

Europol Concept Paper "Policing in an Online World"



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News

On 18 July 2025, Europol's Innovation Lab [published a concept paper](#) on how the police can adapt to citizens' increasingly digital lives. While community police officers play a key role in ensuring the safety and security of citizens in the physical world, the online sphere is increasingly perceived as lawless. Digital equivalents of community policing are often in their infancy or absent. Many police organisations find the objectives and aims of online policing unclear; approaches vary widely.

In response, the paper proposes some guiding principles:

- Maintain a permanent presence in online communities to protect against online crime as effectively as against offline crime, countering the notion that the Internet is a lawless space;
- Engage with all levels of society at eye level, from digital natives to digital immigrants, by building relationships through dialogue and fostering trust, especially with hard-to-reach or at-risk target groups;
- Be transparent by being clearly identifiable (e.g., fully uniformed, using police accounts, and declaring presence and purpose on digital platforms), signalling inclusive justice for all segments of society;
- Stand for evidence-based truth that is non-negotiable, countering misinformation, and helping citizens make informed online choices;
- Offer convenience by lowering the threshold for contacting the police, being available at all times, and leveraging online amplification effects to increase reach.

To advance online policing, the paper stresses the need for enabling parameters, including a legal framework that permits such law enforcement activities. It outlines existing initiatives in Norway, Denmark, Estonia, and Poland, such as regional online patrols, the use of open-source intelligence (OSINT) to investigate online crime, and transparent and accessible online police officers. The appendix includes a self-assessment capability model developed by the Swedish Police. Furthermore, the paper describes the approach taken by the Norwegian National Criminal Investigation Service (NCIS) to set up online policing and explains the role of the Danish Online Police Patrol.



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