



PRESS STATEMENT

European Confederation of Police

☎ +352/43 49 61-22 📠 +352/43 51 82

mobile: +49 174 2029033

eMail: jv@eurocop-police.org

Responsible: Jan Velleman

EURO COP – 617, rue de Neudorf – L-2220 Luxembourg

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Slovakian Government to subject police officers to military jurisdiction

EuroCOP President Heinz KIEFER intervenes in Slovakia to prevent major setback in police reform

In late July the Slovakian Police Union, OzP, had informed EuroCOP about a government proposal to subject police officers to military jurisdiction in order to compensate for alleged deficits in the country's civil court system.

The move is part of a proposal on a reform of police law in Slovakia, where the police has been under civil control for a considerable period of time already. However, the government motivated its proposal by a need to increase popular trust in the police in the country, a logic which is heavily contested by Heinz KIEFER:

The high level of trust that citizens have in their police services in a democracy is the result of transparent structures and accountability through civil control. Military control has been shown to lead to the contrary – decrease of popular trust and less accountability.

In talks with politicians in Bratislava on 21 September KIEFER insisted that apparent deficits in the civil court system are not likely to be compensated by enlarging the scope of military jurisdiction. "The only way to increase popular trust in the police is to strengthen the independence and capacities of the civil court system." KIEFER points out that a move to introduce military jurisdiction to a police force that remains under civilian political control would be unique in Europe.

EU citizens have a right to receive an equally highly skilled, motivated and transparently working police service throughout the European Union, says Mr. KIEFER, "The introduction of military jurisdiction for police officers would not be a step in the right direction. I hope that the Slovakian Parliament will abstain from this move that would isolate it in Europe."

The European Confederation of Police, EuroCOP is the umbrella organisation of 25 national Police Unions and Staff Organisations from 18 European States. It represents the interest of over 600.000 police officers in Europe. www.eurocop-police.org .