

Roger Schneeberger, Secretary General, CCJPD:

Developments affecting the police and the Swiss Security Alliance

Ladies and Gentlemen.

As you heard from our Chairman, the fight for funding is set to become even tougher than it already is.

We can either sit around complaining about that or attempt to make the best of what funding we do have and maximise synergies between security authorities. If I remember correctly what was said at our meetings in 2012 and 2013 as well as the comments made by Mrs Luukkonen, Finland is doing just that in a very systematic way.

However, it will be harder for us on account of our political structure as a confederation. Our security authorities are autonomous down to the local level in many areas as regards fulfilling their remit.

Each small unit makes its own decisions as to

- how best to organise its working processes,
- how to develop IT systems tailored to its working environment, and
- which technical aids are best suited to its work.

This approach is increasingly reaching its limits, and the need to work together is becoming ever clearer.

As has already been said, one reason for this is reduced funding, but there are others, including the growing complexity of tasks in ever more heavily networked fields such as cybercrime and organised crime, where we are seeing many more cases that span cantonal borders than we used to.

These cases are too demanding for smaller administrative units to cope with. This is why we need extensive data networking and, in many fields, shared strategies at all levels. Putting these into practice in our federalised country is a major challenge.

Across the various areas and operating frameworks, we have addressed lots of issues in recent years, including standardised legislation, recommendations for working closer together, joint governance, shared programmes and projects, and new forms of collaboration.

We need to build on much of this going forward. I would like to take a brief look at the three most important projects.

The first is the Swiss Security Alliance, which we presented to you at our last meeting. It is a mechanism for cooperation between all security authorities in Switzerland at all levels, headed by the federal Police Minister together with the Defence Minister, the Chairmen of the two intercantonal conferences for justice and police (Mr Käser) and the military, civil protection and fire services (Mr Gobbi, who joined us on our visit to Finland).

The Swiss Security Alliance is an important instrument for the cantons because it is their only opportunity to engage regularly and in a structured way with representatives of the national government on security policy issues.

It was set up in 2010 and is still in its pilot phase, which runs until the end of the year. It is currently under evaluation pending amendments to its remit, after which it is to be established as a firm fixture of the domestic security apparatus as of 1 January 2016.

You will hear more about it over the next few days, especially from its delegate André Duvillard, who will be speaking to you tomorrow morning.

Collaboration between all Swiss security authorities – police, armed forces, civil protection, fire, ambulance and rescue services – was the subject of the SVU 14, a national Security Alliance exercise last November.

The scenario used was a pandemic accompanied by an extended power cut. This was not a military exercise but was aimed primarily at testing how well federal and cantonal leaders work together. We concluded that we still have a lot of work to do in terms of leadership in a crisis situation. As expected, coordination within the federal system proved to be hugely difficult. We will hear more about that in tomorrow's first module.

Looking to the future, it is important that we learn from this exercise and admit that, while we may be well prepared to deal with regional crises, there remain a lot of questions to be answered and measures to be taken as regards major national crises.

Another area we will be focusing on in the coming years is coordinating police work. We have developed a programme over the past few years to harmonise federal and cantonal police IT systems, and it is gradually becoming established.

We want to harmonise the systems that are currently in place at the police authorities and develop new ones jointly through a programme structure that is funded by all cantons but allows each canton to choose which individual projects it collaborates on.

Most projects are started by a handful of cantons, generally the larger ones, with others buying in later on and bearing a share of the development costs after the fact once they see the finished system.

The first successful projects were a national weapons platform, of which all the cantons and the federal government are members, and Swiss ePolice, a virtual police station that allows people to report stolen bicycles, for example.

It is likely that we will also have to harmonise some of the working processes, or at least the deliverables in the long term if we really want to take advantage of synergies between police forces, but there are still a lot of barriers because it requires the cantons to give up much of their autonomy in fulfilling their police remit.

We have additionally launched a similar IT harmonisation programme for criminal prosecution. The aim here is to create an end-to-end electronic processing chain starting with the police and passing through public prosecutors and courts right up to sentence enforcement.

This is urgently needed because all Swiss authorities now use IT, but the degree of automation in transferring data between them is still very low.

In most cantons, criminal case data are entered manually into the system of each authority concerned.

However, IT is not the only area where we have to do more to unlock synergies. There are many others. With this in mind, we are planning an agreement between all police directors in Switzerland and the federal government.

It will provide a basis for more tasks to be handled jointly by several police forces, and for the shared procurement of vehicles, weapons and equipment. Another element of the agreement is a professional team tasked with planning and leadership for major events.

As you can see, there is a lot of work to do in a federal state like Switzerland in terms of coordination and harmonisation. This work will dominate the security field over the next decade. Its success will determine whether the cantons can avoid the centralisation of tasks at the federal level. This is one of their declared aims. We believe that there are plenty of advantages in our localised structures.

These include proximity to the population, the ability to react very quickly to new challenges and the competition between ideas that comes with federalism.

That said, we must take more opportunities to learn from each other and to adopt each other's best practices.

Some projects will of course fail, or perhaps will never even be started, for fear of their cost in spite of their obvious benefits. These will be moments when we think with a heavy heart of our friends in Finland, who have set up streamlined structures in recent decades, and overtaken us in some aspects of organisation and IT...

That will suffice for our introduction.

Now we would like to demonstrate that there is one area where Switzerland's regional diversity can only be a good thing: food.

Thank you for listening. I hope you enjoy our Swiss cuisine!