

The Role of the Romanian Police in Ensuring Security in Educational Units

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Abstract: *The article analyzes the complex role of the Romanian Police in ensuring a safe environment in educational establishments by implementing preventive and countermeasures. It discusses the educational and information activities carried out in cooperation with educational establishments, aimed at preventing criminal acts, bullying and the use of prohibited substances. The article stresses the importance of raising awareness of the negative effects of school violence and proposes strategies to reduce them, emphasizing cooperation between specialized police structures, teachers, pupils and parents. By analyzing the risks associated with anti-social phenomena and highlighting educational campaigns and programs, the article provides an insight into the need for the active involvement of the Police in creating a safe educational climate. In conclusion, recommendations are made to strengthen the collaboration between the Police and educational institutions in order to increase the effectiveness of interventions and to protect the rights and safety of students.*

Keywords: *Romanian police; ensuring security; educational units.*

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Introduction

The importance of a safe school environment

Safety in the school environment is a defining element for the healthy and harmonious development of pupils, contributing to an educational climate conducive to learning. Educational establishments are more than just teaching spaces, they are also environments where pupils develop social skills and develop their personality, which is why protecting them from negative influences is a priority. The Romanian Police plays an active role in maintaining order and preventing phenomena that could jeopardize the physical and emotional safety of pupils and teaching staff. The authorities contribute, through their actions, to reducing the risks associated with violence, drug use and other anti-social acts, thus strengthening the safety of the school community.

The role of the Romanian Police in preventing and combating antisocial phenomena

This first part highlights the importance that the Romanian Police has in preventing and combating antisocial acts that can negatively influence students in educational establishments. The Police, through the actions undertaken, contributes to the maintenance of a safe environment conducive to the development of students, actively intervening to prevent risk situations. It carries out information campaigns, educational activities and partnerships with schools, with the main aim of reducing misbehavior and raising awareness among pupils and teaching staff. Through its specific methods, the Romanian Police has a major role in promoting a climate of order and safety in schools. These methods combine preventive measures with firm intervention in cases of non-compliance with the law.

The activity of the Romanian Police in preventing and combating anti-social phenomena in the school environment is carried out in accordance with the provisions of the National Plan for Combating School Violence (The Government of Romania, 2024; National Framework Action Plan for School Safety, 2023), a normative act that directs the interventions of state authorities to increase safety in educational establishments. This plan emphasizes the importance of adopting integrated measures that include both prevention and counteracting activities against acts of violence. The Romanian Police contributes to the implementation of the plan by carrying out educational programs on different levels of interest and by organizing

information sessions aimed at raising awareness among students and teachers about the consequences of negative behavior.

At the same time, through their active presence in schools and in the areas around them, police officers monitor and intervene rapidly to prevent the escalation of conflicts and to protect the physical and psychological integrity of the persons involved. In these conditions, the actions of the Police are aligned with the objectives of the National Plan, helping to establish a stable and safe educational climate.

Prevention and information activities in schools

Information campaigns for pupils, teachers and parents

The School Safety Directorate, as the central operational unit, plays an important role in preventing and combating anti-social behavior in and around schools. This Directorate, through the activities carried out, contributes significantly to increasing the degree of safety for students and teachers, promoting an educational climate centered on safety and preventive measures as basic principles (Directorate of School Safety, n.d).

The prevention and information activities carried out in educational establishments by the Romanian Police's specialized structures are based on a complex approach, involving not only pupils and teachers, but also parents. Information activities are an important component of this strategy, with the aim of providing beneficial knowledge about the risks associated with inappropriate behavior and the measures that can be taken to prevent them. Pupils are encouraged to understand the consequences of their actions, through interactive presentations, concrete examples and open discussions on issues such as school violence, bullying or drug use (The Government of Romania, 2024)

Teachers are informed on how to recognize and identify early signs of problem behaviour and their role in creating a positive and safe environment. In turn, parents are involved in these campaigns to raise awareness of how they can support their children's education and identify possible warning signs.

The Romanian Police aims, through these initiatives, to promote dialog and cooperation between all parties involved, contributing to building a solid partnership for the safety of pupils.

Educational programs organized in cooperation with schools

The educational programs carried out by the Romanian Police in cooperation with schools are an essential component of prevention and information efforts among students. These programs are structured on the basis of themes relevant to the current needs of the school community, with the main objective of developing a culture of respect, safety and responsibility. Activities are carried out in an interactive and age-appropriate manner, using topical learning methods such as role-playing games, case studies and discussions moderated by specialists. The Romanian Police cooperates directly with teachers and school counseling specialists to identify the specific problems of each community and to adapt the programs to meet the real needs of students. Through these initiatives, students gain knowledge about the importance of compliance with the law, the risks associated with non-compliant behavior and the solutions they can adopt in difficult situations (IGPR, 2024).

Educational programs often include practical simulations and realistic scenarios, which aim to help students understand the effects of their decisions on their own safety and the safety of those around them. This type of cooperation between police and schools helps to strengthen an educational environment where prevention and civic education are constant priorities.

Prevention of violent crime

Identifying the causes of school violence

A crucial step in preventing and combating this phenomenon is to identify the causes of school violence, which affects both the educational environment and the balanced and harmonious development of pupils. Through its structures, the Romanian Police cooperates with educational institutions, psychologists and school counselors in order to analyze the factors that determine the emergence of violent behavior. These factors include inadequate family environment, lack of positive role modeling, negative influence of peer groups and exposure to abusive or stressful situations (Popov, 2018, 135-143).

Also, the school environment itself may favor the growth of violence in the absence of appropriate regulatory measures, ineffective conflict management or high tolerance for aggressive behavior. The Romanian Police is analyzing these aspects to identify both the immediate and the root causes of school violence, thus contributing to the development of effective preventive strategies. Through this comprehensive approach, the authorities aim to reduce the number of acts of violence by focusing on understanding the context in which they occur and intervening in time in situations of risk.

Police intervention strategies to reduce violence in schools

The intervention strategies of the Romanian Police to reduce school violence are based on an integrated approach, combining preventive measures with direct interventions in conflict situations. These strategies are based on close cooperation with schools, local authorities and other institutions in order to create an organized intervention framework. The police conduct regular patrols in the area of educational establishments and organize regular meetings with pupils and teachers to discuss risk management and effective techniques to prevent the escalation of violence. In situations where violence has occurred, police forces intervene quickly, applying legal measures and providing psychological and specialized support to victims. At the same time, emphasis is placed on the implementation of educational programs and mediation sessions aimed at providing methods of resolving conflicts without violence (IGPR, 2022).

Another important aspect of these strategies is the constant monitoring of the behavior of students at high risk of becoming victims or perpetrators, in cooperation with psychologists and social workers. By applying these methods, the police aim not only to reduce violence immediately, but also to prevent its recurrence in the long term.

Bullying prevention

Definition and forms of bullying

Bullying is intentional and aggressive behavior, repeated over time, which is intended to intimidate, humiliate or exclude a person from a group. It can take many forms, including physical, verbal, psychological or cyber violence, each of which has a major impact on the victims (UNICEF Romania, 2022).

- Physical bullying refers to hitting, pushing or other acts of violence that cause physical harm.

- Verbal bullying includes insults, name-calling, teasing or spreading rumors, with the aim of hurting the targeted person emotionally.

- Social bullying is often more subtle and involves psychological manipulation, intimidation or gradual exclusion of a person from social groups (Medexpert, 2023).

An increasingly common form of bullying these days is cyberbullying, which takes place via the internet or social networks, by posting offensive messages, distributing humiliating images or creating fake accounts to target the victim. These behaviors not only affect the psychological and emotional health of victims, but can also lead to poor

performance at school, increased feelings of isolation and, in more serious cases, even suicide. Defining and understanding these forms of bullying are important for the early identification of risk situations and early intervention to prevent escalation in schools.

Activities and themes to raise awareness

In order to create a safe and balanced educational environment, activities and themes to raise awareness of bullying and school violence are beneficial for the prevention of bullying and school violence. The Romanian Police, in cooperation with school institutes, organizes educational activities and workshops for students, teachers and parents, which raise awareness of the forms of bullying and their consequences. These activities include interactive presentations, role-plays and group discussions, which give participants the opportunity to understand how to identify the signs of bullying and react correctly (Directorate, n.d.).

The topics covered are diverse and focus on the importance of empathy, mutual respect and diversity, promoting tolerance of differences of any kind - race, religion, sexual orientation, social status or disability. In addition, it emphasizes the importance of developing non-violent conflict resolution skills, encouraging students to apply peaceful methods of communication and to seek help when they witness or are victims of bullying.

Another important aspect is awareness-raising on the part of parents, who are invited to participate in such educational trainings in order to better understand the warning signs of bullying and to support early intervention if their children are subjected to such behaviour. The reduction of bullying in schools is significantly influenced by these activities by promoting a climate of safety and respect for all pupils.

The national unique number 119 is intended for reporting cases of abuse, neglect, exploitation or any other form of violence against children, providing an accessible and rapid channel for reporting such situations. It is an essential tool in protecting children's rights and a vital resource in preventing and combating situations of risk (Special Telecommunications Service, 2022; Autoritatea Națională pentru Protecția Drepturilor Copilului și Adopție, n.d.).

The negative effects of bullying on students' emotional and social development

The negative effects of bullying on pupils' emotional and social development are profound and have a long-lasting impact on their lives. Victims of bullying often experience a significant drop in self-esteem, feeling worthless or unable to cope with social situations. These maladaptive states

can lead to social exclusion, where the pupil prefers not to take part in group activities and avoids interacting with others, fearing further bullying. Emotionally, bullying can lead to anxiety, depression and chronic stress, and victims may experience intense feelings of frustration and helplessness.

Students who are victims of bullying are also at greater risk of developing eating disorders, sleep disturbances or even resorting to self-harm in an attempt to cope with the emotional pain. In the long term, these effects can affect their ability to adapt to different social and professional environments, and in some cases can lead to difficulties in maintaining interpersonal relationships (Romanian Police, n.d.a, n.d.b). From a social point of view, bullying creates a toxic environment in which norms of respect and empathy are violated and students learn to adopt aggressive behaviors to resolve their conflicts.

Thus, the effects of bullying are not only individual, but can affect the whole school community, weakening social bonds and creating a climate of fear and distrust.

Combating the use and trafficking of drugs/prohibited substances

Risks and vulnerabilities associated with drug use among school pupils

The risks and vulnerabilities associated with drug use among school pupils are numerous and can have devastating consequences for their physical, mental and social health. Having less capacity to correctly assess risks and cope with peer pressure, young people are often more vulnerable to external influences. Drug use can lead to addiction, and students who try banned substances are at risk of developing a harmful dependence, which can develop into repeated use and eventually a cycle of abuse. These substances impair concentration and learning ability, which can lead to poor school performance and difficulties integrating into society. Violent behavior can also be exacerbated by drug use, which can worsen the school climate (Abraham et al., 2007).

In the long term, the risks are even worse, as young people who use banned substances are more likely to develop mental health problems such as anxiety, depression or personality disorders. In addition, students who use drugs are more vulnerable to becoming victims of substance traffickers, thus entering a vicious circle of illegality and exposure to much higher risks.

These vulnerabilities lead us to intensify our actions to prevent drug use, and education and awareness of the risks must be fundamental components of strategies to protect pupils.

Information campaigns to prevent illicit trafficking of prohibited substances

Information campaigns to prevent illicit trafficking in controlled substances are beneficial for raising awareness of the risks associated with this phenomenon and for protecting the younger generation. The Romanian Police regularly organizes educational sessions targeting both students, parents and teachers to provide them with detailed information about the dangers of drug trafficking and how they can contribute to its prevention. These activities include various dynamic presentations, open discussions and information materials, which address not only the legal aspects of drug trafficking, but also its health consequences. Pupils are taught how to recognize the signs of involvement in substance trafficking and how to avoid contact with individuals or groups that may be a negative influence (IGPR, n.d).

At the same time, different leisure alternatives are promoted, recreational activities that provide young people with a protected and beneficial environment for personal development. These actions also include measures to protect young people, who are encouraged to report any suspicious activities around them, to turn to the authorities or ask for help when they feel threatened by such situations.

Information campaigns play an important role in shaping a social responsibility-oriented mindset, where the whole community is actively involved in preventing illicit drug trafficking and protecting new generations from its dangers (Juridice.ro, 2023).

Conclusions

The involvement of the Romanian Police in ensuring a safe school environment is important for the protection of students and for promoting a safe educational environment. Through its preventive measures and active interventions, the police play a key role in reducing acts of violence, bullying and substance misuse, thus creating a framework in which students can learn and develop in safety.

Close cooperation between the police, schools, parents and the local community contributes to early identification of risks and rapid intervention to prevent their escalation. Outreach activities in schools help to build a culture of respect and responsibility, where pupils become aware of the negative effects of behavior contrary to social norms. Thus, police involvement not only protects pupils from risks, but also contributes to the development of an environment in which values of tolerance and solidarity are promoted and conflicts are resolved peacefully.

Guaranteeing and ensuring a safe school environment is a collective responsibility and the police, through its proactive measures, has a fundamental role to play in achieving this objective.

Recommendations for improving cooperation between police and schools

In order to improve cooperation between the police and educational institutions, it is recommended that close partnerships be developed, including regular meetings between police representatives, teachers and local authorities to discuss issues related to pupil safety and the prevention of anti-social behavior. The implementation of ongoing educational programmes that promote both civic education and the prevention of anti-social behaviour is fundamental, so that pupils are better trained to recognize and avoid dangerous situations.

At the same time, the training and instruction of teachers in conflict management and identifying early signs of violence or substance misuse should be encouraged in order to be able to intervene quickly and effectively. The police could organize training for teachers and parents on school safety legislation and how to recognize the signs of inappropriate behaviour. In addition, creating direct and effective channels of communication between police and schools would facilitate the rapid exchange of information and better coordination of intervention measures. In this respect, the development of joint intervention teams, including police officers, school counselors and social workers, could make a significant contribution to the management of complex cases, thus ensuring an integrated approach to school safety.

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