featuring dedicated police research and science topics, on the other. Please forward any relevant, future announcements to the Bulletin email address.

It must be underlined that this periodical just aims to offer a humble spotlight on the wide-range of police research going on in Europe. We have learned that, in many Member States, police officers and scientists are working on interesting and relevant problems and research topics. The challenge is to give this knowledge a better visibility beyond established boundaries of nationality or language.

Despite different cultures and legal frameworks, we believe that there are no differences in principle between the core missions conducted by a police officer in Finland, in the Netherlands, in Spain or in Greece. Good practice and research findings are thus to be shared as widely as possible in order to build up European knowledge in policing.

This Bulletin is a fragile new media and our hope is that it will be found to be of relevance within the professional networks CEPOL is a part of. It is now up to you — the reader — to bring more content. Please do not hesitate to share your work and to propose contributions for the next issues. Make this Bulletin yours — send us your contributions. The deadline for submissions for the next issue is published on the CEPOL’s website on the bulletin pages.

The Sixth CEPOL European Police Research and Science Conference Report

By Dr János Fehérváry, Head of Unit, Sicherheitsakademie, Austria & Dr Detlef Nogala, Research and Knowledge Management Officer, CEPOL Secretariat

For the sixth consecutive year, CEPOL organised its annual European Police Research and Science Conference, on 24-26 November 2008 on the outskirts of Vienna. As a flagship event for CEPOL’s research and science activities, the aim was to support the dissemination of research results and the optimisation of cooperation between police training institutions, universities, research institutes and researchers in the field of police science. The host country Austria, supported by Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom, centred the event around the topic of ‘Comparative policing research from a European perspective: with a focus on organised crime’. By taking Europol’s ‘Organised Crime Threat Assessment’ (OCTA) report as a case in point, the experts and participants were invited to tackle questions regarding how a comparative scientific approach can (pro) actively support the development of best practice in police training and police practice in Europe.

Almost 80 participants, representing equally police trainers, researchers and police practitioners, listened to the contributions of 12 expert speakers from EU Member States and European institutions such as Europol and the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction. In several workshops, the topics were examined in more detail and participants had the opportunity to exchange knowledge and opinions.

Welcome addresses by the Director of the Austrian Sicherheitsakademie, Norbert Leitner, and the Conference Manager, Dr János Fehérváry, were followed by a presentation of CEPOL’s research and science activities by the (then) Chair of CEPOL’s Training and Research Committee, Salvatore Siena. The first day of the conference was dedicated to the keynote addresses of three distinguished European experts in the field of organised crime. The round of keynote addresses was opened by Prof. Hans-Jörg Albrecht, Director of the Max-Planck Institute for Foreign and International Criminal Law (Germany), with a comprehensive introduction on the topic of ‘Police, policing and organised crime — Lessons from organised crime research’. Looking closely at available research about organised crime, the policing of organised crime and the results of what he called ‘organised crime policies’. He guided the audience
through a collection of empirical facts and findings, highlighting how little is known about certain aspects. He stated that ‘organised crime’ remains a controversial issue, not only for definitional or measurement difficulties, but also for its complex link with the broader issue of ‘security’ and its ramifications in modern societies and their politics of threat containment. Implicit problems in measuring the performance of police actions were illustrated by contrasting the number of wiretaps (per 100,000 population) applied with the number of convictions per wiretap in the USA, Australia and Germany: figures suggested the more wiretaps the lesser the rate of conviction per wiretap. In his conclusions he emphasised the need for informed perspectives on the phenomena as well as on the various efforts to contain the problem with methods of policing, but remained sceptical about the ability of policymakers to listen to available research knowledge.

Focusing in on the conference’s first day topic, Prof. Michael Levi of Cardiff University (UK), offered his thoughts on ‘Organised Crime Threat Assessments — from an academic’s scientific, but not wholly theoretical, perspective’. Pointing out the recent institutional growth of the threat assessment business, he rejected strongly the usual separation of ‘academic’ and ‘practitioner’ perspectives. Instead he offered a set of questions illustrating the key difficulties in threat assessment that Europol and the OCTA report is confronted with. His remedy was to suggest a sophisticated approach centred around the concepts of harm, probability, impact and risk.

In the final keynote address of the day, Dr László Salgó, Associate Professor of Criminal Law and Assistant Director of Europol, presented first-hand knowledge on the ‘Scientific approach to the OCTA report from an analytical, operational point of view’. He gave a detailed account of the background and tasks of the OCTA report and explained comprehensively the methodological approach taken by Europol. ‘Criminal markets’ and ‘regions’ are two major axes of analysis of the vast amount of data reported by the EU Member States, which are complemented by a third one: organised crime groups. Using a set of indicators, the OCTA report tries to identify these groups under a perspective to dismantle them and to rank them by threat level. He also explained the advanced concept of ‘criminal hub’, developed for better understanding of facts that influence the dynamic of these groups across the EU. He concluded his contribution with an outlook on trends and threats, not saving his concern for the occasional undue political interference and delay.

Provided by three outstanding experts with a sweeping introduction on the topic of organised crime research in general and the difficulties of scientifically reliable observations, measurements and assessments in particular, the participants afterwards had the opportunity to exchange first reactions and to collectively prepare questions for the keynote speakers in the three working groups.

Speakers of these working groups presented the main topics of discussion and major enquiries for the keynote speakers the next morning. A number of issues were raised, mainly those brought up by the keynote speakers themselves, such as the problem of a shared definition of organised crime and the difficulties in defining a joint approach in a hugely diverse territory like the EU. The possibilities and limits of Europol and its synthesised assessment efforts in the face of mostly regional horizons of organised crime were also pointed out.

While the first day was dedicated to research into organised crime and the OCTA report in broader terms, the conference continued on the second day with a more specific view on three selected areas, within the organised crime topic, assigned to working groups running in parallel. The discussion process was triggered by so-called ‘kick-start addresses’ delivered by the following experts:

- Illegal Drugs’ — Laurent Laniel, EMCDDA, Lisbon
- ‘Trafficking in Human Beings’ — Nick Kinsella, Human Trafficking Centre, UK
- ‘Financial Crime’ — Prof. Michael Levi, Cardiff University, UK
The outcomes of the intensive group work were reported in the afternoon to the plenum and discussed in their entirety. The outcomes reflected some of the general problems and issues of organised crime research and assessment identified earlier in the conference on the more concrete level of the three given topics. On the third day, the conference programme shifted attention away from the topic of organised crime, and its analytical reflection in the OCTA report, towards the broader issue of comparative police research in the European setting.

Assistant Chief Constable Graham Hooper, Head of Operations Policing Policy and Practice NPIA (UK), brought his well-informed and inspiring practitioner’s perspective on ‘Cooperation in policing in Europe — Current trends and future challenges’ to the fore. He looked, from a UK perspective, at the forthcoming challenges of European policing and the different ways in which cooperation in policing could be achieved more effectively. Although very much grounded in the problems of cooperative operational policing, he explicitly encouraged the research community to ‘keep banging on the doors of police organisations’ to foster a more educated and effective approach to policing.

An equally compelling case for the potentially highly practical value of academic knowledge gained by research and science was presented by Prof. Cyrille Fijnaut (Tilburg University, the Netherlands) in his keynote address on ‘Reinforcing the European dimension of comparative police research’. By looking back through European history, Prof. Fijnaut underpinned his view that policing in a European context had been cross-border, and had mutually influenced national models, from the very beginning. He showed that the different police cooperation projects on various levels are in a way a continuation and evolution of these earlier efforts. For him the Lisbon Treaty, once ratified, will foster a trend towards further convergence of policing in Europe, as legal and procedural harmonisation will make cooperation on the ground much easier. In his conclusions he wondered about how little is actually known about police cooperation in Europe and pointed out ways in which to get past the practical obstacles in order to overcome the shortcomings of comparative police research.

Discussing the ‘Implications for research and police science’ and summing up what had been said by the keynote speakers and the working group rapporteurs, as well as coming up with proposals for further steps, was the task of the concluding panellists’ discussion round, featuring expert participants from Europol, Germany, the Netherlands, Slovenia and the United Kingdom.

Irrespective of the acknowledgement that practitioners’ and researchers’ perspectives will require different approaches and are likely to focus on varying aspects of a phenomenon, the overall consent was that scientific methodology and academic analysis could indeed make a significant contribution to more successful policing efforts. Specifically in regard to the OCTA report — as one of many instruments and initiatives to understand and tackle the organised crime phenomenon in Europe — the keynote addresses and workshops were seen as shedding a brighter light on its actual contribution and value in the context of European policing.

This result of the panel discussion was echoed in the conference conclusion delivered by the Conference Manager, Mr Fehérváry, when he pointed out that the main topic of the conference and the outcome of intensive discussions was an excellent way of showing the necessity and success of an objective and tolerant meeting between researchers/academics and police practitioners, both dealing with a sensitive topic in order to make strategies, methods and expectations of modern law enforcement programmes or projects more transparent and to thus avoid misunderstandings or ignorance on either side.

The conference was one of CEPOL’s future oriented activities for the support and development of a European approach to the main problems facing Member States in the fight against crime and crime prevention, in particular with a strong cross-border and European dimension. In this, the conference can be seen as successfully contributing towards bridging the gap between theoretical/academic and practical viewpoints and towards showing the necessity to analyse new police strategies and methods empirically.