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Particularities of the Organization and Functioning of the Local Police Service in Scheia, Suceava County

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Abstract: *This article aims to analyze the organizational and operational particularities of the Local Police Service in the commune of Şcheia . Confronted with numerous issues related to public order and safety, the local administration in Şcheia was compelled to establish a public service to deter, halt, and prevent criminal acts that endangered the safety of its residents. By examining specific indicators related to activities for preventing and combating offenses and crimes, crime detection and sanctioning, and collaboration with other institutions, this article demonstrates that the Local Police Service in Şcheia serves as a positive model for a public service created to fulfill the public interest of a local community. Although the establishment of this local police service required a significant financial commitment, it has proven to be a long-term solution for stabilizing and enhancing citizen safety and for protecting public and private property within the administrative area (UAT).*

Keywords: *Local Police Service; public services; local community; implications of decentralization.*

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Introduction

Today, Şcheia is one of the most developed communes in our country. The area's economic growth is largely due to various small and medium-sized businesses active in fields such as commerce, wood processing, and the food industry.

The initial steps to establish a local police service in Şcheia were taken at the beginning of 2017, when the decision-making authority of the administrative-territorial unit (UAT) resolved to create this public service in response to identified needs for community safety and protection. The need for this service arose from a high crime rate within the commune. This situation saw an upward trend with the increase in the local population of the Roma community. Numerous home thefts, extensive property damage—often exceeding the value of the stolen goods—and inconclusive police investigations led to an unprecedented scenario in which local authorities were compelled to manage the issue directly. The addition of patrols from the Ministry of Internal Affairs provided a temporary improvement, curbing criminal activity to some extent; however, it failed to meet the expectations of the commune's residents, whose patience, tolerance, and understanding had been pushed to the limit. Consequently, the decision was made to establish a local police service as a long-term solution to stabilize and improve citizen safety and protect public and private property within the UAT. (Law on Local Police No. 155/2010). In the fall of 2017, a competition was held to appoint a head for the service, followed by the recruitment of the full team of local police officers.

Organization of the Şcheia local police service

The Şcheia Local Police Service is a decentralized public service within the organizational structure of the Şcheia Commune Town Hall, directly subordinated to the executive authority of the commune. (Article 76, Administrative Code). The service is led by a retired colonel with over 20 years of military experience and a graduate of the "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" Police Academy in Bucharest. The Local Police headquarters was strategically located in the village of Şcheia, adjacent to the Communal Police Post and the Şcheia Town Hall, and near the local middle school. (Website of Scheia Commune Hall, Organization chart of the Scheia Commune Hall Institution)

Initially, the service comprised 11 positions, with 10 operational roles and 1 leadership role. By 2023, due to the commune's population

growth exceeding 13,000 residents, two additional positions were added, bringing the total to 13 positions, two of which remain vacant (National Institute of Statistics, Population of Şcheia Commune).

Regarding the professional profiles of Şcheia's local police officers, three have degrees in law, one in economics, and one in public administration, while more than half are specialized in other fields, such as history and geography. It is notable that over half of the officers hold higher education degrees (8 officers), while only 3 have secondary-level education.

Table no. 1. Professional Profile of Şcheia Local Police Officers

Field of Study	**Number of Local Police Officers (Şcheia Commune)**
Legal Studies	3
Administrative Studies	1
Economic Studies	1
Other Fields	6

Source: Internal Data of the Şcheia Local Police Service

The age profile of the service shows that it is primarily composed of young officers. The most represented age group is 23-33 years, with six officers; followed by the 33-43 age group with two officers and the 53-63 age group with three officers.

Table no. 2. Age Profile of Şcheia Local Police Officers

Year of Birth	**Number of Local Police Officers (Şcheia Commune)**
1960-1970	3
1980-1990	2
1990-2000	6

Source: Internal Data of the Şcheia Local Police Service

Regarding gender representation, as shown in the table below, the service has a significant gender imbalance: of all local police officers, only one is female, with the male gender being predominant.

Table no. 3. Gender Profile of Şcheia Local Police Officers

Gender	**Number of Local Police Officers (Şcheia Commune)**
Male	10
Female	1

Source: Internal Data of the Şcheia Local Police Service

In terms of professional ranks held by the officers, more than half have over five years of experience in their field. Three have up to three years of experience, one officer is in the probationary period, and one has more than seven years of experience.

Table no. 4. Professional Rank Number of Local Police Officers (Şcheia Commune)

Professional Rank	Number of Local Police Officers (Şcheia Commune)
Probationary	1
Assistant	3
Principal	6
Senior	1

Source: Internal Data of the Şcheia Local Police Service

Technical and financial status of the service

Establishing the service required a significant financial investment, covering not only staff salaries but also essential equipment for effective operation. The local police received substantial budget allocations, particularly in its early years, for setting up its headquarters, purchasing furniture, and funding professional training. To facilitate service operations and ease the burden on the local budget, external funding was sought. In 2019, with the aid of European funds, the service was able to acquire three vehicles equipped with necessary specialized equipment, while logistics, uniforms, and other gear were financed from the local budget. Additionally, employee salaries have continued to be a financial demand on the local budget, as shown in the table below. (calculate conform Law No. 153 of June 28, 2017, Decision No. 69/2023 of the Constitutional Court, Law No. 103 of April 18, 2023)

Table no. 5. Base Salaries as of December 2023, per Legal Requirements

No.	Position	Class	Professional Rank	Pay Grade	Education Level	Base Salary	Meal Allowance
1	Head of Service	I				8.970	48 lei/day
2	Local Police Officer	III	Principal	2	Secondary	4.818	48 lei/day
3	Local Police Officer	I	Asistent	3	Higher	6.918	48 lei/day
4	Local Police Officer	III	Principal	5	Secondary	5.314	48 lei/day
5	Local Police Officer	I	Principal	2	Higher	4.688	48 lei/day
6	Local Police Officer	III	Principal	2	Secondary	4.817	48 lei/day
7	Local Police Officer	I	Asistent	2	Higher	4.618	48 lei/day
8	Local Police Officer	I	Asistent	1	Higher	5.837	48 lei/day
9	Local Police Officer	I	Principal	2	Higher	7.177	48 lei/day
10	Local Police Officer	III	Principal	5	Secondary	5.314	48 lei/day

Source: Internal Data of the Şcheia Local Police Service

Activities for prevention and combating of ofenses and crime within the commune of Şcheia

A key focus of the Şcheia Local Police Service has been the increased effort to detect and combat offenses and crime in Şcheia, aiming to improve citizen safety. The establishment of the local police was grounded in the goal of reducing crime rates and creating a safe environment for residents.

To prevent activities that could disrupt public order and peace, local officers conduct regular foot patrols throughout the commune, as well as joint patrols with the Şcheia Communal Police, predominantly at night. These patrols focus on monitoring high-traffic areas to identify individuals soliciting public assistance, as well as churches, parks, and playgrounds.

Additionally, patrols monitor abandoned vehicles on public property and discourage jaywalking.

In collaboration with representatives from the Şcheia Town Hall, initiatives are undertaken to prevent illegal waste dumping, detect unauthorized public commercial activity, and ensure that businesses comply with operating license requirements and working hours. As shown in the graph below, a comparative analysis of the entire period indicates that identity checks are about four times more frequent than stakeouts. Warnings totaled 2,934, with only 8.5% issued in writing, underscoring an emphasis on prevention over punitive measures.

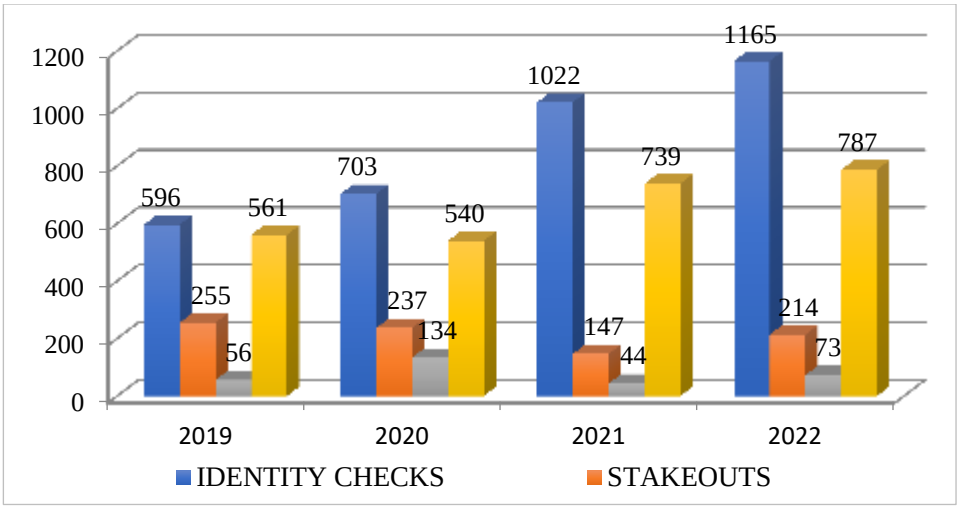


Figure no. 1. A comparative graphical representation of the number of identity checks, stakeouts, and written versus verbal warnings issued by Şcheia's Local Police from 2019 to 2022.
Source: Internal Data of the Şcheia Local Police Service

An essential aspect of the service's efficiency is its responsiveness to citizen complaints and reports, which have gradually increased, especially since 2021. Initially, complaints were fewer than 100 annually, but 2022 marked the peak in resident-reported issues, a sign of rising public engagement with local authorities. While complaint volumes remain modest relative to Şcheia's population, they reflect growing public trust. This trust is seen as a critical performance indicator, encouraging ongoing professional development among officers to build credibility through integrity and impartiality.

By considering citizen trust as a key performance indicator for both institutions and public services, we can analyze the graphic representation below to observe that the local police service is moving in the right

direction. This progress aligns with its primary goal of serving the public interest of citizens within the local administrative unit.

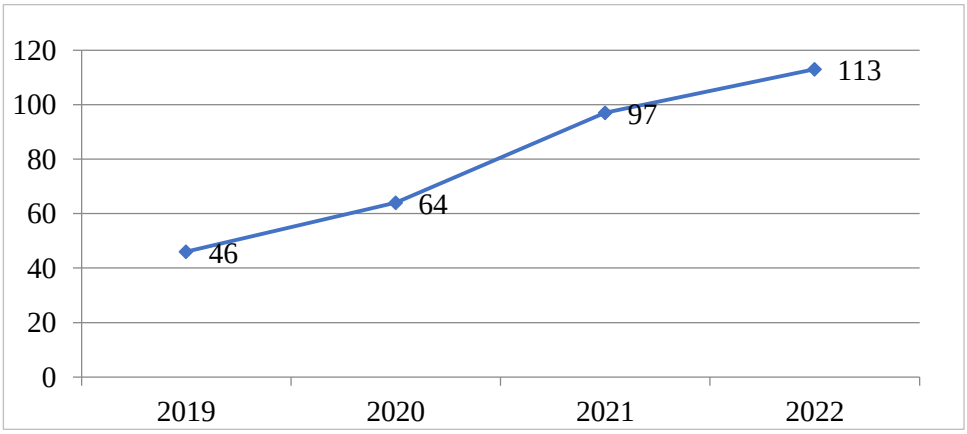


Figure no. 2. The trend in citizen complaints from 2019 to 2022
Source: Internal Data of the Şcheia Local Police Service

Crime detection and sanctioning activitaties

The Local Police Service's efforts in crime detection have led to the discovery of 19 criminal acts over the reviewed period. This is relatively low when compared to the rate of contraventions due to limitations in resources and investigative competencies, which are primarily within the jurisdiction of the national police. Local officers concentrate on maintaining public order, environmental protection, commercial regulation, and construction discipline. While there is some collaboration with national police on public order and environmental protection, construction and commercial discipline remain the exclusive domain of the local police, as national forces lack jurisdiction in these areas.

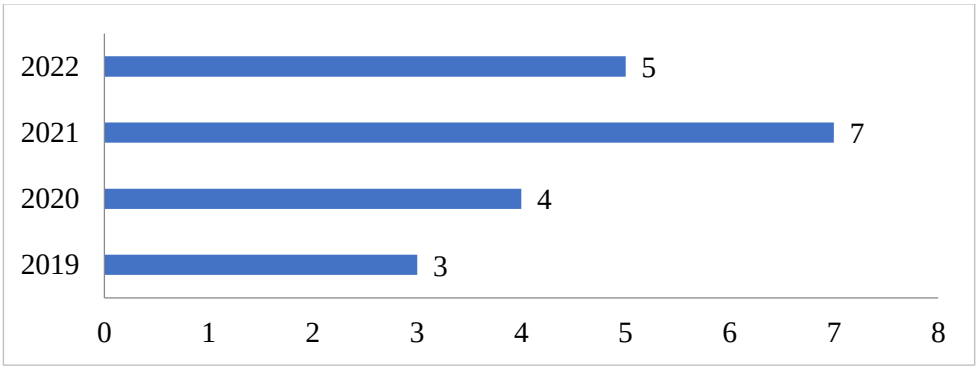


Figure no. 3. The number of criminal offenses identified by the Local Police from 2019 to 2022
Source: Internal Data of the Şcheia Local Police Service

Regarding the reports of contraventions, Figure 4 highlights a significant fluctuation in their numbers during the period from 2019 to 2022. In 2019, the number of reports was 101, followed by a slight increase in 2020, correlated with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, during which the non-compliance of the population with the new measures resulted in a higher number of reports. During this time, the local police closely collaborated with the Ministry of Internal Affairs, also acting to enforce health restrictions. In 2021, the number of reports dropped drastically due to strict isolation measures and the fear induced by the high level of infections, which reduced public movement and, consequently, contraventions. After the lifting of restrictions, contraventions increased again, culminating in 2023 with the highest number of reports during the analyzed period, as normal activities resumed.

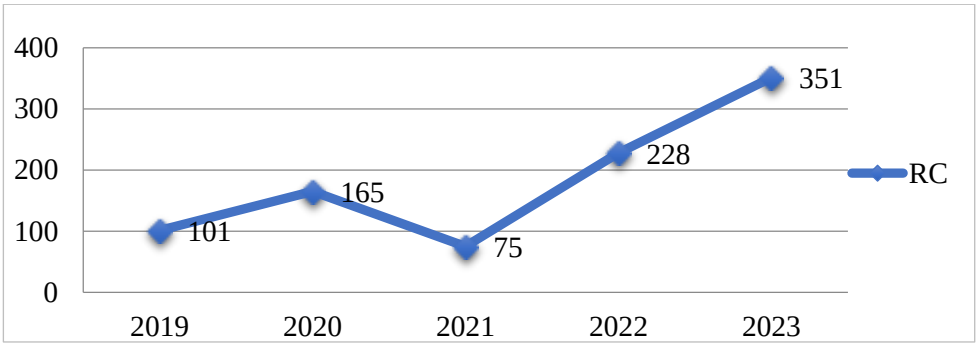


Figure no. 4. The evolution in the number of reports from 2019 to 2022
Source: Internal Data of the Şcheia Local Police Service

It is worth mentioning that not all reports concluded with monetary penalties; many were resolved through warnings, reflecting the predominantly preventive orientation of the local police's activities. The amount of fines, presented in Figure 5, indicates that their value remained below 300,000 lei in each analyzed year. However, in 2022, the total amount of fines imposed increased significantly, surpassing the total from the first three analyzed years by almost four times, marking the effects of the return to usual post-pandemic activities and the intensification of contraventional activities within the community.

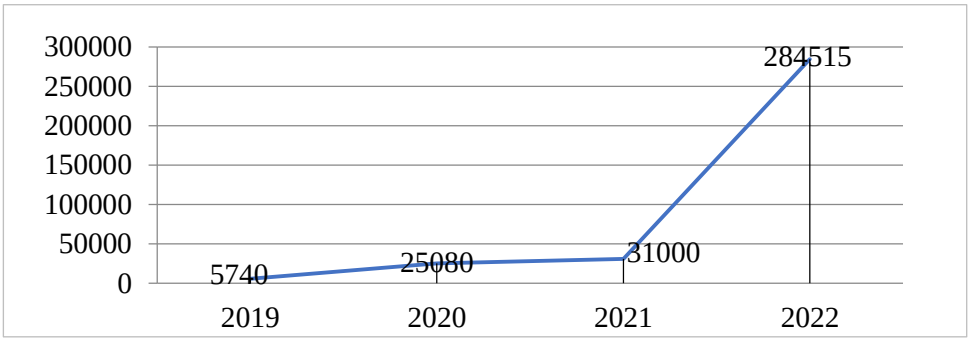


Figure no. 5. Graphical representation of the amount of fines imposed during the period 2019-2022
Source: Internal data of the Local Police Service of Şcheia

Regarding the areas in which reports of contraventions were made, it is clear that the main contraventions involved disturbing public order, with a total of 250 reports filed, peaking in 2023. This situation is not surprising, considering the issues faced by the local community that required the presence of local police in the analyzed administrative territorial unit. Public traffic-related contraventions are also prominent, with 195 reports filed; those filed during the pandemic were close in number, totaling 167. There is a certain parity between the reports filed in the fields of environment, commerce, and construction discipline, where an average of 98 reports were filed. In the latter mentioned field, the activity of detecting contraventions began in 2022. This situation arose due to the delineation of the service into activity compartments, with local police assigned to specific areas of activity. From the analyzed graph, we can deduce the necessity of this service in the locality, and at the same time, we can appreciate, from one perspective, the performance of the activities carried out by these officials, as evidenced by the constant volume of work of the service personnel, all of which are also reflected in the graph below.

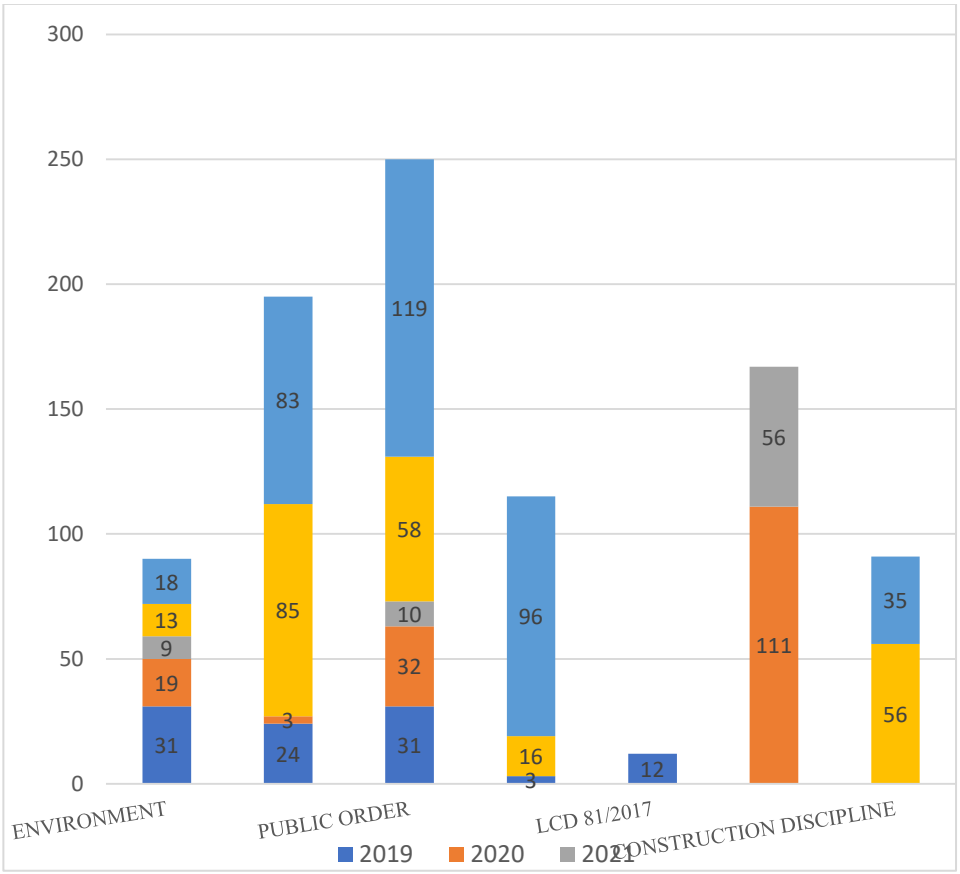


Figure no. 6. Situation by areas of interest for the reports filed during the period 2019-2023
Source: Internal data of the Local Police Service of Şcheia

Collaboration activities

In terms of collaboration with other institutions, the service primarily conducts activities with structures of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MAI), particularly with the Suceava County Police Inspectorate and the Suceava County Gendarmerie Inspectorate; as well as with institutions such as the County Directorate for Child Protection, through the specialized department of the Şcheia Commune City Hall. Given that there is a significant Roma community in the TAU territory, specialized institutions at both the commune and county levels conduct educational and care activities, particularly for minors and vulnerable individuals of this ethnicity, who are

prone to a much higher degree of poverty and, consequently, to illicit activities. Local police officers are requested to be part of these local activities, contributing to the maintenance of public order and safety.

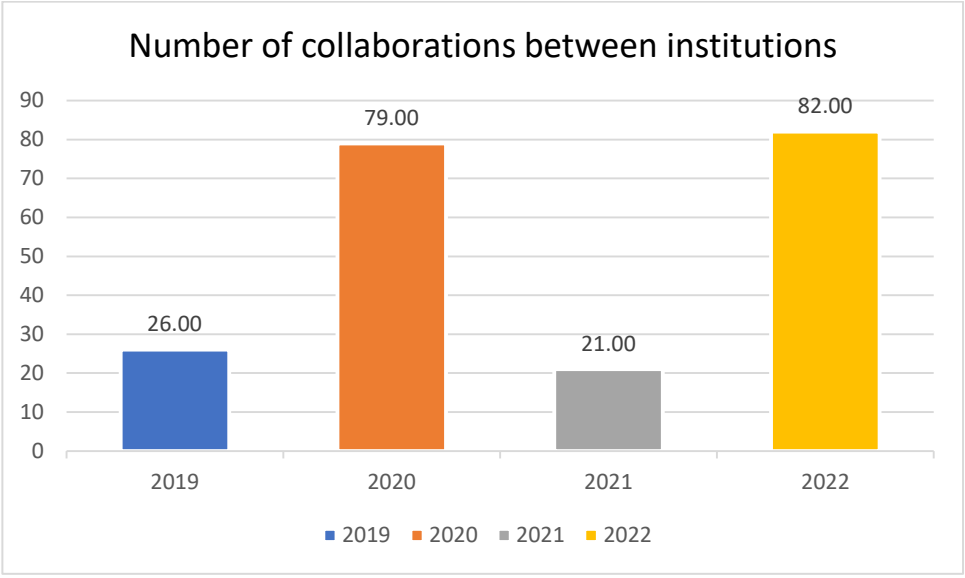


Figure no. 7. Graphical representation of activities conducted in collaboration with other institutions
Source: Internal data of the Local Police Service of Şcheia

As can be seen in the figure above, in the first year analyzed, the number of collaborations was low, one explanation being that the service was just beginning its operations, and institutional cooperation was largely limited to joint patrols with the communal police. The year 2020 was when the COVID-19 pandemic reached its peak with the declaration of a state of emergency, during which the local police service came under the operational coordination of the MAI. In addition to the usual specific activities, it took on the supervision of certain locations in the TAU territory, which were transformed into quarantine centers for individuals arriving from abroad. During this period, local police were also responsible for home checks of quarantined individuals and ensuring they had necessary supplies. Moreover, the mentioned year was an electoral year, and thus, the setup of polling stations, as well as the marking and implementation of movement routes within these stations, also fell under the responsibilities of local police officers.

In 2021, the number of collaborations with other state institutions decreased, mainly due to the stabilization of the pandemic situation. The year 2022 represented a peak in terms of collaborations. With the onset of the Russo-Ukrainian war, officials from the local police service faced new challenges, being involved alongside other authorized institutions in managing Ukrainian refugee citizens.

Conclusions

The possibility of decentralizing certain public services of local interest has allowed public administration authorities to better and more effectively satisfy the interests of the communities they represent. Thanks to the existence of an appropriate legislative framework that allowed for autonomous management of public services at the local level, the fulfillment of the needs of community members has seen gradual improvement. A modern principle of organizing and functioning local administration, decentralization has brought decision-making closer to its beneficiaries, contributing to the efficiency of the services provided. This was also observable in our work through the analysis conducted on the Local Police Service of the Şcheia Commune. Confronted with numerous issues related to public order and safety, the local administration was compelled to establish a public service to deter, stop, and prevent criminal acts that threatened citizens' safety. Created at the insistence of community members, whose patience had been stretched to the limit, the service has largely resolved their problems, which could not be addressed by territorial authorities, despite expressed efforts and good intentions. Given that a significant number of citizens of Roma ethnicity coexist in the locality, the incidence of crimes and contraventions is much higher compared to other localities.

The Local Police Service of the Şcheia Commune represents a positive model of a service created to satisfy the public interest of a local community. As we observed in the article, the work of the officials who make up this service is complex. By analyzing the indicators presented in the article, we can best observe the fulfillment of the main purpose for which the service was created, as reflected in the graph regarding the areas in which contravention reports were filed. By far, the leading offenses pertained to disturbances of public order and safety, which is not surprising given the issues present at the level of the administrative unit. It is encouraging that the necessity of having local police presence in the locality has been confirmed. There are many vocal criticisms and grievances regarding the overextension of the administrative apparatus, not only at the local level but throughout the country. Thus, the establishment of a service like the one analyzed, which

entails significant funding from the local budget, places additional pressure on local authorities. They must justify the appropriateness and relevance of the service, which in our case was not necessary since citizens directly requested the presence of the local police in the TAU area.

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