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→ PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

By Anna Maria Getoš-Kalac

Logos of Criminology: Harm, Conflict, and Academic Freedom

Dear colleagues,

Thank you for the trust you have placed in me by electing me President of our Society. I would also like to thank Josep M. Tamarit-Sumalla and Ineke Haen-Marshall, who have completed their mandate on the Executive Board, and to welcome Letizia Paoli (President-Elect), Mirza Buljubašić (at-large Board member) and Angelina Stanojoska, who will organise our Annual Conference in Skopje in 2027.

I am, as I believe we all are, particularly grateful to Effi Lambropoulou and her entire team for organising our Society's 25th anniversary Annual Conference in Athens that took place under the inspiring theme 'Logos of Crime and Punishment' – 'logos' in classical Greek thought referring to a universal (divine) reason immanent in nature, yet transcending all oppositions and imperfections in the cosmos and humanity.
In the final days leading up to the conference, and throughout the event itself, the entire organising team demonstrated not only tremendous resilience, but also a truly Athenian spirit: a spirit with strong symbolic appeal for us as a Society to remain a community of reason, pluralism and civic virtue, even amid sharp disagreements.

I took office at a moment that is unprecedented in the history of our Society, as documented in the first half of the conference report by Wim Huisman. The political controversy ahead of and surrounding our conference, as well as the months that followed, confronted us as a Society with intense pressure, escalating conflict, and widespread distress that many of us may not have previously encountered within a scholarly association.

It is tempting to treat all these events primarily as a political controversy, and from that perspective to (mis)use a presidential message to promote one set of views over another, backed by our Society's authority. I will, however, make an honest effort to do something else: to reflect on it through our shared disciplinary lens – which makes us, as a Society, stand together, and as criminologists stand with and for, not against, each other. In doing so, I want to make a *reasoned* contribution to reaffirming common ground for mediation, since the *logos* of Criminology – our obligation to *reason* about harm, conflict and our responses to them – also obliges us, professionally, in how we act within our Society.

The European Society of Criminology, for most of us, is far more than a scientific annual conference. It is a scholarly community that offers both exchange of knowledge and a sense of belonging across borders, academic cultures, related disciplines and institutional contexts. For many of us, it has also been a formative "criminological home (away from home)": a welcoming, safe space of international academic socialisation, learning, mentoring, growth, and flourishing, including spirited debate. Recently, however, our "home (away from home)" has also been experienced as a volatile space – one in which some feel disrupted or silenced, others feel targeted or excluded, and still others feel compelled to defend

themselves against accusations unrelated to common scholarly discourse. Our experiences differ, as do our perspectives. Yet the fact that so many among us report distress, fear, and lasting hurt should concern us all, and particularly as a Society.

As criminologists, we have the tools to engage with these dynamics scientifically: not to pathologise each other or our Society, nor to reduce complex moral positions to "mere behaviour," but to understand how conflict escalates in institutions, how harm is produced and distributed, and how bystanders and organisational structures shape outcomes. In the limited format of a newsletter message, I cannot offer a comprehensive analysis. Instead, I will focus on one particular aspect: the harmful experiences reported by those among us who have been treated as if their vulnerability were less visible, less credible, or less deserving of our attention.

A starting point should be simple and honest: harm has been experienced broadly and across positions within and by our Society. Some accounts have already been documented and discussed – most notably through communications on our Society's webpage and on the webpage of Criminologists for Palestine, at our General Assembly, and in (open) letters to the Board[(1)]. The purpose here is not to adjudicate competing narratives, or to rank suffering, nor to assign blame. It is to acknowledge harmful experiences: feeling upset, distressed, coerced, oppressed, or professionally endangered – experiences that have no rightful place in any professional community, least of all in a criminological society.

One set of harmful experiences has, however, thus far received comparatively little if any attention: that of those among us being most directly affected by the ongoing controversy within our Society. Due to their institutional affiliations or nationality, they may not fit our Society's current interpretation of Christie's "ideal victim" – although they most certainly do when analysed dispassionately – and might therefore be perceived as less deserving of our acknowledgement and solidarity. The relevant Report documenting our colleagues' harmful experiences of being targeted, accused, disrupted, harassed and excluded is therefore, in my view, a must-read for us as a Society. Not only to figure out how to re-establish the safe space our Society has been widely known for, but also to factor in the unintended, though predictable, harmful by-products of dealing with the current, or any other, political controversy as a scholarly Society.

At a moment many of us contemplate how (and whether) to engage scientifically and/or politically with mass suffering across the globe, it matters that we also acknowledge and address the suffering within our own Society. One does not exclude the other. But promoting a culture of empathy and moral urgency outward, while ignoring vulnerability and experienced harm inward could further deepen divisions internally and thus seriously undermine our Society's credibility externally.

This is not a call to deny, minimise, or relativise the mass suffering that has mobilised a strong sense of moral urgency in our Society. A criminological approach begins by recognising suffering and vulnerability. And it also asks further questions: what forms of collective behaviour and institutional reaction reduce harm, and what forms reproduce or amplify it – especially in the face of fear, blame, and moral certainty? As we move forward, it might be helpful to focus less on each other's asserted motives or goals and more on the observable effects of the strategies and tactics we use—on colleagues, on governance, and on our Society's capacity to function as a scholarly community.

In that regard we might perhaps want to distinguish more consciously between science activism and political activism, without praising, nor dismissing either. Some of us engage in neither; others in one or the other; and some in both, whereby neither engagement is a duty, least of all something to be imposed on anyone. It is a matter of professional and personal choice, and has been a subject of long-standing debate within Criminology and in science generally. What matters here is that both strategies of engagement operate through different methods and tactics, and therefore place different demands on institutional settings.

(1) For more details, see the Conference Report in this issue of the ESC Newsletter.

Science activism, in our context, can be understood as evidence-based engagement: criminologists bringing research, data, and transparent reasoning into public debate and policy processes. It is compatible with pluralism because it invites critique, replication, and argumentation. It can be passionate and morally compelling, but without abandoning scientific standards. It strengthens academic freedom as it relies on scientific methods, scrutiny, and the right to dissent, whereby it need not rely on numbers – the key is the strength of the argument. A simple heuristic is the "peer review test": whether the central claims, as presented, withstand scientific scrutiny as a contribution to Criminology.

Political activism on the other hand aims at mobilisation, pressure, symbolic alignment, and institutional positioning, including boycotting, as a recognised form of political (not scientific) protest. It may use moral language designed to compel agreement rather than invite inquiry, whereas it does not depend on scientific scrutiny. The challenge, in our Society's context, arises when political activism is channelled through a scholarly association and its scientific authority in ways that demand the association itself adopt political positions, enforce political categories, or apply implicit loyalty tests. At that point, scholarly associations risk becoming instruments of political alignment rather than free scientific spaces of scholarly exchange.

Even in academic contexts, pressure tactics can emerge – sometimes intentionally, sometimes as a by-product of escalations. These might include reputational threats, public shaming, sweeping moral accusations (e.g., complicity), disruption, and intimidation-by-mobilisation. Whatever one thinks about the underlying cause, such tactics have predictable effects: they raise the personal cost of participation, they create fear-induced silence, they further isolate those who are already vulnerable, and they make ordinary governance feel too risky to sustain. Criminology has long studied how coercion can operate without formal force – through stigma, reputational damage, threatened (in) direct exclusion, and the production of fear. When such tactics appear in scholarly communities, it is not "political" to name them; it is part of our discipline to ask who is harmed, who self-censors, who becomes "safe to attack," what patterns of victimisation emerge, and how are we supposed to deal with it.

This brings us to the basic rules we as a scholarly Society agreed to. We are not an informal collective, but a constitutional association with a statutory framework, defined membership rights and duties, and responsibilities under Swiss law. Governance is not mere bureaucracy. It is what protects inclusivity, diversity, pluralism, and lawful decision-making – especially under pressure. When constitutional rules are treated as obstacles to urgency, as a Society we become vulnerable to fragmentation, discrimination, and legal exposure. In the months ahead, the question is not simply what we as members want, but first and foremost what the Society may lawfully do, and by which statutory procedures. These constraints are neither optional nor accidental: they protect us as a scholarly Society – sometimes even from ourselves.

None of this should be a matter of political taste or personal opinion. If we take seriously the idea of being criminological scholars, then this commits us to one core value: academic freedom. Not only when it is convenient or aligns with our goals, but especially when it protects those among us who are vulnerable, unpopular, or exposed—and when it protects us as a Society from harmful dynamics that make us turn against each other.

If there is one point on which I am almost certain we can all agree, it is this: none of us should feel excluded, intimidated, criminalised, harassed, or professionally threatened within, or in relation to, our Society – regardless of scholarly or personal opinion, nationality, or institutional affiliation. From this shared acknowledgement of harm, we can begin to process its impacts, rebuild mutual trust, and recommit – together – to academic freedom as our common value. That means, at least to me, not only preserving our "criminological home (away from home)", but also standing in solidarity with all colleagues in our Society, particularly those who have been singled out, shamed, or silenced because of the politics of their governments or institutions, or their scholarly or personal opinions.

→ CONFERENCE REPORT

By Wim Huisman

The 25th edition of the annual conference of the European Society of Criminology (ESC) was special for several reasons. Not only because it was a festive anniversary that took place in the beautiful and historic city of Athens, but also because the conference was accompanied by unprecedented debate and controversy. It felt as if two events were happening simultaneously. On the one hand, there was the usual conference, with a rich program full of fascinating plenaries and panels on numerous criminological topics, award ceremonies, and social gatherings for networking. On the other hand, there was an ongoing debate, both within and outside the official conference program, about the war in Gaza and the Society's position regarding the atrocities taking place. Below, I will first reflect on this extraordinary aspect of the conference. After that, I will briefly report on the traditional elements of the event.

Serious geopolitical and societal developments have previously cast a shadow over ESC conferences, such as the COVID-19 pandemic and Russia's invasion of Ukraine. During COVID, for 2020 and 2021, the conferences were fully held online. For Ukraine, the ESC board produced a statement (to be found here) and a series of activities to support colleagues affected by the war in Ukraine, such as scholarships. But never before had there been an issue that so deeply engaged many participants as the war in Gaza and the horrors that triggered this war and occurred within it. Discussions about the conflict and its relation to the ESC began weeks before the conference. A group of members united under the name *Criminologists4Palestine* submitted a motion to the ESC board, requesting that it be put to a vote during the General Assembly at the conference.

According to the board, parts of the motion were unconstitutional and therefore could not be presented for a vote. However, the board decided to dedicate an agenda item to the motion and its response. The text of the motion, the board's reaction, and a letter from the Israeli Society of Criminology were sent to members well before the conference, sparking discussions in various forums. Since this brief report cannot provide a substantive account of the positions and debates, I refer readers to the websites of the collective and the ESC.

Within the society, the discussion – in my view – remained substantive and respectful, while heated. That changed when the internal debate was picked up by outsiders via social media. Board members were personally accused of complicity in genocide and received threats. Pantheon University withdrew from hosting the event with a short statement days before the start of the conference and also the city of Athens withdrew its support. Amid the turmoil, misinformation also spread – for example, claims that the conference had been moved last-minute to the campus of the American College of Greece, which allegedly has ties to Israel. During the opening ceremony, the chair of the organizing committee, Effi Lampropoulou – whose university had withdrawn – assured attendees that the choice of campus had been made years earlier for logistical reasons. And while the motion contains several elaborated positions and targets Israeli academic institutions as legal entities only, discussions boiled down to the question whether (the motion called for) to boycott individual Israeli scholars. For many, the presence of scholars from universities in occupied territories in Palestine in the conference program functioned as a case in point.

During the traditional opening ceremony and reception, demonstrators protested outside the campus, with a heavy presence of riot police commissioned by the Greek authorities. The climax came during the General Assembly. Usually, this meeting is a rather dull event with low attendance, as many members use this time slot for an extended lunch meeting. However, both *Criminologists4Palestine* and the ESC board had called on members to join the assembly, and the allocated *aula* was packed. After discussing and deliberating about other matters in the order of business, two representatives of *Criminologists4Palestine* were given five minutes to present the motion. It then followed a lineup of speakers delivering emotional statements, including Israeli scholars working with Palestinian students and three former ESC Presidents. Due to the intensity and eagerness to speak, ESC President chairing the General Assembly, Michele Burman, struggled to keep the debate orderly. Speakers used their few minutes to emphasise different aspects of the complex issue with great emotion and concern. Despite the evident tension, my perspective is that the discussion remained respectful: no accusations or threats to fellow scholars were made.

The extent to which participants were involved in these two sides of the conference varied. Some tried to escape from the controversy, while others were completely submerged by it. Many colleagues felt compelled to determine their own position on the matter. This proved to be a difficult task, as the discussion touched on so many issues: from the nature of the conflict and the characterisation of atrocities, to the positions of the motion's proponents and of the ESC Board, and the presence of colleagues from universities in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories. Members struggled with what is "the right thing to do" – whether to travel to Athens, attend the program, act as chair, deliver the scheduled presentation, and, if so, whether to make a personal statement. This resulted in noticeable gaps in the program, although reasons for absence were not always clear.

My impression was that especially early-career scholars decided to make personal statements about the conflict at the start or at the end of their presentations. The emotion and nervousness that often accompanied these statements were understandable, as they likely wondered what consequences this might have for their relationships with supervisors and the trajectory of their academic careers. Also, during plenary sessions, some of the keynote speakers made reference to the debate and stated their position. For instance, in his acceptance speech upon receiving the 2025 ESC European Criminology Award, Ernesto Savona did so by addressing the challenges facing the field in times of strong geopolitical instability.

I will now use this bridge to share some impressions of the 'regular' program. As always, the conference location and the overarching theme of the conference – 'Logos of crime and punishment' – were reflected in the plenary keynotes. As a city so rich in cultural heritage, Athens is of course the right place for a plenary session on illicit trade in antiquities. While being a niche in Criminology, the speakers were able to show how law enforcement practitioners and academics (in this case, with a background in Archaeology) work closely together for instance, to develop AI tools to screen museum collections for stolen art. They also showed how, with notable exceptions, top private collectors as well as leading museums prove to be persistent offenders. At the stimulating plenary on terrorism and border control, Lucia Zedner and Maartje van der Woude warned Criminology of complicity to the harms of border policing when, for instance, it adopts populist language that is commonly used to reframe migration policy as fighting terrorism. The mere fact that we study this from a criminological standpoint implies a criminal justice frame and the speakers concluded that approaches generated by Critical Criminology and by Zemiology are needed to uncover the undetected harms of border control.

The Saturday plenary focused on the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the criminal justice system. While its current use does not yet meet the demand and expectations from the field, both speakers made clear that regulation is lagging, notwithstanding the recent EU AI Act. The development of AI poses fundamental regulatory challenges, as algorithmic transparency is the basis of accountability. And while the availability to test outcomes is crucial, models of reasoning of generative AI are very opaque, which even developers do not fully understand. And while it seems that Big Tech welcomes the use of agentic AI, that is, systems that have autonomy to act on our behalf, experts seem concerned about the increased tendency of AI to power seeking and deceit. The talks showed how the loss of human control poses regulatory challenges, bringing AI-agency into the scope of Criminology.

In this short report, it is impossible to do justice to the enormous variety of topics that were covered by the over 480 panel sessions that attendees could choose from. What is clear, however, is that many ESC Working Groups do excellent work in arranging these panels and inviting members to submit their abstracts. European Criminology is still growing and expanding, and I am sure this will be illustrated by the 26th annual conference in Warsaw, which will take place from 9 to 12 September 2026.

In the meantime, the discussion about the society's position and actions regarding atrocities in Gaza continues. At the closing ceremony of the conference, President Burman confirmed that the board will return to the membership with a set of concrete questions that will be decided upon through a democratic vote. Recently, the ESC-board reconfirmed its commitment and also announced extra steps. *Criminologist4Palestine* continues to critically monitor and comment on these actions. In closing the conference, the host of the 2026 conference, Dagmara Wozniakowska, expressed the hope that all disputes would be settled before the Warsaw conference, wishing all a happy 2026 conference. To the extent that is appropriate for a discipline that studies crime, including atrocities, of course.

Recipient of the 2025 ESC Young Criminology Award: Nikki Rutter

Filial harm is an umbrella terminology in which parents experience sustained harm from their child. In many cases, this involves an adult child harming an elder parent due to the adult child having significant mental health and/or substance misuse issues and the mother being in close proximity during a crisis, leading to tragic outcomes (Miles et al., 2023). However, many parents report that the harm they experience first starts in the early years, which can evolve and escalate over time if the child does not receive appropriate support and intervention (Rutter et al., 2025). Whilst filial harm is often referred to as a "hidden" form of harm, parents do report that they seek support from the early years, but it is often unclear how to find the correct intervention pathway (Rutter et al., 2025).

To understand how families conceptualise the 'real problem' of filial harm, I opted to investigate it in its earliest form, child-to-parent violence instigated by pre-adolescent children, applying a Glaserian Grounded Theory. 34 parents were involved in diary-based methods and iterative interviews, and 21 children participated in participatory workshops. The article produced from this investigation was the winner of the ESC Young Criminologist of the Year Award 2025, and highlighted the language used by families experiencing this form of harm in the earliest stages, and the unmet needs underpinning these explosive and harmful impulses in children (Rutter, 2024).

A clear issue in families presenting to support services at an appropriate time was that very few of them conceptualise their experiences as "violence" or "abuse" when children are under the age of 12. Rather, both parents and children utilise more descriptive language such as "explosive", "hitting", "throwing" or "hurting". Thus, services that hope to reach families with their support offer should be mirroring this language in an attempt to prevent it escalating to crisis, where children may be at risk of criminalisation, or removal from the home (Rutter et al., 2025), or when there is a risk of parricide (Miles et al., 2023).

Through the Glaserian Grounded Theory approach, I worked collaboratively with the parents and children to develop the 'PRAR' framework of understanding

this form of harmful behaviour. 'PRAR' refers to proactive, reactive, affective, and relational impulses, which captured all forms of harm described by both parents and children over the course of this research. By being able to identify the underlying reasons for the behaviour, we were then able to explore alternatives for the children, recognising that the harm was a maladaptive approach to them, attempting to meet their needs rather than an intentional desire to cause harm or control.

By developing the new language of 'explosive and harmful impulses', which can be understood through the 'PRAR' framework, this paper outlines how services can both increase the number of families accessing appropriate interventions, rather than being considered 'hidden' from services. Furthermore, the types of interventions can be made more appropriate because a holistic understanding of what needs are being met through the harmful behaviour, thus replacing them with non-harmful options.

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The 2025 ESC awards

In addition to the award attributed to Nikki Rutter during the 25th annual conference of the ESC, several other awards were granted in Athens.

2025 European Criminology Award, in recognition of a lifetime contribution to European Criminology: Ernesto Ugo Savona

Professor Savona, one of the founders of the ESC, has had a stellar academic career for almost 55 years (with his first publication in 1971). He has authored towards 150 publications, of which approximately 60 have been in the English language. He was founder of Transcrime, a world-renowned institute that he has not only built, but sustained and modified, and secured, over a long period, during which it has become an established and the go-to hub for research on organised crime. His research has been outstanding and sophisticated, with contributions to empirical research such as the development of the Crime risk assessment mechanism, or a method for the assessment of the vulnerability of legal sectors. His research activities have been outstanding, with a huge number of 'disciples' raised at Transcrime. His authority is also reflected in the frequent consulting work for supranational and international organisations such as the EU and UN. All in all, this makes Professor Savona's lifetime achievements well-deserving of the ESC 2025 award.

2025 "Distinguished Services to the ESC Award": Professor Krzysztof Krajewski.

The jury considered that Professor Krzysztof Krajewski has played a crucial role in the development and consolidation of the European Society of Criminology (ESC) from its early years, contributing with vision, commitment, and sustained service.

His most visible contribution was as the organiser of the 2005 ESC Annual Conference in Kraków, Poland – the first time the Society held its meeting in Central or Eastern Europe. The success of this conference marked a turning point in the ESC's trajectory toward becoming a truly pan-European organisation. The event demonstrated the ESC's commitment to geographic inclusivity and set a standard for future conferences across the continent.

Professor Krajewski also served on the ESC Executive Board in multiple capacities, including as President-Elect (2006–2007), President (2007–2008), and Past President (2008–2009). During these years, he worked tirelessly to strengthen the Society's institutional foundation and promote collaboration across national borders.

He had a leading role in the ESC Fellowship programme, designed to support early-career criminologists from Central and Eastern Europe. This allowed empowering new generations of scholars, reinforcing the Society's commitment to academic excellence and regional inclusion.

His leadership in the ESC was essential in transforming the society from a Western European initiative into a genuinely European scholarly society. He worked to ensure that the Society would serve as a platform for exchange and growth for criminologists across the entire continent.

2025 Book award: Gomes, S., & Rocker, D. (2024). Gender, Prison and Reentry Experiences: A Matter of Time (1st ed.). Routledge.

The Jury considered that Gomes and Rocker's Gender, Prison and Reentry Experiences: A Matter of Time is a thoughtful and timely contribution to the fields of Criminology, Sociology, and Gender Studies. It includes careful empirical work, clear theoretical framing, and relevance to ongoing debates about incarceration and social justice. The book addresses a notable gap in the literature by focusing on the first phase of reentry—the period still within prison walls – challenging the common assumption that reentry begins only after release. This perspective allows for a more comprehensive understanding of how prison experiences shape individuals' expectations, identities, and prospects for reintegration.

It is thus a valuable contribution to the field through its integration of 78 interviews with incarcerated men and women in Portugal. The authors use a qualitative, ethnographic approach that is both rigorous and ethically attentive. Their analysis is grounded in the lived experiences of participants and is enriched by the authors' sustained engagement with the prison

environment. The result is a nuanced account of how gender, institutional practices, and structural inequalities intersect in shaping reentry experiences. The book's gender analysis is particularly valuable, highlighting the differences of women's and men's experiences of incarceration. The theoretical framework draws on established perspectives – life-course theory, narrative identity, feminist criminology, and critical reentry studies – and applies them effectively, making it a useful resource for both scholars and students.

Importantly, the book also engages with policy and practice. It offers recommendations for improving prison conditions and reentry support, while also aligning with broader calls for decarceration and the reimagining of justice. These proposals are grounded in the empirical findings and reflect a commitment to social justice without being overly idealistic.

The jury has then decided that this is a thoughtful and carefully executed study that offers valuable insights, particularly through its gender analysis and broad mapping of the challenges associated with reentry. And although the book's findings may not be entirely surprising to those familiar with the field, its strength lies in its clarity, its contextual specificity, and its ability to connect individual narratives to broader institutional and structural dynamics. It is a well-executed study that contributes meaningfully to ongoing discussions about incarceration, gender, and reentry.

Gender, Prison and Reentry Experiences is a carefully argued and socially relevant work that reflects the values of the ESC Book Award. It deserves recognition for its contribution to understanding how incarceration shapes lives and how justice systems might better support those who pass through them.

2025 ESC Early Career Award: Miguel Basto Pereira

The jury stressed the number and quality of candidates nominated and how their work highlights the buoyancy of European criminology and bodes well for its future. However, on the basis of both the quantity and the evident quality of his publications and their resonance within Criminology, the jury recommended that the ESC Early Career Award 2025 be awarded to Miguel Basto Pereira, who obtained his PhD in 2017.

Miguel Basto Pereira is an outstanding early career scholar who has significantly contributed to criminology, particularly in the area of developmental and life-course criminology. His work has advanced our understanding of risk factors underlying the development and persistence of criminal careers throughout the lifecourse. His contribution to the field has been both methodological and conceptual: through his work (also in collaboration with international colleagues), he has developed and used innovative methodologies and also introduced a new conceptual framework for the analysis of key vulnerabilities during childhood, which expose individuals to risks for antisocial behaviour and crime along the lifecourse.

The jury considered Miguel Basto Pereira's track record to be extremely impressive, and his empirical and conceptual contribution to criminology notable, and was thus convinced of his outstanding scientific achievement.

2024 EJC Best Article of the Year Award: Estimating the incapacitation effect among first-time incarcerated offenders by Enes Al Weswasi

The jury congratulates Al Weswasi for his very cleverly well-designed study on the incapacitation effect among first-time incarcerated offenders. His paper takes on this challenge by applying a meticulous state-of-the-art propensity score matching approach, which mimics a randomised experiment by finding a 'statistical twin' who received a non-custodial sentence (e.g., a fine) for each participant who received a custodial sentence. Using detailed Swedish data, Al Weswasi shows this procedure produces a well-matched control group for estimating counterfactuals. Using this matched sample, he is then able to estimate that incapacitation has modest effects overall, which complements and advances upon findings from previous research. Further, the paper also shows that the effects of incapacitation, while small for people at low risk of incarceration, are much stronger for those at the highest risk. This finding is highly relevant for criminal justice policy, providing evidence that non-custodial sanctions may be a favourable alternative especially for those at low risk of incarceration.

The jury agreed that this paper makes an important and robust empirical contribution towards answering a seminal criminological question that is methodologically challenging and has direct and important implications for criminal justice policy and practice relating to the efficacy and value of incarceration. They also agreed that it makes a substantial contribution to debate in European criminology and criminal justice, and the wider discipline more generally, making it exemplary of the best published works of European criminological research.

→ SPECIAL FEATURES FROM THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ESC

By Marcelo F. Aebi

Riding with Kings and Queens: a Squire's Chronicle of an Unlikely Journey

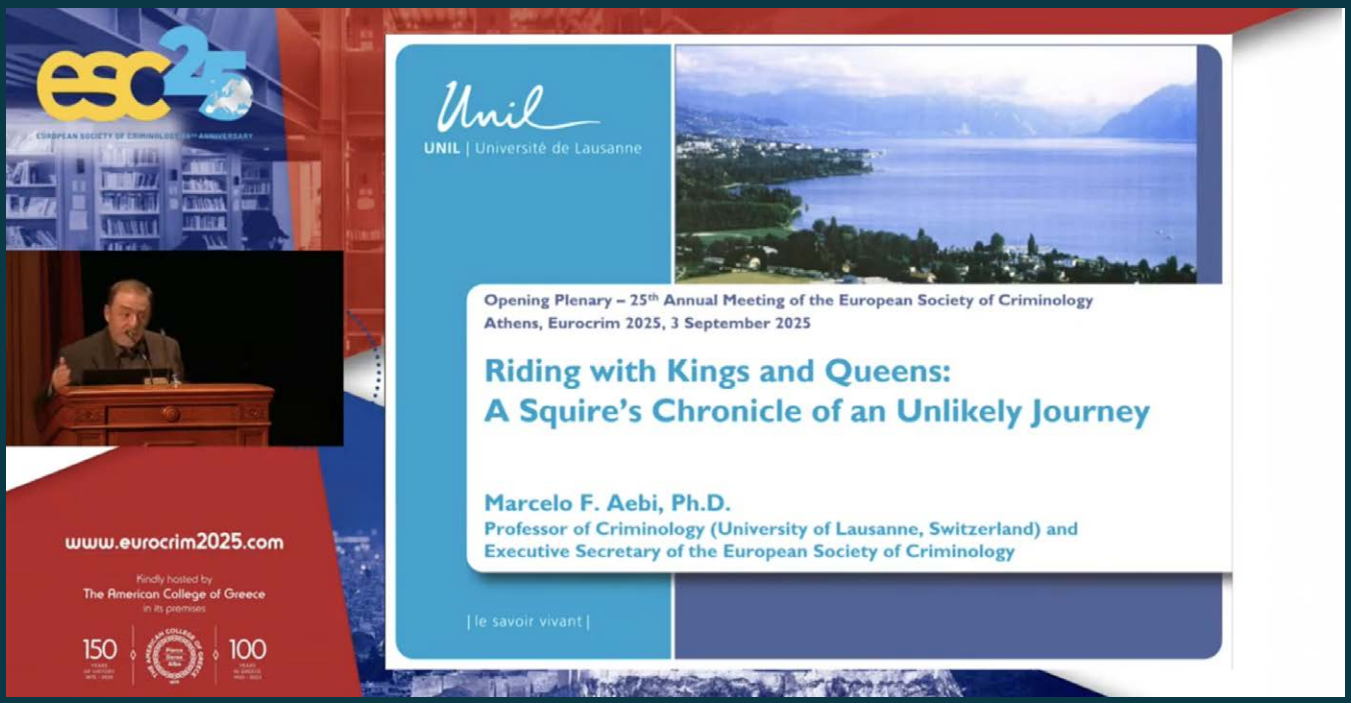
Author's Note

The following text represents my address at the opening plenary of the European Society of Criminology's 25th Annual Conference, held in Athens on 3 September 2025. While edited for clarity, I have sought to maintain the conversational tone of the original oral delivery. The plenary is available on the ESC's YouTube Channel.

All quotes from ESC Presidents are drawn from their presidential messages published in the ESC Newsletter Criminology in Europe over the past twenty-five years.

Introduction: A Remark You Made

"The man who said 'I'd rather be lucky than good' saw deeply into life", says Woody Allen at the beginning of Match Point. I was lucky enough to be in the right place at the right time, and like a hobbit drawn into an unexpected adventure, I found myself embarked on a journey I could never have foreseen.



The journey I want to talk to you about starts in 1999, when I was a PhD student under Martin Killias's supervision at the University of Lausanne. One afternoon, Martin invited the research assistants for coffee. This did not happen often. With time, I realized it was the strategy of an experienced researcher who liked to test ideas aloud and check their effect.

"I've been thinking," he said. "It's rather stupid to have two hundred European criminologists crossing the Atlantic each year to attend the American Society of Criminology's annual conference. Perhaps it's time to create a European Society of Criminology".

Soon after, he involved Josine Junger-Tas. I was fortunate enough to have both Martin and Josine as professors in my postgraduate studies, and later again during my PhD – one supervising my thesis, the other sitting on my jury.

I was lucky a third time a few months later, at the 1999 ASC conference in Toronto – the last one in Canada before September 11 changed everything. There I was, at a quiet dinner for six – including Josine, Marianne Junger, and Michael Gottfredson – when Martin presented the project with a concrete plan of action.

That evening, I could never have imagined that more than twenty-five years later I would stand here as Executive Secretary of the European Society of Criminology. Like a medieval squire chronicling the deeds of kings and queens, I have had the privilege – since 2004 – of serving alongside twenty Presidents: each a sovereign of ideas, each a guardian of the values that have shaped our society.

Today, as we celebrate our silver anniversary, I want to share what I have learned from this unlikely journey – not through my own words, but through theirs. Through the voices of the Presidents who have led us. Their messages, published in the ESC Newsletter over a quarter century, reveal not only the history of an academic society, but the soul of European Criminology itself.

Before we begin, I must echo Jorge Luis Borges, who observed that in every anthology the first thing you notice are the absences. I therefore apologize to Ernesto Savona and Krzysztof Krajewski – whom you have just heard in this plenary – and to Vesna Nikolić and Klaus Boers. I could not include all twenty-five Presidents in this brief narrative; what follows is only a glimpse. But believe me: "I've seen things you people wouldn't believe".

The Foundations: Enlightenment Values

Our story begins with foundations laid in the Enlightenment itself. Our second President, Josine Junger-Tas, set the tone in 2002 with words that continue to guide us today: "May we develop a European Society of Criminology that reflects truly European values: those of the Enlightenment – emphasising reason, empiricism, and human rights – and those of social care and support for the losers in our society".

These were not ceremonial platitudes. They were a declaration of principles that would define who we are and who we would become. Reason over rhetoric. Evidence over ideology. Human rights over state power. And always solidarity with society's most vulnerable.

Open to All

From the beginning, openness was not just a policy but a philosophy. Our third President, Paul Wiles, articulated this democratic vision: "The dream that led to the ESC was that we should have a European-wide society to pursue scientific research in Criminology – but that this should be open to all (not only by invitation) and that its development should be in the hands of a board elected by its members".

Think about what this meant in 2002. Many academic societies were – and still are – exclusive clubs, accessible only by invitation or recommendation. We chose a different path. We chose radical openness.

Michael Tonry, our 14th President, reinforced this commitment in 2013: "From the outset, the successive ESC boards have tried to be inclusive. One way was by moving the meetings around Europe. As long as applications kept arriving from 'new' countries, no country repeated. Another way was by trying to attract presidential candidates from 'new' countries".

This wasn't charity or tokenism. It was recognition that Criminology needs all voices, all perspectives, all experiences to understand the complex realities of crime and justice.

On Language

But openness brings challenges. How do we communicate across dozens of languages? Our fifth President, Sonja Snacken, addressed this with characteristic wisdom: "We need a common language to communicate and to compare our experiences and, in practice, that language is now English. But we should not take it for granted".

She continued with an observation that resonates deeply: "English is their second or third language for many criminologists who attend our annual meetings. I sometimes feel a new 'European' or 'international' English is emerging which all Europeans seem to understand. It may require some flexibility from native English speakers, and more emphasis on clarity of expression than on eloquence. Language should be communication, whether it is our first or our third language".

This isn't just about linguistics. It's about humility, about recognizing that communication requires effort from all sides, about valuing clarity over cleverness.

Building the Community

Building a truly European community has been another constant challenge and, I would say, the greatest achievement of the ESC. Kauko Aromaa, our seventh President, captured both the difficulty and the promise: "Criminology is a hugely diverse field. Many criminologists, in Europe and elsewhere, do not consider themselves criminologists at all. This is due to the wide-ranging nature of the discipline: crime and crime control can be approached from many different perspectives".

He identified a persistent challenge: "Eastern European colleagues often find it difficult to identify partners from Western European countries to participate in joint research projects". Yet he saw hope: "ESC conferences are potentially an important forum to promote greater mingling of East and West, North and South".

Miklós Lévay, our 11th President, made this challenge personal and urgent in 2010: "One of the main objectives of the ESC is to be a pan-European organisation for our discipline, providing and ensuring a forum for criminologists from all regions of the continent. My aim is to draw attention to the fact once again and to declare that one main goal of my presidency will be to contribute to the accelerated participation of criminologists from Central and Eastern Europe".

Gorazd Meško, our 18th President, continued this mission, emphasizing the opportunities for developing Comparative Criminology in South-Eastern Europe. He noted that ESC conferences bring "a vast number of ideas for comparative criminological research and the development of different perspectives on crime and criminality", and he highlighted the importance of regional research projects that could contribute

to a broader European understanding. The Balkan Criminology working group became one concrete expression of this commitment to include voices from all corners of Europe.

A few months later, our next President, Tom Vander Beken, underscored that visiting Sarajevo in 2018 was not merely symbolic but a genuine commitment to discovery: "I have found the Sarajevo conference particularly interesting because it brought us to a city and area in Europe that only some of us know or visit as criminologists".

And from the South, our ninth President, Elena Larrauri, brought another crucial perspective: "I often find it frustrating that data and case studies of penal policy almost never come from Southern European countries. It is frustrating not to be able to find your country when lists and typologies are done, because this seems to exclude us from all these interesting discussions". But she ended with optimism: "I hope the questions posed by the South can enrich analyses being produced elsewhere in Europe. This is among others the task of the ESC, to facilitate this sort of comparative work. Long life to ESC".

And I believe that, if you go through the successive volumes of the European Journal of Criminology, you will see that this task has somehow been achieved.

Growth and Independence

As we grew, we also defined our distinctive identity. Michael Tonry's analysis of 2014 remains definitive. He began with history: "There was definitely a European Criminology in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The adjective 'European' was redundant". Then he identified what makes us distinctive today: "First, European Criminology is especially attuned to pursuit of social justice, exemplified by the Scandinavian mantra that the best crime policy is a good social policy. Second, European Criminology is more humane than that in some other places. Third, European Criminology is internationalist. Fourth, Criminology in Europe much more than in the English-speaking countries is compatible with Edwin Sutherland's description of a discipline concerned with the making, the breaking, and the enforcement of criminal laws. Fifth, European Criminology retains a strong link with the humanities rather than only or principally with quantitative social, physical, and biological sciences".

These aren't just academic distinctions. They represent fundamental choices about what Criminology should be and do.

The reflection on French Criminology of our tenth President, Sophie Body-Gendrot, revealed the tensions within our growth: "The contested status of 'Criminology' in France leads to schizoid positions: those who claim to be criminologists reject the study of issues that are regarded elsewhere as a genuine component of Criminology, whereas those who focus on such issues refuse to be called criminologists in France but do so elsewhere (as at ESC meetings, for instance)".

This paradox – being criminologists abroad but not at home – speaks to the complex politics of our discipline and the importance of the ESC as a space where we can be who we truly are.

Henrik Tham, our 12th President, brought us back to practical matters with key advice: "It is most important when writing a paper for an ESC conference to think in terms of 'the other', that is, the participating criminologists from other countries. Some presenters seem to take for granted that national conditions are well known in other European countries. They are usually not".

His challenge remains vital: "Ask yourself: 'In what way can my paper be of interest and helpful to someone from Spain, Denmark or Lithuania?' This will improve the scientific quality".

Dialogue

The challenge of genuine dialogue has been constant. Gerben Bruinsma, our 15th President, diagnosed a

problem in 2014: "One of the underlying motives of the founding mothers and fathers who established the ESC years ago – which was also set as a formal goal – was to bring together European criminologists annually and to stimulate among them mutual discussions and an exchange of ideas. Although the society succeeded in bringing together European scholars more than was expected in advance, the mutual discussion between the members of the society did not completely live up to its promise. I imagine that the existence of schools of thought has much to do with that and in a way has fragmented the society".

His prescription was simple but profound: "To bring more closely together the members of the ESC, I would like to call upon the Porto participants to attend at least one of the sessions on topics and issues they are not familiar with. As an optimist, I still believe that we can learn from other schools how and why they formulate research questions, how they carry out empirical and theoretical studies and how they solve practical and methodological research problems within their schools". So, I encourage you to take his advice for this conference that is starting tonight.

Facing Crises

Of course, throughout our history, we have faced crises. Crises that tested both our values and our relevance. The refugee crisis of 2015 prompted our 16th President, Frieder Dünkel, to declare: "Criminologists should raise their voices and contribute to a rational discourse about immigration, crime and the possibilities for a humanitarian solution. I really hope that not only in countries like Hungary and others in Eastern Europe, but also, for example, in the UK, criminologists will protest against politics of foreclosure".

Frieder added: "We should furthermore address the causes of the refugee problem: the conflicts in the Middle East, poverty and food shortage in regions of ongoing civil war, such as in Libya. Therefore, war, conflicts, religious and political persecution and the role of state crime should be discussed".

Then we arrive at our 17th President, Rossella Selmini, who brought a feminist perspective to the burqini controversies of those days: "The burqini cases – like the 'anti-prostitution' ordinances – do not raise issues only about legal rights and ethnicity. They are also on matters of gender in many different ways". Her conclusion was both political and deeply human: "As a citizen and as a woman, I think we should be happy to see Muslim women bathing in the Mediterranean Sea, in whatever clothes they choose, rather than dying trying to cross it".

This point becomes especially interesting when connected to what Henrik Tham said about contextualising our national experiences. From that perspective, another reason why I am fortunate is that I live in a country with direct democracy, which creates its own specific challenges. For example, regarding the prohibition of full-face coverings in public, including burqas and niqabs, several cantons held popular votes. The results varied: in some cases, voters rejected the prohibitions, while in others the bans entered into force with majority support. This raises a fundamentally different set of questions. It is easy to speak of penal populism and blame politicians, but when it is the public itself that votes, the challenges become far more complex. Criticising these decisions without adopting an elitist stance becomes very difficult. Similarly, prostitution is legal in Switzerland, which generates different policy challenges – for instance, we have less human trafficking, as Lorena Molnar and I showed in our research.

The pandemic brought new challenges and new insights. Lesley McAra saw it as a moment for fundamental reflection: "The transformations wrought by the global pandemic present us now with the opportunity (and, I would suggest, the imperative) to revisit Josine Junger-Tas's founding ambition for the Society".

Lesley was our twentieth President, and she engaged in a dialogue across time and space with Josine, our second President. Consequently, Lesley called us back to first principles: "I believe we need to re-engage with a number of normative questions: what are the conditions of a just social order; what promotes social solidarity; what are the structural conditions which support human flourishing; how can human rights discourse come to infuse and transform institutional cultural practices?".

The war in Ukraine brought new urgency to our work. Catrien Bijleveld, our 22nd President, reminded us: "While Europe has been relatively peaceful since World War II, wars have been fought in Europe, however, and Ukraine is not the first time we have seen atrocity crimes committed on European soil. As criminologists we need to contribute to unravelling and understanding such 'unimaginable' violence committed around the world as we speak".

And then Josep Maria Tamarit, our 24th President, expanded this concern: "European criminologists will continue to be very much concerned about the war in Ukraine... Since October 7th, new concerns have been added to the current ones due to the horrific war in Palestine. Research on war crimes and atrocity crimes is nowadays even more a matter of interest for criminologists".

Crises, whether humanitarian, political, or global in scale, have repeatedly tested our values as a community. Yet time and again, the ESC has responded not with rhetoric but with reflection, reason, and a renewed commitment to understanding.

And yet, history is never only a sequence of crises. Beneath the turbulence, another story was unfolding – a quieter story, but one no less important: the consolidation and expansion of Criminology across Europe.

Building and Expanding Criminology Across Europe

Parallel to these crises – and sometimes despite them – European Criminology has continued to grow in ways that would have astonished our founding fathers and mothers. Our 21st President, Aleksandras Dobryninas, writing during the pandemic, shared: "Despite all the troubles and obstacles, our Society and its members' academic activity have never stopped generating new projects, publications, educational programs, and expertise. Recently, at my alma mater, Vilnius University, we had a remarkable event – 48 graduates received their Bachelor diplomas in Criminology, the first Bachelor program in the field nationwide".

This is, I believe, proof of the success of the European Society in bringing Criminology to Eastern Europe. Similar programs have emerged in Hungary and elsewhere. When you compare this to the early years – the first presidential messages I quoted – the transformation is remarkable. The dream of our regretted friend Kauko Aromaa and the ambition of Miklós Lévay for greater Central and Eastern European participation are, at some level, becoming reality. Last year, we were in Bucharest for a conference under the slogan "Criminology goes East", and next year we return to Central Europe, to Poland, continuing this trajectory.

What I Did Not Find

Now let me tell you something equally important: What I did not find in twenty-five years of presidential messages.

I did not find paternalism – no President ever wrote "we know better than you".

I did not find claims of false consciousness – no one said "you're brainwashed if you disagree".

I did not find virtue signalling or a Manichean worldview – no declarations that "we embody justice; others are evil".

I did not find tyranny of virtue or puritanism demanding "no compromise, only purity".

I did not find a teleology of progress claiming "history is inevitably on our side".

I did not find cancel culture or moral absolutism declaring "dissent is immoral".

I did not find the totalitarian temptation that "everything is political, no neutrality exists".

I did not find soft authoritarianism restricting freedom "for your own good".

This absence is not accidental. It reflects the deepest values of our society. We are scholars, not prophets. We seek understanding, not converts. We value debate, not dogma.

The ESC as Enabler

Our current President, Michele Burman, captures what we have become: "The ESC is also an enabler. Through its activities, events and networks it enables connections to be forged, new criminological questions to be posed, and the continuing pursuit of more perennial ones".

Michele continues: "Moreover, through its provision of an open and inclusive environment, the ESC offers an opportunity to support the objectives listed in its constitution whilst fostering an open and inclusive environment nurturing ideas and links across borders".

What I Learned from My Ride

After twenty-five years riding alongside these kings and queens of Criminology, what have I learned about what the ESC truly is?

From Martin Killias to Michele Burman, from Enlightenment ideals to present crises, the chorus is clear:

We are not a faction. We are not a platform for demands. We are something rarer: a society built on reason, on dialogue, on human rights, and on respect.

We are an open forum. We are a home for debate. We are a society for all.

This is not weakness or indecision. In an age of polarisation, maintaining a space for genuine dialogue is an act of courage. In a time of tribal certainties, insisting on evidence and reason is revolutionary. In a world of closing borders, remaining open to all is radical.

Conclusion: The Next Chapter

As we celebrate twenty-five years, we face new challenges. Hybrid societies, artificial intelligence, climate change, and democratic institutions are facing threats we haven't seen since our founding. Wars rage on European soil and beyond.

Yet I am not pessimistic. Why? Because I have ridden with kings and queens who faced their own crises with wisdom, courage, and humanity. Because I have witnessed a society that grows stronger through adversity. Because I have seen young criminologists – in Porto, in Bucharest, in Helsinki, in Athens – eager to carry forward our mission.

The European Society of Criminology at twenty-five is not perfect. We still struggle to include all voices equally. We still face the tension between scientific independence and political relevance. We still grapple with how to make our research matter in a world that often seems to prefer simple answers to complex truths. But we continue. We continue because we believe in what Josine Junger-Tas called "reason, empiricism, and human rights". We continue because we know that understanding crime and justice requires all perspectives, all methods, all voices. We continue because, as this unlikely squire has learned from his journey with kings and queens, the work of building a truly open, truly inclusive, truly scientific community is never finished. It must be renewed by each generation, defended against each threat, and expanded to include each new voice.

So let us raise our voices to the next twenty-five years of the European Society of Criminology – may they be as rich in wisdom, as strong in values, and as open in spirit as the first.

→ SPECIAL FEATURES FROM THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ESC

By Anna Di Ronco

The Futures of European Criminology?

What does the future of European Criminology look like in your field over the next 25 years? What will its main challenges and potential achievements be? How can the European Society of Criminology (ESC) support these developments?

We posed these questions to a small group of mid-career European criminologists during a prearranged roundtable at the last annual ESC conference in Athens, Eurocrim 2025. But who were these scholars, and why did we choose them to answer these questions?

Let us proceed in order.

This year, the Society celebrated its 25th anniversary—a milestone for our intellectual community. To mark this achievement, the ESC Board invited the Society's Working Groups to organise a series of featured panels reflecting on the development of their criminological scholarship over time. In addition, the Society's Board organised its own panels and roundtables, ranging from past Presidents reflecting on the highlights of their terms, to younger generations envisioning the future of European Criminology.

It is the latter roundtable that I volunteered to organise, with the help of Csaba Győry, my fellow Board member. In this piece for the newsletter, I would like to offer a brief account of that effort.

Who did we choose for this challenging task?

Selecting participants for this roundtable was no easy task. European Criminology is rich with excellent research, making it difficult to select colleagues for this task. We ultimately based our choices on several criteria: gender and geographical diversity (covering multiple European countries), diversity in topics of interest and methodological expertise, and prior engagement with the ESC—either through Board service or recognition via ESC awards.

The scholars we invited are: Jakub Drápal (Charles University), Csaba Győry (ELTE University), Beth Hardie (University of Cambridge, who unfortunately couldn't attend the conference), Anita Lavorgna (University of Bologna), Kjersti Lohne (University of Oslo), and Olga Petintseva (Vrije Universiteit Brussel).

They were asked to envision the next 25 years of European criminology, and their perspectives were as diverse as one might expect. Yet they shared a common trait: they responded to our questions with more questions and, at times, with suggestions. The remainder of this piece summarises some of these inquiries and recommendations.

Building on her interdisciplinary research on harmful online behaviours, Lavorgna identified several key challenges for a Criminology that aspires to—and is increasingly expected to be—interdisciplinary, particularly when examining the intersections between crime, deviance, control, and digital technologies. Perhaps the most important challenge Lavorgna highlighted can be captured in the following questions: will a growing emphasis on the infrastructures of new technologies—domains largely within the expertise of computational scientists, engineers, and other technical disciplines—render Criminology redundant or erode its distinctive contribution in this area? And, relatedly: how can Criminology retain its relevance and demonstrate the uniqueness of its contribution?

Drápal highlighted the need for our discipline to enhance its methodological sophistication, especially as an increasing amount of digitalised data—such as sentencing information—is becoming available across European countries and will continue to do so in the future. This presents an unprecedented opportunity for criminologists to analyse aspects of judicial decision-making, including courts' discretion in sentencing, in ways that were previously impossible. However, without a corresponding advancement in methodological rigour, quantitative research on sentencing in Criminology risks being outpaced by areas such as Economics, where scholars already possess far greater technical expertise. The question remains: will criminologists rise to the challenge, or will this research area be dominated by other disciplines?

Győry drew our attention to the healthy state of research on corporate crime, a field that has traditionally maintained a critical edge and has seen substantial theoretical and empirical advancements. A major challenge in this area, however—contrary to Drápal's observations—is the persistent lack of access to data owned and retained by private companies, often the very entities that commit crimes and generate interlocking harms. At the same time, and as Drápal

also noted, the available data is becoming increasingly sophisticated, which will require Criminology to scale up its methodological competencies and build alliances with other fields and disciplines, including data science.

Speaking from the perspective of global criminology and international criminal justice, Lohne addressed the current crumbling state of the global order established by the international community since the Second World War. With the International Criminal Court under attack and many crimes against humanity left unpunished—or even condoned or treated more leniently, particularly when committed by Western nations or their close allies—questions arise about the future of international criminal justice: will it still exist in a few years, and if so, what form will it take? More broadly, are we moving toward a new and different global order—with the possibility that it may become an illiberal global disorder—and, if so, how should we confront it? These are difficult questions, but Lohne suggested that one useful step for Criminology would be to strengthen both intra- and inter-disciplinary engagement, while also drawing on the existing literature on illiberal regimes.

Finally, Petintseva emphasised that in today's turbulent times, rigorous empirical work in Criminology can no longer avoid engaging with the normative questions that arise once we acknowledge the inherently political nature of studying crime and crime control. In other words, she noted, whether we like it or not, all our work is political—and criminological research can no longer deny this fact nor take refuge in a supposed 'objectivity' of data collection and analysis. This also implies taking political stances, when and if needed, to call out illegalities and atrocities as they happen.

All in all, the invited speakers highlighted the importance of the ESC in providing an open forum for academic debate, considering it vital to the development of our field. Whether fostering methodological innovation, addressing the challenges of interdisciplinary work, engaging with knowledge produced in other disciplines, or debating the nature of our work and the responsibility of our profession, they viewed the Society's conferences as a valuable space for exchange, openness and mutual learning.

by Mark Littler

ESC Working Group on Teaching and Learning in Criminology

The European Working Group on Teaching and Learning in Criminology (WG-TLC) is a new cluster working under the European Society of Criminology (ESC) to provide a dedicated forum for educators, researchers, and practitioners committed to pedagogic innovation in Criminology. Reflecting the ESC's mission to bring together individuals engaged in research, teaching, and professional practice, the WG-TLC aims to advance Criminology by focusing attention on curriculum design, instructional methods, digital transformation, professional development, and educational research in the discipline.

To achieve this, the working group will:

1. Facilitate meaningful exchanges among Criminology educators and practitioners around teaching practice at undergraduate, postgraduate, and professional levels.

2. Promote innovative, evidence-based pedagogy that responds to contemporary challenges, including digital literacy, artificial intelligence, big data, and technological change shaping criminology education.

3. Strengthen collaborative networks across European institutions to share knowledge, resources, strategies, and examples of effective teaching and assessment that enhance learning and student engagement.

4. Advance comparative and interdisciplinary research on criminological education, exploring variations across countries, languages, and institutional contexts, and identifying effective approaches.

5. Support early-career academics and teaching-focused staff by providing platforms for feedback, community building, and professional development related to pedagogic scholarship.

The Working Group is co-chaired by Lizzie Mansell (Liverpool Hope University) and Mark Littler (University of Greenwich). Together, they coordinate activities, support membership engagement, and act as the key liaison point with the ESC. Membership of the Working Group is free for ESC members, and the group welcomes colleagues from across Europe and beyond.

Planned Activities

Over the next year, the Working Group will develop a range of initiatives to foster community, scholarly engagement, and pedagogic innovation, including:

- Regular symposia, seminars, and thematic workshops addressing contemporary teaching challenges and opportunities

- Online events and webinars to connect educators across European regions and time zones

- Collaborative projects such as edited volumes, special journal issues, and shared teaching resources

- Mentoring and networking opportunities, particularly for doctoral researchers, early-career academics, and teaching-focused staff

• A regular newsletter or digital hub to share teaching resources, announcements, calls for papers, and updates on ESC events

As part of this activity, the working group is pleased to announce its first major event: the 2025 Annual Symposium on Teaching and Learning in Criminology, hosted by Liverpool Hope University on Friday 12 December 2025. The theme was Criminology 2.0: Teaching Criminology in the Age of AI and Big Data

The symposium brought together papers, posters, and panels exploring the role of technology in Criminology education and the pedagogic challenges and opportunities of the 2020s. The event was free to attend and open to all Criminology educators, practitioners, and early-career scholars. Abstracts were due by 14 November 2025 (12:00 UTC), and pre-registration was required.

Invitation to Join

The Working Group welcomes anyone engaged in Criminology education – lecturers, researchers, digital learning specialists, doctoral students, and practitioner-educators – to join and help build an active, supportive, and forward-looking community. By sharing knowledge, strengthening networks, and embracing innovation, we aim to enhance how Criminology is taught and learned across Europe.

→ DOSSIER

By Torbjørn Skardhamar (University of Oslo), Asier Moneva* (NSCR and The Hague University of Applied Sciences), Alex Trinidad* (University of Cologne), Isabelle van der Vegt* (Utrecht University), Joakob Demant (University of Copenhagen)

Criminology is lagging behind

* co-chairs of the European Network for Open Criminology (ENOC)[2]

Over the past decade, there has been a major shift in the Social Sciences towards what is often called "Open Science", which is largely about accessible, transparent, and well-documented research. Indeed, the values and practices promoted by Open Science are closely aligned with the core principles of science itself—principles that seem to have faded under the pressure of the "publish or perish" culture, often at the expense of pause, reflection, and thorough documentation of empirical studies for their later replication or reproduction. To achieve the accumulation of knowledge and advance both theory and public policy, it is essential to generate evidence that is reproducible and replicable – especially in Criminology, where such standards are crucial because this field has direct effects on persons via its own policy. Among the many practices advocated by Open Science, three are particularly relevant in this regard: (1) sharing and/or documenting data, (2) ensuring that analyses are reproducible by sharing code or any other method that allows reproduction, and (3) being explicit about the nature of the study and, in the case of confirmatory research, pre-registering hypotheses. Such research practices enable true reproducibility and replicability of studies, increase the chances of detecting and learning from errors, and, more generally, foster mutual learning within the scientific community. While these are core values of science, they have not always been a systematic part of research practice – but that is now changing.

Psychology has been paving the way in this development. The background is grim: What is now known as "the replication crisis" was the finding that a range of well-known findings in Psychology did not replicate. Indeed, in an empirical replication of 100 studies published in high-ranking journals, only about one-third to one-half of the original findings were replicated (Open Science Collaboration, 2015). Even worse, it seems that this replication crisis affects not only Psychology but the social sciences more broadly, including Criminology (Pridemore et al., 2018).

On how transparency increases scientific rigour

Science is supposed to be self-correcting, but the replication crisis raised serious concerns to what extent that was really the case. There are several reasons for this, but one important part has been a culture of a lack of transparency. This has allowed questionable research practices to go unnoticed or remain uncorrected by the scientific community. Practices such as p-hacking or *HARKing* (Hypothesizing After the Results are Known) are still accepted by some in the community, or at least by a large proportion of participants in the survey on

(2) We are grateful for valuable comments and encouragements from Wim Bernasco, Stijn Ruiter, Amy Nivette, Ferhat Tura, David Bul Gil, and Gian Maria Campedelli.

open science and questionable research practices conducted by Chin et al. (2023). Combined with the difficulty/willingness of publishing null results, which reinforces publication bias, this further increases the risk of inflating false positives.

Beyond affecting the over- or underestimation of effects, the lack of transparency in research can also conceal errors in results that influence political and public debates[3][4]. A well-known example is the case of Reinhart and Rogoff (2010a, 2010b) and their conclusions on austerity policies during economic crises, which were based on calculations containing errors (Herndon et al., 2014). Similarly, in criminological research, mistakes in code or analytical procedures have led to incorrect conclusions about the effects of public policies. Perhaps one of the most consequential cases is that of Ciacci (2024), who concluded that the prohibition of prostitution led to an increase in rape cases in Sweden. This study has been cited in political debates on the criminalisation of prostitution[5]. It was recently retracted following re-analyses conducted by Adema et al. (2024)[6].

Discovering honest errors is important. Discovering dishonest errors even more so. All fields of research have experienced fraud and manipulation with data (see https://retractionwatch.com/). As criminologists, we should not be surprised that not everyone is always honest, and Criminology is not an exception (Pickett, 2019; Chin et al., 2023). An important part of quality control systems is having the ability to control. In science, documenting data and code, and sharing both, if possible, is the one thing that really makes control possible.

Fields like economics and political science soon followed the culture change in Psychology, and it is now much more common in these fields that journals demand data and code to be shared (Scoggings & Robertson, 2024; Ferguson et al., 2024). The reason is clear: good research is well documented. Whatever we consider the "gold standard" of research cannot be more than bronze, and maybe not even that, if it is not well documented.

Criminology is lagging behind other behavioural sciences – i.e. Psychology, Economics and Political Science – in this regard (Greenspan et al., 2024; Beck, 2025). None of the major criminological journals puts hard demands on sharing data and code. Thus, research published in Criminology journals is not necessarily as reproducible, replicable, and, therefore, as subject to error control as it should be. The reason is that it is often less transparent and well-documented than it could be. At first glance, there seems to be no apparent reason why Criminology should lag behind in this area. While it is true that making documentation openly available entails low effort and cost-effective ways for publishers to make science more open, it does involve an additional effort on the part of authors who choose to make their research Findable, Accessible, Interoperable and Reusable[7]. Of course, there are some pragmatic challenges, as not all data can be openly shared. Some – but not all – qualitative data may have features that make it more complicated to share, or not at all; this relates specifically in relation to ethnographic data and data from police investigations (Copes and Bucerius 2024). Similar reasons apply to some quantitative data that will not be shareable due to national legislations on data protection (e.g. Nordic administrative data). But all data should be well-documented and, in those cases in which public access is restricted or the data is non-shareable, a statement should be made with information on how it can be obtained or the reason why the data cannot be made publicly available.

For instance, qualitative data is harder to share because complete anonymisation is not always possible. However, some serious considerations have been made to move towards qualitative replication and data sharing tools[8]. Quantitative studies, by contrast, have no reason not to share reproducible code, regardless of whether the data can be made available. Even if not accompanied by the data,

(3) https://www.theverge.com/2013/4/17/4234136/excel-calculation-error-infamous-economic-study
(4) https://www.ft.com/content/9e5107f8-a75c-11e2-9fbe-00144feabdc0
(5) https://www.bundestag.de/resource/blob/997220/WD-7-020-24-pdf.pdf
(6) https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s00148-025-01114-2
(7) https://esc-enoc.github.io/how-to/cost-benefits-open-science.html
(8) https://esc-enoc.github.io/how-to/open-qualitative-criminology.html and https://qdr.syr.edu/

analytical code can provide a transparent, step-by-step account of how the data were handled, and what specific analyses were carried out. A similar detailed account of data collection processes and protocols, processing and coding is relevant to provide transparency in qualitative studies.

There are many public repositories in which authors can make their research materials open. Some of these are owned by non-profit organisations, like the Center for Open Science and its Open Science Framework (OSF), or for-profit companies like GitHub (and its public repositories. The authors' experience in practising open science may change depending on which infrastructure they use, but "free" options to share data and code abound.

On how pre-registration increases scientific rigour

For the sake of transparency and clarity, authors could make explicit what type of research question their study addresses. This not only helps readers to better assess the results but also enables policymakers to evaluate the type and strength of the evidence. In the case of confirmatory research, authors could pre-register their research questions, the hypotheses they intend to test, and the research design they plan to use to test those hypotheses. As Lakens (2019, p. 1) puts it, "preregistration has the goal to allow others to transparently evaluate the capacity of a test to falsify a prediction, or the severity of a test". In this way, preregistration helps prevent *HARKing*, ensuring a clearer distinction between confirmatory and exploratory analyses. To encourage this practice, Criminology journals could begin accepting registered reports and adopting *in-principle acceptance* (IPA) policies[9]. Of course, there is some degree of flexibility when it comes to deviating from pre-registrations, and, as long as such deviations are well justified and properly documented, they should not undermine the validity of the research findings. In the case of non-confirmatory studies, researchers could instead publish pre-analysis plans outlining the study's objectives and their prior knowledge of the data as a transparency measure, which would limit the researchers' degrees of freedom for post-hoc analyses.

Pre-registration and registered reports are additional steps that potentially requires more work for both authors and reviewers. Spending additional time might be a hinderance to most researchers. However, most of that is a shift in time in when the work is done. Clarifying the research questions and reasoning for the analytical strategy can be written up ahead of data analyses instead of afterwards. Similarly, reviewers can make qualified judgements on only the research question and design without having to see the results, and quality of writing can be assessed at a later stage.

Actionable Steps Towards Open Science in our Discipline

Now, if open science practices increase the rigour and verifiability of criminological research, should the European Society of Criminology (ESC) promote open science? We think so. Here are three suggestions in which the ESC could play an important role in putting our field up to speed:

1. The European Journal of Criminology (EJC; as well as other European criminological journals) should reconsider their policy on data availability and reproducibility. Currently, these journals "encourage" sharing of data and code but put no demand. If we are to make a significant impact in the field, our journals should be more ambitious than this. The flagship journal of the American Society of Criminology has stated that they would gradually introduce a new policy to increasingly require open data (Sweeten et al., 2014), and allow registered reports, but since the last board stepped down, the future is once again uncertain. The EJC could consider adopting these practices and serve as a role model for the field.

2. Since change must begin at all levels, we recommend that Criminology programs across Europe – at the doctoral, Master's, and Bachelor's

(9) https://esc-enoc.github.io/how-to/registered%20reports.html

levels – incorporate a dedicated module on transparency, reproducibility, and replicability, both within academic curricula and in courses designed for these students.

3. The ESC awards highlight research that is "outstanding". As noted above, for empirical research, lacking data, code[10], and documentation for reproducibility is at best only the bronze standard. Making documentation of research materials (including data when possible) publicly available should be a minimum requirement for anything to be outstanding. Thus, we believe that open science should at least be one of the criteria to be considered for ESC awards[11].

Before concluding, it is worth noting that while we often discuss these practices under the label of "open science", they are, in essence, about science itself. The call for transparency and openness is not for its own sake, but to live up to standard scientific ideals. It is about research quality and increasing Criminology's capacity to be self-correcting.

In this respect, the field of Criminology is lagging behind the related fields of Psychology, Economics, and Political Science. It is not because these fields have substantially different challenges than Criminology, but it is a deliberate choice for raising research quality. Raising our standards would strengthen the credibility and impact of criminological research.

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(11) This is the situation in e.g. the ASC Division of Cybercrime.

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→ EDITORIAL NOTES

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"the only thing more terrifying than blindness is being the only one who can see" wrote José Saramago, Nobel prize winner, in his 1995 book Blindness (*Ensaio sobre a Cegueira*).

In it, everyone suddenly becomes blind for unknown reasons, and only one woman is kept untouched from this strange condition. Not really untouched, though. She is the witness, sometimes the carer and guide, to a group of people who endure the most terrifying conditions of quarantine and try to survive while society as they know it crashes and fumbles with every single person losing their eyesight. During the ordeal and crisis, people get hurt and hurt one another, many try to maintain their values and to use their reason (for it was only the eyes that got affected), pray to their gods, comfort their loved ones, as well as all those who were strangers – sometimes enemies – until the crisis brought them together. The group that includes the woman who can see is composed of all sorts of personalities, needs and ideas, and the novel follows them as they try to stick together and overcome this critical situation.

Sometimes scientists – such as ourselves – are considered the ones who can truly see – observe – a situation. Merton, in his "*Social Theory and Social Structure*" implies that it is the sociologist who can really see the latent functions of social events and practices, while the participants of those activities remain blind to them, aiming only for what the author considers to be the manifest functions. However, most of us are participants in the world we inhabit; most of us are the (un-fortunate?) ones who experience, who hurt, who discuss ideas and uphold values. The ones who try to stick together in critical situations.

And let us be honest. There has been no meagre supply of crises in the last 25 years. Wars and atrocities, climate change and stable anihilation of biodiversity, financial crises, refugees dying on shores, terrorism, unemployment and precarity, autocratic manifestations in democratic states, IA and bots and fake news, pandemics... – just to name a few. And most of us are not in a (privileged?) position to be able to see the whole picture. We are pushed and pulled, and hang on and let go, we try to think while feeling deeply, we protect our loved ones and learn to care for strangers, occasionally we rest so we can keep up, we try to act - sometimes screaming, sometimes silently. We are the blinds. We are the participants of social events. We use our frequently limited resources to try to make sense of our function and the functions of what is happening to us and to the rest of mankind, even more so when we are committed to social sciences and human rights.

But we are the blind ones, and no one can claim to be the one who sees it all. And, in the end, would we dare to? To see it all...?