



Covid-19 - Letter from the European Police Union (EPU) to Ursula von der Leyen and response from the European Commission

Brussels (Belgium), 12.03.2021



Mr Gerrit van de Kamp, President of the European Police Union, sent a letter on 08.02.2021 to Ms Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission, to point to the risks run by police officers when standing in the frontline of dealing with the corona crisis and to insist on giving the Police a priority status in vaccination programmes.



The lack of PPE (personal protective equipment) within police forces in European countries has led to several known cases of police officers having lost their lives as a result of having been in contact with the Covid-19 virus while on duty. For this reason, it is the view of the EPU that the infection of police officers by Covid-19 must be recognised as an occupational disease and that the European Commission should put this up for discussion in its agenda. Moreover, considering the health risks to which police officers are exposed, the need for giving priority to the police in vaccination programmes should be highlighted by the European Commission.

In its reply, the European Commission, through the DG SANTE (Health Security and Vaccination Unit), indicated on 25.02.2021 that it is aware that the police are frontline workers in the fight against Covid-19 and run the risk of being infected and transmitting further the virus.



Prior to any vaccine authorisation, the Commission had already included the police as a priority group in the Communication it had issued on vaccination strategies. However, it underlines that this should be regarded as a recommendation and that it is for the member states to determine their vaccination plans and priority groups.

The Commission further pointed to its Recommendation 2003/670/EC on the European schedule of occupational diseases, according to which infection by Covid-19 would certainly fall under the category of “Infectious and parasitic diseases”. Here, too, it is for the member states to decide on the recognition of occupational diseases.

The Commission ends by agreeing that police officers as frontline workers should benefit from recognition of infection by Covid-19 as an occupational disease and states that it is currently investigating which professions enjoy such recognition in member states and to what extent.

