

*ESSAY:***RESEARCH AND SCIENCE - STRENGTH OF CEPOL?¹****By**

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In the headline of this article there is a pinch of paradox. How could research and science be a strength of CEPOL since it is not the task of CEPOL to do research? In his recent writing (2011), however, János Feherváry referring to the CEPOL's five year external evaluation report says that research and science activities are accepted as essential elements of CEPOL's core business. Actually, I feel the same, but let's take a closer look on these issues.

There is not one homogenous and unanimous police force. Instead there are different tribes, different mindsets, and different ways of actions. Also the conceptions about the needed vocational knowledge and about the role of academic education and research as a part of it vary considerably. Thus, the core activity of CEPOL, educating senior police officers, is a contradictory matter too.

In a study that was carried out in the Finnish Police College few years ago experienced senior officers were interviewed about the knowledge base that is needed in the senior officer's work. We noticed that there exist roughly two alternative ideas of the senior officer's competence. On one hand, some of the experts emphasised experiential knowledge saying that inherent traits and experience are of crucial importance for a senior officer. Training should not be theoretical, but emphasis should be in existing work practices and detailed sector knowledge. They also took the view that basically the work remains more or less the same as before.

On the other hand, many of the experts strongly stressed theoretical knowledge. They said that higher education is of crucial importance for a senior officer. Knowledge becomes obsolete fast and thus it is not important to teach detailed practical knowledge

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but larger theories. Thus more general knowledge is needed. There is constant need to learn more and abilities to find, create and use new knowledge are needed.

Naturally, this is a simplification. The aim of higher education, also in the field of the police, is to improve practice - not to replace it. In real life (often tacit) knowledge from practice and more theoretical academic knowledge complement and sometimes challenge each other. Anyway, proper higher education seems to be impossible without a steady scientific basis.

What is this thing called Police Science?

In their excellent book del Barrio Romero et al. (2009) analysed the background and nature of European Police research. The book is a final report of the CEPOL Project Group on a European Approach to Police Science that is also known as the Jaschke Group according to its chairperson professor Hans-Gerd Jaschke. Here I would like to add something about the context where police research and science is carried out. Namely, CEPOL itself does not carry out research (The Council Decision (2005) establishing CEPOL). Instead, the research within CEPOL is realised in the Member States' education and research institutions. As it is mentioned in the book, there are certain differences depending on whether the research is realised within the police organisation or at universities and research institutions outside the police.

The traditional police training or education institutions are nowadays often also research institutions. That is the case regarding the Finnish Police College too. On the grounds of my experience as a researcher and research director in the College, I can say that doing research within police organisations is often challenging. The people working in a police organisation naturally have often limited knowledge about empirical science and the basic nature and values of the scientific activity. The need for and justification of research is often questioned, which I (naturally) have never experienced when working in my academic home, the Tampere University.

So, police research is often done in an unconventional environment which often has almost no scientific tradition. Gibbons et al. (1994) call the research that is carried out in non-university environment as Mode 2 knowledge production. By this they want to embody the difference to traditional university research that they call Mode 1 research that is generated in disciplinary context.

In a university setting problems are set and solved in a context governed by the, largely academic, interests of a specific community. By contrast, outside universities knowledge production is carried out in a context of application. The context includes a heterogene-

ous set of practitioners, collaborating on problems defined in a specific and localised context.

Due to the context, the access to existing data is often easier near the practice (Mode 2) compared with academic environment. The knowledge produced outside the university is intended and expected to be rather directly useful to somebody whether in industry, or government, or society more generally.

The question of quality control is essential in science. For example, in the Finnish Police College, to large extent we determine quality by traditional academic standards such as peer review judgements. However, we have other more practical criteria too, such as if the knowledge produced serves practical needs. Thus quality control becomes more context- and use-dependent. Scientific truth is crucial, but also usefulness in terms of contribution to the practice.

This does not, however, mean that research is not theoretical. According to Gibbons et al. (1994) there is lot of evidence that theories are often developed in the context of application. Actually, research near practice is characterised by a constant flow back and forth between the fundamental and the applied, between the theoretical and the practical.

Thus, for a researcher it is an advantage to have the chance to work near practice.

However, we have to be aware of the risks too. What will happen to the traditional academic independence that is precondition for the existence of critical approaches that are essential especially in social sciences? Does the, often very positive and necessary, close contact with practitioners and need for applicable knowledge blur the eyes of researchers and cause near-sightedness that becomes an obstacle for creativity and innovation?

One solution to these problems or challenges would be to have and maintain close contacts and large networks with the traditional, disciplinary and academic researchers and institutes. This is something that might be borne in mind when developing CEPOL research related activities too.

As far as I have any understanding of the nature of police research and science, it does not belong either to Mode 1 or Mode 2 type. Instead it is situated between them trying to combine the benefits of being near the practice with the good traditions of the academic world.

Member State Research Unit Perspective

In line with the conclusion above, in the recent Research Strategy the Finnish Police College expressed its wish to become an internationally respected and credible research institute. We are aware of the challenges that we will have ahead of us. However, I dare to say that in many respect we

already have a strong potential to realise the goal.

In order to reach the target, three main factors have been pointed out. Firstly, we want to actively develop the know-how and resources of the research activities in the College. We, for example, strongly stress the academic qualifications in the recruitment of new research personnel and also want to encourage our teaching and research staff to improve their academic qualifications.

Secondly, we strongly rely on academic standards and want to maintain a high scientific level. As a part of the national police organisation, we are often reminded of the practical nature of the police work, which naturally is very true. We however believe that high quality research gives more added value to the practice than would a less ambitious approach. In practice maintaining the high quality means for example high ethical standards, independence regarding the research results, openness and quality assurance, peer-reviewed publications, and co-operation with other high level research institutions.

Thirdly, we want actively contribute to the practical usefulness of research and application of the results in the practice. The means for this aim, we are developing the research agenda (doing the right things); increasing the use of the European police research approach, and developing communication about the research results.

In realisation of these ideas and goals CEPOL will be, and has already been, very useful. For a small country that does not have a strong tradition and networks in police research, such an agency working as a network is a great resource. As Fehérváry (2011) pointed out in his aforementioned publication, during the ten first years CEPOL has been able to bring research units/departments and researchers closer together, disseminating findings and transferring them to training and policing, and developing European police science approach. All this is essential from the point of view of a police education and research institution such as the Finnish Police College and respective institutions in many other countries.

Research and Science Working Group

My contribution to CEPOL has mainly taken place through Research and Science Working Group (RSWG). This is an expert group that was set up 2007 consisting of 10 research experts from various EU Member States. The group has a clear and defined remit. Every now and then there has been discussions on the need for such standing working groups. No organ is an end in itself. This is true regarding the CEPOL Research and Science Working Group too. Actually, there are always good reasons to critically reflect the existing ways of doing things. Thus, the discussion is a positive phenomenon showing the vitality and adaptability of the organisation.

When writing this, the administrative structure of CEPOL is under reconstruction. At the moment, however, it seems or at least this is my feeling that Research and Science Working Group or another body as a standing expert (not representative) group will be considered to be necessary in the future too. Since the research and science expertise in the CEPOL secretariat is limited, it seems that such a group will be needed to serve CEPOL and facilitate police research activities in Europe. Despite the important achievements so far, there is still a lot to be done. At the moment we are only on the first steps.

Future Agenda

Before going to the concrete future assignments, a few words about two recent documents, namely the Five-year External Evaluation and CEPOL Strategy. Among other decisions and documents, these give a background for the future plans regarding research and science related activities within CEPOL.

Five-year External Evaluation

In order to orientate to the correct direction in the future, a rear mirror view is needed too. We have a fresh external evaluation report (CEPOL 2011) that gives us a knowledge base for the future work, including in the field of research and science. The evaluation report indicates strong support and need for research and science among the Member States. The assessment

of CEPOL's research and science activities was positive. It was a great pleasure to recognise that nowadays there are only very few people in CEPOL who think that research and science activities are unnecessary for the agency.

One conclusion from the evaluation - and this does not concern research and science activities only - is the need for a more integrated thematic approach for the CEPOL programme activities. There are good reasons to take this into account in the selection of the themes within research and science activities too. This in its part will guarantee the best possible input from research and science to the learning activities within CEPOL. Having limited resources, the efforts should be concentrated to the topics that will be assessed to be the most relevant and natural to the agency. In practice this will have influence especially to the themes of research and science events and publications.

CEPOL Strategy

The CEPOL strategy is an ambitious document bringing up such things as the high level international excellence; recognised and valued CEPOL's qualifications; qualified teachers, trainers, and tutors; and creation of an intellectual environment. Naturally, such high level education cannot be achieved without a steady scientific foundation. The document also expresses that the home for European police science shall be CEPOL.

The CEPOL strategy has direct and practical implications for the CEPOL research and science activities. Among other things, CEPOL aims to become the driving force of Police science and researchers; the European approach will be further developed; a researchers' community and network will be built; and outstanding research work will be awarded. In order to guarantee the concrete implementation of the strategy, the Research and Science Working Group has formulated a strategic action plan that will work as a living document directing the future activities of the group.

In the following, I will take up some assignments that will be realized in the future. The selection is not complete and not all of the matters are new ones. This is rather a selection of the examples of the activities that has already been carried out or planned in the Research and Science Working Group as means to realise CEPOL's goals:

- **Next Step for the "Jaschke"-Group:**

The topic of the 2012 research and science conference will be "Proceedings in European Police Science". In order to implement the aims of the strategy there will possibly also be a new project group on European police science now concentrating in particular on the future challenges and future research agenda.

- **Research and Science Conference to become a flagship event for CEPOL:** This annual conference that started in 2003 has become an important event within the European police research and science community. In the future the aim is to open it to a wider audience too. Thus the importance of the event will increase further and allow CEPOL to open its doors to the wider academic world.
- **Workshops** (earlier called symposia): This new form of events was launched in 2009. These events actively facilitate the research activities and the implementation of the results into police practice within the selected themes. The start has been promising and there are good reasons to go on in utilising and developing the concept further.
- **The network of Research and Science Correspondents:** This has already become an important resource for CEPOL in education and research matters. Through the creation of the national implementation plan there are good opportunities to make the Correspondent network an even better resource for CEPOL and the member states.
- **New Publication Series:** This is a new initiative that was thought up in the working group meeting in

Trakai Lithuania in April 2011. The main idea is to develop a European overview and comparison on police research findings.

- **E-library:** This is an existing system, but there is still much to be done in order to increase the use of this resource for the benefit of education, research, and development.
- **European Police Research Bulletin:** A publication that started 2009. This has proved to be a good way to disseminate and receive information on various police research matters. The Research and Science Working Group is in charge of the editing and developing of the bulletin.
- **European Police Research and Science Award:** This is due to become an important European honour in the field.
- **Researchers' database:** There have been very innovative ideas about how to realise this item of the CEPOL strategy. The Research and Science Working Group is going to work on this topic in the near future.

Finally: the Justification and Role of Research and Science in CEPOL

As can be seen from the above, research and science is, at the moment and even more in the future, a strength and core business of CEPOL. At the 10 year anniversary, I was happy that I have had the chance to be a part of the story - the story that will go on towards even bigger achievements. Kippis!

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