



# Violence Against Police Officers

## Introduction

The European Confederation of Police (EuroCOP) supports police officers in the upholding of the law, the preservation of peace and the protection of the rights of citizens in a democratic society governed by the rule of law.

EuroCOP avers it is the first duty of any government to protect its citizens and welcomes that European democracies embrace this responsibility through independent police forces working in and with the support of our communities.

EuroCOP recognises that on occasion, the preservation of peace, the upholding of the law, and delivery of the safety of citizens will occasionally require the police to use force and other coercive powers. We fully support that where this occurs, such instances should be subject to independent scrutiny to ensure continued confidence that the police operate within the law and with public support.

However EuroCOP vehemently rejects any suggestion that violence against any police officer should be considered as an occupational hazard and believes it is incumbent on any civilized democracy to take a stand against such actions. Attacks on police officers deprive communities of police officers and come at a considerable cost to taxpayers.

Police officers are at the cornerstone of protecting the rights of others and are the most valuable asset in any police service. Fit and healthy police officers are crucial for delivering successful policing that attracts public trust and confidence. Police officers who are subject to violence may be unable to return to work and ultimately face financial hardship. Police forces have a moral responsibility to look after the health, safety and wellbeing of their officers.

## Considerations

EuroCOP considers that violence against police officers is not only an unacceptable violation of the personal integrity of a human being but also constitutes a deliberate attack on society and the democratic principle of the rule of law.

EuroCOP considers that information and data is the key to understanding the impact and costs of violence against police officers and that governments should actively promote the gathering and reporting of police assault statistics.

EuroCOP considers that diminishing police budgets, falling police numbers, communication difficulties and an insufficiency of training and equipment risk exposing police officers to increasing instances of violence.

EuroCOP considers that the psychological impacts of exposure to violence are seldom understood and that police leaders routinely only give consideration to the physical effects of violence.

EuroCOP considers that promotion of self-defence and officer safety training, and the availability of modern effective equipment can help mitigate the effects of attacks on police officers.

EuroCOP considers that increased political language of intolerance and hostility can create resentment in communities and can unnecessarily increase tensions. Police officers regularly find themselves between rival groups and often become a common enemy and exposed to greater risks of violence as a consequence.

## **Action**

EuroCOP calls for governments to compel the recording and publishing (as a minimum requirement) details of the number and types of assault against police officers. EuroCOP also calls for such information to include the types of injury sustained and periods of absence from work as a consequence.

EuroCOP calls for additional independent investigation into instances of assault on police officers. All employers have a general duty of care to their employees and only by investigating the circumstances surrounding assaults can police leaders be in a position to identify and implement improved preventative measures.

EuroCOP calls for a wholesale introduction of a risk management approach to all aspects of policing. Proper appreciation of risks and dangers will ensure police leaders are better placed to identify control measures and minimise the risk of officers being exposed to violence.

EuroCOP calls for mandatory officer safety training for all police officers. Such officer safety training to be delivered not less than once per year and to include first aid training and risk awareness.

EuroCOP calls for all suspects in cases where police officers have been exposed to violence to be brought before the courts. EuroCOP further calls for any assault on a police officer to be treated as an aggravated offence.

EuroCOP calls for compensation and welfare programmes to be established so that in all instances where a police officer is injured as a result of an act of violence, that officer can be guaranteed to be fully supported in their recovery and return to work, and not suffer financial hardship through injury.

EuroCOP calls for the development of a respect agenda, where the behaviours and actions of those who promote intolerance and violence can be challenged at every opportunity. Respect for every citizen should be a fundamental element in a free and democratic Europe and should be promoted by all.

EuroCOP calls for investment into research programmes to help better understand the causes of violence with a view to developing intervention strategies to prevent violence from occurring in the first place.

**Adopted by the European Confederation of Police  
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