

SPEECH BY JONNE RINNE, PRESIDENT, EUROPEAN CONFEDERATION OF POLICE EUROCOP AT EPP GROUP HIGH-LEVEL POLICE SUMMIT

Honorable Members of the European Parliament, Commissioner, esteemed colleagues and guests. My name is Jonne Rinne. I'm a sworn police officer from Finland, a Chair of the Finnish Police Union and the President of the European Confederation of Police EuroCOP.

I want to thank the EPP Group in the European Parliament for the opportunity to speak with you tonight. It is a privilege to address this distinguished gathering on a matter that touches the very core of our confederation's promise: the safety of European citizens and the integrity of those who protect them. Europe should be protecting the protectors.

We live in dangerous times and this is why policing issues are high on the EU agenda. Supporting and protecting law enforcers is fundamental if Europe wants to protect its citizens, its democracy, rule of law and combat organized crime. We are happy to see the ongoing initiatives such as the European Internal Security Strategy or the intention to revise Europol regulation and we are ready to offer our support and recommendations. Across Europe, our police officers face growing risks—not only from the complexity of their duties, but increasingly from targeted violence. This is not just a national concern. It is a European one. And it demands a European response. That is why I stand before you with a clear and urgent message: violence against law enforcement officers must be recognized as a crime area under Europol's mandate. This is not symbolic—it is structural. It sends a signal that Europe stands behind its officers, and that attacks against them will be tracked, prevented, and prosecuted with the full weight of our collective institutions.

To that end, we propose the creation of a European Action Plan against Violence Targeting Police, supported by a dedicated framework to monitor and prevent such attacks. A European Observatory on Violence Against Police Officers -VAPO-would provide the data, insight, and coordination we currently lack. Eurostat could offer a foundation, but the reality is clear at the moment: data on violence against police is inconsistent, fragmented, and in many cases, simply unavailable. We must do better.

But protection is only one pillar. The second is cooperation. We must strengthen cross-border policing—not just at the national level, but at the regional and local levels where threats often emerge first. Europol must be empowered to work directly with local police authorities, respecting national frameworks but eliminating unnecessary bottlenecks in line with the 2024 "Prüm II" Regulation (on the automated search and exchange of data for police cooperation). Let us revise Europol Regulation to reflect this reality.

We also call for the launch of an EU Operational Capacity Fund—to support training, staffing, and technology where risks are highest. Europol's capabilities must not remain HQ-centric. Real-time access to EU databases for frontline officers is not a luxury—it is a necessity.

Another question concerns highly skilled police officers in the areas of cyber and financial crime. If we're going to attract the best, we are going to have a conversation about how to retain them through a structured career pathway that recognizes their enhanced skills, otherwise the private sector will swallow them up quickly.

And let us not forget the financial dimension of crime. Many Member States lack the resources to tackle money laundering and terrorist financing. EuroCOP supports the creation of a specialized EU financial crime unit to assist national police in this fight.

Third, we must invest in modern skills and training. A minimum EU knowledge standard for all officers, expanded LETS programmes, and support for joint training and exchanges will build a more cohesive and capable European police community.

Fourth, we must recognize policing as a high-risk profession. EuroCOP very much appreciates and supports the EPP proposal for a Union Act on employment protection for the activities of police officers, military personnel, prison officers and customs and border officials, classifying them as high-risk occupations in the EU. That means fair pensions, health coverage, and psychosocial support. It means integrating police into EU occupational health and safety initiatives under the European Pillar of Social Rights. And it means requiring Europol to systematically collect and analyze data on risks to officers—so that our policies are not just reactive, but evidence-based.

Finally, we must deliver the resources to match the ambition. Police support must be prioritized across the Internal Security Fund, ESF, Horizon Europe, and Erasmus. If we expect excellence, we must invest in it.

Honorable Members, Commissioner, esteemed colleagues, protecting those who protect us is not just a policy choice—it is a moral imperative. Let us act with clarity, courage and conviction. EuroCOP will stand on your side to deliver these priorities.