



SOMEPE

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SOMEPE

Solving Crime through Social Media

Country Report for Germany on the Use of Social Media by Police Organisations
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University of Applied Science of the Police of Brandenburg, Germany

Country Report of Germany

The Quantitative and Qualitative Extent of Social Media Utilisation by German Police Organisations for Policing Purposes

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1. Introduction

The project "Solving Crime through Social Media" (SOMEPE)¹, which was officially launched during the implementation meeting in Kayseri (Turkey) on the 23 November 2013, addresses the issue of the possibilities social media can provide to police forces in the context of prevention, information, communication, averting of dangers, crime prevention and intelligence gathering. Social media is becoming more and more important in all areas of life. The law enforcement agencies and police forces cannot just watch from the side-line or focus solely on investigating internet and cybercrimes. Police forces should instead exploit the vast potentials social media could provide for their own interests.

Aiming at this goal, the work of the project partners will eventually result in the preparation of an eLearning module and a comprehensive database which can be used for introducing social media to police officers of all ranks and positions, train them in the use of social media and show them the opportunities that the use of social media might have for policing purposes in their daily business, but also regarding special operations and other occasions². The main focus of the project will be specifically on the enhancement of communication between the individual police officer or police organisation and the individual citizen and the public. Police organisations should develop strategies for adapting social media into their portfolio. In the future, using social media for policing should become a normal operating resource for police forces across Europe.

The eLearning module and materials to be developed will not specifically focus only on particular social media platforms and networks, but also on the broad variety available and its potential and benefits. Nevertheless, it has to be taken into consideration that different legal provisions in various countries, who could use the module and the related materials, might limit the usage of social media for policing purposes.

¹ SOMEPE, 2014

² Ibid.

Since SOMEPE is also an innovation transfer project, relevant research results of the COMPOSITE³ project, in which the University of Applied Sciences of the State Police of Brandenburg is also involved, needs to be integrated into the project and will influence the outcome not insignificantly. The COMPOSITE results in some way set the direction for SOMEPE.

The purpose of this country report is to publish the results of further research about the current state of play in Germany regarding the type and scope of the utilisation of Social Media by police organisations throughout the country. This draws the right conclusions when it comes to estimating the knowledge regarding Social Media amongst police officers and the necessary training requirements.

2. COMPOSITE Findings for Germany

SOMEPE is building on the content and at least in basic terms also on the methodological and didactical results of the research project COMPOSITE. Work Package 4 of the COMPOSITE project specifically focuses on the use of social media by European police forces for policing purposes⁴. A comprehensive survey was conducted and representatives of 13 police forces in 10 European countries were interviewed. The results of this research gave an accurate representation about the use of social media by the police in European countries at the end of 2012. The research methods were primarily based on case studies and analysis of the accounts. The case studies show that social media and its professional utilisation by the police can be, under certain circumstances, crucial for the success of police operations, maintaining or restoring public peace and order as well as creating a positive image of the police through active dialogues with the community⁵.

SOMEPE also conducts a survey (needs analysis) in order to get a picture about the current knowledge of police officers about social media and to meet their expectations and needs when creating the e-learning module and training materials. In order to do this, SOMEPE will be using the qualitative methodological approaches and a slightly amended version of the COMPOSITE survey form.

³ COMPOSITE, 2014

⁴ Deneff et al., 2011

⁵ *ibid.*

The results of this needs analysis will be published in a further report when finished and evaluated. This is the sort of innovation transfer envisioned by the EU Commission.

Unfortunately, the outcome of the COMPOSITE survey does not provide any useful data regarding the use of social media by the German police since there was only one reply to the survey from German police representatives⁶. This is why the results for Germany cannot be considered to be representative, let alone to get a full picture about the current state of affairs in this matter.

3. Methods of Data Collection

Since the data collected and provided by COMPOSITE cannot be used to draw any conclusion about the use and acceptance of social media by police forces and police officers in Germany, further research had to be conducted to get a picture in this regard.

In addition and complementary to the methodological approach used by the COMPOSITE team, this country report was prepared by using a multi-methodological approach. For this, the project researchers observed social media applications which could possibly be used by police forces for various policing purposes and could be beneficial for the effectiveness, efficiency or reputation of the police, no matter to what extent. This was done by way of a qualitative survey. The collected data is not representative but the results give a fair idea about if and in what way the police forces use social media as part of their policing repertoire.

Furthermore, online research was undertaken to find out, how many police organisations on local, state or federal level use one or more of the various social media platforms for communication, information, prevention, investigative and other purposes.

To this end the known social media platforms – Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram – have been analysed for official accounts of police organisations or individual police officers by using corresponding search parameters⁷.

⁶ Bayerl, 2012

⁷ Search parameter consisted of “Polizei + Facebook [using the names of the various social media platforms], “Polizei und Soziale Netzwerke [using the names of the various social networks]”, “Polizei + Präsenzen +

Additionally, on the one part official police websites were analysed for hints and links to social media used by these respective police organisations and secondly search engines were utilised using the already described search parameter. The survey was conducted from the 15 February to 31 March 2014. Moreover, the experience of the involved researchers and advising police officers were used to obtain a comprehensive view of the visible police presence in social media. Naturally, the outcome is also based on extensive literature research in the German-speaking area.

After the assessment of the number of existing social media appearances, these appearances were analysed according to the purposes for which they are used by the respective police force. For that, seven fields of police activities⁸ were identified and used to analyse and compare the appearances.

4. Structure of the German Police

Since Germany is a federal republic, the country is politically divided into 16 federal states (Länder). These states are responsible for providing safety and maintaining public peace and order within their own territory. Policing is a matter of the individual states (Länder). This means, the states have their own police forces (state police) and police laws. The state police are responsible for a variety of policing and investigations with the exception of fighting terrorism. The BKA⁹ (Bundeskriminalamt – Federal Criminal Police Office), which belongs to the federal police, has the sole responsibility of fighting terrorism and conducting investigations as well as international cooperation and data exchange in this regard. The federal police are responsible for securing the borders and providing security at airports, train stations and on the rail network. This means that Germany has 17 police forces, each of which have a different approach to social media when it comes to using it for their own purposes. In most of the cases, these police forces are subdivided into several police organisations, not necessarily with a hierarchical relationship between them.

Internet”, “Polizeibeamter + Twitter [using the names of the various social media platforms], “[Using the names of the various police forces] +Soziale Medien [using the names of the various social media platforms]“

⁸ Table 2: Policing Purposes for Using Social Media, page 10 of this report

⁹BKA, 2013 |

For instance, the University for Applied Science of the Police of Brandenburg is present in three social media platforms, whereas the Police Directorate of Brandenburg, which is solely responsible for maintaining public peace and order in the whole state, is not present at all.

What has to be highlighted in this regard, is that crime prevention is the sole responsibility – and in most of the state police laws explicitly codified¹⁰ – of the police in Germany and one of its main tasks.

5. The Use of Social Media by German Police Forces

It is remarkable that there is no common approach on this issue amongst Germany's police forces, since there are no federal guidelines or regulations on the use of social media. Such guidelines or regulations do not even exist at state level, which makes it difficult, if not impossible, to develop a common approach on this subject.

When looking at the various qualitative and quantitative levels of social media usage by police forces across Germany, we only see patches in the landscape. Despite the fact, that social media is a common appearance these days, the police in Germany are still reluctant to recognize the benefits for policing. For example, communication with the public is still mostly one-sided and limited to informing the citizens via sterile press statements. The use of social media for publically tracing wanted criminals or missing persons is still quite limited by criminal procedure law and data protection regulations, which are rather strict on this issue and tightly handled in Germany.

The usage of social media by the German police is still in its infancy. The German police forces and organisations currently have some social media accounts (Facebook and Twitter being at the forefront), most of which are run by police directorates of the state police; only a few of them are central state police accounts¹¹. Since there is no common policy, the design of the appearances are decided on by the police force which has set up the account. An official corporate design is completely devoid.

¹⁰ BbgPolG, 2013 - §1 Abs 1 i.V.m §2

¹¹ RLP, 2014 ; MV, 2014

Some of the Facebook accounts are so called fan pages which are, to a great extent, only used to improve the reputation of the respective police force or organisation. A number of these accounts are poorly administrated and the information posted is trivial, outdated or contains no more than the regular press statements. In a lot of cases low numbers of followers show the slow interest from the public in visiting these pages, getting information, or posting useful information or remarks. However there are also rather good examples of social media presence of police forces, containing a broad variety of information, which are useful for the public. The administrators of these appearances seem to be well trained and effective at communicating with the public.

When discussing the appearances of police officers in social media, consideration must be given to the fact that private and professional usage cannot be separated any longer. Police officers use their private accounts to post relevant (unrestricted) police issues or prevention advice, which in both cases helps to maintain the positive image of the police. Most of the people, who are linked to a police officer by social media networks, know about the profession of the individual officer and see those posts from this particular perspective. In addition it can be assumed that not only a few police officers, even if their forces do not officially use it, use social media for research purposes for example. It is quite common among police officers, who privately use social media like Facebook or Twitter, to also use these platforms for official purposes, for example to look for persons who need to be contacted for various reasons.

Although Germany is relatively poorly positioned regarding this matter, it does not automatically mean that German police officers have not recognized social media as a natural area for policing activities and professional communication.

5.1. Overview of Police Social Media Accounts in Germany

The table below presents the findings of the research done, showing the number of social media accounts by federal and state police organisations, broken down by states. It becomes obvious that the police in some states like Lower Saxony and North Rhine-Westphalia are much more active in the use of social media than others. According to this research, police forces of 5 out of 16 states currently do not use social media at all.

Table 1: Number of Social Media accounts of the federal and state police

<i>Federal or State Police</i>	<i>Facebook</i>	<i>Twitter</i>	<i>YouTube</i>	<i>Other</i>
Lower Saxony	8	0	0	0
Brandenburg	1	1	1	0
Hesse	1	1	1	0
Rhineland-Palatinate	2	3	0	0
North Rhine-Westphalia	8	4	1	0
Baden-Württemberg	3	1	0	0
Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania	2	1	0	0
Federal Police (BKA, GSG9, German Police University, Federal Police)	4	0	0	1
Saxony	1	2	0	0
Berlin	0	2	0	0
Bavaria	0	0	0	0
Bremen	0	0	0	0
Hamburg	1	0	0	0
Schleswig-Holstein	0	0	0	0
Saxony-Anhalt	0	0	0	0
Thuringia	1	0	0	0
Saarland	0	0	0	0
inaktiv accounts	0	36	0	0
Total	32	51	3	1

Facebook (32 accounts countrywide) is by far the most popular social media utilised by German police forces, followed by Twitter (15 accounts, deducting the idle accounts). The use of Twitter for policing purposes is not as common and widespread as Facebook. There are less official accounts of police forces, and as far as we have gathered, no duty Twitter account of an individual police officer in Germany. This also applies to Facebook. In a few cases the number of followers shows a quite broad interest in what the police have to tell but in other cases the number is rather low.

This could be due to the potentially dull content of the page; the communication style not being oriented towards the target audience; or simply the lack of popularity of Twitter in a certain region or among the target group.

The research also revealed that 36 **Twitter** accounts of German police organisation lie idle. There might be several reasons for setting up the accounts in Twitter and Facebook without tweeting or posting anything so far¹². The police may have lost interest in using Twitter or they just wanted to occupy the space to avoid that others step in and use the name for an unofficial or private appearance or they stopped the activities immediately after setting up the account due to legal reservations. There is a good chance that private persons or corporations use and block the names of police forces for not too police friendly purposes. For instance, the name of the Bavarian police is used for in such a way, using an official looking design¹³. The same seems to apply to the Facebook account of the BKA or Police of Saxony¹⁴. There are no visible activities noticeable since the account was set up and the pictures of the NSU members were posted.

YouTube only plays a marginal role since it is only used by three police organisations and only for recruitment and representation videos. This goes so far that private persons post police prevention videos on YouTube¹⁵ because the police do not use this media¹⁶. This is all the more surprising since according to projections YouTube has approx. 36 million users¹⁷ in Germany compared to only 25 million Facebook users¹⁸.

Other social media platforms were obviously neglected. For instance, there are no police organisations or individual police officers who use WhatsApp to get and stay in contact with the community. The one exception found is the German Police University which uses Foursquare¹⁹.

¹² Sachsen, 2013

¹³ Beste Polizei, 2013

¹⁴ Sachsen, 2012; BKA, 2013 II

¹⁵ Bayern, 2010

¹⁶ Hepp, Fasel, p.84

¹⁷ Ritter, 2014

¹⁸ Statista, 2014

¹⁹ DHPol, 2014

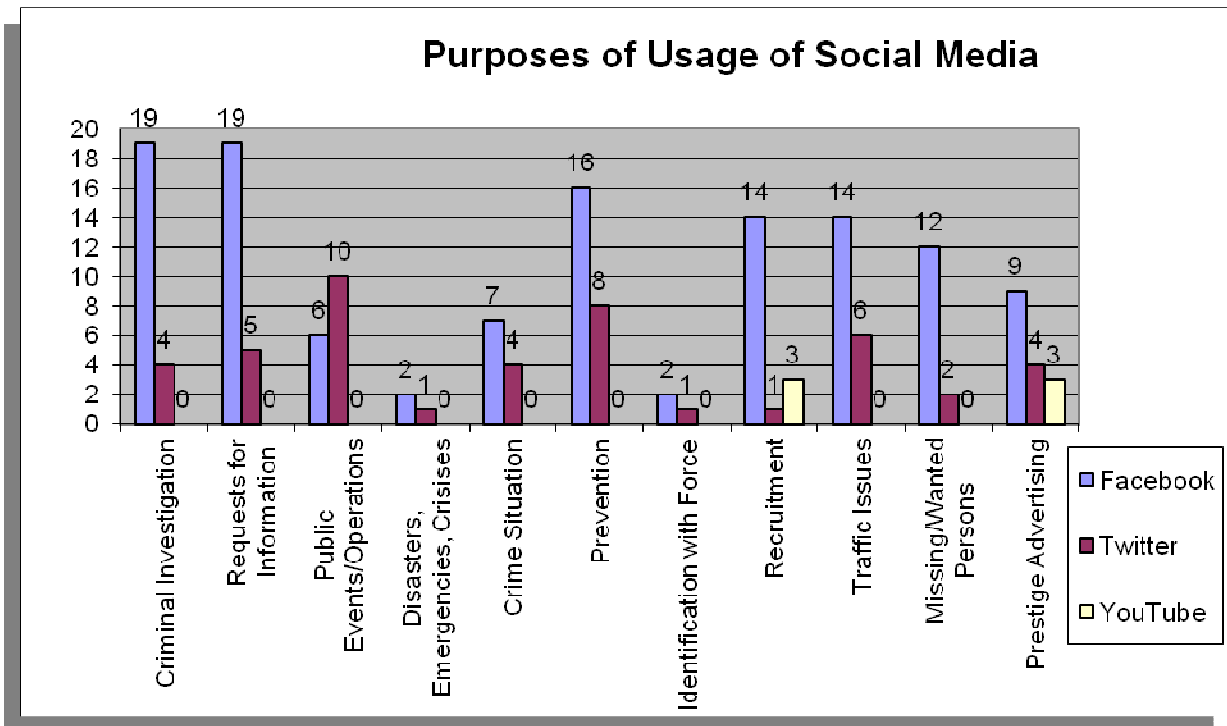
5.2. Purposes for which Social Media is Used by German Police Forces

Table 2 shows for which purposes social media is being used by German police forces. Facebook is mostly used to inform the public about criminal investigations (19) combined with requests to the public to come forward with information regarding these, mostly unsolved, crimes (19). Furthermore, in a high number of cases (16) Facebook is also used for crime, road traffic prevention activities and advice, as well as recruitment (14) and the related advertisement of job vacancies. Also traffic issues (14) like information about road accidents, traffic checks and speed controls are very often seen on Facebook pages. There are a few police accounts which almost exclusively focus on this topic. Looking for wanted persons (12) is also well rated in this research since some police organisations quite regularly post information about known or unknown wanted criminals, including pictures, CCTV footage or identikit pictures of culprits. Warnings of emergencies, dangers and disasters seem to be reserved to Twitter since this issue is rarely (2) covered by Facebook pages. Almost the same applies to information about public events and related police operations (6).

It was noted that there is less information posted on Twitter than on most (not all) of police Facebook accounts. The significant difference between Facebook and Twitter is the use of Twitter for real time information regarding ongoing events (10) like public demonstrations, football games, traffic restrictions and disasters with much less emphasis for requesting information from the public (5) and information about criminal investigations (4). This means that German police forces use Twitter almost in the same fashion as the Greater Manchester Metropolitan Police and the London Metropolitan Police but not on the same scale. In a number of cases (8) Twitter is also used for spreading crime and road collision prevention advice. On the other hand, Twitter is barely used for recruiting (1), prestige advertising (4) or searching for wanted criminals and missing persons (2).

It can be summarized that both social media platforms Facebook and Twitter are used for similar purposes but with a different weighting.

Table 2: Policing Purposes for Using Social Media



5.3. Further Social Media Platforms

According to the research done for this report, the German police organisations currently do not use other social media platforms (WhatsApp, Instagram, Blogs etc.) except for Facebook, Twitter and to a limited extent YouTube. As aforementioned, the German Police University is the only exception since it uses Foursquare²⁰.

5.4. Police Websites

A common way of presenting the federal or state police, is the use of websites on which information in press release style, statistics and traffic warnings is posted. Despite the fact that websites are not considered to belong to social media in the narrow sense of the word, they play an important role when talking about the presence of the police in digital media. But this report addresses such sites only in general terms.

²⁰ Ibid.

One part of such a presence is also a so called internet police station (internet police station of the Brandenburg police²¹). Citizens can use this virtual police station to report crimes, give hints to the police or file complaints. These virtual police stations cannot replace the emergency numbers since they are not permanently monitored and an immediate response cannot be guaranteed. But this is emphasized on all of these websites. Citizens who have filed a report receive automatically generated replies from the system stating that their report has been received and forwarded to the respective police organisation, department or law enforcement agency (if the subject is beyond police responsibility). Afterwards it is up to the responsible department or agency to inform the reporter (complainant) about the state of affairs regarding their cases.

It has to be positively emphasized that some of the police forces try to design their media presences to be more interactive and child/juvenile friendly. For example, the virtual police station of the Brandenburg Police website includes a so called “Children Police Station”²² which offers games and age appropriate media reports.

Police websites are to a great extent also used to give prevention advice to the public. This advice consists of video footage to protect elderly people against criminals posing as long-lost relatives, house burglaries, criminals posing of CID officers, trick thefts and much more. Further prevention advice is given regarding other criminal phenomena like child pornography, corruption, car theft and robberies as well as road traffic issues.

Another key area for the usage of websites by the police is the search for wanted criminals, missing persons and identification of dead bodies, posting pictures, CCTV footage, identikit pictures and facial reconstructions.

²¹ Brandenburg, 2014 I

²² Brandenburg, 2014 II

5.5. Labour Unions

In some cases police labour unions (for example, GDP²³ present themselves in social media. These accounts are not official police accounts and cannot be used for the intended policing purposes. The main themes are collective bargaining, violence against police officers, improvement of working conditions and last but not least self-promotion.

5.6. Unofficial Appearances Posing as Police Accounts

Another phenomenon is that private persons set up unofficial police accounts (for instance, PoliceNews Potsdam Facebook²⁴ and Twitter²⁵) to spread information about the police and police operations. These accounts are not authorized by the police but they can be mistaken for official police accounts by its design and the content of information posted, if one does not read the small print. This proves that others will fill the gap when the police are not present. Posts which look quite official can be mistaken as official police statements and can cause misunderstandings or even provocations if the people who feed the account intend to cause unrest and disseminate false information²⁶. The only way to avoid this is by having a professional and well maintained presence in the respective social media. These accounts only copy and post police press statements and sometimes media reports. Amazingly, one of these unofficial accounts (PolizeiNews Berlin²⁷) with over 30.000 followers is rather popular.

Since these accounts are not official police accounts and the origin of the information posted is of dubious origin, they are therefore not considered any further.

²³ GDP, 2014

²⁴ Potsdam, 2014 I

²⁵ Potsdam, 2014 II

²⁶ Rüdiger, 2013

²⁷ Berlin, 2014 I

6. Legal Barriers with Regards to the Use of Social Media by German Police

According to its population, economic strength and absolute number of police officers, Germany should be a big player in Europe's security architecture and should take a pioneering role in the area of security policy challenges in Europe. However, it is worthwhile to note that the reluctant use of social media - especially in comparison to countries like the Netherlands and Great Britain – does not do justice to this role.

Criminologists suggest the reasons for the hesitant adaptation of social media as means of policing and area for police activities in particular is due to the national legal regulation²⁸. Data protection concerns, especially in connection to public searches for wanted persons, and the principle of legality play a large role in the national discussion.

The German principle of legality states that police officers must prosecute all criminal offences as soon as they learn about them. In order to reinforce this principle, the German legislator created a special criminal offense to prosecute those police officers who do not do that. Particularly problematic, is the fact that police officers do not have leeway and must prosecute also minor criminal offences, even if the victim does not want to report the crime²⁹. That means an insult or a minor brawl must be investigated even if the involved persons do not have an interest in the involvement of the police at all. Police officers who do not do that render themselves liable to prosecution. Using this principle of legality for activities in social media could cause an overload, due to the huge number of possible criminal offences detected by police officers monitoring these media platforms or maintaining the police appearance, and could paralyse the police force.

There is already a so-called "shitstorm" on Facebook with several hundreds of in Germany punishable defamatory offences which must be investigated if the police learn about them. That is the reason why the criminal procedure law needs to be modernised and adapted to the new circumstance regarding the use of modern technologies and social media by the police³⁰.

²⁸ Rüdiger/Denef, 2013

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

7. Research on the Usage of Social Media by German Police

Research about the Internet and social digitalisation are carried out in all relevant fields of science in Germany and beyond. Particular attention is being paid to the problem of cybercrime and crimes committed in or through the Internet by law enforcement agencies. Until recently research and scientific publications in connection with the security sector, almost exclusively focused issues and approaches towards cybercrime in the narrow sense like hacking attempts on critical and /or military infrastructure, Internet sites, identity theft and the spread of malware and viruses.

In Germany the BKA plays a leading role among the law enforcement agencies in the exploration of cybercrime and regularly conducts research symposia³¹ and established the "Research Centre Cybercrime". Besides the BKA the federal states also conduct surveys, partly on a greater scale. In 2013 the Ministry of Interior of the state Lower Saxony for example cooperated with the Criminal Research Institute of Lower Saxony³² to conduct dark field interviews and published the results, which also included findings on victimisation by cybercrime³³.

Despite the fact that research institutes and law enforcement agencies in Germany address the dark side of the Internet to successfully tackle Internet and cybercrime, considerably less attention is being paid to the emerging risks which go along with the establishment of social media, related necessary change processes and possibilities social media offer for the police and the fulfilment of their tasks and their performance.

One of the few research centres in this regard belongs to the University of Applied Science of the Police of Brandenburg³⁴. The staff of this centre research in the fields of communication and interaction risks like cyber grooming, cyber mobbing, sexting, online hate crime, however also addresses the issue of utilisation of social media by police forces for policing purposes.

³¹ BKA, 2014

³² KFN, 2014

³³ Niedersachsen, 2013

³⁴ Grieger, 2013 p.41

Besides a number of publications³⁵, representatives of the research centre regularly present the results and achievement at symposia and conferences but also conduct their own scientific events.

On the whole, it must be said that the social-scientific approach on this issue does not play an important role in Germany. Some publications strongly criticize this fact and demand to pay far greater attention to the subject of social media use by police organisations.

8. Summary

The findings clearly indicate that the use of social media by the German police is still in its infancy. If one compares the widespread use of social media by the National Police of the Netherlands or the Police in Great Britain for instance³⁶, Germany's police are far behind in this matter. Besides the lack of awareness among senior command officers about the possibilities that social media can provide for various policing purposes, legal limitations are also an issue which has to be taken into account when assessing the situation regarding this subject. Regulations in the German criminal procedure code as well as the data protection law, drastically restrict the options of publishing pictures and names of wanted or missing people. These restrictions however can be successfully overcome as some of the police social media accounts prove.

The police primarily focus on Facebook and Twitter to set up police presences in social media. There are hardly any accounts in other social media (except for a few YouTube and one Foursquare accounts) to find. Despite the extreme high number of YouTube users in Germany and the wide range of possibilities for self-promotion, prevention and image advertising, the German police practically neglect this media³⁷. Interestingly, no duty accounts of individual police officers in Germany could be found.

Until now, further considerations for the utilisation of smart phone messengers like WhatsApp for direct mobile communication with the publication is completely missing³⁸.

³⁵ FHPolBB, 2013; Rüdiger/Denef, 2013

³⁶ Denef, et al., 2011; Denef, et al., 2012

³⁷ Hessen, 2010 - contains only one video posted a couple of years ago

³⁸ Rüdiger, 2013

Thereby, in times of demographic change Social media, used by individual police officers working in community policing, are especially suitable for Germany to provide a sense of security. However, such innovative solutions in terms of communication and representation require determined and well trained police officers.

Taken as a whole, it must be said that the German police have managed the first steps in using social media for policing purposes. But sooner, rather than later, the utilization of social media has to be intensified since the multitude of unofficial accounts show the high level of interest the public has in information from the police but also the risks when the police remain inactive.

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Annex I: Analysis of Police Facebook Account Examples

The **University for Applied Science of the Police of Brandenburg** has a Facebook account³⁹, with currently 829 followers. This account was founded in 2009 and has been fed with all sorts of useful information since then. Since the University for Applied Science is not a law enforcement agency in the narrow sense of the word, the information posted on this account refers less to investigation, prevention or criminal statistic matters, and instead illustrate the broad variety of activities of such an institution.

It starts with the history of the facility which has accommodated the University since 2005. The University uses parts of the former barracks which were used to train SS-troops, concentration camp guards and commanders for the concentration camp Sachsenhausen. It also shows that the German police have come to grips with the past and wish to discuss it publicly.

Further issues are related to the activities of the University in terms of academic research, participation in international projects and cooperation with other police and training institutions. Special emphasis is placed on the close and strong cooperation with the Police Academy Słupsk (Poland) which shows the public that the University but also the Brandenburg police in general is very successful in working together closely with the Polish police.

Since the University for Applied Science is, besides training and education, also responsible for recruiting students and future police officers, advertising and attracting the attention of young people for a police career is one of the main objectives in using this media. This is being done by pure advertisement but also by invitations for special events like open house days, Girls' Day and taster courses.

Study related events like the official start of study courses or the appointment of police officers after successfully finishing the course is posted on the site in order to give the newly appointed officer's families the chance to celebrate with their loved ones. This also can lead to positive representation of both the police in general and the single police officer as well and improves the identification with the force.

³⁹ <https://www.facebook.com/fhpol?fref=ts>

Further information posted on this account cover issues like sport events, special conferences on investigative issues like fighting organised or cybercrime, science days, information about the virtual police station of the Brandenburg police, updates on the EU financed Erasmus - Lifelong Learning - Project and much more besides. Furthermore the University is posting information about public peace and order issues like bomb disposal operation and the linked evacuations or seal offs of parts of the city.

To summarize, it can be said that the account is well maintained and fed with useful information, mostly focussing on the main objectives of an education and training institution.

Another Facebook account is run by the **Police Directorate Hannover** – Land of Lower Saxony⁴⁰ - with currently 113,835 followers. This is quite a lot in comparison to similar sites of other police forces and organisations. The police of Hannover use this account for various purposes.

Firstly, for prevention activities like warnings of domestic burglaries during the dark season within their area of responsibility. Furthermore, there is information about cybercrime, alcohol abuse, violence, extremism and radicalisation prevention projects.

Secondly, the police use their Facebook appearance to look for witnesses who can give information for a wide variety of crimes such as, robberies, car theft, burglaries as well as homicides. Searching for missing or wanted persons seems to be the responsibility of the LKA of Lower Saxony⁴¹. The police of Hannover posted a link which refers to the LKA website where respective information can be found. Last but not least Facebook is also being used for recruitment purposes. There are advertising posts but also invitations to recruitment activities like presentations and job fairs.

This appearance works very well and is quite successful according to the huge number of followers and the wide variety of content it offers.

⁴⁰ <https://www.facebook.com/PolizeiHannover>

⁴¹ <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Landeskriminalamt-Niedersachsen>

One of the few central state police accounts is the one of the **Police of Hesse**⁴² which currently employ 18,000 police officers. This account (7,600 followers) is a disappointment in comparison to the previously examined accounts of the Police Hannover and the University for Applied Science of the Police of Brandenburg. There is barely any information posted on this page which describe the activities of the police, key aspects, prevention activities, police operations or achievements.

What can be found there, are links to information about wanted unknown perpetrators. In one of the cases, two suspects, one known and the other unknown, are wanted for a homicide by the police and all available personal data like, name, nickname, pictures as well as CCTV footage is published. The other cases are about arson, grievous bodily injury, attempted robbery and dangerous interference in road traffic. In these cases the police are looking for unknown suspects and are publishing all available information inclusive pictures and CCTV footage.

Since there are no further posts there are also no comments to analyze. Finally there is a list of links to a couple of police Facebook accounts. It can be said that the administrators of this appearance do not seem to put much effort in to maintaining the account and making it attractive for the public.

The account of the **Police of Rhineland-Palatinate**⁴³, with a strength of approximately 7,200 police officers, is another example of a central state police account which is better maintained and more interesting for the public due to its more varied editorial content.

This appearance illustrates the broad variety of subjects that a state police force of this size has to deal with, in maintaining public peace and order within its area of responsibility. Posts refer to day-to-day policing activities like traffic checks (speed and red light offenses) and regular patrols. It was interesting to read, that comments regarding such traffic controls conducted by police trainees were extremely positive. Such traffic controls are usually not very popular among the regular population, but seem to be accepted when used for training purposes. The police also publish unprecedented findings

⁴² <https://www.facebook.com/PolizeiHessen>

⁴³ <https://www.facebook.com/PolizeiRheinland Pfalz>

like overloaded or un-roadworthy trucks, which were stopped at traffic checkpoints and taken off the road. The arrest of a bank robber who committed several robberies was very positively commented by the followers and the police was explicitly praised. The same applies to a post which announced the detention of a perpetrator who was wanted for sexual assault.

But comments are not always positive towards the police. One follower posted an episode which says that police officers stood idly by and allowed an animal welfare campaigner to be beaten up. This obviously caused concern as well as negative comments about the performance of the police officers on the spot, who were blamed for having taken sides.

Police of Rhineland-Palatinate also use this site to search for wanted criminals. E.g. they posted an identikit picture of a culprit who has committed an armed robbery. Another post is about a call for witnesses in connection to a car theft. Prevention is also an issue. The police explicitly warn against burglars who use the dark season for their business. Such warnings are usually taken well by the population but barely commented. Another warning notice against fraudulent gold dealers, who carried out their nefarious deeds at highway rest area, resulted in a couple of xenophobic comments against Roma and Sinti.

Posts about social projects (hospice for children), which are supported by the police force, are acknowledged and help to improve the reputation of the police. Vacancy notices are also part of the appearance. Twitter is used to update the citizens about the situation on the spot regarding special police operations (public demonstrations, soccer games).

On average there are only one or two comments per post, most of them positive and supportive but a few also critical and some also unduly as mentioned above. Quite interesting is the fact that this appearance attracts only 662 followers despite its rich content in comparison to the 7600 followers of the account of the Police of Hesse, which barely contains any information, except for searches for wanted criminals.

The account of the **Police Directorate Krefeld**⁴⁴ – Land of North Rhine-Westphalia – is a bit less exciting; the posts mainly focus on information about traffic checks and speed controls. They even announce where they are going to conduct those radar speed checks.

⁴⁴ <https://www.facebook.com/PolizeiKrefeld>

In most of the cases these announcements are combined with warnings about the dangers of speeding. There are furthermore posts regarding prevention issues like warnings about house burglaries, larcenies by trick, as well as security gaps in Internet routers and the exploitation of those by cyber criminals. Despite the fact that 4,300 people follow this page, there are only a few comments, mostly positive, posted. The warning about the larcenies by trick resulted in another subtle xenophobic comment since it is widely believed, that such crimes are only committed by foreigners who come to Germany to commit crimes and exploit the social security systems. The information about an arrested sprayer was highly appreciated. All in all an uninteresting appearance except for those who are prone to speeding and want to know where the police is going to conduct speed controls.

The **LKA Baden-Württemberg**⁴⁵ as a State Criminal Police Office, understandably focuses on its main responsibilities and priorities. As was to be expected, there is not much information about current operations and investigation since most of them are highly confidential and information leaks could jeopardize such undertakings. The posts on this site are quite up-to-date and range from information about the Safer Internet Day launched by the EU Commission and warnings about tricky privacy settings on Facebook as well as ransomware and identity theft. There are also warnings about the so called romance scamming which seems to be an increasing problem at the moment. In comparing posts on various police accounts, Facebook gives us the opportunity to figure out whether some criminal phenomena are only local occurrences or more widespread than believed. One example is the number of house burglaries which increases during the dark season. This seems to be the problem almost countrywide, since almost all police forces that run a Facebook account post warnings about this particular crime in regular intervals.

The LKA Baden-Württemberg uses its appearance to tackle another serious problem which is not only of local interest. Germany has a number of extreme right wing groups and far-right and racist parties. The LKA Baden-Württemberg uses its Facebook account to encourage members of such groups and parties and offer assistance to persons (and their families) if they want to leave the right-wing scene.

⁴⁵ <https://www.facebook.com/lkabw>

They also offer counselling services to victims of crimes. Further information posted on this page is about drug statistics and calls for witnesses in homicide and sexual abuse cases. Some of the information is written in a rather formal style similar to a press statement style. This is not the typical, colloquial language spoken on social media websites.

Last but not least recruiting and advertising for job and career opportunities in the police is covert as well. This site has close to 4000 followers but only a few of them comment on the posts. Typically, only positive comments are posted.

The Facebook account of the **Police of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania**⁴⁶ has 25,777 followers and is therefore quite popular in comparison to other appearances. The reason for this popularity is not obvious since the content of this site is not especially spectacular. Next to regular traffic controls there is information posted about an unknown perpetrator who committed a robbery and a call for witnesses after a cruelty offense. Further information is about missing persons. Interestingly there are links to other social media platforms which are used by the police for certain purposes. In one case there was a link to a Twitter account run by the Police of the Land of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, which updated the public about the situation when storm “Oscar” hit the Baltic Sea coast.

The Facebook presence of the **Bundeskriminalamt**⁴⁷ – Federal Criminal Police Office – is another disappointment in comparison to accounts of other police forces. There is only an outdated search for members of the dismantled NSU (National Socialist Underground), the right wing extremism terrorist group which was notorious for the killings of 9 business owners of Turkish and Greek descent. There is no further useful information except for a couple of links to other police sites. But it is still interesting to find out, why this site has 9,700 followers. The account has been considered to have been laying idle since shortly after setting up the account in 2011.

⁴⁶ <https://www.facebook.com/PolizeiMV>

⁴⁷ <https://www.facebook.com/bka.wiesbaden>

The **Federal Police**⁴⁸ use its Facebook presence only for limited purposes like presentation of the federal police, recruitment and illustration of career opportunities. They describe in detail the requirements for applying and becoming a police trainee and police officer with the federal police. Furthermore, they celebrate their competitive athletes for their achievements in national and international competitions and Olympic Games.

The account of the **Police Directorate Stuttgart**⁴⁹ (Baden-Württemberg) which currently has 12,800 followers is quite popular among the users. The police regularly post information about the traffic situation, road accidents, seized drugs, committed crimes (homicides and so on), crimes solved and perpetrators apprehended. The police also asked the citizens for help to catch the perpetrators in cases of sexual abuse, serious bodily harm and a fatal road accident. Furthermore, they informed the public about the establishment of a special commission for investigating a homicide. The police also inform the public, that this page is not designed for information which requires an immediate response by the police. They refer to the emergency phone number and propose to use the online police station in less urgent cases.

Comments from the users are mostly positive. However, in a case of sexual abuse involving a child, the comments became unreasonable in calling for the death penalty if the perpetrator is caught. In another case with a foreigner identified as a perpetrator, some comments displayed a slight xenophobic attitude.

The **Police of Oberhausen**⁵⁰ (3,700 followers) use its Facebook account for a number of purposes. Prevention is a big issue on this page. The police cover subjects like advice against pick pocketing, trick swindlers and prevention of road accidents caused by inappropriate speed and drunk driving. The warnings of trick swindlers caused xenophobic remarks from some users. The police also share their achievements like solved crimes and caught perpetrators. As a result the public followed by praising comments but also with requests for heavier penalties. Further posts are about road accidents and crimes committed. The police also post identikit pictures to search for culprits and to ask the public for help in such cases.

⁴⁸ <https://www.facebook.com/BundespolizeiKarriere>

⁴⁹ <https://www.facebook.com/polizeipraesidiumstuttgart>

⁵⁰ <https://www.facebook.com/PolizeiOberhausen>

The account of the **Police Directorate Osnabrück**⁵¹ (4,300 followers) covers a wide variety of topics from road traffic statistics, recruitment of new police trainees, prevention advice and warnings from various crime phenomena. The police also report about investigative successes and caught culprits, which is usually taken well by the followers. They also asks the public for help and to come forward with information in cases of sexual abuse, robbery and hit-and-run accidents. Furthermore, the Police of Osnabrück posts information about police operations referring to public events.

The Facebook account of the **Police Directorate Göttingen**⁵² (3,700 followers) is similar to some of the previous appearances covering the same topics such as prevention videos, updates on police operations, solved crimes, traffic checks and restrictions. The police also publish calls for witness regarding various crimes and road collisions as well as to find owners of seized stolen goods. With posts about the CeBIT⁵³ trade fair police info point and online child protection activities the police is working on building a positive image.

⁵¹ <https://www.facebook.com/PolizeiOsnabrueck>

⁵² <https://www.facebook.com/polizeidirektion.goettingen>

⁵³ <http://www.cebit.de/home>

Annex II: Analysis of Police Twitter Account Examples

Here are a couple of examples for the usage of Twitter as media for policing by German police forces:

The official Twitter account of the **Police of Rostock**⁵⁴, which currently has 1,119 followers, is a positive example for the use of Twitter as a means for policing. This appearance covers a huge variety of issues. It starts with the usual press statements about crimes committed within their area of responsibility or the number and seriousness of road collisions. Furthermore, the police announce the time and location of speed controls or common traffic checks. It seems that the announcements of speed controls attract some special attention amongst the followers. Further information is about traffic restrictions, car thefts, solved crimes and caught criminals.

Interesting is the use of this account for informing the public about police operations regarding public events such as fairs, demonstrations and football games. Twitter proved to be useful for giving live updates to the public when storm “Oskar” hit the coast of the Baltic Sea.

The **Police of Saxony**⁵⁵ (830 followers) use their Twitter account to spread press statements regarding road collisions, committed crimes, solved cases and warnings, as well as prevention advices. Information regarding ongoing police operations and public events is not available on this site. The content is similar to what is usually posted on police websites. The options that Twitter provides are not fully exploited yet.

The content of the Twitter account of the **University of Applied Science of the Police of Brandenburg**⁵⁶ (with only 37 followers) is manifold. It covers prevention advice such as protection against credit card fraud, cybercrime and violent crime. The university also uses the appearance for recruitment (Girl’s Day, open house day, for instance) and image campaigns. Furthermore, the administrators retweeted information about other police accounts, interesting scientific information and police related media publications. Political issues are covert as well. The university regularly adds images to attract attention and support the effects of the tweets.

⁵⁴ https://twitter.com/Polizei_Rostock

⁵⁵ <https://twitter.com/PolizeiSachsen>

⁵⁶ <https://twitter.com/search?src=typd&q=FHPol>

The low number of followers does not reflect on the quality of the content. Since the university is not a law enforcement agency, they cannot post information about solved crimes and caught culprits.

A great deal of attention (3,347 followers) is being paid to the account of the **Police Directorate Stuttgart**⁵⁷. Obviously, this is due to the rich content of the appearance. The police provide live updates on police operations regarding public demonstrations and other occasions. Further subjects are prevention issues such as information campaigns to protect elderly people against criminals posing as long-lost relatives and trickster thieves. Traffic issues are also on the agenda, with information about speed and alcohol checks combined with warnings about the dangers of speeding, drink driving and drug abuse. The police also use the Twitter account to inform the public about the crime situation and ask the followers to provide information regarding crimes committed by unknown perpetrators. Finally the police do something for their reputation in posting information about a culprit caught by a police dog and campaigning for new police trainees. The administrators are rather active and effective in tweeting and answering tweets from Twitter users.

The Twitter account of the **Police of Mainz**⁵⁸ (473 followers) is exclusively designed and used to inform the citizens about police operations, mainly football games, live updates on public events and the problems caused by such. This includes traffic advice, public transportation and warnings of threats.

The **Police of Berlin**⁵⁹ set up their account on the 20 March 2014 and already got 2,737 followers. This account covers information about road accidents, calls for witnesses regarding road collisions, robberies and gives prevention advice to avoid bicycle theft for instance. Recruitment is also an issue and special events like Girl's Days are being discussed. For providing information regarding events and updates on police operations, the Berlin Police has set up another Twitter account⁶⁰, which is exclusively used for this purpose.

⁵⁷ https://twitter.com/PP_Stuttgart

⁵⁸ <https://twitter.com/PolizeiMainz>

⁵⁹ <https://twitter.com/polizeiberlin>

⁶⁰ https://twitter.com/PolizeiBerlin_E

The Twitter accounts of the **Police Kaiserslautern**⁶¹ (1,045 followers) and **Police of Frankfurt/Main**⁶² (2619 followers) are also exclusively used for information with respect to police operation. The information given is usually rather detailed and in the case of the account of the Frankfurt/Main Police is provided in German and English language.

The **Police of Dortmund**⁶³, with currently 1,875 followers, use their appearance to a great extent to inform the public regarding the security situation and police operations concerning football games. Furthermore, they post information about solved serious crimes such as robberies. Traffic issues such as road collisions and traffic restrictions are on the agenda too. The police are also calling for witnesses regarding a murder case, including the respective link to their Facebook account and an identikit picture of the suspect. Further issues are road safety advice for cyclists and an image press campaign.

The Twitter account of the **Police of Dresden**⁶⁴ (877 followers) offers information about the crime situation (official crime statistics), solved crimes and crime hotspots such as burglaries, for instance. The Police of Dresden also use their account to ask for witnesses regarding a robbery and a road collision to come forward with information. Most important is the detailed information provided regarding the security situation in relation to football games and bomb disposal operations. But this information is provided in a rather formal style similar to a press statement style. This is not the typical, colloquial language spoken on social media websites. Further issues covered by this account are warnings of tricksters and regular press statements about daily occurrences such as, crimes, accidents, road collisions or disturbances of public peace and order.

⁶¹ https://twitter.com/Polizei_KL

⁶² https://twitter.com/Polizei_Ffm

⁶³ <https://twitter.com/PolizeiDortmund>

⁶⁴ https://twitter.com/Polizei_Dresden

Annex III: Analysis of Police YouTube Accounts

Here are the short descriptions of YouTube accounts used as media for policing by German police forces:

The YouTube account of the **Police of North Rhine-Westphalia**⁶⁵ offers only one video trailer, which is only 33 seconds long. The video was posted in 2013 to encourage young people to consider the profession of policing and to make them aware of the application deadline.

The account of the **University of Applied Science of the Police of Brandenburg**⁶⁶ was established in the middle of March 2014 and is still under construction. This account also consists only of one four minute long image video to attract people to the profession as police officer. This video has already attracted the attention of 828 YouTube users.

The **LKA of Hesse**⁶⁷ uses its YouTube account for prevention issues. It posted a prevention video about against violence and the posting of violence videos on the internet. This video was posted four years ago. The account has been considered to have been laying idle since.

⁶⁵ <http://www.youtube.com/channel/UCNPXR89pOpGpW0S8O3wiwQ>

⁶⁶ <http://www.youtube.com/channel/UckCorPvu8eoV9qJygo1lguQ>

⁶⁷ <https://www.youtube.com/user/Jugendkoordination/feed>

Annex IV: Analysis of the Purposes for which the Police uses Facebook

Table 2: Purpose of Usage of Facebook by Federal and State Police

<i>Policing Purposes</i>	<i>Criminal Investigation</i>	<i>Requests for Information</i>	<i>Public Events/ Operations</i>	<i>Disasters, Emergencies, Crises</i>	<i>Crime Situation</i>	<i>Prevention</i>	<i>Identification with Force</i>	<i>Recruitment</i>	<i>Traffic Issues</i>	<i>Missing/Wanted Persons</i>	<i>Prestige Advertising</i>
University of Applied Police Science BrB.				X			X	X			X
Police Directorate Hannover	X	X				X		X		X	
Police of Hesse	X	X								X	
Police of Rhineland-Palatinate	X	X	X			X		X	X	X	X
Police Directorate Krefeld						X			X		
LKA Baden-Württemberg	X	X			X	X		X			
Police of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania	X	X							X	X	
BKA										X	
Federal Police								X			X
Police Directorate Stuttgart	X	X			X				X		
Police Directorate Oberhausen	X	X				X			X	X	
Police Directorate Osnabrück	X	X	X		X	X		X		X	
Police Directorate Göttingen	X	X	X		X	X			X		X
Police Directorate Lüneburg	X	X	X	X	X	X			X		
Police of Braunschweig	X	X	X		X	X		X	X	X	
Central Police Directorate Lower Saxony								X			X
Police of Cologne	X	X				X				X	
Police of Hamm	X	X			X	X			X	X	
Police of Essen	X	X				X			X	X	X
Police of Mönchengladbach	X	X				X		X	X		
Police of Münster	X	X				X			X	X	X
Police of Rhineland-Palatinate Career								X			X
Police of Hamburg						X		X			

<i>Policing Purposes</i>	<i>Criminal Investigation</i>	<i>Requests for Information</i>	<i>Public Events/ Operations</i>	<i>Disasters, Emergencies, Crises</i>	<i>Crime Situation</i>	<i>Prevention</i>	<i>Identification with Force</i>	<i>Recruitment</i>	<i>Traffic Issues</i>	<i>Missing/Wanted Persons</i>	<i>Prestige Advertising</i>
Police Directorate Gelsenkirchen	X	X							X		
Training Centre of the Thuringia Police	X	X						X			
GSG9							X				X
University of Applied Police Science MWP								X			
Police Directorate Mannheim	X	X	X			X		X	X		

Annex V: Analysis of the Purposes for which the Police uses Twitter

Table 2: Purpose of Usage of Twitter by Federal and State Police

<i>Policing Purposes</i>	<i>Criminal Investigation</i>	<i>Requests for Information</i>	<i>Public Events/ Operations</i>	<i>Disasters, Emergencies, Crises</i>	<i>Crime Situation</i>	<i>Prevention</i>	<i>Identification with Force</i>	<i>Recruitment</i>	<i>Traffic Issues</i>	<i>Missing/Wanted Persons</i>	<i>Prestige Advertising</i>
University of Applied Police Science BrB.						X	X	X			X
Police of Rostock			X	X	X	X			X		
Police of Saxony					X	X			X		
Police of Stuttgart	X	X	X			X			X		X
Police of Mainz			X								
Police of Berlin	X	X				X					
Police of Berlin Operations			X								
Police of Dresden	X	X	X		X						
Police of Kaiserslautern			X								
Police of Frankfurt/Main			X								
Police of Münster			X		X				X		
Police of Koblenz			X			X			X		X
Police of Dortmund	X	X	X			X			X	X	X
Police of Cologne		X				X				X	
Police of Oberhausen											