

## CALL FOR PARTICIPATION

# HOW ACCEPTED ARE SOCIAL MEDIA IN EUROPEAN POLICE FORCES?

By



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Social media are rapidly gaining ground worldwide – changing how we organize our work and private life including expectations and relationships between citizens and state agencies. Police forces need to and are reacting to this development. Many are currently adopting social media as part of their daily work practices. The most recent IACP survey on social media use by US forces, for instance, indicated that slightly over 88% of agencies monitored social media, primarily for investigative purposes. And nearly 58% of agencies not currently using social media were considering their adoption in the near future.

This spells broad acceptance of social media. Still, interviews and workshops conducted in the context of the COMPOSITE project highlighted the fact that police officers are often split between enthusiasm about the potential of social media to support operations and improve relations with the public and serious concerns. Moreover, they revealed striking differences between accounts of countries in terms of acceptance and use. The conversations also hinted at different experiences and attitudes across ranks and primary functions such as criminal investigations versus neighborhood policing. Such disparities can create considerable conflicts in collaborations between police officers, departments, or even national police forces.

But what exactly is the status of acceptance of social media in European police forces? And what are the factors that determine, whether police officers are willing to accept and adopt them in their daily work? At present we have no good answer to either of these questions. For this reason, the Dutch COMPOSITE group at the Erasmus University Rotterdam is currently launching a European-wide study into social media use and acceptance in police forces.

### What are the objectives of this study?

While anecdotal evidence indicates national variations, we have little systematic knowledge of the current use of social media throughout European forces. This study therefore has two main objectives:

- To map the current use of social media in European police forces
- To identify factors that influence the degree of acceptance or rejection of social media use

### Please participate!

We are looking for a broad participation of police officers all over Europe – i.e., all ranks, all forces – to obtain a solid picture on the current state of social media acceptance and use in European police forces. We welcome participation from:

- Individual police officers – independent whether you currently use social media or not. The survey is online and can be filled out anonymously. This takes about 10 minutes.
- Police forces – independently whether the force currently uses social media or not. Interested police forces can contact the principle researcher Dr. P. Saskia Bayerl for more information on how to participate (see contact information below).

*Link to the online survey (anonymous): <http://erim.3uu.de/uc/pbayerl/85c8/>*

### Who runs this study?

The study is conducted in the context of the COMPOSITE project (see **Jacobs and Christe-Zeyse** in this issue for more information on the project). The study is linked to the specialized work package on technology change, which focuses on the impact of new technologies on existing work practices, as well as differences in the type of technologies police forces in European police forces.

The study itself is led by Dr. P. Saskia Bayerl at the Rotterdam School of Management, Erasmus University, Netherlands. Dr. Bayerl is currently post-doctoral researcher in the COMPOSITE project. In the past she has studied participative leadership in US police forces and the impact of information and communication technology in the offshore oil industry. Her current research focuses on the link between technological and organizational change with a special emphasis on social media, the role of identity and leadership in the organizational change process, as well as online impression formation and management.

### When and where will the results be presented?

We plan to present first results of this study at the CEPOL Police Research and Science Conference (26.-28. September 2012). A summary of the outcomes will be published in a future issue of the CEPOL Research and Science Bulletin. Interested police forces, who agree to participate in the study, can also receive separate reports for their force (given sufficient response rate).

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