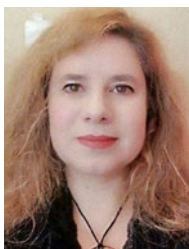




# Innovative Paradigms in Policing: Bridging Research and Practice in Law Enforcement Training



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## Abstract

**Aim:** This article examines the central role of scientific research and innovation in improving law enforcement training, emphasizing empirical evidence as the foundation for effective crime prevention and democratic accountability.

**Methodology:** It synthesizes the framework for integrating science in law enforcement culture, highlighting the superiority of proactive, place-based, and focused interventions over traditional reactive approaches. It argues for a systemic integration of research into law enforcement education, institutional reform, and leadership development to enhance operational outcomes, foster continuous learning, and promote international interoperability.

**Findings:** Along the article, samples on how Research at CEPOL is doing its way to reinforce its intervention to improve the offer, include innovation and reinforce the quality of the main core business of this European Union Agency: law enforcement training. It highlights the practical application of numerous findings from the literature review by briefly presenting the research activities within its portfolio, thereby demonstrating how theoretical insights are actively integrated into real-world research efforts.

**Value:** The discussion underscores the global relevance of evidence-driven training reform, particularly within European law enforcement contexts, and

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advocates for a strategic realignment of training paradigms to meet contemporary security and legitimacy challenges, which results on training of excellency already offered by CEPOL.

**Keywords:** Research and Innovation; Law Enforcement (LE) training; Scientific meetings to Exchange of knowledge; Scientific Publications; Research networks

## Introduction

Law enforcement (LE) agencies globally are confronted with unprecedented complexities—ranging from evolving digital threats to heightened demands for transparency and legitimacy. The traditional reliance on reactive, experience-based policing models is increasingly inadequate in addressing these challenges effectively and ethically. The concept of evidence-based policing, pioneered by Sherman (1998), suggests that law enforcement strategies and tactics should rest on robust scientific evidence rather than intuition or tradition. Despite extensive research demonstrating the benefits of empirically validated interventions, a persistent division exists between academic knowledge and frontline LE practice. The integration of a comprehensive research portfolio into law enforcement training is pivotal for advancing methodologies and ensuring successful outcomes. The concept of translational criminology (Casey, 2025) plays a crucial role in bridging the gap between criminological research and practical applications in law enforcement. This approach emphasizes the importance of researcher-practitioner partnerships and the development of research and planning units within law enforcement agencies to facilitate the translation of research into practice<sup>1</sup> (Casey, 2025).

This article seeks to bridge that partition by exploring how integrating research and innovation into law enforcement training can elevate law enforcement standards. Central to this analysis are two key contributions: the *Evidence-Based Policing Matrix*, which organizes intervention strategies by effectiveness and operational characteristics (Lum, Koper, & Telep, 2011), and the paradigm shift proposed by Weisburd and Neyroud (2011), calling for science to be instilled

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1 The focus on priority setting within administrative law enforcement, as explored in Casey's work, highlights the necessity of strategic resource allocation and prioritization within a research portfolio. The study underscores the importance of agency characteristics, such as size, accreditation status, and openness to research, in influencing the success of practitioner partnerships (RPPs) and research and planning unit (RPU). These factors are critical considerations for developing training programmes that are responsive to current and future challenges in law Enforcement (Casey, 2025).

as a core policing value. Together, these frameworks inform recommendations for redesigning law enforcement training systems to improve crime prevention and control, democratic accountability, and cross-border cooperation.

## Research-Driven Training Enhances Policing Effectiveness

The *Evidence-Based Policing Matrix*, synthesized from 97 rigorous studies, identifies proactive, place-based, and focused interventions as markedly more effective than reactive or generalized approaches (Lum, Koper, & Telep, 2011). Incorporating these insights into training curricula ensures that LE officials are equipped with strategies proven to reduce crime and disorder. Such research-aligned training, transforms policing from routine procedure into a dynamic practice grounded in scientific rigor, facilitating measurable operational improvements and strategic resource allocation (Lum & Koper, 2017).

According to Weisburd and Neyroud (2011), embedding science and research into institutional law enforcement learning, and professional development, has enormous gains. To succeed in this goal, these authors emphasize that scientific reasoning must transcend peripheral roles and become central to LE culture. This requires structural reforms including the establishment of university law enforcement centres and hybrid academic-practitioner roles, bridging theory and practice. Academic literature affirms continuous professional learning development, interdisciplinary collaboration, and leadership committed to evidence-based methods are crucial to overcoming institutional inertia and cultivating a culture of innovation within law enforcement. The research of other authors also identifies motivational factors, such as job satisfaction, welfare, and professional life quality, as critical for the efficiency of internal affairs bodies. Training programmes should emphasize these factors to enhance motivation and improve performance (Seitakova et al., 2024).

The gains do not stop there: integrating research into LE education increases transparency and legitimacy by grounding decisions in empirical evidence, adequately and critically evaluated and adapted. This scientific foundation acts as an ethical anchor, promoting accountability and public trust. Additionally, as LE commitment and operations, increasingly rely on digital technologies, Artificial Intelligence and data analytics, innovation in training is essential to ensure LE officials feel comfortable to ethically use digital tools, critically engage with them, validating their efficacy and mitigating risks of misuse (Lum & Koper, 2017).

Furthermore, the adoption of evidence-based training frameworks aligns with international efforts to standardize LE education and enhance democratic

policing. Within the European Union and beyond, shared research-driven training protocols facilitate interoperability, mutual trust, and coordinated responses to transnational crime. Tailoring these frameworks to respect local legal and cultural contexts ensures adaptability while advancing a unified commitment to rights-based, intelligence-driven policies across jurisdictions (Lum & Koper, 2017; Weisburd & Neyroud, 2011).

Brook and Cseres (2024) emphasize the importance of priority setting in administrative law enforcement due to limited resources. Similar to the obligation of the Independent Regulatory Agencies to choose which cases to pursue, balancing economic, societal, and doctrinal importance, training agencies must also focus on priorities and follow a strategy to achieve its goals, as CE-POL has been doing. This is relevant in the context of law enforcement training, as it highlights the need for strategic resource allocation within a research portfolio to maximize impact and efficiency. These authors present four models of prioritization, each reflecting different trade-offs between good governance principles and transparency, accountability, independence, and efficiency. Understanding these models can inform the development or enhancement of a research portfolio that supports law enforcement training by identifying best practices and pinpointing areas for improvement. According to these authors (Brook and Cseres, 2024), the importance of transparency and accountability in setting enforcement priorities strengthens procedural accountability and stakeholder trust. This suggests that a research portfolio should include mechanisms for evaluating and communicating the outcomes of law enforcement training programmes. A research portfolio would also gain to include methodologies for assessing the impact of law enforcement training on regulatory outcomes. The authors also highlight the importance of designing a research portfolio that allows for innovative training approaches while ensuring oversight and alignment with broader law enforcement objectives. Seitakova (2024) also refer proper organizational procedures and supportive management are crucial for improving employee performance. Training should therefore include components that implement supportive work environments and effective management practices as this would make the difference in valuing the research role. Foresight exercises are also essential: the study by Ali Unlu and colleagues emphasizes, for example, the necessity of strategic foresight in developing effective drug policies in Finland (Unlu et al. 2025). This approach involves a comprehensive methodology, including horizon scanning and trend analysis, to anticipate future challenges. Such foresight methods can be directly applied to law enforcement training to ensure preparedness and adaptability. The integration of strategic foresight, participatory processes, and trend analysis into law enforcement

training is essential for enhancing the adaptability and effectiveness of policing strategies. By adopting these research-driven approaches, training programmes can better prepare LE officials for the complexities of modern law enforcement (Unlu et al. 2025).

Including research findings into law enforcement training might not be linear at a first sight, though. CEPOL has therefore different relevant activities matching what literature review highlights, favouring a space for scientific discussion of relevant topics for law enforcement, the inclusion of innovative technologies and the higher education training. We selected four of these main actions of the research portfolio to illustrate how CEPOL progresses with science into LE training: the CEPOL Research & Science Conferences, the European law Enforcement Research Bulletin (Bulletin) publication, the Higher Education offer (and its reconfiguration as a work in progress to meet the EU required best practices of accreditation and professional lifelong learning) and the Research networks and new actions.

## The CEPOL Research & Science Conferences

Networking and learning through participating at international conferences hold profound relevance for both research portfolio holders and law enforcement officials as they endeavour to enhance their professional competencies and adapt to evolving challenges. For research portfolio holders, engaging in such academic and professional meetings offers the possibility of engaging with different networks and platforms to explore innovative training courses, methodologies, risk management strategies, investment trends, theoretical and technological innovations and digital advancements that are crucial for optimizing the training portfolio performance (Brown et al., 2020). Similarly, law enforcement officials benefit tremendously from these conferences by gaining insights into advanced policing strategies, legal frameworks, and community engagement practices. The integration of scientific research into law enforcement training can significantly improve decision-making processes and operational efficiency, as demonstrated in studies emphasizing evidence-based practices (Lum & Koper, 2017). According to Cyrille Fijnaut 2004 opinion, “*not many senior Law Enforcement officials are familiar with research results and not many police researchers conduct comparative research*”. Thus, the conferences appear to serve as a platform for exchanging knowledge and adopting interdisciplinary collaborations, enabling participants to view their work from different angles and integrate novel approaches into their daily operations.

Moreover, the opportunity to engage directly with keynote speakers and experts during conferences is invaluable in encouraging a deeper understanding of complex subjects and in addressing specific queries pertinent to one's professional context. This direct interaction not only enhances the learning experience but also empowers attendees to challenge existing paradigms and propose innovative solutions to persistent issues (Johnson et al., 2019). For law enforcement officials, the ability to interrogate nuanced aspects of new methodologies or technologies with thought and scientific leaders can lead to transformative changes in training programmes and operational tactics, ultimately contributing to better results, public safety and community trust (Sherman, 2013). In this regard, the conferences act as research actions for professional growth and institutional improvement, supported by rigorous scientific inquiry and practical relevance. Having in mind this relevance, CEPOL has been organising the Research & Science Conferences since 2003, serving as a platform for academics, practitioners, trainers, and researchers in law enforcement topics to share knowledge and perspectives. They provide a stimulating intellectual environment that brings together ideas and perspectives of academics, practitioners, trainers and educators in policing and other areas of law enforcement, with researchers and academic scholars from Europe and the international sphere. Participants at this forum can inform and be informed about new scientific findings, ongoing research projects and challenges for law enforcement and policing. Papers discussed during CEPOL Research and Science Conferences are submitted, assessed, selected and published in a special Conference edition of the CEPOL Bulletin, so that ideas and knowledge can be shared within the law enforcement community, promoting and facilitating broader discussions and becoming a source of inspiration for the future.

The 17 already organised CEPOL conferences in 13 different countries addressed current and emerging challenges in LE for the specific moment when they have been conceived, often aligning with EU and EMPACT (European Multidisciplinary Platform Against Criminal Threats) ([URL1](#)) priorities and initiatives. Initially these conferences were organised every year and later they started being launched every two years, initially because of COVID, but also because the growing number of participants required a more complex planning and organisation (the conference 2024/2025 had in total 350 participants). Thirteen Members States hosted these conferences, whose topics ranged from the first one on *“Interplay between Research, Education & Practice”* (Sweden, 2003) to *“Cybersecurity, cybercrime and social networks”* (Spain, 2011), passing through *“Pandemic Effects on Law Enforcement Training & Practice: Taking Early stock from a Research Perspective”* (Online, 2021) to the latest,

“Tackling the world of High-Risk Criminal Networks (HRCN) (2024/2025, Italy), organised in partnership with the Economic and Financial Police School of the Italian Guardia di Finanza.

This year’s conference aimed to explore the scientific dialogues currently looking at trends, challenges, leading practices, and opportunities to disrupt and dismantle HRCN as an EMPACT priority. When deciding the subject, CEPOL has in mind the shared knowledge that could significantly strengthen the effectiveness of the multidisciplinary collaboration at the political, judicial, and law enforcement levels against HRCN and would help enhance the learning strategies and outcomes of relevant CEPOL training products delivered to the EU law enforcement community. Out of the referred 350 participants, 185 belonged to LE agencies, 71 from Academic background and 94 from different origins, such as EU Agencies and International organisations, national and judicial authorities, journalists, press, private sector, and others, ensuring the multidisciplinary approach to the discussed topics.

The topics discussed touched the emerging trends in the landscape of HRCN, also the challenges and best practises on combatting HRCN, including the external dimension, the opportunities for multidisciplinary collaboration to fight HRCN, the best way to protect witnesses and many other relevant and related topics ([URL2](#)). There were main sessions and parallel sessions running at the same time, in total 135 presenters, of which 43 keynotes. The next conference is previewed to be held in 2027.

It is worth referring that since 2008, after the formal establishment of a National Research and Science Correspondents Network ([URL3](#)), CEPOL benefited a lot from the new appointed members, the senior law enforcement officials or law enforcement training related academics nominated by each Member States and the CEPOL associate countries. The aim was to strengthen the integration of law enforcement research and science into European law enforcement training by creating direct links between national law enforcement research communities and CEPOL research’s activities. They have annual meetings ([URL4](#)) to align and exchange information, share research findings, and identify and discuss best practices for applying research to law enforcement training and cooperation. Furthermore, they act as ambassadors of research at CEPOL, actively participating at the organisation and implementation of the Research & Science Conference, bridging the gap between law enforcement academia and practices. Beyond that, they disseminate research information at national level, they provide scientific advice and disseminate research and scientific information, contributing to writing to and promoting the CEPOL Law Enforcement Research Bulletin, that will be shortly presented in the next point.



## The relevance of investing into research publications: the European Law Enforcement Research Bulletin

The engagement of CEPOL participants, academics, courses' trainees, researchers, students, even activity managers and law enforcement officials in the publication and evaluation of academic articles of the European Law Enforcement Research Bulletin, has proven to be crucial for promoting a culture of continuous learning and professional development. For authors, publishing in peer-reviewed journals provides an opportunity to contribute to the body of knowledge by sharing innovative investment strategies and to receive critical feedback from peers, which can refine their decision-making processes (Faff, 2015). Reading articles from a diverse range of sources, including those available through open access, helps them stay up to date with the latest research findings and methodologies, enabling them to adapt to the rapidly changing law enforcement landscape (Todorov & Bollerslev, 2010). For law enforcement officials, engaging with scientific research articles facilitates the integration of evidence-based practices into training programmes and operational strategies, thereby enhancing the efficacy and accountability of law enforcement activities (Lum & Koper, 2017). By reflecting on diverse perspectives presented in scholarly work, these professionals can achieve a more comprehensive understanding of the complex issues they face daily.

Moreover, the process of double peer review and active participation in academic reasoning, encourages law enforcement officials to critically assess and improve their own practices. This rigorous review process not only enhances the quality of the published work but also raises a sense of accountability and commitment to scientific rigor (Smith et al., 2016). Networking through academic publications and conferences allows professionals to directly engage with leading researchers and practitioners, facilitating the exchange of ideas and collaborative efforts to address shared challenges (Johnson et al., 2019). Access to a broad spectrum of editorial publications, beyond those that one may be directly involved with, enriches the learning ecosystem, and provides a wealth of resources that can inspire innovative solutions and improvements in both financial management and law enforcement training (Sherman, 2013). Thus, the symbiotic relationship between publishing, reading, and networking within the academic realm is instrumental in driving progress and excellence across these fields.

The Bulletin ([URL5](#)) is periodically published online and printed by CEPOL, since 2009 (at the time under the name "European Police Science and Research Bulletin"), having updated its title in 2018 to the current one. It is an open-access,



double peer reviewed journal, with an editorial board currently composed of nine members, who are selected through a biannual call, and they work in close cooperation with the Research & Knowledge Management Officer. The process of submission, review and acceptance is managed through a software and supported by the CEPOL editorial board. It has been created in the sequence of the words of Fijnaut during the 2024 conference, “*there has never been a medium like a journal on policing, where research had been widely accessible. (...) in many member-states police research is missing at all.*”. Given these deficiencies, Fijnaut recognised a historical chance for CEPOL to develop as a high-grade publication where science would support training. CEPOL maintains the commitment to further international research and establish new communication channels to encourage teamwork on law enforcement science in Europe.

The Bulletin has issued 22 regular issues with more than 220 articles, essays, and other scientific publications (from 2009 until now); articles ranging from all the topics related to Law Enforcement. It also counts with 6 special issues (Special Conference edition) with another 180 scientific articles. Beyond the Bulletin we highlight the research leaflet published in 2024 ([URL6](#)) that summarizes the research activities and helps promoting research activities when Research is present in other international meetings and conferences. The agency’s publication of a regular research Bulletin plays a strategic role in bridging the gap between academia and practice. Like other platforms, the Bulletin presents complex findings into actionable insights for law enforcement audiences ([Weisburd & Neyroud, 2011](#)). This translational effort ensures that research outcomes do not remain confined to academic silos but inform daily operational decision-making.

From 2023, the editorial policy of this Bulletin has introduced new thematic numbers of the Bulletin, with two special thematic editions under finalisation to be issued in the upcoming months of 2025, The Environmental Crime and the Firearms Trafficking editions (call for papers for the latter just closed a couple of days ago). These thematic editions will be already granted a Digital Object Identifier (DOI<sup>2</sup>)’s and will have a limited version in paper, while the general Editions will maintain its permanent online publication, also with granted DOI’s and a constant open call for papers. The special conference editions will also be available online and distributed in limited paper version. Needless to refer that the thematic editions might also be used as training material for the training courses offered by CEPOL, especially targeting the higher education product

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2 Digital Object Identifier is a unique alphanumeric string assigned to a publication (like a journal article or book chapter) to provide a persistent and unique link to its online location.

that is being prepared to re-launch when ready. This offer is complemented with the existing EBSCO Discovery Service, available in CEPOL Law Enforcement Education Platform (LEEd) to allow any registered law enforcement official to consult scientific and research e-books and e-journals. Cepol Research prepares every year a new contract selecting the most updated scientific e-books, e-journals and abstracts that are made available to all LEEd registered participants. They have access to more than 150.000 (URL7) e-book titles of general academic interest and a growing list of specific monographies, edited volumes, and text-books relevant for policing, law enforcement and criminal justice, with a clear connection and relevance to the higher education concern of research.

## **The Higher Education offer and its relevance on LE scientific advancement**

The relevance of higher education courses in law enforcement training has gained significant attention, as they are instrumental in equipping LE officials with the analytical and ethical tools necessary for effective policing in contemporary society, as well as updating their skills with the most recent innovations and digital tools. A solid educational foundation in relevant fields such as criminal justice, sociology, and ethics, enhances LE officials' ability to engage in critical thinking and informed decision-making. As noted by Paoline (2003), *“Higher education is perceived as a way to enhance the professionalization of policing by increasing the knowledge base and analytical abilities of officers”* (Paoline, 2003). This educational grounding is crucial in developing a deeper understanding of the diverse socio-legal contexts LE officials navigate daily, promoting a more nuanced approach to law enforcement that aligns with public expectations of accountability and community engagement.

The CEPOL European Joint Master's Programme (URL8) (EJMP) was the first EU-level academic master's programme established to address shared challenges of law enforcement cooperation within the framework of internal security and had 2 successful iterations. It's worth referring that the current CEPOL Executive Director was one of the successful master graduates of this programme. It was designed as a two-year, part-time programme, awarding 60 ECTS credits under the Bologna Process and integrating four-day and week-long residential modules with distance-learning phases, all delivered in English, to build a science-based European community of practice. The first iteration of EJMP was launched in October 2015. This inaugural programme was led by the German Police University and accredited by the Spanish accreditation institute ANECA,

with the master's diploma awarded by the Spanish University UNED. The programme consisted of seven modules<sup>3</sup>, with the first module taking place in Budapest, Hungary, and the rest in other partner countries (Finland, Italy, Lithuania, Romania, The Netherlands, and Estonia), combined with online activities. It targeted senior law enforcement officials and specialists in management or expert roles, who wished to develop or enhance competencies in international and European law enforcement cooperation and leadership.

The EJMP curriculum comprised seven sequential modules<sup>4</sup>. Each module had to be passed sequentially, and all assignments, whether written, oral, empirical, or theoretical, were evaluated using a common assessment framework applied uniformly by all partner institutions. The two iterations of the EJMP were implemented by a consortium of public universities and law enforcement agencies appointed by CEPOL national contact points, ensuring both academic rigor and practical relevance through collaboration with institutions across the EU. This blended-learning environment combined residential phases with e-learning tools — such as webinars, common curricula, and online modules — to promote continuous interaction, knowledge exchange, and networking among senior law enforcement professionals. After the completion of its second cycle in 2019, the EJMP's continuation was suspended in 2020 and proposals for a revised higher-education offering are currently under consideration, including micro-credentials and lifelong learning possibilities, allowing LE professionals to better manage their learning experience with the professional commitments and personal balance. A study authored by Milojević et al. (2025) highlights the necessity of continuous professional development through specialized courses and advanced training. This ongoing education helps law enforcement officials to keep abreast of the latest practices and technological advancements, crucial for responding to modern security challenges.

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3 The modules held were General Introduction and Methodology (4 ECTS), International and Comparative Policing (8 ECTS), Governance and Strategic Aspects of International Police Cooperation (8 ECTS), Legal and Regulatory Aspects of European Police Cooperation (8 ECTS), Operational Aspects of European Police Cooperation (ECTS), Management and Leadership Aspects of European Police Cooperation (9 ECTS) and Master dissertation (14 ECTS).

4 Module I (general introduction and research methodology, 5 ECTS, four-day residential), Modules II–VI (core topics delivered as one-week residential sessions of 40 hours each, 8 ECTS apiece), and Module VII (master's thesis research and writing, 15 ECTS) Modules II through VI cover international and comparative policing; governance and strategic aspects of European police cooperation; legal and regulatory frameworks; operational aspects; and management and leadership, respectively.

Micro-credentials (as proposed by the Commission in 2021<sup>5</sup>) ([URL9](#)), quality assurance and lifelong training, play a decisive role in complementing traditional higher education by offering targeted, flexible, and up-to-date learning experiences that meet the evolving needs of law enforcement professionals. Micro-credentials, which are defined as “*certifications of assessed learning that are significantly smaller than degrees*” (Oliver, 2019) provide LE officials with the opportunity to acquire specific skills and knowledge efficiently. These credentials are particularly valuable in a landscape characterized by rapid technological advancements and changing legal frameworks. Integrating micro-credentials into a joint master’s law enforcement programme brings modular flexibility and immediate recognition of specialized competencies, allowing LE officials to stack discrete badges or certificates towards full master’s accreditation. These lifelong training programmes ensure that LE officials remain adept and versatile throughout their careers, adapting to new challenges and societal shifts. As articulated by Walker (2005), “*Continuous education and training are vital for law enforcement officers to remain effective and responsive in their roles*”. By integrating higher education, micro-credentials, and lifelong training, law enforcement agencies can cultivate a workforce that is not only skilled and knowledgeable but also capable of evolving with the demands of a complex and dynamic environment.

Currently CEPOL Research portfolio is reconfiguring the programme to match the most innovative requirements adapting its curriculum to host the leading LE professionals with the most updated current trends, including a close cooperation with the Justice and Home Affairs Agencies ([URL10](#)). By collaborating across different universities and law enforcement agencies, the joint programme can co-develop micro-credential modules that reflect best practices and regional priorities, leveraging shared resources to reduce duplication and costs. Modern law enforcement training increasingly requires interdisciplinary integration. Collaboration between criminologists, psychologists, data scientists, and legal scholars enhances the complexity and relevance of training content (Boulton et al., 2020).

Our agency seeks to ensure that training evolves in parallel with societal and technological change, such as cybercrime or AI ethics. An expert group on higher

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5 Micro-credentials have emerged over the last decade as a flexible complement to conventional studies. They offer certification for smaller periods of learning, allowing a focus on narrower specialisations, and can be offered before, during or after conventional studies. “*The definition proposed by the European Commission in 2021 describes micro-credentials as ‘the record of the learning outcomes that a learner has acquired following a small volume of learning. These learning outcomes have been assessed against transparent and clearly defined standards’*”.

education has been discussing the curriculum, its content, methodologies, and a reflecting upon a cohesive proposal for an innovative programme, aiming to ensure the most effective implementation of this new offering. This will enable CEPOL to maintain its leadership in providing higher education programmes for Law Enforcement officials. But the expert group on higher education is not the only network of professionals with whom Research at CEPOL is collaborating (not to mention the Research & Science Correspondents, already presented), many other networks and innovative actions have been part of the day-life of research portfolio at CEPOL and will be shortly presented in the next point.

## **Research Networks and Research New Actions**

The Heads of Law Enforcement Training Institutes (HoLETI) workshop was a research event, started in 2023<sup>6</sup> that created another research network reflecting CEPOL's strategic shift toward greater stakeholder integration and a common EU law enforcement training culture, ensuring that national training programmes are aligned with European security priorities and that knowledge-sharing and cooperation are strengthened across borders.

The HoLETI network served as a first platform for harmonizing law enforcement training across Europe through information exchange, joint initiatives, and innovation. One key activity initiated in this research action, was the mapping of the landscape of national law enforcement training and research programmes – cataloguing each country's training courses, advanced curricula and facilities – to build a comprehensive picture of Europe's training capacities. The network also provided a forum for members to exchange best practices on curriculum design, training delivery, accreditation standards and the hosting of international training sessions. Another major focus was the coordinated mobility schemes for law enforcement training: HoLETI analysed existing EU-funded exchange programmes (such as Erasmus+ and CEPOL's own Exchange Programme) to enable cross-border placements of trainees and instructors, promoting mutual learning and a European dimension in police education ([URL 11](#)). By strengthening links with academia and encouraging collaborative research, the network helped keeping law enforcement training innovative and evidence-based, for example by suggesting integrating new adult learning methodologies and sharing research findings on emerging crime issues. Crucially, HoLETI workshop aimed at discussing the alignment of the national training agendas with EU

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6 The next HoLETI workshop is previewed to be organised by 2026.

strategic priorities – using tools like the EU Strategic Training Needs Assessment (EU-STNA) to ensure that training topics and skills reflect Europe’s security strategy and policy cycle priorities.

These goals were put into practice at the first HoLETI workshop when CEPOL Research launched the network and jump-start cooperation among its members. Held over three days at CEPOL’s headquarters in Budapest, this inaugural workshop convened high-level training directors from EU Member States (and neighbouring partners such as Georgia, Turkey, and Ukraine) to share insights on modernising law enforcement education. Participants compared their institutes’ approaches, discussed common challenges, and identified opportunities for joint initiatives – from developing common curricula to improving the use of EU training tools and exchange programmes. Organised in line with the EU’s *European Year of Skills 2023*, the forum emphasized updating and innovating law enforcement training curricula to meet new threats and technological developments. By the end of the workshop, the foundations were laid for sustained international cooperation among training institutes, reinforcing a Europe-wide network committed to continuous improvement and strategic alignment of law enforcement training. The next HoLETI workshop is previewed to be organised by 2026. This workshop bridged the higher education work in progress and the accreditation process started at CEPOL, where research stepped into progressing to a new education conception. Other actions have proven to be effective, leading to brainstorming ideas and putting CEPOL at a leading position in what concerns being the hub for research discussions.

This was the case of the Research week ([URL12](#)). It was proposed for the first time in 2023 and combined many of the networks with the direct involvement or lead of the CEPOL Research. This pilot research activity was held in 2024, in Budapest, at CEPOL’s premises, having hosted a dynamic research hub by inviting 29 young researchers, 25 Research & Science Correspondents, and 35 participants from the EU Agencies Network on Scientific Advice (EU-ANSA) and EU Innovation Hub for Internal Security networks. Across many selected thematic workshops, interactive brainstorming sessions, and strategic foresight panels — featuring the input from European Commission experts on funding and AI — the event achieved a seamless integration of academic inquiry and operational priorities. Key goals included the composition of a transnational young-researcher network from 25 countries, the development of a comprehensive evaluation framework for CEPOL conference (held later in March 2025), and the initiation of a Training Needs Analysis ([URL13](#)) on AI. By facilitating direct dialogue between junior scholars, senior correspondents, and EU agencies, CEPOL not only refined research objectives for 2024/25 but also

laid groundwork for collaborative Horizon projects and EMPACT-aligned capacity-building initiatives.

By the end of the research week, participants had new professional contacts and tools they could use immediately. Young researchers, some of which law-enforcement officials proposed by the corresponding Research & Science Correspondent, acquired knowledge and discussed research findings for their courses, and agencies and universities began preparing several joint proposals and sharing best practices. Within CEPOL, grant funding opportunities support (for young and senior researchers) was increased and the grounds for AI and foresight working groups were clarified, with CEPOL appearing as a hub for research networking between participants. The EU-ANSA network members were also present during this research week.

The EU-ANSA was created in 2012. A joint review by EU institutions identified the need for better coordination among EU agencies that provide scientific or technical advice (for example, to harmonize expert selection processes and uphold independent expertise). At that time, while several inter-agency networks existed for other matters (legal affairs, IT, communications, etc.), none focused specifically on agencies' scientific advisory work. This gap was seen as problematic because many EU agencies share a mandate to supply science-based input for policymaking, and ongoing budget cuts made it more important to collaborate and share best practices. In response to that void and engaged in using the research goals to improve the quality of the EU Agencies' performance, the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) ([URL14](#)) proposed creating a dedicated inter-agency network to improve the quality, efficiency, and transparency of scientific advice across agencies. The idea was endorsed by the heads of all EU agencies, and later the EU Agencies Network on Scientific Advice (EU-ANSA) was officially launched as a sub-network under the umbrella of the Heads of EU Agencies, with ECDC serving as its first coordinating chair. It is currently part of the EU Agencies Network (EUAN) ([URL15](#)).

EU-ANSA serves as a forum for EU agencies with significant scientific advisory roles to coordinate their efforts and share best practices. Each member agency is represented by its Chief Scientist or equivalent senior expert, ensuring that discussions take place at a high scientific level. The network's overarching mission is to strengthen the quality, consistency, and impact of scientific advice for EU policymaking by straightening cooperation, harmonizing standards.

In practice, EU-ANSA allows agencies to learn from each other, develop joint approaches, and tackle cross-cutting issues together – for example, improving risk assessment methods or how to communicate scientific uncertainty. Organizationally, it is an informal sub-network and operates with a rotating



chairmanship, where each year a different member agency leads the network's meetings and initiatives. The European Institute of Innovation and Technology ([URL16](#)) (EIT)-CEPOL led this subnetwork (through CEPOL Research & Knowledge Management Officer) in 2024 ([URL17](#)), and the network focused on strengthening the integration of scientific evidence into EU policymaking through proactive collaboration, strategic foresight, and capacity-building initiatives. Since then, CEPOL Research has been active participating in EU-ANSA sub-groups such as the Foresight and AI sub-groups engaging in discussion groups and joint meetings. Law enforcement challenges often transcend national borders, making international collaboration indispensable. The agency's coordination of transnational research networks promotes exchange of ideas and promotes harmonisation of standards. According to Fyfe et al. (2013), such networks are crucial for promoting methodological consistency and cumulative knowledge-building across jurisdictions. CEPOL leadership in these networks positions the agency as a central intersection in the European law enforcement research ecosystem.

Finally, what is the EU-Innovation Hub for Internal Security, where CEPOL is also active? This network was launched in late 2019 at the EU Council's Standing Committee on Operational Cooperation on Internal Security (COSI) and was formally established in early 2020 as a collaborative network of innovation labs to drive innovation in Europe's internal security domain ([URL18](#)). It is hosted at Europol and jointly involves the European Commission (DG Home and the Joint Research Centre) alongside with major EU agencies such as European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation – Europol ([URL19](#)), European Border and Coast Guard Agency – Frontex ([URL20](#)), European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Training - CEPOL, European Union Agency for Criminal Justice Cooperation – Eurojust ([URL21](#)), European Union Agency for the Operational Management of Large-Scale IT Systems in the area of Freedom, Security and Justice - EU-LISA ([URL22](#)), the European Union Agency for Asylum – EUAA ([URL23](#)), the European Union Drugs Agency – EUDA ([URL24](#)), and the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights – FRA ([URL25](#)), among others. Together, these stakeholders form a cross-sector platform under the Hub's umbrella, pooling their expertise and resources to modernize internal security capabilities and encourage coordinated innovation across law enforcement, border management, justice, and related fields. The Hub's core mission is to ensure strategic coordination and collaboration among all internal security innovation actors, aligning technology development and research efforts across the EU.

Since 2023, CEPOL has reinforced its active participation, as well as participating into the Community for European Research and Innovation for Security

(CERIS) ([URL26](#)) directly interacting with the European Commission officials and with the security researchers' community.

## Conclusion

The integration of research into law enforcement training is no longer an aspirational ideal but an operational necessity. The empirical insights synthesized in the *Evidence-Based Policing Matrix* offer clarity on “what works” in policing and provide a practical foundation for redesigning training systems around effectiveness, specificity, and proactivity (Lum, Koper, & Telep, 2011).

CEPOL has proven to be paving the way to become a hub for research networking, for creating synergies, having an active role in all research communities involved and discussing the best mode to suggest the improvement for law enforcement training, though multiple actions under its portfolio.

As law enforcement agencies confront increasingly complex challenges — from localized violence to transnational threats — the use of research-based frameworks ensures that resources, personnel, and technology are deployed strategically and ethically. Scientific insights into adult learning, neurocognition, and stress responses have revolutionised law enforcement training design. Techniques such as scenario-based training, virtual reality, and cognitive load management are now being adopted, based on findings from cognitive neuroscience and psychology (Andersen et al., 2016). Incorporating such innovations into curriculum development ensures that training is not only realistic but also optimised for skill retention under stress. Moreover, incorporating these principles into law enforcement education strengthens institutional legitimacy, facilitates evidence-based leadership, and aligns with international standards such as those promoted by the European Union (Weisburd & Neyroud, 2011; Lum & Koper, 2017). Beyond operational benefits, including research within training enhances the professional identity of law enforcement officials. As Loftus (2009) argues, professionalism in policing is tied to the adoption of scientific norms such as critical thinking, peer review, and continual learning. Training that incorporates these elements signals a commitment to transparency, accountability, and public service. These studies collectively advocate for a diversified research portfolio that not only enhances technical skills through simulation and practical applications but also addresses the strategic, ethical, and theoretical dimensions of law enforcement training. By leveraging these insights, training programmes can be tailored to meet the dynamic needs of modern policing, thereby improving outcomes, and fostering greater public trust in law enforcement agencies (Casey, 2025).

Looking forward, the role of research in law enforcement training will only grow in importance. As a European agency recognising the research value, CE-POL remains committed to encouraging and strengthening a culture of scientific excellence through strategic initiatives – conferences, publications, research calls, and collaborative networks. By integrating science at the heart of training systems, we contribute not only to more effective policing but also to a safer, more just society. In sum, research-informed training is both a stimulus for institutional innovation and a pillar of modern, rights-based policing.

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URL1: *EMPACT EU Policy Cycle - EMPACT - EMPACT 2022+ Fighting*. <https://www.europol.europa.eu/crime-areas-and-statistics/empact>

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