



PRESS STATEMENT

European Confederation of Police

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Luxembourg, 28 April 2008

Passengers on Swiss trains will no longer be protected by the police

Privatised railway security service in Switzerland will have same powers as the police – including access to police databases such as the SIS

Switzerland is moving to completely privatise security on its railways. As a consequence, passengers on trains through Switzerland will no longer be protected by the police. Instead, a private security service will be made responsible.

The first chamber of the Swiss Parliament has already in March voted in favour of a proposal to dismantle the railway police and replace it with a contracted security service. Further the private railway security service will be given far reaching police powers, such as identity checks as well as searching and arresting passengers.

In order to be able to enforce decisions, personnel will be equipped with firearms. According to the proposal the new railway security service will have access to the Swiss police information database Ripol which is also connected to the Schengen Information System, SIS.

The second chamber of the Swiss Parliament is expected to finally decide on the proposal in June. The Swiss Police Union, VSPB, has already voiced its strong opposition against the proposal.

‘We are strongly opposed against the idea that private companies are given police powers and access to police databases.’ says EuroCOP President Heinz Kiefer. ‘Railway networks in Europe are particularly vulnerable to terrorist attacks. It is unacceptable for any state to yield control over security measures in this area. For the police, the railway network must not become a white spot on the map.’

Although not being a Member State of the EU, Switzerland has ratified the Schengen Convention. Full implementation is scheduled for the end of 2008. This will also grant law enforcement authorities in Switzerland access to the SIS. The Schengen Convention however restricts access to the Schengen Information System to public authorities.

‘If the railway police is privatised as proposed, Switzerland will violate the Schengen Convention even before it is due to be implemented by the end of this year. We sincerely hope that the second chamber will stop the proposal and prevent this from happening’, says Heinz Kiefer.

The European Confederation of Police, EuroCOP, is the umbrella organisation of 33 national Police Unions and Staff Organisations from 26 European States. It represents the interests of over 500.000 police officers in Europe. www.eurocop-police.org