

Organizational identity and images of the Romanian Border Police in the international cooperation within FRONTEX Agency: Implications of structural organizational change

Claudia Lenuța Rus, Gabriel Vonaș, Lucia Rațiu, Adriana Băban
Department of Psychology, Babeș-Bolyai University (Romania)

RESEARCH FOCUS

This targeted study investigated the organizational identity and images of the Romanian Border Police in the international cooperation within the European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders of the Member States of the European Union Agency (FRONTEX Agency). Also, it investigated the implications of the structural re-organization of the Romanian Border Police from December 2011 on the image of this police force and its international cooperation within FRONTEX Agency.

Following these two major research aims, this study specifically aimed:

1. To analyze the content of the organizational identity and images of the Romanian Border Police on the international cooperation within FRONTEX Agency. This analysis was conducted based on Brown, Dacin, Pratt and Whetten's (2006) "viewpoints" of an organization: (a). organizational identity; (b). intended image, and (c). construed image.
2. To investigate how the intended image of the police force is transmitted by organizational actors to FRONTEX Agency.
3. To identify the organizational actors and the methods they use to obtain information about how the FRONTEX Agency views the Romanian Border Police in the international cooperation.
4. To analyse the discrepancies between organizational identity and intended image and how these discrepancies are managed
5. To identify the implications of the structural change on the organizational identity of the Romanian Border Police and its international cooperation within FRONTEX Agency.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Organizational identity is a flourishing domain among organizational theorists and researchers (Gioia, Prince, Hamilton, & Thomas, 2010). Literature on the concept of organizational identity revealed its importance in understanding organizations and explaining the interactions of these organizations with their environment and stakeholders (He & Brown, 2013). While there is a tremendous research on the individual and organizational outcomes of organizational identity, little is known about how police organizations define themselves (Jacobs, Christe-Zeyse, Keegan, & Pólos, 2008), how they construct and transmit their image about themselves to various stakeholders such as public, other institutions and police forces (Sillince & Brown, 2009).

The need to investigate these concepts in police organizations becomes more important in the context of economic crisis and public-spending cuts (He & Brown, 2013). Often, these environmental changes pressure police organizations to change.

Moreover, considering the challenge for Romania to access Schengen space and to be responsible for a major part of the European external borders, several changes in the public institutions, such as Romanian Border Police, took place in order to align to international practices. The Romanian Border Police states: it *“has constantly pursued - within the institutional transforming processes carried out in the last years - to set up a functional, modern institution, compatible with the similar structures from the E.U. Member States and capable to counter the cross-border crime phenomena efficiently”* (www.politiadefrontiera.ro). But few studies investigated how police organizations, mainly border police forces manage their identity and images after such organizational changes (Davis & Thomas, 2008).

DESIGN

This re-organization of the Romanian Border Police has been implemented in December 2011 according to Law No. 280/December 2011. After applying the law 25 management positions were reduced, certain structures were adjusted, approximately 12% of the staff was reduced.

The major modification introduced with this law was the aggregation of the County Inspectorates of the Romanian Border Police into five major Territorial Inspectorates and one structure called Coast Guard. The Coast Guard was established by unifying the Tulcea and Constanța County Inspectorates. The following five territorial inspectorates were created at the border with the neighbour countries: (1). the Territorial Inspectorate of Border Police Iași - border with Republic of Moldova; (2). the Territorial Inspectorate of Border Police Giurgiu - border with Bulgaria on Danube River; (3). the Territorial Inspectorate of the Border Police Timișoara – border with Serbia; (4). The Territorial Inspectorate of the Border Police Oradea – border with Hungary, and (5). the Territorial Inspectorate of the Border Police Sighetu Marmației – border with Ukraine.

These territorial units include territorial services, sectors and groups of ships, and they are subordinated to General Inspectorate of the Romanian Border Police. This structure has a coordinating and controlling role, and the responsibility for the overall activity of the subordinated structures.

Figure 1: *The structural re-organization of the Romanian Border Police according to Law 280/December 2011 (Source of photo: Romanian Border Police).*



The Romanian targeted study examines the implications of this structural change on the organizational identity and international cooperation of the Romanian Border Police within FRONTEX Agency. To identify and to understand these implications, it is important to examine the content of the organizational identity and images of the Romanian Border Police in the international cooperation within FRONTEX Agency before and after such structural changes happen.

We adopted a qualitative approach, collecting data from 21 police officers involved in international police cooperation missions conducted under the auspices of FRONTEX Agency. Data were collected using a semi-structured interview. The qualitative and quantitative analyses were used to analyze these data.

THE EXPECTED IMPLICATIONS

The findings revealed that police forces are organizations concerned about who they are and how they transmit and construct images about themselves to their stakeholders. Also, they provide understanding of how structural organizational changes may impact the organizational identity and international cooperation activity of the police forces.

The findings of this study provide a number of theoretical and practical implications. Thus, it highlighted:

- (1). How organizations, and mainly, police organizations define themselves, how they construct and transmit their image about themselves to stakeholders such as international police agencies.
- (2). How organizations manage the discrepancies between organizational identity and the intended image they want to transmit to stakeholders.
- (3). How structural organizational change affects identity and international cooperation of the organizations, mainly of the police forces.

References

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