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# The Local Police in Romania: Role, Competencies, and Controversies in Relation to the National Police

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**Abstract**: *The article critically analyzes the institutional role of the Local Police in Romania in relation to the responsibilities and competencies of the National Police, with a focus on the legal, functional, and operational distinctions between the two structures. The study highlights the fundamental differences in organization, subordination, and areas of intervention, as well as the ways in which these aspects influence the coherence of law enforcement at both the local and national levels. In the context of an ambiguous and often insufficiently harmonized legislative framework, the paper identifies a series of recurring controversies regarding the overlap of responsibilities, the absence of unified oversight, and public perceptions concerning the efficiency of the Local Police. The paper also examines the challenges surrounding the professionalization of human resources within the Local Police, emphasizing the structural deficiencies in both initial and ongoing training systems, as well as the lack of uniform standards for evaluation and instruction. In this light, the analysis addresses the deficiencies observed in the training of local police officers, which negatively impact the quality of administrative action and the capacity to respond effectively in complex situations. Finally, the study formulates concrete proposals for institutional reform and the optimization of the normative framework, aiming to strengthen an efficient and equitable partnership between the Local Police and the National Police, in the spirit of the public interest and the rule of law.*

**Keywords:** *local police; national police; institutional competencies; professional training; legal controversies.*

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## Introduction

The Local Police represents an essential structure within the institutional framework of Romania, holding distinct responsibilities compared to the National Police. Although initially established to support local administrations in maintaining public order and enforcing municipal regulations, this institution has frequently been the subject of debates concerning its efficiency, the limits of its competencies, and its overlap with the structures of the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

In the context of the evolving local public administration and the growing need to strengthen public order and safety, the Local Police has emerged as a significant actor within the landscape of authorities tasked with upholding the rule of law. Primarily governed by Law no. 155/2010 (Parlamentul României, 2010) on the organization and functioning of the Local Police, this decentralized structure operates in a complex relationship with the National Police, which is subordinate to the Ministry of Internal Affairs and regulated by Law no. 218/2002 (Parlamentul României, 2002a) on the organization and functioning of the Romanian Police. The relationship between the two entities raises numerous legislative, institutional, and operational challenges, often marked by overlapping competencies, legal ambiguities, and dysfunctions in inter-institutional cooperation.

From a normative standpoint, the Local Police holds limited powers, restricted to areas expressly provided by law, such as public order and tranquility, construction discipline, environmental protection, and street-level commercial activities. However, legislative ambiguity and the lack of coherent harmonization among relevant legal instruments generate confusion regarding the hierarchy of responsibilities, limits of intervention, and accountability toward citizens. Moreover, administrative litigation case law and doctrinal opinions reflect a polarization of interpretations regarding the actual status of the Local Police, oscillating between the perception of an auxiliary authority and that of an autonomous structure with a law enforcement vocation.

Another critical aspect concerns the level of professionalization of Local Police personnel. In the absence of standardized systems for initial and continuous training, local police officers are often placed in challenging situations that require advanced legal, tactical, or psychological expertise. By contrast, the National Police benefits from a consolidated system of recruitment and education, conducted through specialized institutions such as the Police Academy or police agent training schools.

Within this framework, the present article aims to offer a comprehensive analysis of the role and competencies of the Local Police in relation to the responsibilities of the National Police, to highlight the existing institutional and legal dysfunctions, and to formulate concrete proposals for reform. These proposals seek to ensure functional complementarity between the two structures. Through a critical and legally grounded approach, the paper strives not only to clarify the status of the Local Police but also to optimize inter-institutional cooperation mechanisms in the service of public interest and the efficiency of local administration.

## The role and competencies of the Local Police

The Local Police is organized at the level of municipal administrations and holds responsibilities in areas such as public order, construction discipline, environmental protection, and traffic control on local roads. Unlike the National Police, which operates under the coordination of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Local Police functions under the authority of local public administration. This chapter analyzes the legal framework governing the activity of the Local Police, the main responsibilities conferred by Law no. 155/2010 (Parlamentul României, 2010), and the practical implementation of these competencies.

Within the institutional architecture of public administration in Romania, the Local Police is a specialized administrative body with responsibilities in maintaining public order and enforcing both local and national regulations, within the limits established by law. As a locally subordinated structure, under the authority of the mayor and financed from the budgets of local public administration authorities, the Local Police operates based on Law no. 155/2010 (Parlamentul României, 2010). It is vested with administrative, contraventional, and supervisory powers, but lacks prerogatives related to criminal investigation or coercive means specific to national public order forces.

The institutional role of the Local Police is to contribute to the maintenance of public order and safety in urban and rural communities through the surveillance of public spaces, the prevention and sanctioning of misdemeanors, and the support of local authorities in areas such as environmental protection, construction discipline, the management of traffic on locally administered roads, and the enforcement of social coexistence norms. Thus, the Local Police performs a subsidiary but complementary role in relation to the responsibilities assigned to the National Police, in accordance with the principles of subsidiarity and administrative decentralization.

Legally, the competencies of the Local Police are structured across six areas of intervention, clearly defined in Article 6 of Law no. 155/2010 (Parlamentul României, 2010):

1. Public order and tranquility, including the protection of public property and educational institutions;
2. Road traffic, limited to public roads administered by local councils;
3. Construction discipline and street advertising, particularly regarding the enforcement of building permits and the prevention of illegal constructions;
4. Environmental protection, by monitoring compliance with laws on sanitation, waste disposal, and the preservation of green spaces;
5. Commercial activity, through the verification of adherence to local regulations on street commerce, business hours, and commercial licenses;
6. Civil status records, especially in relation to domicile and residence compliance within the administrative-territorial unit.

It is important to note that the responsibilities of the Local Police are strictly administrative, as it is not part of the national system of defense, public order, and national security, according to Article 118 of the Romanian Constitution. Consequently, the local police officer is not vested with the exercise of public authority in the sense provided by the Criminal Code, particularly in relation to offenses such as assault against a public official (ultraj), and does not hold the same legal status as a police officer as defined by Law no. 360/2002 (Parlamentul României, 2002b) on the Statute of the Police Officer.

Furthermore, the lack of prerogatives in criminal investigation and the inability to apply procedural coercive measures—such as detention, search, or communication interception—clearly delineate the competencies of the Local Police from those of the National Police. This distinction is especially relevant in terms of avoiding jurisdictional overlaps, abuse of power, or unlawful interference with citizens' fundamental rights.

In conclusion, the role of the Local Police must be understood within an administrative framework, as an extension of local authority in the enforcement of coexistence norms and urban management regulations, without encroaching on the specific functions of law enforcement structures under the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Ongoing clarification of competencies, coupled with appropriate professional training and a coherent legal framework, are essential prerequisites for improving the effectiveness of this institution and strengthening public trust in local administrative governance.

## Differences between the Local Police and the National Police

An analysis of the differences between the Local Police and the National Police requires a multidimensional approach, as the two structures are organized and regulated on distinct legal foundations, with different institutional missions, unequal professional status, and essentially divergent competencies. This structural separation is crucial not only for the delineation of responsibilities but also for understanding the limits of intervention and accountability within the framework of the rule of law.

From a legal and organizational standpoint, the National Police is a specialized structure operating under the direct authority of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, organized at the central, territorial, and local levels, pursuant to Law no. 218/2002 (Parlamentul României, 2002a) on the Organization and Functioning of the Romanian Police. The National Police is part of the national system for public order and national security, entrusted with responsibilities such as crime prevention and suppression, detection of offenses, conducting preliminary procedures and, in certain cases, criminal investigations, as well as maintaining public order in cooperation with other security-related institutions.

In contrast, the Local Police is a civilian structure subordinated to local public administration authorities—namely, the mayors of municipalities, towns, or communes—according to Law no. 155/2010 (Parlamentul României, 2010). It is not an integral part of the national public order system and holds no competencies in the field of criminal investigation. Instead, it exercises administrative and contraventional functions with strictly local applicability. The funding, organization, and management of the Local Police are exclusively handled by local authorities, often resulting in significant disparities in terms of professionalization, logistical equipment, and operational efficiency depending on the financial resources available at the local level (Law no. 155/2010 on the Local Police).

From a functional perspective, the National Police holds general jurisdiction, whereas the Local Police has specialized and territorially limited jurisdiction (Parlamentul României, 2002a). The National Police may intervene across the entire national territory, with responsibilities in both urban and rural environments, while the Local Police operates exclusively within the administrative-territorial unit in which it was established. Furthermore, national police officers are vested with the exercise of public authority as defined by the Criminal Code, allowing them to apply coercive measures such as administrative detention, identity checks, handcuffing, or the use of police equipment, in accordance with the law. By contrast, local

police officers possess limited authority and may impose contraventional sanctions only in the specific domains expressly provided by law.

With regard to professional status and disciplinary regime, officers within the National Police are public servants with special status, regulated by Law no. 360/2002 (Parlamentul României, 2002b). They benefit from a unified system of recruitment, training, and professional evaluation conducted through institutions of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, such as the Police Academy and subordinate training schools. In comparison, local police officers are generally public servants or contract-based personnel, governed by Law no. 188/1999 (Parlamentul României, 1999) (subsequently repealed and incorporated into the Administrative Code), with no unified national framework for professional training and no disciplinary system adapted to the operational risks of field work.

Differences are also evident in terms of public perception and institutional legitimacy. The National Police is viewed as a state authority with essential duties in defending citizens' fundamental rights and freedoms, while the Local Police is often perceived as an auxiliary structure, with variable efficiency and limited involvement in high-risk situations. This perception is partially fueled by the absence of a national institutional evaluation framework and the lack of effective cooperation mechanisms with National Police structures.

In conclusion, the differences between the Local Police and the National Police are not merely organizational, but reflect essential legal, functional, and institutional distinctions. Clarifying these differences is necessary to prevent overlapping responsibilities, to establish clear procedures for inter-institutional cooperation, and to enhance the overall efficiency of the national public order system.

One of the most important distinctions between the Local Police and the National Police lies in institutional subordination and decision-making power in matters of public order and safety. While the National Police holds extensive responsibilities, including nationwide crime prevention and suppression, the Local Police focuses on enforcing local regulations and addressing administrative matters. In this chapter, we will compare the competencies of the two institutions, analyze the professional training level of their officers, and examine potential overlaps in responsibilities between the two structures.

## Controversies and challenges in the functioning of the Local Police

Since its establishment, the Local Police has been the subject of numerous controversies, ranging from the lack of uniform professional training for officers to cases of abuse of power and nepotism in recruitment. Additionally, limited resources and significant disparities between large municipalities and smaller towns have led to notable inconsistencies in the institution's effectiveness at the national level. This chapter will explore the main criticisms leveled against the Local Police, proposed reform measures, and prospects for improving its activity.

Although the Local Police was created with the intention of addressing the specific needs of local communities and partially decentralizing the responsibility for maintaining public order, its practical functioning has generated a series of persistent controversies, both regulatory and operational. These controversies arise mainly from the ambiguity of legal regulations, overlapping competencies with the National Police, the absence of a unified framework for professional training, and a relatively negative public perception regarding the effectiveness and authority of this structure.

One of the most controversial aspects concerns the overlap of responsibilities between the Local Police and the National Police, particularly in the areas of public order and traffic control. Although Law no. 155/2010 relatively clearly delineates the areas of intervention for the Local Police, in practice, there are numerous situations in which local officers act outside their scope of competence or, conversely, avoid assuming responsibilities by invoking a lack of clear legal prerogatives. The absence of well-defined institutional cooperation protocols and the lack of a functional hierarchy between the two structures frequently lead to authority conflicts, operational deadlocks, or unnecessary duplication of interventions.

A second major challenge is the uneven level of professionalization among Local Police personnel, which directly impacts the quality of administrative action and public trust. While National Police officers undergo centralized, standardized training in specialized institutions of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, local police officers are recruited and trained in a decentralized manner by local authorities, without access to a uniform national curriculum or a coherent system for evaluating professional competencies. This legal and structural gap has led to pronounced professional heterogeneity, with training levels and response capacities varying significantly from one locality to another, depending on available resources and administrative will.

In the same vein, one must mention the shortage of operational tools and technical equipment, which impairs the Local Police's ability to respond effectively in emergency situations or to cooperate meaningfully with public order structures. The lack of mobility assets, interconnected IT systems, and access to databases managed by the Ministry of Internal Affairs (such as population records or vehicle registries) significantly limits the effectiveness of interventions and creates dependency on other authorities, undermining the principle of local administrative autonomy.

Another critical issue is the absence of a coherent mechanism for oversight and accountability of the Local Police's activity. Unlike the National Police, which is subject to internal control by the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Public Prosecutor's Office, and, in some cases, the judiciary, the Local Police is controlled solely by the local authority that established it. This strict administrative subordination leaves room for political interference, a lack of objectivity in performance evaluation, and, in some cases, the abusive use of local law enforcement structures for electoral influence or intimidation purposes. Administrative practice has revealed numerous cases where Local Police positions have been filled based on non-transparent criteria, without adherence to meritocratic principles or minimal professional competence requirements.

Last but not least, public perception remains ambiguous and often critical with regard to the utility and authority of the Local Police. In the absence of coherent institutional visibility and effective public communication, the Local Police is perceived more as an auxiliary body with minor tasks—at times even as decorative or bureaucratic—rather than a genuine partner in ensuring citizen safety. This perception is fueled by the media coverage of abuse or incompetence cases, as well as by citizens' reluctance to turn to local officers in emergency situations.

In conclusion, the functioning of the Local Police is marked by a series of structural controversies and systemic challenges that require a profound rethinking of its legal and administrative framework. It is imperative to reform the organizational model, clarify the legal status, unify recruitment and training criteria, and establish an external and professional oversight mechanism to ensure institutional autonomy, efficiency in fulfilling its duties, and protection of the public interest.

## Professional training of Local Police officers – legal and practical framework

The professional training of Local Police officers is regulated by national legislation; however, unlike the National Police, it does not benefit from a unified and rigorous training system. According to Law no. 155/2010 (Parlamentul României, 2010) and its methodological norms, Local Police officers are required to attend training courses organized by accredited institutions. The duration and content of these courses vary, creating a significant discrepancy in the level of training among officers.

This chapter analyzes the minimum training requirements for Local Police officers, the certification process, and the extent to which the absence of a specialized training academy affects their competencies. It also compares the training of Local Police with that of the National Police, highlighting significant differences in professional standards and selection assessments.

The professional training of Local Police officers is a crucial element in ensuring the functionality and efficiency of the Local Police, given that its responsibilities require a minimum level of legal, administrative, tactical, and interpersonal skills. Nevertheless, the current regulatory framework fails to ensure uniform, coherent, and standardized training for local officers, resulting in a high degree of professional inequality and institutional vulnerability.

According to Article 20 of Law no. 155/2010 (Parlamentul României, 2010), Local Police officers are required to undergo initial and continuous training courses organized by the Ministry of Internal Affairs through the National Institute of Administration (INA) or other accredited providers. However, in the absence of uniform curricular standards, a centralized evaluation methodology, and indicators of professional performance, the training process is inconsistent, unstandardized, and often superficial. In practice, the content of these courses varies considerably from one center to another in terms of duration, curriculum, and evaluation requirements.

In contrast to officers from the structures of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, who undergo systematic training in specialized educational institutions (e.g., the "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" Police Academy or post-secondary police agent schools), Local Police officers do not benefit from an institution dedicated exclusively to their training. This lack of a specialized institution negatively affects professional coherence and the development of a shared organizational culture. The absence of a consolidated professional

identity is evident both in the officers' attitude toward their mission and in the public's perception of the Local Police.

Another important issue is the lack of an institutionalized career path within the Local Police. There is no national promotion framework, no standardized periodic evaluation, nor a mechanism for advancement based on competence and performance. Furthermore, continuous professional development is often treated as a formality, reduced to the accumulation of credits within a system lacking practical substance and relevance to real-life field conditions. Moreover, tactical, physical, and psychological training is almost non-existent or, at best, insufficient. Unlike officers of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, who are trained in intervention techniques, self-defense, and crisis management, Local Police officers rarely possess such knowledge and skills, which diminishes their ability to act in tense or dangerous situations. This deficiency affects both the personal safety of officers and the institutional credibility of the structure they belong to.

From a legal standpoint, it is important to note that current legislation does not provide a special regime for the training of Local Police officers but rather delegates this responsibility largely to local public administration authorities, which decide the relevance, budget, and content of training programs. This excessive decentralization, in the absence of clear and binding implementation norms, has led to significant disparities among various administrative-territorial units (ATUs), both in terms of the quality and frequency of professional training programs.

In conclusion, the professional training of Local Police officers requires strict, coherent, and centralized regulation that ensures a minimum level of competence nationwide, regardless of the financial capacity or political will of local authorities. The introduction of a unified framework for training, evaluation, and career advancement—alongside the establishment of a national institution dedicated to Local Police training—are essential directions for strengthening this structure and ensuring professional, equitable, and rule-of-law-compliant interventions.

## Deficiencies in the training of Local Police officers and proposals for improvement

Within the framework of an institutional structure still undergoing a process of maturation, the professional training of Local Police officers faces a series of systemic deficiencies that affect not only the efficiency of daily operations but also the coherence of the legal status of this entity within the public order architecture of Romania. The lack of uniform training, disparities in resources among administrative-territorial units, the absence of

national professional standards, and legislative ambiguities result in an uneven level of competence, weakening the Local Police's capacity to respond to contemporary challenges to community safety.

One of the most evident shortcomings is the absence of a mandatory national curriculum, regulated by a legal act of superior authority, clearly outlining the minimum competencies required to serve as a Local Police officer. Without a standardized framework, initial training varies significantly in duration, content, and rigor, often leading to superficial and fragmented instruction. Furthermore, many local authorities opt for short-term, ad hoc training programs delivered by accredited private providers, without ensuring content adapted to operational realities in the field.

Another structural issue is the deficiency in continuous professional training. The lack of physical and psychological preparedness is also a critical concern. Most Local Police officers do not benefit from regular physical training or instruction in self-defense and intervention techniques, which impacts their personal safety and operational response capacity. In addition, there is a lack of training in conflict communication, community mediation, and crisis management—skills essential in an urbanized and pluralistic society.

Regarding personnel recruitment, there is an inconsistent application of selection criteria. Although the law stipulates minimum conditions (such as education, work experience, and clean criminal record), there is no national framework outlining the necessary psychosocial skills and competencies. This allows for the hiring of individuals who may be unprepared or behaviorally and morally unsuited for public service. In many cases, the recruitment process is influenced by political considerations or discretionary criteria, further deepening the professionalism gap and damaging the institution's public image.

In this context, a series of urgent reform measures are necessary to standardize, professionalize, and enhance accountability in the training process of Local Police officers:

1. **adoption of secondary legislation** (such as a Government Decision or a joint order of the Ministry of Internal Affairs) to establish a national curriculum for initial and continuous training, with clear competency standards and uniform evaluation procedures.
2. **creation of an accreditation and oversight system** for training providers, based on clear quality criteria, trainer expertise, and the relevance of programs to the actual needs of communities.
3. **implementation of a merit-based career and promotion system**, including periodic evaluations and continuous knowledge updates, similar to the system applied within the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

4. **equipping Local Police officers with knowledge in administrative law, criminal law, and contraventional procedure**, as well as training in the use of modern technologies (body-worn cameras, reporting applications, integrated databases).

By implementing these proposals, a genuine professionalization of the Local Police can be achieved, contributing to increased public trust in this institution, improved cooperation with the National Police, and the delivery of competent, dignified, and effective interventions in the public space.

To address these challenges, a comprehensive reform of the Local Police training system is required. This chapter proposes solutions such as the implementation of standardized training protocols and the development of advanced modules in public safety and tactical response.

These sections complete the analysis and provide a clear perspective on the importance of Local Police officer training, highlighting both existing issues and the necessary solutions for the professionalization of this institution.

## Conclusions

An examination of the structure, competencies, and limitations of the Local Police in Romania reveals a complex reality, marked by institutional tensions, legislative gaps, and inconsistencies in the application of operational norms. Although the Local Police was originally conceived as a tool for the decentralization of public order—meant to bring authority closer to the citizen—in practice, it often functions as a marginalized entity, with poorly defined responsibilities and limited operational capacity.

In relation to the National Police, there are considerable differences in structure, training, authority, and public perception. This duality frequently results in overlapping competencies, legal ambiguities, and dysfunctions in interinstitutional cooperation. The lack of clear collaboration protocols and well-defined responsibilities contributes to inefficiencies in interventions, particularly in urban environments where both entities operate concurrently.

From a legal standpoint, the current regulatory framework is insufficiently aligned with on-the-ground realities. Law no. 155/2010 on the organization and functioning of the Local Police, although a significant legislative pillar, requires substantial updates to reflect the need for professionalization, accountability, and integration into the national public order system. Moreover, clear correlation with Law no. 218/2002 on the organization and functioning of the Romanian Police is needed in order to eliminate ambiguities in the exercise of competencies.

The deficiencies identified in the professional training of Local Police officers—from the absence of a specialized training school to inconsistencies in ongoing evaluation—highlight the urgent need for structural reform. An effective public order apparatus cannot rely on personnel who are inadequately trained, poorly motivated, or recruited based on non-professional criteria. Therefore, the professionalization of the Local Police must become a strategic objective, articulated through coherent public policies and sustainable budgets.

Based on this assessment, we propose the following directions for reform:

1. **revision and updating of Law no. 155/2010**, with a clear delineation of responsibilities, the establishment of a coherent institutional career framework, and integration into the national public order system through a unified legal framework shared with Ministry of Internal Affairs structures.
2. **establishment of a national authority** for the regulation, supervision, and training of the Local Police, empowered to develop unified policies, training programs, and professional activity control mechanisms.
3. **creation of an integrated national digital platform** for information exchange between the Local Police and the National Police, aimed at ensuring efficient and real-time operational cooperation.
4. **implementation of a unified system for career development, training, and evaluation**, including the establishment of a national training school for Local Police officers, under the auspices of the Ministry of Development or in partnership with the Ministry of Internal Affairs.
5. **adoption of a specific code of ethics for Local Police officers**, along with the establishment of joint ethics and disciplinary committees tasked with monitoring and intervening in cases of behavioral or administrative misconduct.

Ultimately, the strengthening of the Local Police should not be viewed as an alternative to the National Police, but rather as a complementary component capable of responding promptly and effectively to community needs within a coherent, responsible, and professional public order system. Only through an integrated, transparent, and competence-centered approach can the Romanian state restore public trust in this institution and transform the Local Police into a genuine guarantor of urban safety.

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