

# Ignoring, tolerating or embracing? Social media use in European police forces

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(2012 Conference in Lyon)

Social media has been accused of many things — from causing ‘Facebook riots’ to ‘gadgifying’ and ‘disorienting’ people. At the same time, they have also been lauded for enabling ‘Twitter revolutions’, ‘unifying’ people and even for ‘democratising’ societies’.

Social media are ‘a group of Internet-based applications [...] which allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content’ (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Compared to previous internet services, social media enable the direct participation of large groups of people in the development of online content. It is this ‘participativeness’ that creates the proverbial double-edge of this specific technology.

How to deal with the ‘double edge’ of social media is also an issue for police forces around Europe. Individual cases, on how applications such as Twitter or Facebook led to the conviction of criminals or prevented crimes show the potential of social media for police work. In October 2008, for instance, a status note on Facebook helped solve a case of first-degree murder in the Canadian town of Edmonton, while the Belgian police had a positive experience in using Facebook to prevent violent attacks between hostile groups. No wonder police organisations worldwide have started to adopt social media. According to the latest survey of the International Association of Chief of Police, currently 92.4 % of United States police forces employ social media, and 74 % claim that social media has helped them to solve crimes (IACP, 2012).

Yet, social media also raise serious questions and concerns. The rapid spread of social media services means continuous scrutiny for police forces by a critical public. (As only one example, a search for ‘police brutality’ on YouTube on 18 March 2013 resulted in 531 000 videos, some with up to 12 million views.) In some European countries approx. 50 % of citizens are members of social networks (e.g. Facebook use in Norway: 55.4 %; United Kingdom: 51.6 %; Macedonia (FYROM): 48.6 %; Netherlands: 45.2 %, as of April 2013) (!). In many societies social media is thus widely accepted and used to replace more traditional communication and information channels such as newspapers, TV and radio.

This trend has consequences for police work and the standing of police within the societies they operate. One may remember the fallout after the ‘pepper spray cop incident’ on 18 November 2011, which saw a single picture of campus police officer John Pike ‘casually’ pepper-spraying protesting students become the centre of a viral storm against the seeming mistreatment of peaceful protesters and of democratic values more generally (?). This would not have been possible without the social media services of reddit, which first posted the picture on its site the same day, and thus provided the seed for its further spread through social media

(!) <http://www.socialbakers.com/facebook-statistics/>.

(?) Bayerl, P. S., & Stoynov, L. (2016). Revenge by Photoshop: Meme-fying police acts in the public dialog about injustice. *New Media and Society*, 18 (6), 1006-1026.

networks resulting in hundreds of new pictures <sup>(3)</sup> and even a Wikipedia entry for the event <sup>(4)</sup>.

In social-media themed workshops organised within the COMPOSITE project, as well as informal conversations at conferences and meetings, we encountered many different voices and views about the possibilities of social media — from enthusiastic to reluctant, from resigned to at times downright incredulous. While we cannot give an exhaustive review of these disparate perspectives, a few examples may illustrate the breadths and disparities of opinions.

One part of police forces clearly embraces social media. For instance, in British police forces such as the Greater Manchester Police community police officers are regularly commenting on their current activities on Twitter to their local communities, while the Finnish police in Helsinki have officers exclusively dedicated to ‘virtual community policing’. Here, reaching out with social media has become part of the normal daily duty of many officers. Other forces focus primarily on investigative purposes such as soliciting help from citizens for missing people or collecting electronic evidence of crimes.

Another group takes a more cautious stance, considering it more appropriate to ‘think more about the risk than about the opportunities’ to ensure that social media use does not lead to negative results for police operations or the police image. This is driven by the realisation that engaging on social media can have severe, unanticipated consequences. In December 2010, for instance, a Dutch chief of police was put on non-active duty after infelicitous remarks on Twitter during a running investigation <sup>(5)</sup>. An often-repeated question during conversations in this latter group addresses the access to and ownership of own data on Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, etc.: why would you trust public companies (such as Twitter and Facebook) with your data? Others warned to ‘be careful not to over-rate social media, as the image of the uniformed police cannot only be solved online’.

Overall, we found that there is a broad spectrum of attitudes and approaches to social media (for a more in-depth review of current social media practices see Deneff, Kaptein, Bayerl, & Ramirez, 2012). And even police forces that use social media extensively are aware of their risks with respect to overstepping boundaries, the legality of publishing information, how to resource the services, the need to monitor the mood on the networks, and when and how to engage the public.

Yet, despite the differences in outlooks, it seems there is consensus amongst European police forces that ignoring social media is not an option either.

One of our aims in COMPOSITE is to give voice to the disparate opinions and perspectives in Europe — providing a forum to learn about and better understand these disparate views. This is important, as despite the need for close cooperation, what police forces in one country consider normal practice is often alien to police forces in another country. This is clearly also the case in dealing with social media.

The influence of culture on many aspects of our social or organisational life is widely acknowledged as a fact (Hofstede, 1980; Jacobs, Horton & Bayerl, this book). The intensity of cultural influences on our behaviour across various situations and depends on the interaction between objects and people. Leadership or communication is surrounded by a rich cultural context, and even products such as furniture or food can be classified depending on the richness of the cultural context surrounding them. Technology in contrast is often cited as an example of a so-called culture-free product. In this contribution we question the assumption — also shared by many consultants — that the use of technology is actually culture-free. To better understand the disparate attitudes towards social media in European police forces and their underlying reasons, we conducted a study to obtain a clearer picture of the current social media usage and the degree of general acceptance within European police forces.

In this chapter we report results from this study.

<sup>(3)</sup> <http://peppersprayingcop.tumblr.com/>.

<sup>(4)</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/UC\\_Davis\\_pepper-spray\\_incident](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/UC_Davis_pepper-spray_incident).

<sup>(5)</sup> <http://www.nrc.nl/nieuws/2010/12/28/politiefchef-op-non-ac-tief-na-tweede-ongelukkige-twitterbericht/>.

## Findings on the use and acceptance of social media in European police forces

Our study was conducted in the form of an online survey, which started in May 2012. The recruitment of participants was done through CEPOL contacts in each country, who were asked to distribute the information about the survey and the corresponding link to their national police forces.

In detail we looked into the following aspects:

- the extent to which individuals would be/are willing to use social media (i.e. general acceptance);
- the extent to which social media is perceived as useful (a) for their police force and (b) for police officers;
- the purposes for which social media use is deemed acceptable (based on the categories used in the 2011 IACP social media survey);
- the extent of fit between social media use and (a) an individual's tasks, (b) the values of the police organisation (organisational fit) and (c) the professional values of police officers (professional fit).

To differentiate between disparate groups within police forces we also requested the following information:

- country;
- primary task (community policing, crime investigations, emergency services, intake and service, administrative function, IT development/support, other);

- individual usage (no use, private-use only, work-related use only, private and work-related use);
- usage at agency level (yes, no, I don't know);
- gender;
- age group (< 20, 21-35, 36-50, 51-65, > 65);
- rank (open question).

All questions were asked in English. Answers had to be provided on a seven-point scale from 1: *very low/not at all* to 7: *very high/very much*. On average it took about 10 minutes to complete the survey (median: 8 minutes).

### General information about participants

To date, 352 people have completed the survey (8 March 2013). We received reactions from 22 countries, although this number may be higher as 41.2 % of participants chose not to answer the question. 81.2 % of the reactions for which information was provided stemmed from six countries: Greece, Cyprus, Netherlands, Poland, Slovenia and United Kingdom (Table 1). The majority of participants were male (73.4 %) and between 36 and 50 years old (51.0 % of the sample), 42.3 % were between 21-35 and 6.7 % between 51-60 years old. The biggest group worked in crime investigations (approx. 30 %) followed by 'other functions' (26.4 %) and community policing (13.0 %). The details on the distribution across primary functions can be found in Figure 1.

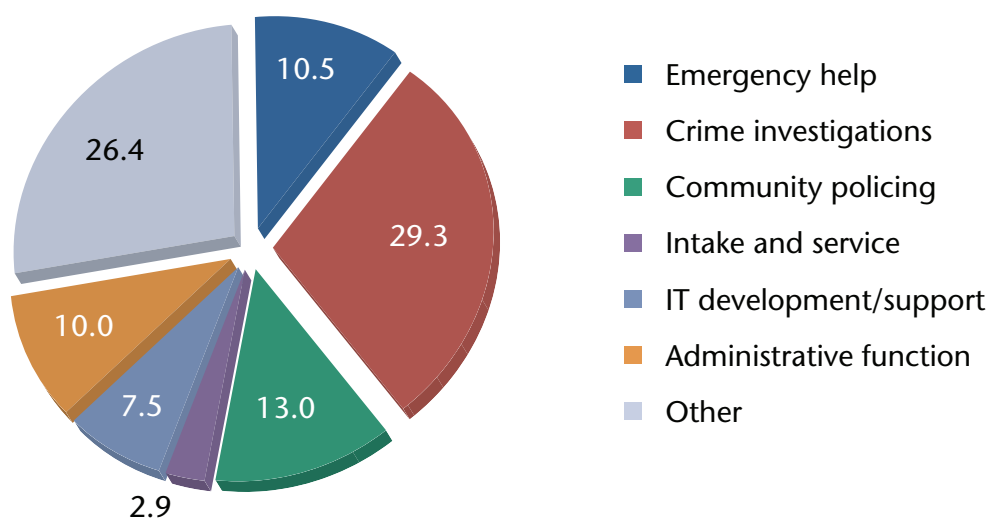


Figure 1: Primary functions of participants

**Table 1**

Number of participants per country

	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Poland	62	30.0	30.0
Slovenia	37	17.9	47.8
Cyprus	19	9.2	57.0
Netherlands	19	9.2	66.2
Greece	17	8.2	74.4
United Kingdom	14	6.8	81.2
Belgium	7	3.4	84.5
Romania	7	3.4	87.9
Estonia	5	2.4	90.3
France	4	1.9	92.3
Hungary	3	1.4	93.7
Denmark	2	1.0	94.7
Portugal	2	1.0	95.7
Bulgaria	1	0.5	96.1
Germany	1	0.5	96.6
Ireland	1	0.5	97.1
Italy	1	0.5	97.6
Lithuania	1	0.5	98.1
Slovakia	1	0.5	98.6
Spain	1	0.5	99.0
Sweden	1	0.5	99.5
Other	1	0.5	100.0
[Not provided]	145		
<b>Total</b>	<b>352</b>		

**Extent of social media use by officers and forces**

Police officers' experience with social media was very high. Only 6.5 % of individuals indicated that they had no experience. The remaining 93.5 % already had used them or were currently using them (cp. Table 2). The usage, however, was mostly for private purposes

(38.6 %) or in a combination of private and work (48.7 %). Only 6.1 % used social media exclusively for work. This suggests that police officers still encounter social media primarily in the context of their home, supporting the view that social media currently remains primarily a medium of the personal sphere.

**Table 2:**  
Current social media use by police officers and police forces

Social media use by individual officers			Usage frequency by individual officers		
Yes, private use only	38.7	87.4 % private usage	Several times a day	32.9	50.8 % frequent users
Yes, work and private use	48.7		Once a day	17.9	
Yes, work-related use only	6.1	2-3 times a week	15.7		
No	6.5		Once a week	15.4	33.6 % Infrequent users
			Once a month or less	18.2	
Type of social media services used by individual officers			Usage frequency by police forces		
Social networks (e.g., Facebook, LinkedIn)	45.7		Yes	68.9	
Microblogs (e.g., Twitter)	27.4		No	21.5	
Video/photo sharing (e.g., YouTube)	26.7		I don't know	9.6	
Blogs	15.4				
Other	6.7				

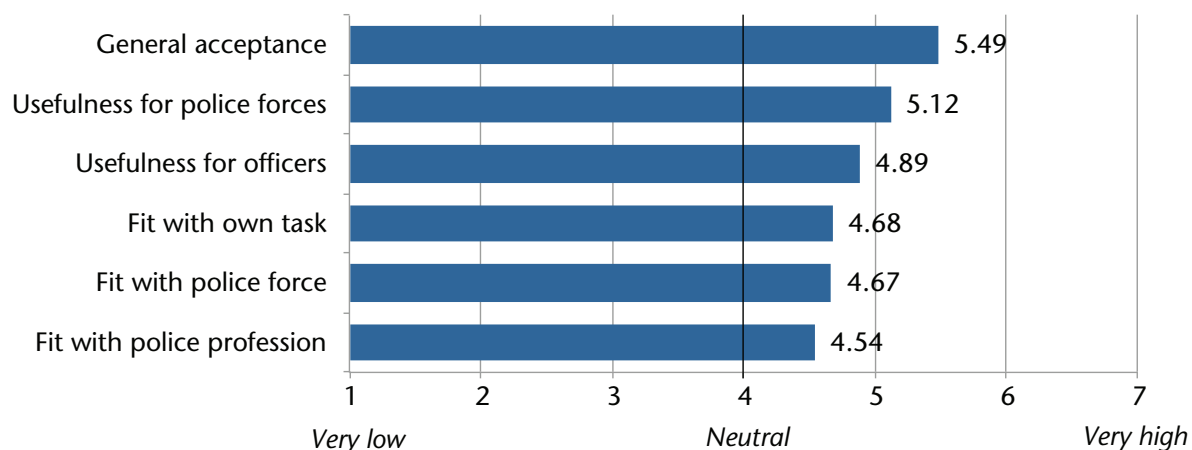
Still, if officers used social media for their work, half of them (50.8 %) did so at least once a day (frequent users). A third were infrequent users (33.6 %) accessing social media only once a week or less. Work-related usage of social media primarily focused on social networking sites such as Facebook followed by microblogs and video/photo sharing, often in combination.

Asked whether their police force currently used social media, 68.9% reported that it did, while 21.5 % reported that their police force did not. Interestingly, nearly 10 % of officers were uncertain as to whether or not their police force currently used social media.

**Perceived usefulness and acceptance**

As part of the survey we asked officers to what degree they accept social media use (general acceptance), how useful they consider social media for their own organisation and for the individual police officer as well as the degree of fit between social media use and their tasks, their police force and the values of the police profession.

As can be seen in Figure 2, overall attitudes towards social media were positive: average values were above the neutral point in all six aspects. Nonetheless, we found systematic differences in attitudes for specific groups.



**Figure 2: Evaluation of social media (all participants)**

**Primary function in the police:** Comparing all functional groups, the general acceptance of social media, perceived usefulness for force and profession, and the perceived fit with one's own tasks, force and profession were similar across groups.

Comparing only the 'main' operational functions (i.e., emergency help, crime investigations and community policing), however, showed that officers in these three areas did have somewhat disparate attitudes towards social media — at least in how 'fitting' they considered social media for their tasks, profession and organisation. Across all three aspects, community police officers were (significantly or at least marginally) more positive about social media than officers in crime investigations:

- Fit with their own tasks: mean values 5.37 versus 4.72;  $F(2,1)=2.78$ ,  $p=.07$ ;
- Fit with the values of the police profession: mean values 5.32 versus 4.45;  $F(2,1)=4.06$ ,  $p<.05$ ;
- Fit with the values of my organisation: mean values 5.28 versus 4.52;  $F(2,1)=2.94$ ,  $p<.05$ .

The answers of officers in emergency help lay between the two groups.

**Impact of experience and exposure:** Direct experience also played an important role in shaping attitudes towards social media. Officers with a high level of personal experience were significantly more positive than officers with less usage (*general acceptance*:  $F(3,1)=11.12$ ,  $p<.001$ ). More specifically, officers who used social media for work as well as private purposes were

significantly more positive in all aspects compared to non-users and private-only users (pairwise comparison,  $p<.001$ ). In the same regard, frequent users were significantly more positive than infrequent users (*general acceptance*:  $F(4, 1)=8.13$ ,  $p<.001$ ).

Similarly, officers in police forces that use social media were also more positive with respect to perceived usefulness (*force*:  $t(272)=2.39$ ,  $p<.05$ ; *profession*:  $t(263)=2.81$ ,  $p<.05$ ) and fit than officers in forces that did not use social media (*task fit*:  $t(268)=2.81$ ,  $p<.01$ ; *force*:  $t(266)=3.61$ ,  $p<.001$ ; *profession*:  $t(270)=3.56$ ,  $p<.001$ ). Being exposed to social media in the work environment thus seems important in creating positive attitudes. The more frequent the usage, the more positive attitudes seem to become. Moreover, work-related usage seems crucial in creating positive attitudes, whereas private usage alone is insufficient.

**Differences across countries:** Because of the low number of reactions from most countries, we only reviewed usefulness, fit and acceptance in the following six countries: Greece, Cyprus, Netherlands, Poland, Slovenia and United Kingdom. In all six countries, officers rated social media positively. However, members of the Dutch police seemed to view them the most favourably, while ratings by participants from Poland were close to neutral on most aspects (cp. Figure 3).

**Impact of demographics:** Age and gender did not influence attitudes towards social media.

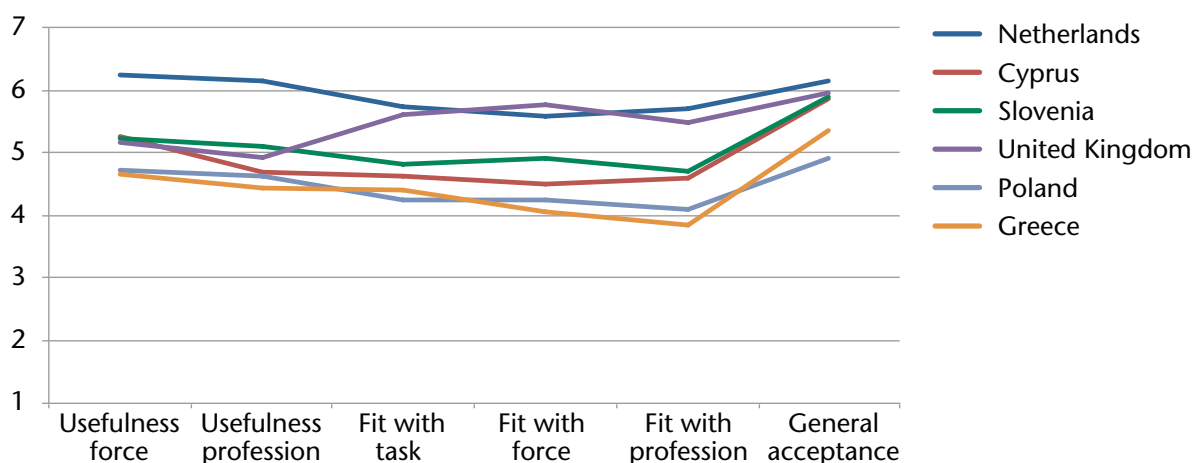


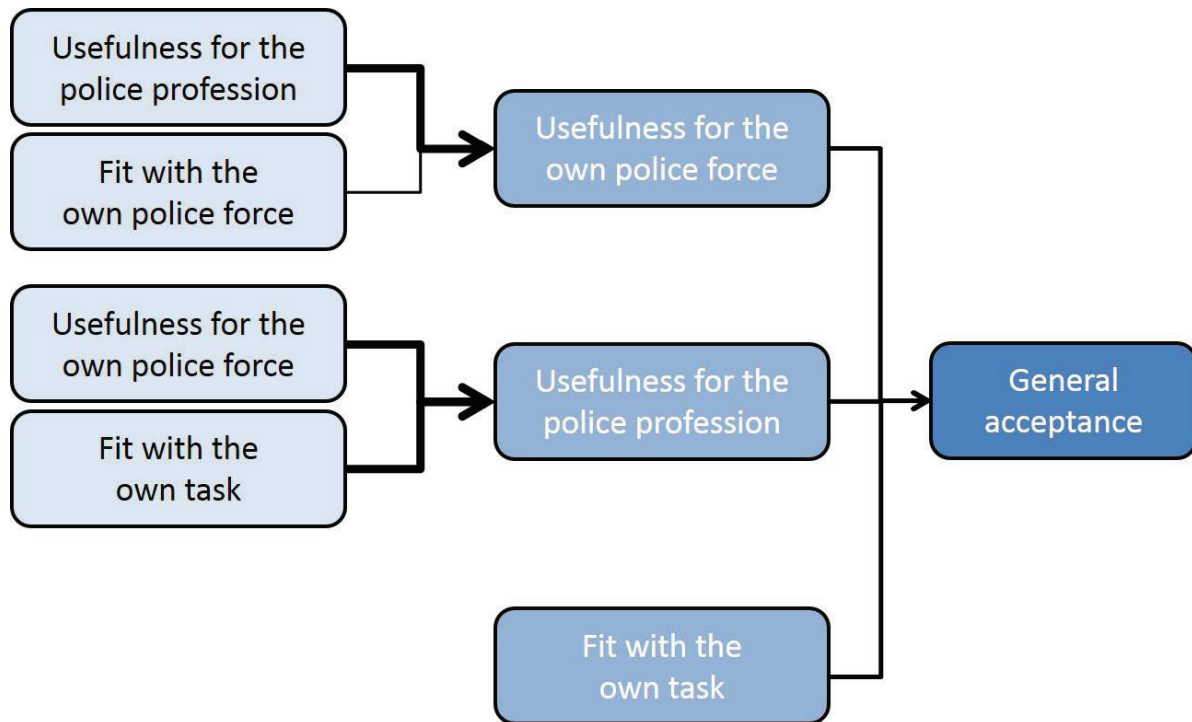
Figure 3: Comparison of social media attitudes across countries (only countries with sufficient data)

**What shapes perceptions of usefulness and acceptance?**

General acceptance of social media is a good predictor for its actual usage by individual officers. Therefore, we were also interested in the factors influencing how strongly individuals accept social media.

We found three factors, which impacted *general acceptance*: (1) how useful social media is considered

for the force; (2) how useful it is considered for the police profession; (3) the extent to which it supports their own tasks. *Usefulness for the police force* was, in turn, impacted by usefulness for the profession and to a lesser extent by perceived fit with one's own force. *Usefulness for the profession* was impacted in equal degree by usefulness for the force and fit with the own task (cp. Figure 4).



**Figure 4. Factors that influence general acceptance and perceptions of usefulness**

**For which activities are social media considered useful?**

We further asked participants to indicate for which of eleven activities they considered social media to be useful. Interestingly, none of the activities were

considered inappropriate. In fact, nine of the eleven purposes received clearly positive ratings (5.4 to 5.7 on a 7-point scale). Only the use of social media for *recruitment* and *in-service training* were considered less positively (cp. Figure 5).

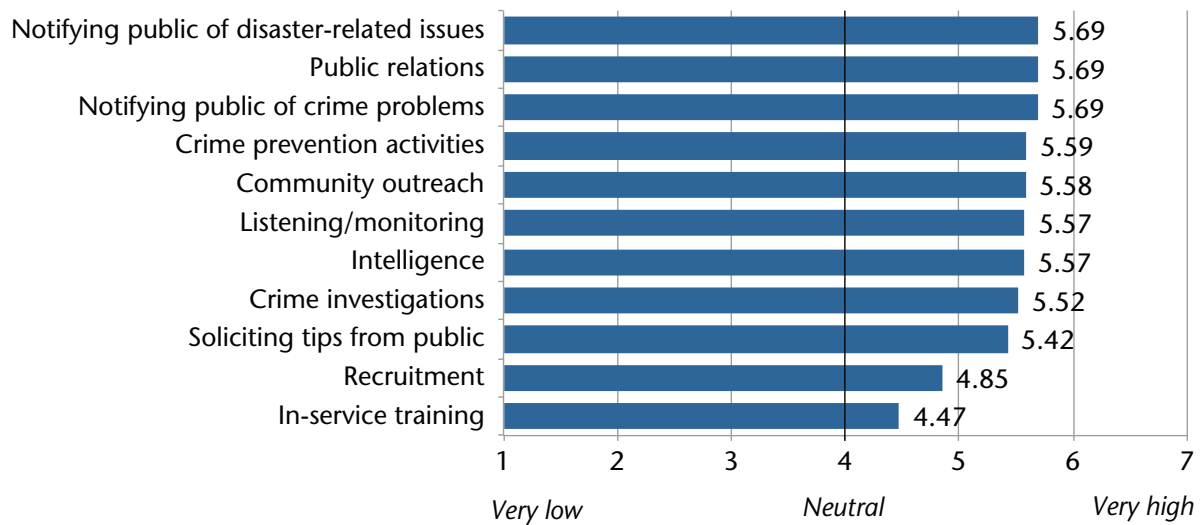


Figure 5: Evaluation of social media (all participants)

Some participants added further areas, for which social media might be useful. The open answers addressed three aspects: (1) *extensions to community policing*, (2) *crowd-based use*, and (3) *police-internal purposes*.

A fourth category mentioned additional services such as *lost and found* and *identification of the current crime status*. Box 1 shows the list of open answers received.

#### Box 1: Answers for additional uses of social media

1. Extensions to community policing
  - a. Fast and simple contact with people you normally don't reach
  - b. Good to build trust and break down barriers
  - c. Identify as a police officer in the city
  - d. Increase confidence
  - e. Online community policing — being close to citizens also on a digital level
  - f. Reaching (groups) of young people to connect with
2. Crowd-based use
  - a. Crowd control
  - b. Social media in events
3. Police-internal purposes
  - a. Reaching out to colleagues
  - b. Creating a network
  - c. Internal communication inside the police service
  - d. Knowledge sharing
  - e. Comparison of data
4. Others
  - a. Identify crime status
  - b. Lost and found
  - c. Advertising and promotion



Intriguing about this list is that activities focused on community-policing were mentioned more frequently than other potential purposes. A possible explanation may be that community police officers were generally more positive than other groups in their perception of the different activities.

In Figure 6 we compare the five largest functional groups. The black lines indicate a significant difference in the ratings between functional groups with respect to their perception of purposes. While the significant difference for *community outreach* between community police officers versus crime investigators may not come as a surprise, community police officers were also significantly more positive about the value of social media for *crime prevention activities* and for *notifying the public of crime problems*. This is another sign of the fact that participants in crime investigations were generally more hesitant towards social media compared to participants in community

policing. Further differences emerged in the activities the four functional groups considered the most useful: Members of emergency services as well as administrative staff saw the most value in *notifications of crime problems*, criminal investigators in the use for *crime investigations*, community police officers in the *community outreach* function, while participants in the 'other' category considered *public relations* as the most valuable purpose.

These differences showcase the considerable versatility of social media, when it comes to their potential uses. Police officers in Europe are obviously well aware of the disparate roles that social media can play for police. However, these differences also demonstrate that each group tends to develop unique opinions of how, when and for what to use social media — or not. We cannot say whether this also causes conflicts, e.g., between services or policing and administrative staff, but the potential certainly exists.

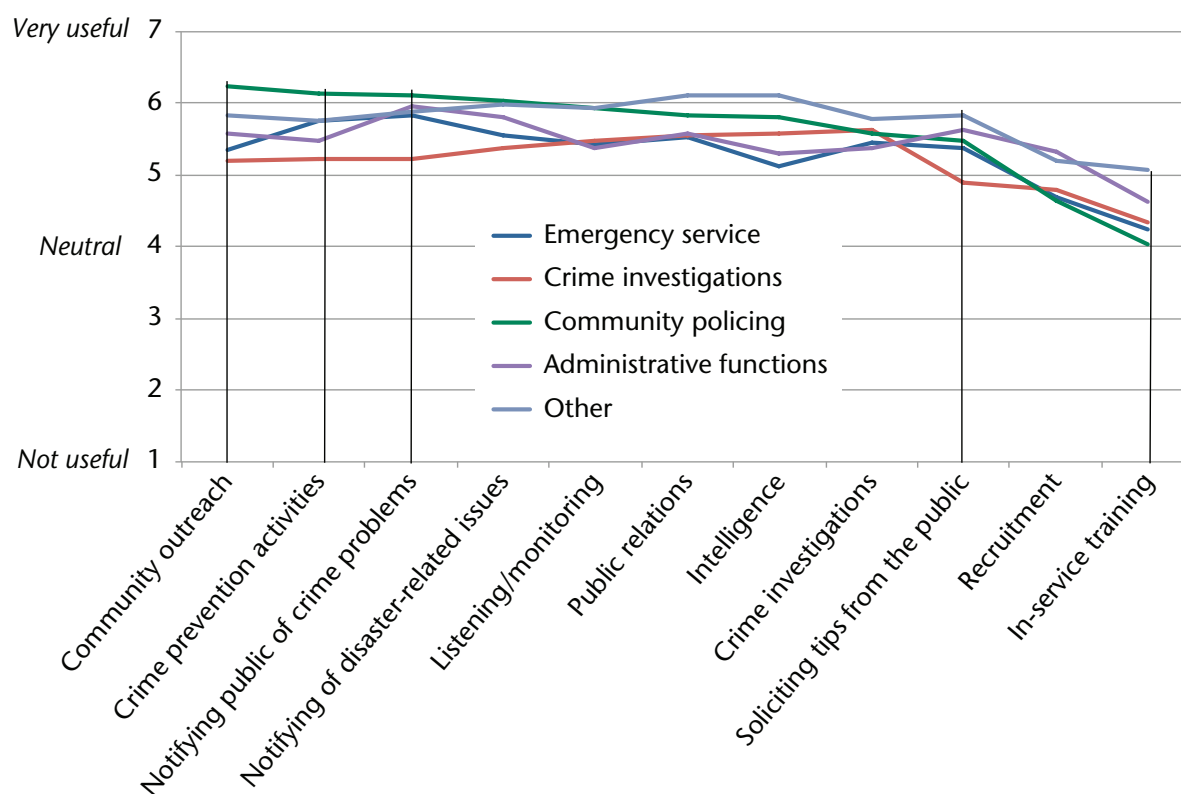


Figure 6: Comparing acceptable purposes for the five largest functional groups in the sample (black lines indicate activities with statistically significant differences among groups)

A comparison of countries also yielded considerable disparities in the perceptions of social media’s purposes. Figure 7 compares the ratings for the same eleven purposes across six countries (other countries yielded an insufficient number of answers for a comparison). Already at a first glance, two types of answer patterns become visible. In the first group, ratings are highly differentiated. Participants from the United Kingdom,

for instance, rated *notifications for disaster-related issues* close to the maximum of the scale ( $m = 6.5$ ), while *in-service training* received a mere 3.6 average rating. Greece demonstrates a similar spread from 6.3 for *disaster-related notifications* to 3.4 for *recruitment*. In contrast, Cyprus and Poland show little variation across purposes indicating a more generalised positive or negative attitude towards social media.

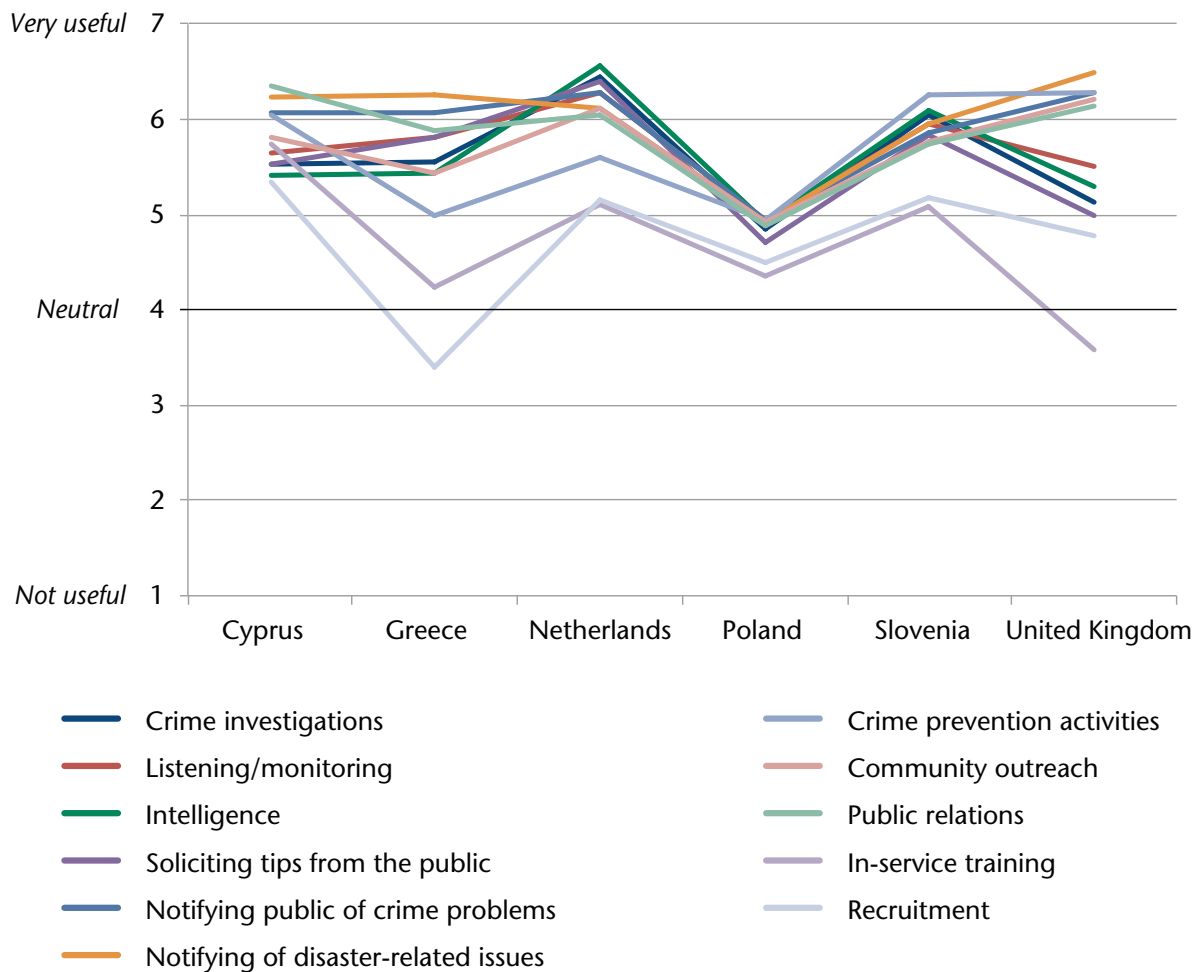


Figure 7: Comparing purposes across countries (only countries with sufficient numbers of participants)

## Why is a look at acceptance relevant? Practical considerations for the implementation and use of social media

Findings from our study may serve police forces in two ways:

1. By raising awareness for potential issues when using social media across functions or countries
2. By providing ideas on how to ease the implementation of social media.

Police forces generally agree that social media is a trend that cannot be ignored. The question is what motivates police officers to use social media, if they are not already doing so? And what can police forces do about it?

Use of new technologies can of course be coerced, but this often leads to lower satisfaction with the system, resistance, work-arounds or even sabotage (e.g. Kleingeld, Tuijl, & Algera, 2004; Jian, 2007). Creating acceptance is thus undoubtedly a much better strategy. Acceptance of new technologies refers here to 'the demonstrable willingness within a user group to employ information technology for the tasks it is designed to support' (Dillon & Morris, 1996). As such it is a precursor to the adoption and continuous use of new technologies.

The predominant assumption is that acceptance is driven by either instrumentality or political concerns (e.g., Davis, 1989; Lapointe & Rivard, 2005): Is the technology easy to use? Does the implementation threaten my current position within my organisation or vis-à-vis my colleagues or supervisors?

These aspects remain important in determining whether individuals adopt new technologies. Yet, our study demonstrates that there may be additional considerations when trying to understand differences in reactions to social media. The fact that primary functions had disparate views on whether and for what purposes social media should be used is a clear sign that the type of job and surroundings shape officers' attitudes towards new tools. The same is true for the country differences we observed as well as the impact of personal experience and exposure to social media in one's own police force.

Our findings indicate that how people understand their work and their organisation matters, affecting their acceptance of new technologies such as social media. How then can police forces increase acceptance of social media?

One answer lies in the antecedents for acceptance identified in this study: fit between the values of the police force and the profession as well as fit with their own tasks emerged as important factors for the perceived usefulness of social media. Perceived usefulness for their own police force and profession emerged in turn as important factors influencing general acceptance. New technology is thus accepted if it is in line with existing practices and cultures — and resisted if it is in conflict. One of the more obvious examples in this context may be that social media for soliciting information from the public is probably harder to implement if police officers fail to see the value of integrating the public in police work.

Translated into practical terms, this means that a clear link needs to be laid between the affordances of social media and the core values, norms and tasks of the organisation and the individual police officer.

Concerns or resistance in this process should thus be taken as a sign that important personal values, beliefs or ingrained practices are threatened (instead of interpreting them as a generalised negative attitude towards change that needs to be overcome at all costs).

Considerable variation existed among officers from different countries and with different primary tasks on the most acceptable purposes. This observation suggests that officers in different countries and/or primary tasks perceive disparate benefits from social media usage. Underlying these differences in views are disparate expectations and motivations on where, how and why to use social media (e.g., in which contexts and in which ways). Such disparate attitudes towards social media can be the basis for disagreement and frictions: should social media be used at all? And if so, for what purposes should it be used? Given the differences in attitudes across primary functions and countries such tension can emerge between individual officers, between internationally cooperating police forces, but also between officers and a police force, which wishes to implement social media. To prevent such friction,

police forces should thus obtain a clear view on possible disparities in expectations prior to implementation and subsequently aim for alignment in purposes, expectations and usage motivations up-front.

Interesting in this context is the relevance of experience and exposure. Our study suggests a clear trend: the more exposure and experience, the more positive the attitudes. Working in a police force that already uses social media seems to help, as is having personal experience. Interestingly, however, the exclusively private usage (e.g. a private Facebook profile or Twitter account) without work-related experiences yielded less positive attitudes than if officers used social media directly for their work. This suggests that a strategy of 'tell-and-sell' may not be enough to convince officers with a more negative attitude. Instead a 'try-and-learn' approach may be needed that allows officers to become familiar with social media on the job. In this context, the most resistance to the use of social media may be expected from people with little or no experience.

### Limitations of the study

Our overall findings indicated that European police officers were generally positive about social media. Unclear is in how far this positive picture is a 'true reflection' of attitudes towards social media across Europe. It is highly likely that this positive attitude is a reflection of the group of officers, who answered our call for participation. Most of them already used social media and many of them did so frequently. Attitudes in non-users and infrequent users were considerably less positive, which suggests that across Europe opinion may still be more divided than appears from this first overview. Given the large proportion of users in our sample, our findings thus paint very probably a more positive picture of social media attitudes than would be obtained from a more balanced sample.

Moreover, while function and country comparisons yield interesting patterns, caution should be taken against over-interpreting the differences. The numbers in the groups are very small and can therefore not be considered representative of a whole country or functional group. Also, unfortunately, the current sample is too small to test interactions of variables such

as contrasting attitudes of primary function across countries or the impact of experience across age and gender groups.

### Open questions to address

Our study is a first step in understanding the broader issue of social media in European police forces providing a first view into differences in attitudes towards social media across Europe. It also addresses the question of what shapes the acceptance of social media in individual officers. Yet, social media use by police forces is a complex topic — and this study is obviously only a starting point.

Addressing the limitations mentioned above, certainly a broader sample of countries and more participation from individual countries is needed to obtain a more systematic and balanced picture of attitudes and usage practices. Such a broader sample should then also include non-users to provide insights into reasons for non-adoption.

Despite cautioning against over-interpretation the observed differences in attitudes among countries and functional groups, the fact that disparate patterns emerged is nonetheless worth further consideration. Why do such differences emerge? What are the consequences for collaborations across functions or countries? And how can differences be identified and reconciled? Similar questions arise with respect to the disparate purposes, for instance: why do some purposes seem more acceptable than others and what drives the differences in acceptable purposes amongst groups?

Investigating specific purposes in more detail would certainly yield important insights to these questions. Moving beyond general attitudes into more focused investigations, for instance, targeting crisis management, community engagement or recruitment would further elucidate the respective merits and problems of social media applications. A focused case study into Twitter use during the UK riots in August 2011 unearthed interesting findings on disparate communication strategies by two British police forces (Denef, Bayerl, & Kaptein, 2013). Yet, as this study focused solely on the UK, it remains unclear

whether the same strategies would also lead to similar results in other situations and countries.

Moreover, social media constitutes a very broad family of diverse applications from microblogs (e.g. Twitter) and social networks (such as Facebook, Google+, LinkedIn) to file, picture and interest sharing (e.g. YouTube, flickr, Pinterest), applications to locate friends, colleagues and employees (e.g. foursquare) to those facilitating ever more social interactions such as MingleBird. In asking for usefulness and fit of social media we did not differentiate between these disparate types of applications and services. Given the specific features as well as systematic variations in user groups across services, it seems important to consider them individually in more detail. Future investigations should thus take a closer look into the respective merits and limitations of disparate social media services for police.

Relatedly, the increasing number of specialised police applications, for instance for crisis management or public participation in investigations, also needs to be addressed. While they provide more tailored services to crisis responders and the public, these new additions raise the question of how to integrate them into the existing (social and traditional) media landscape. This is especially relevant as users tend to remain with the services with which they are familiar with (Manso & Manso, 2013).

Our study was concerned exclusively with the internal view of police with their own social media use. Yet, the

adoption of new technologies can also greatly impact the perception of police from the outside (Neyroud & Disley, 2008). Especially, if new technologies are not deployed carefully, public perceptions of police legitimacy may be damaged. Public reactions to social media use by police are a largely uninvestigated issue, but are needed to understand when and in what way the use of existing or the development of new social media services may be useful.

Overall, the topic of social media remains an exciting as well as challenging one. Clearly further investigations are needed to obtain a better understanding of the respective benefits and drawbacks of social media for European police forces. However, we hope that our findings in this study are a first step in addressing some of the challenges that police forces in Europe face in working with social media.

## Acknowledgements

We want to thank CEPOL, and here especially Dr Detlef Nogala and the national CEPOL contacts, in supporting us in the data collection for this study. We also thank the participants who took time out of their busy schedules to fill out our questionnaire. This research is funded by the European Commission as part of the FP7 framework in the context of the COMPOSITE project (contract no 241918). For more information about COMPOSITE, please visit [www.composite-project.eu](http://www.composite-project.eu).

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