

Conference of the High Representatives of the Ministers of the Interior - The role of the police in a democratic society “European Code of Police Ethics, nearly 20 years”

Elements for the Concluding Remarks by Jan Kleijssen, Director, Information Society – Action against Crime

21 October, 12h30, Room G03 and KUDO

- Thank all the speakers and participants for their excellent contributions. Even if such events online will never replace the contacts and networking that an in-person event generates, we hope that the Conference was nonetheless of interest to all delegations and participants.
- In line with the tradition of similar police-related events we organized since 2016, we once again saw a strong participation by member states. Some 90 participants were connected online. The level of responsibility of the police officers appointed by the member states to attend also demonstrates the interest generated by these conferences and the topics addressed.
- Police are the first respondents to many of the crimes that threaten democratic security. This is a difficult challenge and requires professionalism, competence and constant adaptation. In this context, the Council of Europe’s Code of Police Ethics remains a unique, benchmark document which should guide police work across Europe. This does not mean that it cannot be updated to take into account, for instance technological developments. But it is and remains a reference for police forces in our member states.
- This conference allowed us to exchange experiences and good practices between the police representatives of the member states. It focused on five key issues:
- **First: Qualifications, recruitment and retention of police staff.** We learned about recruitment and training of police officers in different member States. Many similarities are visible, but particularities exist and are often linked to the history of the States concerned and their political and sociological evolution. We can affirm that, if the level of recruitment and initial training are important, ongoing and specialized training is

essential throughout the career of the officer because society is constantly evolving, and the police must adapt.

- **Second: The Role and place of women in the police forces in Europe.** The challenge of gender equality policies is to give everyone access to the same career opportunities. This is about changing mindsets and fighting stereotypes. Just to give you a reference, out of the 18 GRECO evaluations conducted so far under its 5th evaluation round focusing on law enforcement, among others, 9, that is half of them, include one or more recommendations relating to the need to strengthen the representation of women and other underrepresented groups at all levels in the police. The aim is not just to collect data but to achieve better policing.
- **Third: Accountability and internal and external control of the police.** It was clear from the interventions of Ms Claire Hédon, Défenseure des droits of France, at the opening, and of her staff throughout our work, that the Council of Europe is and remains a reference and a place of reflection to find the right balance between applying the laws by police and respecting and developing human rights and fundamental freedoms. Improving relations between the population and police is a major issue which helps guaranteeing and strengthening - on a daily basis - social cohesion. Trust between police and the population is built through actions, behaviour, communication, engagement. Trust is earned; it should not be given for granted.
- **Fourth: Research and international co-operation.** Under this topic, we discussed how to facilitate the development, implementation and monitoring of information sharing and consultation between partners. The aim is to identify common priorities and challenges, and to coordinate activities in the field of police.
- **And last but not least, the fifth topic was about Strengthening the institutional link between Council of Europe and high-ranking representatives of police from member States.** I would like to thank the Ambassadors of the Netherlands and of Switzerland for having accepted to intervene in this panel together with Ms. Jacob. Police-related matters are very much present in many aspects of the Council of Europe work – perhaps more than we even imagine. Whether it is the judgments of the European Court of Human Rights or the work of our Human Rights Commissioner or the CPT, whether it is the Social Charter,

ECRI, GRETA, GREVIO, MONEYVAL or GRECO, in these and other areas the Council of Europe focuses through various angles on police work. And yet, we have no dedicated structure to gather – on a regular, systematic basis – police representatives of our member states.

- I believe that it is time to strengthen the Council of Europe institutional link with law enforcement officials. The aim would be to (i) offer space and opportunities to share good practices and innovative techniques in policing between police officers across our member states, (ii) inject, where relevant in our work, the expertise and the perspective of police representatives, (iii) assess common challenges in combating new forms of criminality or new social phenomena, and (iv) collect data, where available. We could imagine the creation of a real Network of high representatives of the police services of the Member States on the successful model of the Conference of Directors of Prison and Probation Services (CDPPS) which is placed under the aegis of the CDPC and which works very well.
- Such a proposal would be in line with the 2017 Internal Audit evaluation report on the CoE. In one of its conclusions, the Audit Report recommends to identify the main problems related to law enforcement with a view of addressing these issues through the creation of a high-level regular forum of police representatives. I think the time is ripe to bring this matter to the attention of the Committee of Ministers and the relevant Rapporteurs Groups whose Chairs are present here today.
- Dear Participants, let me once again thank you all very much for your participation and excellent contributions, and I wish you to remain healthy and safe. The Conference is closed. Thank you.