



Organization for Security and  
Co-operation in Europe

# LEVERAGING NEW TECHNOLOGIES TO **ENGAGE WITH COMMUNITIES**

SUMMARY PAPER FROM AN EXPERT ROUNDTABLE  
DISCUSSION AT THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATION  
OF FINLAND TO THE OSCE IN VIENNA, AUSTRIA  
(18-19 JUNE 2025)

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# Introduction

New and emerging technologies have transformed almost all aspects of human life. From big data analytics and machine learning algorithms through the Internet of Things (IoT), smart sensors and autonomous drones to artificial intelligence (AI) – the current pace of technological innovation is unprecedented. This development has prompted discussions around the benefits and risks associated with the use of new technologies in various professional domains.

In the context of crime and policing, much of the debate has focused on concerns about the threats that such technologies may pose, especially their misuse for criminal purposes. However, the potential of these technologies to revolutionize how law enforcement operates and to enhance both its effectiveness and efficiency is equally significant. There is substantial and varied scope for the integration of new and emerging technologies in the work of law enforcement. For example, they can help to analyse trends and patterns, monitor security risks and threats, assist in identifying suspects and solving crimes, or streamline various administrative processes and procedures. At the same time, achieving a balance between leveraging technological advancements and safeguarding human rights and fundamental freedoms is an important task that raises ethical, legal and practical questions.

Against this backdrop, the OSCE Secretariat's Transnational Threats Department/Strategic Police Matters Unit launched a series of expert roundtable

discussions on the use of new and emerging technologies by law enforcement. The discussions aim to identify opportunities for law enforcement to harness new and emerging technologies to support their work, to help formulate policy recommendations and to explore potential OSCE capacity-building support in this area.

This paper summarizes the key points and outcomes of the third round table, which was dedicated to the use of new and emerging technologies to engage with communities and took place in Vienna, Austria on 18 and 19 June 2025. The round table was organized in co-operation with the 2025 Finnish Chairpersonship of the OSCE.

## Digital communication and engagement

Digital technologies have fundamentally transformed how people communicate and engage with each other. Almost all state authorities recognise the importance of public communication and outreach. However, there are significant differences in how different institutions engage with the communities they serve and to what degree they utilise all the possibilities that modern technologies offer.

Law enforcement authorities have often tended to be among the more cautious, with digital technologies largely perceived as another medium to inform the public about their activities and priorities. While this is certainly important for transparency and accountability, digital technologies offer many more opportunities. Examples from across

the OSCE area show that the innovative use of modern technologies to engage communities can make policing more effective and efficient. Communicating effectively builds trust between the police and the public, strengthens awareness and can support the investigation of crime.

### A multi-platform approach

A wide range of digital platforms can be used to communicate with the public, including various types of social media platforms. Some focus on building personal or professional networks (e.g., Facebook, LinkedIn), others on sharing media (e.g., Instagram, TikTok, Twitch, YouTube) or rapid information/short-form content (e.g., Twitter/X, Threads), and still others on facilitating discussions and community engagement (e.g. Discord, Reddit, Quora) or providing instant messaging services (e.g., Signal, Snapchat, Telegram, WhatsApp). Many social media platforms combine several functions. In addition to social media, other digital platforms can be utilized for outreach and engagement, such as podcasts, dedicated websites and online tools (e.g., for crime reporting, awareness-raising or capacity-building purposes).

The choice of platform(s) should be guided by clearly defined communication objectives rather than by habit or convenience. Many law enforcement agencies rely on a fixed set of social media platforms through which all messages are channeled, regardless of their relevance to specific audiences or topics. A more strategic approach requires flexibility – selecting and combining platforms according to the purpose of outreach, the nature of the message and the intended audience. In some cases – for example,

reporting crimes or suspicious activities – law enforcement agencies may even consider developing their own secure platforms instead of relying solely on third-party tools.

The key principle for effectively utilizing different digital platforms is to create content tailored to its particular user base and functionality. This requires an understanding of what platform(s) are most popular among a target audience as this will differ depending on factors such as age, gender or geographical location. For example, an awareness-raising campaign about gender-based violence targeting the general public may be most impactful using the mainstream social network that has most users in a given country. However, to raise boys' awareness about gender-based violence, online gaming platforms or niche social media platforms popular among young people may be more impactful. Secondly, it is important to understand how the given platform operates and what type of content it is primarily designed for. For example, communicating key messages in a written form on a platform that is primarily designed for sharing images and videos will have only limited impact on the audience.

Aligning platform selection with communication goals not only increases reach and impact, but also ensures that engagement efforts can adapt to evolving digital trends and user preferences.

### Static vs. dynamic engagement

The effectiveness of digital communication also depends on the type and intensity of engagement. Depending on the objective(s), static or dynamic engagement with the public can be pursued.

Static engagement refers to one-way communication, where the police primarily use digital platforms to disseminate information, announcements or guidance. This approach is often suitable for conveying factual content such as safety alerts, public notices, recruitment campaigns or updates on institutional reforms. Dynamic engagement, by contrast, involves two-way communication and active interaction with the audience. It is particularly valuable when the police seek to build trust, promote behavioural change or foster co-operation with the public.

Choosing whether to focus on static and dynamic engagement should always be context-driven and aligned with the intended communication outcome(s). While dynamic engagement is more resource intensive and riskier than static engagement, a deliberate and balanced combination of both approaches can help the police to maintain responsiveness and flexibility in their digital communication.

### Communication context

Equally important is the consideration of context when determining the style and format of digital communication. Content and tone should always reflect the purpose of engagement and the expectations of the audience. In some cases, a more informal, creative or even humorous approach can help to humanize the police, increase reach and encourage interaction – for example, when promoting community initiatives, awareness-raising campaigns or safety tips. In other contexts, however, such as official statements, crisis communication or the dissemination of factual crime-related information, a neutral and professional tone is essential to maintain authority and credibility.

Understanding when to adopt a lighter, conversational style and when to communicate in a more conservative, factual manner allows law enforcement to remain relatable without compromising public trust. Tailoring both content and tone to the communication context thus strengthens the overall effectiveness and authenticity of digital engagement.

### Combining online and offline approaches

While digital communication enables law enforcement authorities to reach larger audiences more efficiently, it should not completely replace traditional, in-person, forms of outreach. Direct human interaction remains indispensable for building long-term trust, understanding community needs and addressing sensitive issues that may not be effectively discussed in an online setting.

Experience across the OSCE area shows that the most successful outreach and engagement strategies combine both online and offline approaches. Digital campaigns can generate awareness, spark interest and provide information, while in-person encounters and events can reinforce these messages. Furthermore, feedback and insights gathered from in-person interactions can be used to refine digital communication strategies, ensuring that messages remain relevant and responsive to community concerns.

Promoting digital channels through “offline” interactions also helps to ensure their inclusivity. Not all members of the public have equal access to – or trust in – digital platforms. Demonstrating and explaining new digital solutions face-to-face can encourage their uptake and increase confidence in their use. This

bottom-up approach, which combines the accessibility and reach of digital communication with the authenticity and personal connection of offline engagement, allows law enforcement agencies to maximize the impact of their outreach and strengthen public trust.

## Outreach to remote communities

One area where digital technologies can have a significant impact is the outreach to communities that are geographically remote. Digital platforms can serve as powerful tools to bridge physical distances, allowing law enforcement to maintain presence, visibility and contact even in the areas where regular in-person interaction is limited. While digital literacy skills or access to digital technologies may differ within such communities, in general digital platforms can help to ensure that all segments of society – regardless of location or infrastructure constraints – have opportunities to interact with the police. Combining these digital approaches with targeted offline initiatives can further strengthen inclusion and ensure that no community is left behind.

### Digital presence

In many participating States, maintaining a visible police presence across large territories and sparsely populated areas presents a growing challenge. Budgetary constraints, administrative reforms or changes in policing priorities have in some cases led to the closure or consolidation of small local police stations. While such measures can save costs and improve efficiency, they also risk creating a perception among residents that

the police have withdrawn or are no longer accessible. Developing a strong digital presence can help to compensate for the reduced physical footprint of the police and preserve the sense of proximity and accessibility that is vital for public trust.

One example comes from Norway, where a major police reform in 2015 resulted in the closure of numerous small local police stations. The decision initially provoked public concern about the disappearance of the police from local life. In response, the Norwegian police invested in strengthening their online presence and interaction. They joined more than eighty local Facebook groups created by residents, becoming active contributors in these online spaces. In parallel, the police continued to conduct regular physical patrols, using the same digital channels to inform the public about when and where patrols would take place and to document their activities.

Digital presence can complement and, in some cases, partially substitute physical presence. Establishing a consistent and authentic online presence allows the police to remain part of the daily life of remote communities, making it easier to share information, respond to concerns and monitor emerging issues. Such digital presence should not aim to replace in-person interaction altogether, but rather act as an extension of community policing that combines online accessibility with periodic physical engagement.

### Online patrolling

Once a strong and trusted digital presence is established, the police can extend their engagement with remote communities into what is often referred to as online



patrolling. This concept mirrors the principles of traditional neighbourhood policing but takes place in the digital spaces where residents exchange information and discuss local issues.

Through online patrolling, the police can monitor trends in public discourse, identify concerns and respond proactively to developments affecting public safety or community well-being. They can also provide timely updates about ongoing cases, warn of emerging threats, clarify misinformation, explain procedures or refer citizens to the appropriate services. Online patrolling can also contribute to the early detection of local tensions or potential risks, enabling preventive action before the situation escalates.

The visibility of the police in online spaces reassures citizens that their concerns are heard and that the police remain attentive and responsive to what is happening in their area. This helps maintain and strengthen public confidence: people who regularly see the police engaging constructively in their online communities are more likely to perceive the police as approachable, transparent and part of community life. In this sense, online patrolling represents an evolution of community policing in the digital age – not replacing traditional methods, but complementing them by extending the reach of law enforcement into the online environments where community life increasingly takes place.

### Local partnerships

The success of initiatives such as digital presence or online patrolling depends not only on technical capacity and communication skills but also on the level of public trust in law enforcement and other state institutions. In some

participating States, particularly in remote or rural areas, trust in the police and other state institutions can be low due to historical, socio-economic or cultural factors. In such settings, establishing a digital connection between the police and the community without first building credibility and trust may have limited impact or even risk reinforcing perceptions of distance or detachment.

For this reason, developing local partnerships is essential. Local administrations, municipal councils, community leaders and civil society organizations often enjoy higher levels of public trust and possess a deeper understanding of local needs, sensitivities and communication habits. Involving these actors in designing and managing the digital outreach initiatives of the police can provide valuable legitimacy and ensure that messages resonate with the target audiences. They can act as intermediaries, introducing police representatives into local online communities or co-hosting digital events. This partnership-based approach not only helps to build trust but also strengthens co-operation between different tiers of governance in promoting safety and resilience.

Effective digital engagement in remote areas thus requires a flexible and context-sensitive approach that balances technological innovation with human interaction. Where trust in the police is low, joint initiatives with local authorities and relevant civil society organizations can gradually build confidence. Coupled with visible, periodic physical presence – for example, through visits, meetings or patrols – such partnerships can ensure that digital platforms become genuine spaces for dialogue and co-operation



with remote communities rather than one-way information channels.

## Youth crime prevention

Another area where digital technologies can significantly increase the effectiveness and efficiency of police efforts is youth crime prevention. Young people are among the most active users of digital technologies, making the online environment a natural and powerful space for engagement. Digital tools have proven particularly useful for awareness-raising as well as skills development and education among youth. At the same time, they also hold the potential to provide targeted support services and facilitate early intervention, thus helping to identify and address risk factors before they escalate into juvenile delinquency.

### Awareness-raising

Effective youth crime prevention begins with awareness-raising – helping young people to understand the risks and consequences of irresponsible behaviour in both the online and offline world. Digital technologies offer a unique opportunity to reach young audiences directly in the environments where they already spend much of their time. However, to achieve real impact, such awareness-raising efforts must be designed with a clear understanding of youth communication habits and preferences. Selecting the right platform(s), tone and format is crucial. Young audiences tend to respond best to interactive, visual and participatory content, presented in an authentic and relatable way.

As many children and young people spend a lot of time playing computer games, gaming platforms are an especially relevant setting for crime-prevention initiatives. Europol's "Cyber Defenders"<sup>1</sup> game on Roblox (an online platform for creating and playing user-generated 3D games and experiences popular particularly among children aged 12 and under), is one example of using gamification to teach children about cybersecurity and safe online behaviour in a playful and engaging format.

Another example comes from Denmark and Norway, where the police have dedicated teams of officers who live-stream playing computer games on the Twitch platform to engage directly with teenagers, answer questions and discuss issues such as online bullying, fraud or gaming addiction. As these officers build trusted relationships with many players, they also receive tips and information relevant for the police. Making such engagement successful requires striking a balance between giving officers sufficient autonomy to use their knowledge and understanding of different platforms and youth issues to build meaningful relationships, and having guidelines in place that set clear parameters for such outreach.

An alternative approach for reaching young audiences involves co-operation with social media influencers. Young people often join social media at an early age and many view influencers as trusted role models whose opinions and behaviours shape their own attitudes and choices. Partnering with credible and

[1] For more information, please visit: <https://www.europol.europa.eu/operations-services-and-innovation/public-awareness-and-prevention-guides/cyber-defenders#downloads>

responsible influencers can therefore amplify the reach and authenticity of youth crime prevention messages, especially when addressing sensitive topics such as online safety, violence, or substance abuse. Alternatively, some law enforcement agencies have successfully developed their own “influencers” within the police force. In Finland, for example, a dedicated team of police officers produces short online lectures and interactive content for schools. Over time, these officers have become recognizable and well-liked figures among pupils, making them effective messengers for prevention efforts.

While these initiatives target different groups, they share an essential feature: meeting young people where they are, in the digital spaces they trust and enjoy. They also demonstrate that awareness-raising efforts that combine credible information with relatable content and interactive participation are far more likely to resonate with young people than conventional campaigns. Beyond raising awareness, such initiatives help to normalize positive interactions between young people and the police, showing the police as accessible, understanding and willing to engage on equal terms.

### Skills development and education

Alongside awareness-raising, developing practical skills and expanding educational opportunities are critical components of youth crime prevention. A lack of relevant skills and limited employment prospects have long been recognized as key risk factors contributing to youth involvement in criminal activities.<sup>2</sup> By helping young

people to acquire marketable skills and realistic career perspectives, law enforcement can address some of the underlying socio-economic drivers of youth crime.

Digital technologies offer an efficient and scalable means to support such prevention measures. For example, online vocational training programmes through e-learning platforms and virtual classrooms can provide young people with practical knowledge and skills at a fraction of the cost of traditional in-person programmes. Interactive online events such as hackathons or coding challenges have also proven effective in engaging young participants, combining education with competition and teamwork while fostering creativity and problem-solving skills. New technologies are opening up even more engaging and immersive educational experiences. For example, serious games, simulation-based learning and virtual reality environments can replicate real-life situations in a safe and controlled setting, allowing young people to develop practical competencies while keeping them motivated and interested.

Besides making such prevention efforts more effective and cheaper, digital technologies also make training and education more accessible and inclusive, as they enable authorities to reach young people regardless of their location or socio-economic background. By investing in digital education and vocational training, law enforcement agencies can make a tangible long-term contribution to crime prevention by strengthening resilience, confidence and social integration among youth.

[2] For example, see the OSCE report "From risk to resilience: The role of financial literacy in youth crime prevention" (<https://www.osce.org/secretariat/588529>).

## Early intervention

Early intervention is one of the most effective ways to prevent youth crime, yet it is also among the most challenging. Identifying vulnerable young people and providing them with timely support often requires co-ordination across multiple institutions such as schools, social services, healthcare providers and law enforcement, which is resource-intensive and often prone to human failures or missed opportunities.

Digital technologies can significantly improve the accessibility, inclusivity and cost-efficiency of such interventions, helping to ensure that support reaches those who need it most, including in remote areas. They can host a wide range of support services traditionally available only in person, such as mentoring, legal advice or psychological counselling. For instance, online mentorship programmes can connect at-risk youth with trained professionals who can guide them through personal or educational challenges. Similarly, virtual counselling and legal-aid services can provide confidential, immediate and affordable assistance without the logistical barriers associated with face-to-face interaction. These services can be easily scaled up and adapted to local contexts, offering a valuable complement to traditional “offline” support networks.

Beyond improving access to support, digital technologies also hold promise for early detection of risk factors linked to youth offending. Many cases of juvenile delinquency have shown that the signs of vulnerability or distress had been visible well before the offence occurred, yet the relevant institutions failed to connect the dots or co-operate effectively. Data analytics could help address this gap by

identifying patterns and correlations that may signal a young person’s increased risk of engaging in criminal behaviour. Such systems could evaluate pre-defined risk indicators (e.g., school absenteeism, exposure to violence, repeated contact with social services) and flag individuals for closer attention and early intervention. While such approaches raise important human rights and data protection questions, when properly designed and governed they can provide valuable decision-support tools for professionals working with youth, enabling earlier, more targeted interventions.

## Support to police operations

The potential of digital technologies in engagement with the public extends well beyond outreach to remote communities or youth crime prevention. Digital tools also play an increasingly important role in supporting operational law enforcement functions – from communicating with the public during crises to facilitating crime reporting and assisting criminal investigations. The same technologies that connect communities and empower young people can, when used strategically, enhance the responsiveness, transparency and effectiveness of police work.

## Crisis communication

Whether responding to natural disasters, large public disturbances, terrorist incidents or other emergencies, the ability to share and receive information instantly is essential. As most people now use digital devices almost constantly, social

media platforms, applications or online tools offer an unparalleled means of reaching vast audiences in real time. Effective crisis communication today relies on these technologies to ensure that information flows swiftly and accurately, both from police to the public, and from the public to the police.

On the one hand, the police need mechanisms to collect reliable information quickly from witnesses and affected individuals. Several participating States have developed dedicated online platforms that can be activated during emergencies to centralize the collection of such data. These platforms are designed for simplicity and accessibility, allowing users to anonymously upload files in various formats from any type of device. By consolidating this information in one system, the police can reconstruct the sequence of events more quickly, verify reports and gain the situational awareness needed for effective crisis management.

On the other hand, the police must also be able to disseminate verified information rapidly and counter the misinformation that often spreads in the early stages of a crisis. Social media platforms play a central role in this regard due to their reach and immediacy. Using specialized tools for trending hashtags, tracking viral content and conducting sentiment analysis can help authorities understand the public discourse and identify areas where clarification or reassurance is needed. Automated AI agents or chatbots can assist in generating short, platform-specific updates and responding to frequently asked questions, significantly accelerating communication workflows.

However, while digital technologies enable

faster and broader communication, the challenge remains in producing accurate and verified content under intense time pressure. Inaccurate or premature information can undermine public trust and complicate response efforts. To mitigate this risk, law enforcement agencies need clear operating procedures and thorough preparation and planning before crises occur. This includes developing and regularly updating crisis communication plans, pre-defining roles and responsibilities, and ensuring that staff are trained in both the technical and communicative aspects of digital crisis management.

## Crime reporting

In recent years, several participating States have established dedicated websites or mobile applications where crimes can be reported directly. In some countries, online crime reporting has even become more common than visiting a police station in person. Such systems can save time and resources for both the public and the police, while improving accessibility for individuals who may otherwise be reluctant or unable to report incidents face-to-face.

At the same time, there are important considerations to take into account. Not all types of offences are suitable for online reporting – serious crimes such as homicide, sexual assault or other violent offences typically still require in-person statements. Another critical consideration concerns the verification of identity. Online reporting mechanisms must include secure and inclusive ways to confirm a user's identity, accommodating citizens with varying levels of digital literacy and access to authentication systems. Ensuring privacy and

confidentiality is equally essential. Trust in online reporting platforms depends on robust data protection, encryption and secure storage of submitted information. Individuals must be confident that the data they provide will be handled responsibly and cannot be accessed or misused by unauthorized parties.

Furthermore, many existing reporting websites only serve as passive collection points, providing little or no feedback to the person submitting a report. Introducing mechanisms that acknowledge the receipt of each report and, for more serious crimes, automatically flag them for individual follow-up by an officer could significantly increase trust and encourage further engagement. Looking ahead, chatbots or AI-based agents could serve as interactive guides within reporting platforms, advising the public on which crimes can be reported online, what information and evidence to include, or where to turn for immediate help.

## Criminal investigations

Beyond crisis management and crime reporting, digital platforms can be used to support and enhance criminal investigations. By connecting law enforcement with the public in new ways, they allow for faster information flow, broader participation and more effective use of collective knowledge. In this way, they can serve as powerful force multipliers – extending the reach of investigators, accelerating the collection of leads and increasing the likelihood of solving cases.

One of the most promising developments in this area is the use of crowdsourcing to gather investigative leads from the public. Some police forces have begun using

social media and other online platforms to solicit assistance in specific investigations. A notable example is Europol's "Stop Child Abuse – Trace an Object" initiative<sup>3</sup>, which invites members of the public to help identify objects or locations visible in child sexual abuse material. By publishing images of items such as clothing, furniture or packaging, Europol enables individuals to share information that might help to locate victims or offenders. The project has led to the successful identification of several locations and victims.

Digital platforms are also proving valuable in cases of missing persons or suspect searches. Online appeals shared across social media can spread rapidly, reaching wide audiences within minutes and increasing the likelihood of receiving useful tips. Similarly, interactive maps or mobile apps can provide real-time updates on search operations, enabling the public to remain informed and engaged.

## Challenges

While digital technologies offer unprecedented opportunities for law enforcement to strengthen outreach and engagement with the public, they also bring a range of practical challenges. Some of the key challenges identified during the discussion include:

- **The complex landscape of digital platforms:** understanding the wide range of digital platforms and their specific audiences, communication cultures and technical features is

[3] For more information, please visit:  
<https://www.europol.europa.eu/stopchildabuse>



difficult. Social media platforms, in particular, are constantly evolving both in terms of their functionalities and their popularity among different segments of society. Keeping pace with these developments requires continuous learning and adaptation.

- **Tailoring content to platforms and audiences:** crafting messages that match the tone, format and expectations of each platform's user base – while remaining consistent with institutional communication standards and requirements – is a constant balancing act.
- **Balancing decentralization and institutional control:** effective digital communication often requires flexibility, rapid responses and a degree of autonomy for those managing online engagement. However, in many law enforcement institutions, public communication remains highly centralized and governed by strict protocols. This approach can limit the ability of local officers or specialized units to communicate effectively and authentically with their communities.
- **Cybersecurity:** maintaining official accounts and an online presence on third-party platforms exposes law enforcement to potential hacking, impersonation or misuse of official content. Any breach can cause reputational damage and erode public trust, making robust cybersecurity and authentication measures indispensable.
- **Dependence on third-party tools and algorithms:** many outreach tools are controlled by private companies, whose algorithms determine what

content is visible and to whom. Police communication teams must learn to “work with” or maximize these algorithms to ensure messages reach their intended audiences, while remaining mindful of transparency and human rights and rule of law standards.

- **Selection bias and representativeness:** digital engagement tends to reach audiences who are already active online, potentially excluding groups with limited internet access or digital literacy. Overreliance on digital tools can therefore exclude some important parts of the intended target group(s) or lead to skewed perceptions of public opinion and community needs.

Addressing these challenges requires not only technical solutions but also strategic planning, institutional learning and human rights-based reflection to ensure that digital communication by law enforcement remains effective, credible and sustainable.

## Conclusion and policy recommendations

Harnessing digital technologies for outreach and engagement transforms how law enforcement interacts with society. By embracing this transformation thoughtfully and responsibly, police services can enhance their operational effectiveness and their legitimacy in the eyes of the communities they serve. For example, digital technologies can help law enforcement reach much broader audiences, engage meaningfully with

remote communities and young people alike, facilitate crisis communication and support criminal investigations. At the same time, effectively harnessing these technologies requires careful planning, sound governance, and respect for human rights. Ultimately, the success of digital engagement depends as much on people, skills and institutional culture as on technological solutions. In this context, law enforcement actors from the OSCE participating States could consider the following policy recommendations.

### Strategic planning

- Conduct a comprehensive mapping exercise of the digital platforms used by different segments of society within the national context, with special attention to youth, vulnerable groups and remote communities. Such mapping exercises should be repeated on a regular basis.
- Based on the mapping exercise, develop practical guidelines on understanding and effectively using relevant digital platforms – their technical features, target audiences, communication styles and potential risks – to support informed decision-making in law enforcement outreach and engagement activities.
- Formulate dedicated digital outreach and engagement strategies for law enforcement. These strategies should be aligned with broader operational, community policing and crime-prevention priorities.
- Integrate digital communication planning into overall law enforcement and public safety strategies to ensure coherence between online communication, community engagement, prevention and operational activities.
- Establish clear standard operating procedures to manage digital communication channels. The procedures should strike a balance between necessary oversight and sufficient flexibility and decentralization.
- Design and regularly update crisis communication plans outlining how digital platforms will be used during and after emergencies. Such plans should define roles, responsibilities, content approval procedures and mechanisms for verifying and disseminating information rapidly and accurately.

### Training

- Introduce a targeted training programme on digital outreach and engagement for communication officers, spokespersons and other relevant law enforcement personnel. The programme should focus on topics such as content creation, community interaction, platform-specific engagement, multi-platform management, crisis communication, the use of analytics to assess impact and reach or cybersecurity aspects of digital communication.
- Strengthen awareness of digital communication among operational police officers, ensuring they understand both the opportunities and risks of engaging with the public through digital platforms.
- Promote interdisciplinary collaboration and exchange between police officers, IT specialists, data analysts and communication experts



within law enforcement agencies to foster integrated and innovative approaches to digital outreach and engagement.

- Establish continuous learning mechanisms, such as refresher courses, online learning modules or internal communities of practice, to keep personnel updated on emerging digital platforms, trends and communication tools.
- Encourage leadership-level awareness and engagement by including digital communication and public outreach in management and command-level training curricula, ensuring strategic understanding and institutional support from the top.

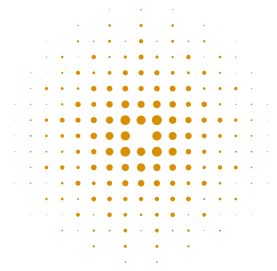
## Partnerships

- Build partnerships with municipalities, civil society organizations and community leaders to support inclusive and culturally sensitive digital engagement, especially in remote or low-trust areas.
- Engage youth organizations, educational institutions and relevant civil society organizations in co-designing online awareness-raising and crime prevention campaigns for young people, ensuring that messages resonate with young audiences and reflect real-life experiences.
- Collaborate with relevant civil society organizations to reach vulnerable or marginalized groups, helping to ensure that digital outreach efforts are inclusive, accessible and equitable.
- Establish formal co-operation with private sector actors, especially social media companies, to promote the responsible use of digital platforms, share expertise on emerging digital trends, and develop mechanisms for faster information exchange in crisis situations.
- Encourage multi-stakeholder dialogue among law enforcement, local government, academia, the private sector and civil society to share experiences and good practices on the effective and responsible use of digital technologies in public outreach and engagement.

## Security and oversight

- Implement robust cybersecurity measures to protect official accounts and digital assets from unauthorized access, hacking or impersonation, and designate responsible units or officers for account monitoring and incident response.
- Introduce mandatory protocols for secure data handling and storage, including encryption, regular security audits and restricted access to sensitive materials collected through digital platforms, in particular those used for crime reporting.
- Ensure full compliance with national legislation and international human rights standards in all digital communication and engagement activities, particularly with regard to privacy, data protection and freedom of expression.

- Develop clear internal policies and ethical guidelines governing the use of digital platforms by law enforcement personnel, including standards for online conduct, content moderation and interactions with the public.
- Encourage oversight and evaluation of digital communication practices to safeguard against misuse, discrimination or overreach, thereby reinforcing public trust in law enforcement's digital activities.



## Innovation

- Encourage pilot projects to experiment with new digital tools for community engagement, awareness-raising, crime reporting or investigations, followed by structured evaluations to identify good practices, lessons learned and opportunities to scale up.
- Establish feedback mechanisms that allow both the public and frontline officers to share insights on the effectiveness of digital tools and platforms, ensuring that innovation is driven by real operational needs.
- Integrate evaluation and data analysis into digital outreach programmes to measure reach, engagement quality and public sentiment, supporting data-driven decision-making and resource allocation.

## Further reading

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