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Cyprus Declaration – April 2026

Policing at the Frontline of Europe's Security and Resilience

EuroCOP Spring Meeting – Cyprus, 22–23 April 2026

Meeting in Cyprus, EuroCOP members and partners highlighted a clear shift: **policing in Europe is entering a new phase. It is more exposed, more complex, and more essential than ever.**

Across discussions, one message stood out: police officers are no longer only maintaining public order. They are increasingly **operating at the frontline of societal stability, hybrid threats and democratic resilience.**

A changing role under pressure

Delegates described a profession under growing strain:

- Police forces are expected to respond simultaneously to crime, social tensions, digital threats and geopolitical instability
- In several countries, resources are declining while expectations continue to rise
- Budget priorities are shifting toward defence, often leaving policing underfunded.

This imbalance is creating **capacity gaps that directly affect public safety.**

Hybrid threats are now a daily reality

Testimonies from across Europe confirmed that hybrid threats are no longer theoretical:

- Drones, cyberattacks, disinformation and sabotage are becoming routine challenges
- Migration and organised crime are increasingly instrumentalised across borders
- Police officers are often the first responders to security incidents linked to state-level tensions

Policing is now a core component of Europe's security architecture, not a secondary one.

Workforce sustainability is reaching a tipping point

Delegates warned that policing faces a structural workforce challenge:



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- Recruitment is declining while experienced officers are leaving
- Understaffing leads to fatigue, reduced rest time and operational risk
- In some countries, entire services are being reshaped due to budget cuts or staff shortages

At the same time, examples of reform and progress show that **investment and political will can make a difference**. As an example, EuroCOP recently co-signed a European Declaration of Support for Petition 1407/23 with 3 other European police unions representatives. It requests the urgent adoption of the two European legislative measures set forth in said petition:

- The recognition of public safety and defense professionals as high-risk professions through a European Directive;
- The classification of violent attacks against officers as Eurocrimes under article 83 TFEU.

Mental health: from awareness to operational necessity

Mental health was addressed not as a welfare issue, but as an **operational requirement**:

- Exposure to trauma is continuous, not exceptional
- Stigma remains a major barrier to support
- Some countries still lack basic data on suicide and mental health in policing

EuroCOP calls for:

- A **European framework for police mental health**, aligned with EU initiatives
- Mandatory trauma-informed approaches, including preventive measures
- Systematic post-incident support and early intervention mechanisms
- Support for families of police officers
- Scaling initiatives such as suicide prevention and trauma debriefing programmes.

Mental health must be embedded into organisational culture, **not treated as a secondary or reactive issue**.

Trust, legitimacy and internal challenges

Beyond external threats, members raised internal pressures affecting policing:



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- Growing scrutiny, legal uncertainty and public mistrust in some contexts
- Misuse of social media targeting officers
- Workplace issues including harassment, inequality and organisational culture

Maintaining **trust—both within police organisations and with the public—is becoming a central challenge.**

Technology: opportunity with responsibility

New technologies, including AI, are rapidly reshaping policing:

- They offer significant gains in efficiency and situational awareness
- But they also raise questions about ethics, control and implementation

EuroCOP emphasises:

- The need for ethical safeguards and legal clarity
- Proper training and user **involvement in procurement processes**
- Ensuring technology improves working conditions rather than increasing pressure.

Technology must be seen as a **tool to support officers, not replace them.** This is also a reason for police officers to be involved in the procurement process as primary user because technology is quality of life/work issue.

A call for alignment

The Cyprus meeting concluded with a call for better alignment between:

- **Political priorities and operational realities**
- **Security ambitions and investment in policing**
- **Technological innovation and human capacity**

Conclusion

Europe is asking more of its police officers than ever before. If policing is to meet these expectations, it must be treated as a strategic priority, not an afterthought.

EuroCOP calls on decision-makers at national and European level to recognise this shift and act accordingly: resilient societies require resilient police forces.



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