



GOOD START OF THE SERBIAN MINISTRY OF INTERIOR ON FACEBOOK

The work of professional police officers is in the focus of the communication of the Serbian Ministry of Interior (Mol) on their Facebook page that was opened five months ago. More than half of all posts promote police directly, most often through showcasing personal successes of police officers in their line of work. The page content is diverse and it is mostly focused on sharing photographs, along with links and videos. All these indicators suggest that Mol is off to a good start with their communication via Facebook. However, the Mol Facebook page attracted less than 6.000 followers, which makes up only a tiny share (0.16%) of the total number of this platform's users in Serbia. One of the reasons might be the fact that the Mol currently utilizes Facebook for a one-way communication only, without engaging with the users by answering questions or replying to comments, which is not the best practice.

The Ministry of Interior opened their official Facebook page on 21 January 2018.¹

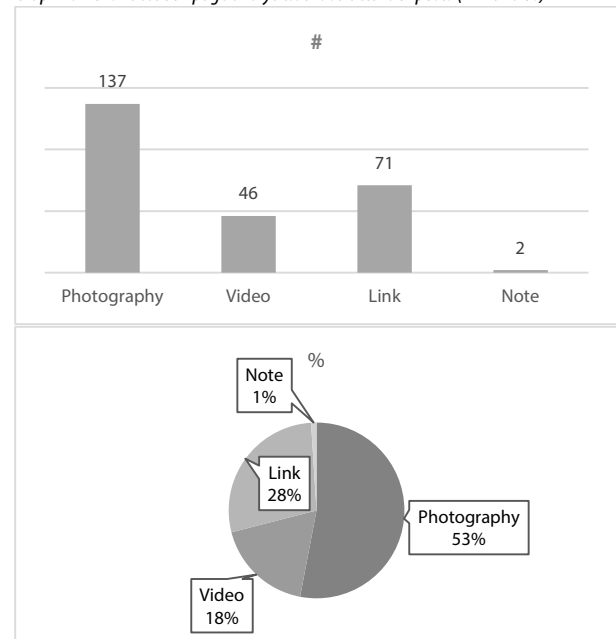
As of 31 May 2018, the Mol's Facebook page has a total of 5 678 „likes“, which comprises 0.16% of the estimated 3.4 million users of this social network in Serbia.²

The Mol's Facebook page is administered in line with most of the network's own rules and best practices of online presence.³

Since its inception and until 1 June 2018, the page had a total of 256 posts. This suggests that the Mol had an average of 2 posts per day, which is considered a sufficient number of posts for this social network.

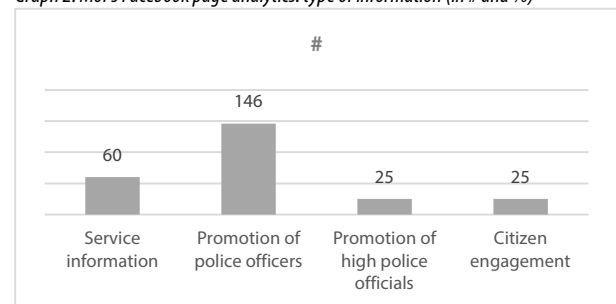
The Ministry publishes content of various formats on their Facebook page, ranging from photographs and videos, to posts with external links. An example of good practice is the use of formats such as *carousel*⁴ and *notes*.

Graph 1: Mol's Facebook page analytics: the structure of posts (in # and %)

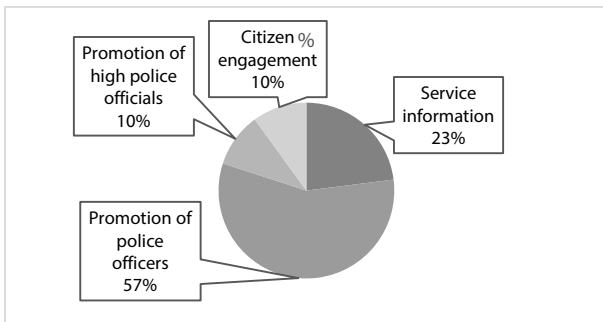


Photos make up more than half of all the posts, whereas 78 of those were galleries with 2 or more photographs. Then come links, contained in one out of every four posts; videos, as one fifth of the total number; and finally notes, which were used twice.

Graph 2: Mol's Facebook page analytics: type of information (in # and %)



⁴ The carousel format allows one to showcase two or more images, videos, headlines or links within a single Facebook post. In this manner, the user can browse the content by scrolling on mobile phone/tablet or by clicking an arrow on the computer screen, this selecting the preferred content.



As a communication channel, Facebook is primarily being used for promoting police officers.

Out of a total of 256 posts, more than half are promotional ones, followed by service information (every 1 in 4), whereas the posts that promote the Minister of Interior or police officials make up 10%--the same percentage as of those inviting citizens to become involved or help with the police work.

The *About* section of the page was utilized in a good manner by including a map of the Mol's headquarters, as well as the Ministry's email address, short description of posting rules and links to the Mol's web address and Instagram profile.

The Mol did a great job in promoting personal successes of their employees and creating videos solely for posting on Facebook, as well as making collages with the most popular posts from the previous months.

The Mol use its page in a balanced manner by sharing information on different departments within police (traffic police, border police, etc.) and thus promoting the whole institution to their followers.

The fact that the Mol utilize their Facebook page for one-way communication only remains problematic.

The Mol's activities on Facebook mostly serve the purpose of promoting their work, whereas no answers are provided to the citizens' inquiries posted in comments, not even to those pertaining to the Ministry itself. This is not a good practice when taken into account the two-way nature of communication via Facebook as a social network.

The one-way communication must also be the reason why such a small number of Facebook users liked the page to begin with, especially if one considers that more than 3.4 million of people utilize this social

network and that the Mol are one of the largest ministries with more than 40,000 employees.


The citizens expect from state institutions to be responsive to their questions, which means that the Mol could, through answering those inquiries, improve their credibility and have a positive impact on trust in police, as well as state administration as a whole.

The Mol should recognize the possibility to be interpreted in a wrong manner if they refuse to engage in a direct communication, even on social networks. The success of social media presence is measured not by the quantity of content but rather by taking into account the quality of communication and engagement with users.

The Zurich police once organized a one-day *Tweetaton* campaign during which they published police activities during said day, while at the same time receiving more than 400 messages from citizens. The police responded to more than half of questions received, which is why citizens sent mostly positive or neutral messages, whereas those with negative connotation were at minimum (<0.1%).⁵

Not a single question or comment on Mol's Facebook page should remain unaddressed by the administrators. Those comments containing offensive content, either on religious, ethnic or some other basis should, of course, be deleted and the users who posted them reported. Finally, if there are elements of criminal acts in those comments the users who posted them should be criminally charged.

With the aim to improve the official Mol's Facebook page, it is necessary for the procedure of replying to users' comments to be put in place. This, coupled with the procedures aimed to address the potential conflict or crisis communication, will help with the Mol treating the users in a respectful and professional manner.



The analysis was produced within the framework of the following of project "Western Balkans Pulse for Police Integrity and Trust" supported by the European Union (EU) through the program "Civil Society Facility". The views and opinions presented in this analysis do not represent the views of the EU.

⁵ See: <https://goo.gl/qYbhS>.