

LAW ENFORCEMENT IN THE NETHERLANDS

There is one national police force in the Netherlands, leads by one Commissioner and consists of ten Regional Units and one Central Unit, each with its own Chief Constable. There are about 55,000 police employees serving in the Netherlands. Selected police officers may also be deployed in a riot police Mobile Unit. Mobile units are called in to deal with serious public order offenses. Tasks of the Dutch police force include: dealing with traffic issues: traffic surveillance, handling traffic accidents, advising citizens and municipalities, traffic congestion security, deploying mounted police, sniffer dogs and forensic expertise, combating all forms of serious violence and terrorism, combating serious, organized forms of criminality of a national or international character which undermine the rule of law or vital infrastructure.

The police also have the power to use force. This power is often called the "monopoly on force". The police is one of the few organizations in the Netherlands that are allowed to use force. Officers have investigative powers and can exercise it while off duty. The investigative powers of the police are for example described in the Police Law, the Arms and Munitions Law, the Opium Law, the Road Traffic Law 1994, the Entry Law and the Code of Criminal Procedure.

These powers are bound by very strict rules. Police powers, like wiretapping, observation or searching premises, can only be used after permission is granted by the examining judge. The Dutch government is keen to put more and more police in municipality called "police on the street". Surveillance is done from the patrol car, a motorbike or a horse. Especially in crowded malls surveillance is often done on foot or (motor) bike. The police in a municipality are available 24 hours every day for basic law enforcement.

More and more often the police officers will visit schools to teach pupils about drug prevention, vandalism or sex on the internet. Police officers in the Netherlands cooperate with other services. For example, ambulance services, doctors and the fire brigade. The police cooperates closely with support organizations that can continue providing support when the abilities of the police to do so come to an end.

A police officer will be armed with a truncheon, pepper spray, and a service weapon (pistol, defined as a 9x19 mm semiautomatic). Officers who belong to arrest and support units will also be equipped with explosives, noise and smoke grenades, electric batons, grenade launchers.

The Police Academy of the Netherlands is the centre for training, knowledge and research for the Dutch National Police. It is a dynamic organization, offering training and knowledge programs on the highest level, anticipating developments in society and translating these into customized education programs. The Police Academy cooperates with the National Police and other partners in the field of security, education, knowledge and research. The police training system is competence-based; to tie in with police practice and the authorities and competencies police officers need to be able to do their job.

The Dutch National Police has the unique and important job of maintaining legal order.