

# THE POLICE & YOU

## KNOW YOUR RIGHTS AND DUTIES!

What should you do if the police performs a check on you in the street? What is the police allowed to do and what can you do? A few tips and warnings.

# CONDUCT & COMMUNICATION

## REMAIN CALM

Try to remain calm and friendly, cooperate. Keep your voice and body language under control. Challenging or arrogant behaviour can lead to the situation getting out of hand. Take your hands calmly out of your pockets and make eye contact. Show that you have nothing to hide.

It is a check, not a confrontation. Explain how the check makes you feel and answer the agent's questions. You can ask why you are being checked, but know that the police are not obliged to answer. Don't want to tell something? Then ask if you are obliged to answer.



## ASK QUESTIONS

During the check, the police can request your identity card. Cooperate calmly. You can ask critical questions:  
*Why am I being checked? Did I commit an offence? Am I a suspect? Is there an alert?*

Police officers are strictly speaking not obliged to tell you why they are checking you.



## FILM

According to international law, you can film a police action. A video can prove how the police officers behaved and what you said or did yourself. But in Belgium, filming can get you into trouble because the laws are unclear. It is better to be careful until these laws are improved on.

A couple of tips: try to tell the police that you are filming and don't hinder the police officers in their work. Do not share the images on social media, unless you have permission from the police officers or make everyone completely unrecognizable (for privacy reasons). The police are not allowed to delete your images, but they may confiscate your phone.



## THE POLICE: A QUICK RUNDOWN

*Neighbourhood team:* approachable, ensures quality of life in the neighbourhood.

*Intervention team:* patrols and intervenes in urgent situations.

*Special units (SRT in Antwerp):* specially trained police officers who intervene in dangerous situations.

A police officer in uniform always wears a name tag. Police officers in plain clothes must identify themselves with their service card if they check or search you, for example, and if the situation permits it.



# RIGHTS AND DUTIES

## IDENTITY CHECK

From the age of 15, you must carry your identity card. The police can check your identity if they have a valid reason to suspect that you are disturbing the peace, have committed (or want to commit) a crime or are being traced. Checks may not occur arbitrarily or without any reason.

Not only must you show your identity card, but also hand it in. If you violently resist an identity check, the police can arrest you.



## WHEN CAN THE POLICE BODY SEARCH YOU?

Sometimes the police may search you on the street, for example if they have a valid reason to suspect that you are carrying a weapon, if you are being arrested, or at some public meetings. A search may under no circumstances be random.



## IS THE POLICE ALLOWED TO ENTER YOUR HOUSE WITHOUT A REASON?

In order to enter and search your house, the police needs a search warrant (unless you're caught red-handed). You can always ask for this before you let them in. If you approve of it yourself, the police may also enter without a search order.



## FILING A COMPLAINT

If you feel that you have been wrongly checked, badly treated or discriminated against, you can file a complaint. This is not easy, but it is important. You can report discrimination to the public institution Unia.

There are several other possibilities:

- You can file a complaint with the chief of police of the internal supervision department of the police force in question.
- You can contact Comité P.
- You can go to the office of the ombudsperson of the city.
- If you are younger than 18 years, you can contact the Children's Rights Commissioner.



## USEFUL WEBSITES

- [www.amnesty-international.be/etnischprofileren](http://www.amnesty-international.be/etnischprofileren)
- [www.unia.be](http://www.unia.be)
- [www.comitep.be](http://www.comitep.be)
- [www.kinderrechten.be](http://www.kinderrechten.be) (under 18)
- [www.obspol.be](http://www.obspol.be) (only in French)
- [www.quelsdroitsfacealapolice.be](http://www.quelsdroitsfacealapolice.be) (only in French)

