



Open letter to all European heads of government and the European Institutions

The Netherlands, 19 March 2020

Dear European heads of government,

The full impact of the coronavirus is now being felt across Europe. At present, it is not possible to determine the consequences of this, or how long it will last.

Each country appears to have its own strategy for how to respond, from reducing social contact (social distancing) to a total lockdown. It is now clear that this will have a major impact on the whole of society.

The fact is that members of a number of vital professions are expected to continue doing their daily work as normal, or are being asked to work even harder. Indeed, this has been explicitly requested by all European heads of government.

The police is one of these vital professions. As such, the police are expected to perform their duty effectively. Furthermore, they have a statutory obligation to do so.

At the EPU, we are particularly concerned about this point. After all, police agents are not immune, and are part of a high-risk group that is at increased risk of contracting and spreading the coronavirus while performing their duties.

Information recently acquired by the EPU has shown that a number of European countries are experiencing an acute shortage of protective equipment for police agents. While the number of infected police agents in Europe with the corona virus is also increasing. This is very disturbing, and may lead to a dangerous situation with profound consequences.

The EPU urgently appeals to the major responsibility that all individual countries – and Europe as a whole – have to undertake adequate measures to optimally protect all police agents across Europe. We advise mapping, coordinating and facilitating – and subsequently enforcing – this at European level. Specifically, we believe that the European Commission should play a leading role in this.

The EPU has argued for some time that more attention should be paid to the capacity of police forces to guarantee security in times of crisis. But also about appropriate equipment, uniforms and training. As well as the certainty that constitutional (social) rights established in the European Social Charter are complied.

The arrival of the coronavirus has again demonstrated that there is an alarming shortage of capacity and protective equipment within European police forces, which has led to a situation in which guaranteeing security is increasingly difficult. The workload of police agents has already increased to an unjustifiable level in recent years as a result of emergencies faced by society, including the threat of terrorism, migrant flows,

undermining, policing capacity, workload, corona etc. This demands rapid reform of the European policing system.

The EPU calls on all European heads of government and European Institutions to think now about the time after the coronavirus, and the important steps that must be taken to ensure that police forces in Europe are able to operate at an adequate level. The European Police Union (EPU) is ready to make a valuable contribution to this process.

Yours sincerely,



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