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“A chain is only as strong as its weakest link.”

EU.Pol Position Paper: Strengthening Internal Security in Europe and the Urgent Need for Enhanced Cooperation on Internal Security within Europe.

Introduction

Europe is facing an increasingly complex security landscape. While the focus on external security cooperation has intensified due to geopolitical shifts, internal security remains equally critical. The retreat of the United States from traditional alliances and its shifting foreign policy require Europe to take greater responsibility for its own security. The ongoing war in Ukraine has further highlighted the direct link between external and internal security. Threats from state actors are no longer limited to Europe’s borders; they manifest within our societies, targeting institutions, infrastructure, and public safety. A robust internal security strategy is needed to complement external defense efforts and safeguard Europe’s stability.

The Link Between External and Internal Security

The distinction between external and internal security is becoming increasingly blurred. Cyber espionage, disinformation campaigns, and the infiltration of critical infrastructure by foreign entities demonstrate that threats to internal stability originate both outside and within European borders. Organized crime networks, often linked to international actors, exploit weaknesses in national security structures, facilitating illicit activities such as drug trafficking, human smuggling, and financial crimes that undermine public trust and economic stability. A fragmented approach to internal security leaves Europe vulnerable to these evolving threats.



Key Areas for Enhanced Cooperation

1. Improved Intelligence Sharing

- National security agencies and law enforcement must have efficient mechanisms to share intelligence on cross-border threats.
- Strengthening EUROPOL's role in coordinating intelligence across member states will be crucial.
- A secure, real-time data exchange system should be implemented to track criminal networks operating across jurisdictions.
- The balance between data protection and effective policing must be carefully maintained. While data protection is essential, it should not obstruct the ability of law enforcement agencies to share and pool critical information across borders. A clear European legal framework is needed to harmonize data protection with operational efficiency.

2. Joint Operational Structures

- The establishment of multinational investigative and enforcement teams within the EU framework will improve cross-border crime prevention.
- Coordinated police operations should be expanded to combat human trafficking, cybercrime, and organized crime.
- Standardized training programs for European law enforcement agencies will ensure a unified response to emerging security challenges.
- Lighthouse projects, such as the Franco-German Cooperation Unit, serve as best-practice examples of cross-border collaboration. Expanding and replicating such successful models across Europe should be a priority.

3. Legal and Policy Harmonization

- Disparities in national security policies create enforcement gaps that criminal networks exploit. A more aligned legal framework for policing transnational crime is essential.
- The mandatory storage of connection data of digital communication, in particular IP addresses, to be particularly important for prosecuting and investigating serious crimes. All national police authorities must be able to access data stored by service providers.
- Strengthening judicial cooperation mechanisms such as the European Arrest Warrant and EUROJUST will enhance the effectiveness of cross-border law enforcement.



4. Resilience Against Hybrid Threats

- Europe must increase investment in countering cyber threats, disinformation campaigns, and economic coercion by foreign actors.
- Law enforcement should be equipped with specialized tools to detect and neutralize hybrid threats targeting democratic institutions and public trust.
- An European center for hybrid threat intelligence should be established to support member states in developing adaptive security strategies
- A European resilience strategy must be developed with the aim of promoting cooperation and information exchange between European security agencies to ensure a coordinated response to crisis situations. One building block is to improve cooperation at the technical level. An exemplary building block here is that the needs of the emergency services in Europe must be specifically taken into account in the upcoming allocation of mobile radio frequencies. In addition, cross-border training as well as exercises, material and human resources must be coordinated and made available in order to improve the capabilities and flexibility of the security forces in dealing with crises. This is crucial for ensuring the safety and well-being of citizens across Europe, even in times of crisis.

5. Standardizing Police Language and Working Conditions

- Greater collaboration on internal security requires European police organizations to develop a more standardized approach to law enforcement terminology and operational procedures.
- Cross-border police cooperation can only function smoothly if, in addition to the legal framework, the cultural and linguistic integration of police forces and their workers is improved throughout Europe. Against this backdrop, the European Erasmus+ exchange program must be expanded for police workers and access to it must be facilitated. The harmonization of working conditions, labor rights, and the democratic principles under which police officers operate will strengthen trust and coherence within European policing structures.

6. Funding and Resources for Internal Security

- Strengthening internal security requires sustainable funding. The EU should consider creating a dedicated European Internal Security Fund, similar to the European Defence Fund.
- More financial resources should be allocated to support cross-border law enforcement initiatives and operational cooperation.
- Initiating targeted structural support programmes for metropolitan areas at the European level with the aim of strengthening security and intercultural cooperation.
- The Multi-Annual Financial Framework (MFF) should allocate consistent funding for law enforcement cooperation, ensuring stability and long-term planning for security initiatives.



7. Technology and Innovation in Security Operations

- Investment in AI-driven surveillance, predictive analytics, and digital forensic capabilities will enhance law enforcement's ability to detect and disrupt threats proactively.
- Greater coordination in cybersecurity efforts across EU member states is essential to prevent large-scale cyber attacks.
- The EU should establish a framework for joint technology projects that enable police organizations to benefit from cutting-edge security solutions.
- We advocate for the establishment of a European pool with state-of-the-art technology and equipment to efficiently manage special operational situations across borders.

8. Protecting Civil Liberties and Democratic Principles

- While enhancing internal security, Europe must ensure that policing measures respect fundamental rights and the principles of proportionality and accountability.
- Strong oversight mechanisms should be established to balance security efforts with individual freedoms.
- EU institutions should develop clear ethical guidelines for the use of surveillance and AI-based policing tools.

9. Rapid Response and Crisis Management

- Europe must develop a coordinated crisis response framework that enables rapid deployment of law enforcement resources during security crises.
- An EU-wide internal security command center should be established to coordinate emergency responses to cyber threats, terrorist incidents, and hybrid attacks.
- This would allow Europe to react swiftly to security challenges without delays caused by fragmented national responses.

10. Public-Private Partnerships in Security

- Security is not solely the responsibility of law enforcement agencies. Cooperation with private sector actors, such as tech companies, financial institutions, and infrastructure providers, is crucial in combating cybercrime, fraud, and data breaches.
- Collaborative efforts with airports, ports, and logistics hubs will improve efforts to combat trafficking and smuggling.
- Public-private partnerships should be formalized through EU security initiatives that align law enforcement capabilities with corporate sector expertise.

11. Strengthening the EU Agencies, Enhance the Attractiveness of European Agencies as employers

- Through strengthening Frontex, the focus could be shifted to external borders, reducing the need for national controls at internal borders. This would bolster free movement within the Schengen Area while ensuring security. A well-equipped European resource pool would also allow national police forces to access state-of-the-art technology and equipment when needed, without requiring each country to make significant individual investments.



This means:

- Frontex must be reinforced with additional financial and personnel resources as well as expanded operational capabilities. Its mandate to secure the EU's external borders should be further developed to ensure effective migration control and reduce the need for police measures at internal borders.
- Additionally, a European pool of advanced technology and equipment is needed, which can be made available quickly and without bureaucracy to national police forces.
- Uniform and attractive working conditions — such as harmonized working hours, fair vacation policies, and adequate compensation for injuries sustained in service — are necessary to establish Frontex as a future-oriented employer for national police forces. Employee participation is also a decisive factor. Stronger institutional participation would build trust in the organization and increase job satisfaction. Furthermore, fair salary structures are essential. A more attractive working environment in European security agencies benefits employees and is also a necessary measure to ensure a strong, efficient, and well-staffed European security architecture in the long term.

Specifically:

- European security agencies like Frontex must be made more attractive employers to recruit and retain qualified personnel over the long term. This includes uniform and high standards in areas such as working hours, vacation policies, remuneration, and compensation during operations.
- Binding participation rights for police employees in European agencies must be established to ensure fair and transparent working conditions.
- To make European agencies more appealing employers in economically strong countries, targeted measures are required that include competitive pay and improved working conditions. At the same time, national police forces in economically weaker member states must not suffer from personnel shortages because European agencies like Frontex offer better conditions there. The European security architecture must be designed to balance strengthening European agencies with maintaining personnel capacities in national police forces.

The Role of EU.Pol

As a European Federation for police union, EU.Pol plays a crucial role in safeguarding the rights, working conditions, and professional standards of law enforcement personnel across Europe. Strengthening internal security is not only about improving operational capabilities but also about ensuring that police officers work under fair and standardized conditions that support their well-being and effectiveness.



EU.Pol advocates for:

- The harmonization of labor conditions and employment rights for police officers across Europe, including fair wages, adequate working hours, and access to proper support structures.
- A European framework for police well-being, ensuring proper psychological support, mental health services, and post-incident debriefing programs.
- The establishment of a European minimum standard for police employment rights, ensuring officers are not overburdened and have fair career progression opportunities.
- Better Co determination within EU security agencies! The creation of an EU Police Social Charter, outlining the fundamental rights and responsibilities of police officers across all member states.
- A permanent European law enforcement advisory body (EU police Unions included), representing the interests of police officers in EU security policymaking.
- Expressing appreciation of active and former police workers across Europe: With complete dedication and idealism, police and security workers across Europe ensure our security and freedom 365 days a year. Their experiences in the service shape them far beyond retirement. In order to appreciate these people and their services to society befittingly, we propose launching „Police Day“ on 1 October each year as a European day of action.
- Increased funding for cross-border policing initiatives, joint training programs, and law enforcement cooperation.
- The establishment of an EU Police Monitoring Mechanism to assess and report annually on police working conditions, labor rights, and well-being across member states.

By advocating for these priorities, EU.Pol ensures that police officers are equipped, protected, and empowered to maintain security in a changing European landscape. Strengthening internal security requires not only better operational structures but also a commitment to the well-being and professional integrity of those who enforce the law.

Conclusion and Call to Action

The changing global security environment demands a new approach to internal security in Europe. A comprehensive strategy that integrates external and internal security efforts is essential to protect European citizens and institutions. Law enforcement agencies must be empowered through stronger cooperation frameworks, intelligence-sharing mechanisms, and joint operational capabilities. EU.Pol urges European policymakers and law enforcement leaders to prioritize internal security as a key pillar of European stability and resilience.



By investing in a more cohesive security framework, Europe can ensure that its internal security structures are as strong as its external defense mechanisms, creating a safer and more resilient continent. Therefore we must invest in cooperation, harmonization, and the well-being of those who uphold the rule of law. This requires robust structures, sustainable funding, and a shared commitment to modernizing policing practices. However, no security framework can succeed if weaknesses remain unaddressed—a **chain is only as strong as its weakest** link. By reinforcing every link in the chain, we can build a safer and more resilient Europe for all.



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