

Torremolinos Declaration

European Police Officers Call for Stronger Protection, Better Working Conditions and Real Support for Mental Health

Conclusions of EuroCOP's Autumn Meeting in Torremolinos 12th -13th November 2025

1 Recognising policing as a high-risk profession

At EuroCOP's 2025 Autumn Conference in Torremolinos, delegates representing 24 member organisations and 7 guest organisations raised serious concerns about the escalating hazards faced by police officers across Europe.

The sharp rise in violence, threats and operational pressures confirms once again that policing must be formally recognised at EU level as a high-risk profession. This recognition must translate into early retirement options, adequate social protection and working conditions that reflect the unique dangers and psychological toll of police work.

Delegates highlighted alarming national examples, including 17,000 attacks on national police officers in Spain in 2024 and repeated assaults in several countries where sanctions remain insufficient or inconsistent across jurisdictions. Police unions stressed that Europe still lacks harmonised rights and protections for police forces.

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Core challenges: Recruitment, retention, resources and rising violence

Across Europe, forces are struggling to retain experienced personnel and attract new recruits. Countries including Ireland, the UK, Portugal, Romania, Malta, Finland, Norway and Spain reported a combination of:

- growing recruitment gaps ;
- officers resigning before retirement age for safer and better remunerated work;
- inadequate or shrinking budgets ;
- outdated fleets and equipment ;
- a judicial system too slow or too weak to deter assaults on officers.

Delegates warned that without decisive, systemic action, police forces risk becoming unable to meet operational demands—particularly given new patterns of public disorder, hybrid threats, gang activity and violent protests linked to social tensions or migration issues.

The tragic situation described by the Ukrainian National Police, who face daily evacuations and high-intensity war conditions, reminded the conference of the extreme spectrum of challenges confronting European policing today.

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Mental health:

A growing crisis that can no longer be ignored

Many delegations—notably from Scotland, Sweden, Iceland and the UK—reported a marked deterioration in police mental health. Budget cuts, high workloads, and chronic exposure to trauma have created conditions where psychological injury is increasingly common.

Drawing on the expert presentation by Gill Moreton (Rivers Centre for Traumatic Stress), the conference underlined that:

- Police officers face repeated potentially traumatic stressors, not occasional critical incidents.
- Psychological injury accumulates over time and is shaped by organisational factors such as workload, leadership and support culture.
- Trauma prevention must be mainstream, proactive and embedded into policing, not limited to post-incident care.
- Protective factors include identity, training, peer support, competence and access to help.
- Forces must also support families, who are often the first to notice when an officer is struggling.

The EU's recent Comprehensive Approach to Mental Health and other initiatives (EU4Health, EU-OSHA guidance, CEPOL training) could offer concrete tools that police services should be supported to implement.

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Violence against police officers (VaPO): A repeated and urgent need for an EU repository

Violence against officers, including physical assaults, intimidation, cyber-harassment and threats to families, was raised repeatedly.

EuroCOP reiterated its longstanding demand for a **European repository on violence against police officers**, as foreseen in earlier discussions at EU level. Reliable data is essential for policy, training and operational planning.

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Stronger police forces for stronger democracies

Delegates reaffirmed that Europe's democratic resilience requires properly resourced, respected and well-supported police officers.

The meeting welcomed EU initiatives such as the European Democracy Shield but insisted that police officers must be recognised as central partners in safeguarding democratic institutions and public order.

EuroCOP also stressed the need to feed the real experiences of frontline officers into the future Internal Security Strategy and the forthcoming revision of the Europol Regulation.

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Hybrid Threats and Border Security: Testimonies from frontline EuroCOP members

Delegations from Poland, Ukraine, Latvia, Finland and Norway provided concrete testimonies illustrating the rapidly evolving security environment along Europe's eastern borders and the growing operational burden placed on police forces.

- Poland highlighted recent social unrest triggered by disinformation, including fake news alleging attacks on Polish students by foreigners. Criminal groups involved in trafficking and vandalism have become increasingly bold, with clear indications of support from the Russian FSB.
- Ukraine emphasised that policing has transformed under wartime conditions: around 15% of police officers now serve in combat units, drone-training has become routine, and Russian propaganda continues to spread like a “cancer.” Delegates underlined that the ongoing conflict is a technological war evolving daily. Their message to Europe was clear: prepare for the worst.
- Finland reported how Russian authorities gathered asylum seekers at the border and pushed them toward Finnish territory, forcing blue-light services to manage complex and sudden surges. With the border now closed, asylum applications must be processed through Estonia. Finland stressed that the enemy “has no limits,” making strong European unity essential.

- Norway described the challenges of policing the world's second-longest coastline after Chile. With intensified interest in the Arctic—particularly its mineral, oil and gas resources—Norwegian police face mounting pressure. The delegation noted that only 1% of Russia's shadow fleet can realistically be controlled.
- Across all testimonies, delegates warned that Europe is still not prepared despite lessons from Ukraine. Modern warfare increasingly includes cyber-operations, disinformation and social-media-driven destabilisation.
- The UK delegation linked these observations to rising social tensions in Western Europe, where immigration—legal and illegal—has been heavily politicised and weaponised. In times of crisis, police officers are the frontline and must be properly trained, equipped and protected.

Key message for trade unions: Looking after police officers is essential to protecting the “blue zone,” particularly under hybrid and cross-border threat conditions.

EuroCOP will continue addressing these issues at the Police Day event in Brussels on 3–4 March.

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Torremolinos Declaration – Key Priorities

- **Formal EU recognition of policing as a high-risk profession**, including early retirement schemes and harmonised working conditions.
- **A European framework for police mental health**, aligned with existing EU mental-health initiatives and grounded in trauma-informed, preventive practice.
- **Creation of an EU-level repository on violence against police officers (VaPO).**
- **Urgent action on recruitment and retention**, including modernised equipment, adequate budgets, fair allowances and career development.
- **Judicial and legislative reforms** to ensure consistent and serious sanctions for assaults on police officers, including a discussion on recognising such crimes as EU-level offences.
- **Investment in preparedness for new and emerging threats**, including hybrid threats, organised crime and violent extremism.
- **Stronger coordination at EU level**, ensuring that policing voices shape the Internal Security Strategy and democratic-resilience policies.

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Conclusion: Protecting the protectors

EuroCOP reiterates a simple truth: Europe cannot ensure internal security or democratic stability if it cannot keep its police officers safe, healthy and supported.

- Police officers are human beings who serve society 24/7.
- To protect European citizens, Europe must finally and concretely protect its protectors.