„Disseminating Research Findings" – An interim review of the European Police Science & / Law Enforcement / Research Bulletin

When CEPOL was first established in 2001 as the "European Police College", its mandate included the "dissemination of research results and good practices" as one of the new organisation's tasks. This task was based on the firm conviction of the initiators that the training of senior police officers with a view to improving cross-border cooperation at the European level could not do without a concrete intake of scientific knowledge and research results - not least if the larger objective looming on the horizon was already to aim at the creation of a common "European law enforcement culture". The use of scientific studies, whether internal or external, for the training or education of higher ranks had already become common practice in some, but by no means all, national police training systems. Studies and research on various police and policing topics existed, mainly in the Anglo-American area, but as police structures had essentially grown as national architectures, the creation and dissemination of relevant scientific police knowledge developed mostly within traditional or linguistic boundaries. The creation of a European pool of scientific police knowledge, not only for practical training purposes, but also as a solid basis for the promotion of a common police culture of a European nature, would require some special efforts and initiatives (Honkonen 2011, Fehérváry 2007; 2011; 2016).

On the initiative of the "Training and Research Committee", the CEPOL Management Board approved in 2008 the launch of the "European Police Science and Research Bulletin" as an open-source publication with the aim of becoming a forum for scientific exchange and discourse between university academics, trainers and police practitioners with a European focus. At that time, a number of well-established, mainly English-language, quality journals were available on the market. However, the lively exchange within the CEPOL network showed that there was a lack of an easily accessible outlet for academic and scientific work at the professional interface of policing, law enforcement, training and education at the European level. Moreover, there was a strong belief that bringing together and eventually consolidating individual expertise and the various national knowledge

resources in this area would not only promote better understanding and preparation for cross-border cooperation, but could also be a cornerstone of an emerging new 'European Police Science'.

The ambition was as high-flying as the premises of realisation and production were pretty modest – a setting not unfamiliar for researchers and scientists. The first articles were based on a call directed to the affiliates of the CEPOL-network in the Member States and the early issues were rather of a makeshift kind, produced with little internal resources. Nevertheless, the response to the publication of the early issues was encouraging and the next step towards a more professional approach to production was taken, when the Publication Office of the EU Commission became a partner from issue Nr. 8 onwards. Reflecting the change in the Agency`s mandate in 2016, widening the target groups from police to a larger law enforcement community (including border guards, tax officers, prosecutors), the Bulletin was renamed and relaunched as the "European Law Enforcement Research Bulletin".

Two years ago, the 20th (regular) issue of the Bulletin appeared and we were able to share with our readership in the editorial introduction a chart showing the multinational and truly European congregation of authors contributing to the growth of the journal towards international professional standards. With some changes in the Bulletin's editorship in sight, it might be a good moment to take another analytical look at what has been achieved so far.

Evolution and Highlights of the Publication

From the first issue launched in 2009 to date, in sum 27 issues of the Bulletin have been completed and published – twenty-two regular ones and five Special Conference Editions (Nr. 6 of the latter is about to be launched). At the beginning a real "push and drag" effort (gently pushing authors to submit a paper and dragging them to delivery of the final version), the journal has taken in the meanwhile its place in the global market as a recognised international open-access publication, indexed in Google Scholar, Hein Online and EBSCO, while articles are regularly cited and referenced in other scientific publications worldwide. Including the current issue and the forthcoming Special Conference Edition Nr. 6, over 400 articles and contributions will have been released in all hitherto published issues of the Bulletin, all of which are accessible online free-of-charge to the general public. It is perhaps a sufficient number to allow an excursion into some statistical accumulations produced by the statistical feature of the Open-Journal-System, the platform on which the Bulletin has been running since 2014.

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In total up, to 15th December 2022[1], the system recorded 121.768 "Abstract Views" and 98.312 Downloads of the full text as a PDF-file. The arithmetic mean for the mode of access to a published article is 356 and 287 respectively.

Table 1. Overall electronic access

	Abstract Views	PDF-Download
Total Count	**121.768**	**98.312**
Numerical average per article	356	287

At first glance, this looks like good news, since the figures imply that the Bulletin is serving its purpose - at least on a formal level: the contributions seem to meet the demand of a potential readership. From a strictly mathematical point of view, we could imagine a full auditorium of readers for each article.

The informed reader will, of course, be aware that, like all statistics, the figures given are only indications of the actual actions and effects of what real people – or computerised algorithms – do with the articles. The returns are not very sophisticated either: for each article the system only counts "Abstract Views" and "Total Gallery Views" – which is equivalent to downloading of the pdf-file of an article. It doesn't say whether it's a download robot or a human click, and we can only speculate whether a human has only glanced at an entry or taken the time and leisure to read either the abstract or the full article properly.

As the leading international publishing houses do with their hosted journal-websites, we can still derive some information about the resonance and impact of our publication in the real world, by looking at the "*most read*" or "*most cited*" papers.

The first list of analytical interest is the ranking of articles, whose abstracts have been viewed – according to the system - more than 1000 times. The assumption here is that these abstract views are driven by the curiosity of real humans, trying to explore the relevance of the contribution for their real interest.

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1   The figures given reflect the counts for the electronic versions of Bulletins Nr. 1-21 and Special Conference Editions (SCE) Nr. 1-5 only, usage of distributed printed copies is beyond accessible knowledge.

Table 2. TOP-14 Articles with Abstract Views (>1000)

Article Title	Issue	Abstract Views
Female Leaders in a Male Organisation	No 17 (2018)	4781
The Power of Dialogue in Public Integrity and Curriculum Development - (… in Hungary)	SCE No 3 (2017)	4140
The GODIAC Project	No 6 (2011)	2742
What about AI in Criminal Intelligence? From predictive policing to AI perspectives	No 16 (2017)	2401
Citizens' trust in the Police and Police Trust-Building Strategies	No 19 (2020)	1622
Interagency Cooperation	No 19 (2020)	1417
Social Media for Community Oriented Policing	No 19 (2020)	1397
Opening Up the Black Box: Understanding the Impact of Bodycams on Policing	SCE No 4 (2019)	1390
The Schengen Evaluation Mechanism: Exploring the Views of Experts (…)	No 18 (2019)	1352
Moped Enabled Mobile Phone Snatches	No 18 (2019)	1284
Technopoly and Policing Practice	SCE No 4 (2019)	1149
Investigative Strategy: the application of strategic principles to criminal investigations	No 16 (2017)	1144
Crime in the Age of Technology	SCE No 4 (2019)	1072
Illegal Trading in Endangered Animal and Plant Species from an Austrian Perspective	No 19 (2020)	1004

In view of the average number of abstract views for a Bulletin article given above, the first four entries are noteworthy: the highest interest, more than ten times the average, seems to be reserved for an intra-institutional 'gender issue' topic, followed by a topic related to community policing in a particular country. It is perhaps not too far-fetched to suggest that the attention is coming from quite different groups of readers. The article on the GODIAC project is about innovative approaches to protest policing, and any article on artificial intelligence has become a headline story in recent years. All in all, the Bulletin's front-runners attract readers' interest across a wide range of topics.

One might expect that reader interest would be closely correlated with the number of downloads of the full-text pdf of the article. However, the top list of article downloads tells a different story:

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Table 3. TOP-12 Articles Downloaded > 1000

Article Title	Issue	PDF
Cyber-Policing: The role of the police in fighting cybercrime	SCE No 2 (2017)	7525
What About AI in Criminal Intelligence? From predictive policing to AI perspectives	No 16 (2017)	5318
Understanding Distance Shooting and the Type of Firearm from the Analysis of Gunshot Sounds	No 15 (2016):	3099
Investigative Strategy: The application of strategic principles to criminal investigations	No 16 (2017):	1722
Writing Instruments Inks: microspectrophotometry forensic analysis and characterisation	No 16 (2017):	1682
Professionalising policing: seeking viable and sustainable approaches to police education and learning	SCE No 3 (2017)	1392
Opening Up the Black Box: Understanding the Impact of Bodycams on Policing	SCE No 4 (2019)	1381
The ePOOLICE Project: Environmental scanning against organised crime	No 16 (2017):	1348
Transformational, Transactional and Cooperative Police Leadership in Theory and Practice	No 14 (2016):	1127
Interpol's Evolving Approach to Innovation and Research-Based Policing	No 14 (2016):	1121
Sectoral Qualifications Framework for Border Guarding	No 3 (2017)	1049
Stress Management as a Part of Police Work	No 15 (2016):	1000

Comparing both lists, we find some counter-intuitive peculiarities:

• the article with the highest download figure of all, tackling the paramount cyber-crime-theme does not appear in top article-view ranking at all;
• conversely, the first three abstract-views do not mirror in the top download-list;
• in fact, only three titles (on AI, bodycams and investigative strategies) feature in both lists.

This unexpected finding of a noticeable mismatch between abstract views and download figures is fuelled by looking at the most striking divergent ratios between both ranked categories:

Article Title	Delta
The power of dialogue in public integrity and curriculum development	36-fold
Understanding Distance Shooting and the Type of Firearm from …	17-fold
Female Leaders in a Male Organisation	15-fold
Cyber-Policing: The role of the police in fighting cybercrime	14-fold
Research Methodology Applied to Teaching in the Spanish Guardia Civil	11-fold

While four top titles appear on both lists, for around 5% of the entirety of articles the "mismatch" is more than twofold in one or the other direction. Given the limited statistical capabilities of our technical platform, we can only speculate about the reasons for the significant discrepancy in the figures for a small set of articles. Assuming that "Abstract Views" are triggered by the action of people simply scanning for relevant content, and "PDF-downloads" indicate a confirmed closer interest in the content, one is tempted to identify a functional difference between "***attraction***" and "***engagement***" when readers search for scientific literature. No less plausible is the suggestion that disproportionately high file-downloads are the effect of web-robots, harvesting internet-material controlled by key-words – "cybercrime", "artificial intelligence" and "firearms" probably featuring high on the list.

For a publication such as the Bulletin, what is probably more important than technical access figures is the potential impact on readership and scholarly dialogue in the field. Citations to published articles are often taken as an indicator of the overall impact of a journal in the scientific community. Again, given the technical limitations of our platform, Google Scholar is our only source of investigation here.

Table 3. Top-10 Cited Articles

Article Title	Issue	Citations*
Putting learning into practice: Self reflections from cops	SCE No 3 (2017)	22
What about AI in Criminal Intelligence? From predictive policing to AI perspectives	No 16 (2017)	21
Sectoral Qualifications Framework for Border Guarding	No 3 (2017)	17
Professionalising policing: seeking viable and sustainable approaches to police education and learning	SCE No 3 (2017)	16
Interagency Cooperation – Building Capacity to Manage Domestic Abuse	No 19 (2020)	9
Opening Up the Black Box: Understanding the Impact of Bodycams on Policing	SCE No 4 (2019)	9
Transformational, Transactional and Cooperative Police Leadership in Theory and Practice	No 14 (2016)	9
Social Media for Community Oriented Policing	No 19 (2020)	6
Cyber-Policing: The role of the police in fighting cybercrime	SCE No 2 (2017)	6
Female Leaders in a Male Organisation	No 17 (2018)	4

Apart from the reassurance that the articles published in the Bulletin actually are read and increasingly cited in other academic publications, there is another surprise in this listing, as at the top we find an article on professional self-reflection and learning, which inter-estingly does not rank high among either article views or download numbers. It might be a bit overstretching the numbers and the limit data body, but there is a temptation

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to add "***inspiration***" as one of the functional effects of publishing the European Law Enforcement Research Bulletin.

About issue Nr. 22

This issue, due to organisational reasons a bit delayed as the 2022' summer edition, makes up for it with a wide range of relevant and insightful contributions.

Since a few issues ago we have started to identify the type of contribution in the Bulletin. For example, whether it is a previously unpublished empirical paper, the written version of a conference presentation or an essay for discussion.

Such a classification according to the type of article can rarely be combined with a thematic link between the texts and the authors' perspectives. However, it is precisely this kind of linkage an editor is interested in, as it highligts the immense range and interconnectedness of police problems and activities.

A thread running through the articles in this issue begins in the technological realm with an empirical exploration of emerging organisational requirements for open-source intelligence in the age of artificial intelligence by **Bayerl, Akhgar, Raven, Gibson & Day**, as well as an inventory of the challenges that fifth generation mobile technology poses for law enforcement work, which is the result of a senior officer course at the **Guardia di Finanza**. The appropriate design of critical communication infrastructures is the subject of a study by a Finnish research group (**Salmela, Aaltola, Toivonen & Lehtinen**), which highlights the central importance of the category of resilience, especially in crisis contexts such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

The still reverberating effects of the pandemic are the focal subject of another group of contributions which, look at the specific policing problems and responses of countries such as Malta (**Muscat & Laudi**) and Portugal (**Romano, Soeiro & Olivera**), and the complex intra-organisational side-effects of the extraordinary health-crisis, as illustrated by a study of the police force in Saxony, Germany (**Meisselbach, Melcher, Schöne & Thieme**).

The additional tasks faced by police forces in Europe have not made it any easier to control long-term problems such as the spread of organised crime, as **Gil Valero** points out using the example of the Western Balkans. Moreover, to remain in this part of the continent, there are persistent inter-organisational weaknesses in corruption, which undermine the police's ability to act, as the paper of **Stergioulis** argues for the case of Greece.

Given the increasing effort and burden of ensuring public safety, it is not surprising that authorities in some place are looking for new ways to organise support from civilian resources. **Pepper & Rogers** present an example of the involvement of volunteers in policing from England and Wales, identifying not only a social but also economic benefits. However, the contribution from Germany by **Koerner & Staller** underlines the specific risk and therefore the need for special preparation for police work in public spaces, which could set strict limits to the suggested approach of volunteering.

Two contributions then lead back thematically to the technology-driven field presented at the beginning, but these deal with the well-known, almost 'old-fashioned' problems of police issues which come with individual car traffic: **Amaraxi & Kokkinos** examine the evolution of road collisions in Cyprus over a period of 22 years, while **Cestra & Zaniboni** call for tacking on the complex nexus of crime and road traffic on a European institutional level.

The twelve articles in this 22nd issue deal with a range of traditional, crisis-related and technology-driven emerging policing issues in a predominantly European perspective, partly using empirical scientific methodology. In this sense, the Bulletin will try to continue to contribute to the further development of knowledge and practices of progressive and effective policing for the benefit of European citizens (see for context and more details del Barrio Romero et al., 2009).

This endeavour however would be inconceivable without the investment and dedication of the Bulletin's reviewers as well as its members of the Editorial Board. We would therefore kindly ask the readership to take note of the **list of our reviewers** from the last five years in this issue. In a similar sense, we would like to draw attention to the availability of the 5th Special Conference Edition covering contributions to the 2021 online edition of the CEPOL Research & Science Conference on "Pandemic Effects on Law Enforcement Training and Practice", as well as to the online-first published articles of forthcoming issue Nr. 6 titled "Preparing Law Enforcement for the Digital Age".

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