



Folketinget, Christiansborg
Det Udenrigspolitiske Nævn
Nævnsssekretær Eva Esmarch
1240 København K

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Worrying sign of deterioration in a police service of a member state of the European Union.

I contact you on behalf of the European Confederation of Police, umbrella organisation of police unions and staff side associations in Europe.

As you may be aware, there has been a worrying incident in Latvia on 25 January, where a group of 4 police officers participated in an armed robbery. We feel that this unjustifiable incident is a drastic and worrying sign of deterioration in a police service of a member state of the European Union that calls into question the capacity of the country to live up to its obligations within the European Union and therefore cannot pass without comment by other Member States.

While the perpetrators need to be brought to justice and measures might need to be taken to ensure discipline within the police service, the question needs to be asked whether the quick and drastic deterioration of the economic and social situation of police officers has contributed to an environment that increases the likelihood of resort to criminal activities and corruption. Police officers have lost up to 50% of their pay since 2007 and social guarantees have been reduced to almost zero. Many police establishments in Latvia are in such bad condition that certainly in many other EU Member States they would have long been closed by labour inspections. Currently our colleagues from the Police Union in the Netherlands are financing the delivery of drinking water to police stations in Latvia which would otherwise not be available.

For your attention, I enclose a position paper of the European Confederation of Police in relation to the maintenance of a minimum common standard in law enforcement services in the EU. It is sad to say, but, while we did not expect such drastic developments to occur, we, as an organization, and certainly many of our colleagues out on the street saw this coming. It is high time that the European Union agrees measures to ensure that the high degree of cooperation between its police and law enforcement services is mirrored by a clear commitment to the maintenance of standards that ensure a dedicated and professional service to citizens throughout the Union

Yours sincerely,


Peter Ibsen
President of the Police Union in Denmark

Enclosure

Position of the EuroCOP Executive Committee
adopted 12 May 2009

A Stability Pact for the common area of freedom security and justice –
EuroCOP call for a new commitment to the 'Copenhagen criteria'

1. In 1993 the Copenhagen European Council, defined a set of EU membership criteria, which are often referred to as the 'Copenhagen criteria'. These were complemented by the Madrid European Council in 1995:
2. According to these criteria, any EU member state must have achieved
 - stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities;
 - the existence of a functioning market economy as well as the capacity to cope with competitive pressure and market forces within the Union;
 - the ability to take on the obligations of membership including adherence to the aims of political, economic & monetary union.
 - appropriate administrative and judicial structures that permit that Community legislation is implemented effectively
3. The effects of the financial crisis make it necessary for the EU to renew its commitment to keeping these standards as the basis for close cooperation among its Member States and economic and social prosperity of the EU.
4. The EU must not allow any Member State to fall short of these criteria through the effects of the current economic crisis through excessive and short sighted cuts into budgets of essential public services, such as police.
5. The current economic crisis makes it apparent that an EU wide fight against organised crime, trafficking in human beings and terrorism cannot be based exclusively on approximation of legislation.
6. To complement approximation of legislation Member States need to ensure efficient enforcement in these areas. Member States that risk falling short of providing efficient enforcement must not be left to address this on their own.
7. EuroCOP calls on Member States to agree a stability pact for police based on the Copenhagen criteria. This stability pact for the common area of freedom security and justice must ensure that Member States live up to common minimum standards with regards to law enforcement capacities and standards.
8. In addition, EuroCOP calls upon Member States to set up an early warning mechanism that ensures that measures can be taken before the capacities of any Member State to contribute to the common fight against organised crime, terrorism and corruption are severely damaged.
9. With the imminent adoption of the new multi annual framework programme on justice and home affairs, the EU Council is in a unique position to renew its commitment to the Copenhagen Criteria and to show citizens that their concern for a life in peace and freedom of crime matter.