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European Parliament discussion on police brutality in the EU – EuroCOP response

As the leading voice of police officers in Europe, representing police unions from across 27 European countries, the European Confederation of Police (EuroCOP), considers it is necessary to respond to the comments raised during the recent exchange of views in the European Parliament's plenary regarding police brutality in the EU.

EuroCOP recognises that police officers occupy a unique role in our societies and that part of that role can involve the lawful and proportionate use of force. We accept that police powers (including the use of force) must be subject to robust and independent scrutiny, and where use of force has been found to be excessive, or unlawful, that appropriate sanctions must exist.

Police officers across Europe have tens of thousands of interactions with members of the public every single day, in every part of Europe. The vast majority of these are entirely cooperative and demonstrate that the public accept and respect the role of the police officer.

As many members of the European Parliament emphasised, the role of police officers within our communities, is to protect our citizens and uphold democracy, the rule of law, and fundamental rights as bastions of justice. We believe police officers do just that.

It is of course entirely legitimate for political representatives to raise concerns over occasions when police officers use excessive force. It is understandable that politicians concentrated their criticisms of police officers on a small number of high-profile incidents. The examples cited were exceptionally challenging and gave rise to legitimate concerns from observers and commentators, as well as the police officers involved. We expect all of these examples to be fully and independently investigated.

We cannot however accept that the concentration on a small number of high-profile incidents is evidence or indicative of a wider problem of the excessive use of force by police officers. Quite simply the evidence does not support such a proposition.

EuroCOP deplores political interference in policing and sees dangers that the police could be seen as an oppressive force if this is allowed to occur. We support any concerns that are raised in respect of this.



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We have time and again stood against such actions, most recently publicly condemning the actions of police officers in Belarus. *‘This extraordinary use of force which can only be described as nothing more than sheer brutality, which the world has witnessed has not, and will not, go unchallenged by this Police representative body.’*

Since 2002, EuroCOP has actively engaged with policymakers at European and domestic level on issues ranging from cross- border police cooperation to ensuring a safe working environment for police officers. Given the significance and urgency of the issue at hand, EuroCOP stands at the disposal of all European policymakers as a supporter of any necessary regulatory change to make European citizens from all background across Europe feel safe and receive the same fair treatment.

Executive Committee, European Confederation of Police. 2 November 2020