article 53** (summarized):

*“Establishes the rights and protection of whistleblowers who report corruption-related offenses”.*

**Proposed revised wording of Article 53 (amended):**

#### **Article 53. Protection of whistleblowers and encouragement mechanisms (amended)**

(1) A whistleblower shall be any individual who, in good faith, reports information about a corruption-related offense or serious misconduct committed by a public official, including members of law enforcement agencies.

(2) Whistleblowers shall be granted the following safeguards:

- Legal immunity from disciplinary, civil, or criminal liability related to the report;
- Protection from dismissal, demotion, harassment, or other forms of retaliation;
- The right to request anonymity and confidentiality, as managed by the National Agency on Corruption Prevention (NACP).

(3) In cases where a whistleblower's report leads to the discovery of serious misconduct or a criminal offense, the whistleblower may be eligible for a financial reward of up to 10 percent of the recovered funds or assessed damage, in accordance with procedures established by the Cabinet of Ministers.

(4) Law enforcement agencies shall not have the right to initiate disciplinary proceedings or investigative actions against whistleblowers without prior review and authorization by the NACP or the Prosecutor General's Office.

(5) The NACP shall maintain a national whistleblower registry (with respect for confidentiality) and prepare an annual report on whistleblower protection measures and outcomes.

**Justification:** Recent initiatives, such as the introduction of monetary rewards for whistleblowers, demonstrate Ukraine's commitment to combating corruption and promoting accountability within law enforcement agencies.

### **3. Develop and implement crisis communication protocols**

#### **Draft Amendment to the Law of Ukraine "On Civil Protection" – Article 31.**

**Current content of Article 31** (summarized):

*"Outlines the duties of executive bodies and local authorities in managing civil protection during emergencies".*

**Proposed revised wording of Article 31 (amended):**

#### **Article 31. Duties of executive authorities and local self-government bodies in the field of civil protection (amended)**

(1) Executive authorities and local self-government bodies shall ensure the coordination and functioning of the civil protection system, including planning, prevention, response, and recovery in emergency situations.

(2) The National Police of Ukraine, in coordination with the State Emergency Service and the Ministry of Internal Affairs, shall develop and implement standardized crisis communication protocols for use during states of emergency, martial law, or large-scale public threats.

(3) These protocols shall:

- Define communication responsibilities at each level of the police structure;
- Establish procedures for timely dissemination of accurate and verified information to the public;
- Utilize digital platforms, including official websites, social media, and emergency alert systems, to provide real-time updates;
- Include multilingual access where relevant and ensure accessibility for persons with disabilities.

(4) The Ministry of Internal Affairs shall monitor compliance with these communication protocols and submit annual reports to the Cabinet of Ministers and the Verkhovna Rada on their implementation and effectiveness.

**Justification:** Effective communication is crucial for maintaining public trust and cooperation during crises. Establishing clear communication protocols will enhance transparency and reduce the potential for misunderstandings.

### **LATVIA: Strengthening Police Accountability and Investigative Effectiveness**

#### **1. Strengthen independent investigative mechanisms**

**Draft Amendment to the "Law of the Republic of Latvia on the State Police" – Section 7.**

**Current wording of Section 7** (simplified):

*"The State Police shall perform investigative functions and cooperate with other institutions in maintaining public order and security."*

**Proposed revised wording of Section 7 (new version):**

**Section 7. Functions of the state police (amended)**

(1) The State Police shall perform preventive, operative, and investigative functions to ensure public order, protect individuals and property, and prevent and investigate criminal offenses.

(2) Allegations of police misconduct, including those involving high-ranking officers or criminal acts committed by members of the police force, shall be investigated independently by the Internal Security Bureau (ISB), which shall act autonomously and without interference from the State Police or Ministry of the Interior.

(3) The Internal Security Bureau shall have unrestricted access to documentation, evidence, and personnel necessary for the effective execution of its mandate.

(4) The ISB shall report its findings to the Prosecutor General's Office and to the Parliamentary Committee on Human Rights and Public Affairs. Summary findings may be published, excluding information that compromises ongoing investigations or personal data protection.

**Justification:** The ISB's role in investigating police misconduct has been recognized as a critical component of ensuring accountability within Latvia's law enforcement agencies.

**2. Address conflicts of interest in internal investigations**

**Draft Amendment to the "Law of the Republic of Latvia on the State Police" – Article 8.**

**Current content of Article 8 (summarized):**

*"Describes internal disciplinary and investigative procedures within the police structure."*

**Proposed new wording of Article 8 (amended):**

**Article 8. Internal investigations and disciplinary proceedings (amended)**

(1) Internal investigations concerning police misconduct shall be conducted in accordance with the principles of legality, impartiality, and transparency.

(2) A police officer may not participate in the investigation of a case involving a colleague from the same structural unit or involving a superior or subordinate, if such participation creates a risk of partiality, bias, or conflict of interest.

(3) In all cases involving serious misconduct, the investigation shall be referred to the Internal Security Bureau (Iekšējās drošības birojs), which shall act independently of the police chain of command.

(4) The procedures and criteria for identifying conflicts of interest and reassigning investigations shall be regulated by the Cabinet of Ministers.

**Justification:** Independent investigations are essential for maintaining public confidence in law enforcement agencies and ensuring impartiality in the handling of complaints.

**3. Standardize training and professional development**

**Draft Amendment to the "Law of the Republic of Latvia on the State Police" – Article 6.**

**Current content of Article 6 (summarized):**

*"Outlines general duties and obligations of police officers".*

**Proposed new wording of Article 6 (amended):**

**Article 6. Duties and obligations of the police (amended)**

(1) In the performance of their duties, police officers shall respect and protect the rights and freedoms of individuals, maintain public order, prevent and investigate criminal offenses, and assist in emergency situations as required by law.



(2) The State Police shall ensure that all officers, regardless of rank or assignment, undergo standardized and mandatory training programs on a regular basis. These programs shall include, but not be limited to:

- Fundamentals of human rights and their protection under national and international law;
- Ethical standards in police work and mechanisms for accountability;
- Crisis management, including communication, de-escalation, and use-of-force protocols in high-risk situations.

(3) The Ministry of the Interior shall approve and supervise the implementation of such training programs, and shall publish annual reports on training participation and outcomes.

**Justification:** Regular and comprehensive training ensures that officers are equipped to handle complex situations while upholding human rights and ethical standards.

## **LITHUANIA: Strengthening Police Accountability and Human Rights Protection**

### **1. Enhance public oversight of police activities.**

#### **Draft Amendment to the Law on the Police of the Republic of Lithuania – Article**

**6.**

**Current Article 6 (summary):**

***“Defines police functions: public order protection, crime prevention, assistance to individuals, etc”.***

**Proposed revised wording of Article 6 (new version):**

#### **Article 6. Functions of the Police (amended)**

(1) The police shall ensure public order and safety, protect the life, health, rights and freedoms of individuals, prevent and investigate criminal offenses and administrative violations, and assist persons in cases prescribed by law.

(2) During a state of emergency or martial law, the police shall act in accordance with the principles of legality, necessity, proportionality, and respect for fundamental human rights. All police actions must be documented, and access to independent oversight mechanisms shall be ensured.

(3) The Police Department, in cooperation with the Seimas Ombudsperson’s Office and the Public Oversight Commission, shall provide regular reports on the legality of police actions taken during extraordinary legal regimes.

(4) The Ministry of the Interior shall adopt guidelines for crisis communication and training programs aimed at improving human rights protection and police accountability under emergency conditions.

**Justification:** Public oversight is a fundamental aspect of democratic policing, ensuring that law enforcement agencies remain accountable to the communities they serve.

### **2. Implement digital tools for transparency**

#### **Draft Amendment to the “Law of the Republic of Lithuania on the Police” – Article**

**14.**

**Current content of Article 14 (summarized):**

***“Describes the duties of police officers when interacting with individuals, including use of force, identity verification, and proper behavior”.***

**Proposed new wording of Article 14 (amended):**

#### **Article 14. Interaction Between Police Officers and the Public (amended)**

(1) Police officers, in performing their duties, shall act in accordance with the principles of legality, proportionality, respect for human dignity, and transparency.

(2) In all interactions with members of the public during police checks, stops, detentions, or use of force, officers shall be equipped with and use body-worn cameras or equivalent digital recording tools to ensure objective documentation of events.

(3) The data collected from these devices shall be stored, processed, and accessed in accordance with the Law on Personal Data Protection, and may be used as evidence in administrative or criminal proceedings, as well as for the evaluation of officer conduct.

(4) The Police Department under the Ministry of the Interior shall establish the technical requirements, operational procedures, data retention periods, and access rules related to the use of such recording equipment.

(5) In cases where the use of body-worn cameras is not possible due to technical or security reasons, officers must provide a written explanation immediately following the incident.

**Justification:** The use of digital tools enhances transparency, provides objective evidence in cases of disputes, and promotes accountability within law enforcement agencies.

### **3. Strengthen legal framework for human rights protection**

#### **Draft Amendment to the “Law of the Republic of Lithuania on the Police” – Article 6**

**Current content of Article 6** (summarized):

*“Defines the general functions and principles of police activity.”*

**Proposed new wording of Article 6 (amended):**

**Article 6. Principles of Police Activities and Human Rights Compliance (amended)**

(1) Police activities shall be carried out in accordance with the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania, laws and other legal acts, as well as ratified international treaties.

(2) The police must, in all circumstances, respect and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms as enshrined in the European Convention on Human Rights, the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and other binding international instruments.

(3) During a state of emergency or martial law, police actions must comply with the principles of legality, necessity, and proportionality, and may be restricted only to the extent strictly required by the situation, in line with applicable derogation provisions under international law.

(4) The Police Department shall ensure that police officers receive ongoing training on international human rights obligations, and shall develop internal guidelines to ensure compliance during emergency legal regimes.

**Justification:** Aligning national legislation with international human rights standards reinforces the commitment to protecting individuals' rights and freedoms, even during exceptional circumstances.

These recommendations, along with the specific legislative amendments proposed for Ukraine, Latvia and Lithuania are aimed at enhancing police accountability, protecting human rights, and improving law enforcement practices during states of emergency or martial law. Implementing these changes will contribute to building public trust, ensuring effective policing, and aligning national practices with international standards, particularly in the context of wartime and crisis management.

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