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Special Collection: Now wider and deeper? A special collection of editorial reflections on the progress of European criminology

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Introduction to *Now wider and deeper? A special collection of editorial reflections on the progress of European criminology*

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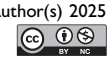
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Abstract

A decade ago, in a 2014 editorial on the future of European criminology, David Smith, then Editor-in-Chief of the *European Journal of Criminology* argued that 'European criminology needs to become both wider and deeper: wider in the range of countries, in the scope of the subject matter, in the borrowings from related fields … and in the research methods used; deeper through a close engagement between humanistic and scientific approaches'. In this editorial collection marking the 25th Anniversary of the European Society of Criminology, the 2025 European Journal of Criminology Editorial Team celebrates and reflects on the breadth and depth of European criminology today; its unique contributions to global knowledge about crime and criminal justice; and its future directions, priorities, and challenges.

Keywords

25th anniversary, editorial, European criminology, reflections

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The *European Journal of Criminology* (EJC) Editorial Team – which includes the Editor-in-Chief, Managing Editor, and six Associate Editors – is a small group of scholars representing different European regions and topical areas of criminology and criminal justice, who work together behind the scenes of the EJC to curate its flagship collection of European criminological scholarship. To curate means not only to select and display objects, or in our case articles, as part of a collection, but to care for and present them to achieve a particular effect. As an Editorial Team we not only care for authors and their articles throughout the peer review process, working with reviewers to support authors in refining their articles and preparing them for publication, we also select high-quality articles that reflect the unique contributions of European criminologists to the field, and showcase their width and depth to the international criminological community.

Our aim in compiling this special editorial collection is not to provide a definitive statement about European criminology – what it is, where it has come from, where it is now, or where it is going – but rather to encourage our fellow criminologists to reflect on their own understanding of European criminology, what sets it apart from criminology in other jurisdictions, and the value of continuing to do so for the next 25 years.

Content of this special editorial collection on European criminology

Providing a forum for European criminology: Connecting scholars with different perspectives and shared goals

Kyle Treiber, Editor-in-Chief and Beth Hardie, Managing Editor
University of Cambridge, UK

In this contribution, we reflect on the understanding we have gathered of European criminology during our 5 years as current Editor-in-Chief and Managing Editor of the European Journal of Criminology. Applying an analytic approach, we reflect on the defining features of European criminology, the boundaries of European criminology, and the goals of European criminology. We affirm that European criminology's most defining feature is its shared differences and scholarly goals to be theoretically guided, methodologically inclusive, empirically cross-comparative, and policy oriented. We conclude that the European Journal of Criminology provides an important space in which these differences and goals can be celebrated and shared.

The rise of European criminology through European penal integration?

Gaëtan Cliquennois, Associate Editor
Rennes University, France; University of Strasbourg, France

While penal and detention policies in Europe have tranditionally been a monopoly possessed by national states, these policies have been progressively oriented by the different organs of the Council of Europe and the European Union. This European influence is sufficiently

significant for criminologists to integrate the study of these penal and detention policies at this European level. The European regulation of penal and detention policies, which has been made through the human rights' perspective in order to end significant rights violations committed by national states and to protect victims' rights, would indeed tend to influence and account for the paradoxical and contradictory developments of national criminal policies. This shift would contribute to reinforcing the development and rise of European criminology through the study of the penal and detention policies both conducted by the European Union and the Council of Europe. The European dimension of criminology would thus be necessarily nurtured and affected by the progressive achievement of the European integration project by making it mandatory rather than desirable. In this contribution we explore this paradox and how European criminology has evolved under the influence of European integration.

What is (of relevance to) European criminology?

Anna Di Ronco, Associate Editor
University of Bologna, Italy

This paper considers what is relevant to European criminology from the editorial perspective if the European Journal of Criminology (or EJC) perspective and critically examines it through decolonial and southern criminological lenses. By briefly reviewing some of the key concepts and arguments from these scholarships, this paper questions whether European criminology – and, hence, the EJC – should be solely focused on research on and from Europe, or that makes the relevance to the European context its central concern, or whether it can be extended to other contexts even in the absence of a carefully crafted 'case for relevance'. The aim of this paper is to raise some questions on inclusivity that invite critical thinking in relation to 'Europe' and what is relevant to 'European criminology' 25 years after the establishment of the society, and as we look forward to the next 25 years.

Distinguishing European criminology: A metatheoretical argument

Adam Edwards, Associate Editor
Cardiff University, UK

David Smith's inaugural editorial of the EJC justifies European criminology in terms of a distinctive tradition, defined primarily in relation to a hegemonic, universalising, American social science. By contrast, a distinctively European criminology can offer a 'much wider view of the world' given its 'variegated' contexts and cultures of control that enable, indeed oblige, comparative research. Smith identifies the greater leverage provided in Europe than in the USA for comparative analysis and notes how this is central to avoiding another kind of false universality: that of assuming the ubiquity of grand narratives about crime and control such as Merton's theory of strain, Foucault's thesis on the shift from punishment to discipline, or Garland's identification of a late-modern culture of control. In this paper, subsequent progress on this promise of European criminology is considered in terms of the fundamental tension in comparative research between seeking

uniformity and seeking uniqueness. It is argued various forms of false universality (the presumption of generalities) and false uniqueness (the assertion of exceptional cases) are better avoided through a metatheoretical concern with substantive, necessary, and contingent relations of connection rather than with formal relations of similarity and difference. It is through the discovery of 'contingent necessities' that the distinctiveness of European criminology is better appreciated alongside other emergent criminological traditions within the global criminology of the 21st century. This metatheoretical argument is illustrated through the 'filtering' of online harms by offline regimes of governance and regulation such as the European Union's Digital Services Act and Artificial Intelligence Act.

'Wider and deeper'? Reflections on the challenges of doing European criminology in a demagogic age

Claire Hamilton, Associate Editor
Maynooth University, Ireland

Over 20 years ago, in the inaugural issue of the EJC, David Smith identified the rising profile of crime control, criminal justice, and security in European politics as one of the three key processes driving the development of criminology in Europe. His 2014 exhortation to go 'wider and deeper' in this regard — to embrace 'the sociology and politics of punishment' as worthy 'subjects for a journal of criminology' as well as closer engagement with the humanist tradition — raises some interesting questions for the discipline in the turbulent times in which we now live. In a global and European context increasingly dominated by various alliances on the right, sometimes referred to as the 'far' or 'alt' right, what adjustments to the criminological lens are required to capture the full spectrum of exclusionary policies, practices, and institutions that Smith (and others) view as so fundamental to the discipline? How — in a climate which has possibly never been more hostile to 'epistemic crime control' — to 'create the conditions for a wider, more critical and more constructive debate'? Against this background, this think piece offers some brief reflections on the role of European criminology in an increasingly partisan and polarised society.

European penology or European penologies?

Rok Hacin, Associate Editor
University of Maribor, Slovenia

This essay explores the penological map of Europe to frame European penology, based on cultural particularities that define the penal practice. One of the main characteristics of the European continent is its diversity, which is not solely reflected in the cultural particularities of nation-states, but also in the specificity of the criminal justice systems and especially the implementation of penal sanctions. Deriving from a theoretical viewpoint, penology as an academic discipline has several definitions, but in a broader sense, it can be defined as the science of penalties and sanctioning. European countries are unique in their abolitionist

stance towards the death penalty, and adherence to the international regulations regarding detention and protection of detained persons' rights imposed by the Council of Europe and monitored by the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. However, European countries are also distinct in the ways of punishing delinquents and especially implementing sanctions. Analysis of penal statistics (SPACE I and SPACE II) shows that European countries are as diverse as they can be, ranging from punitive to mild/progressive. The organisation of prison services, level of professionalism, treatment of prisoners, and the size and characteristics of prison and probation populations support the claim of multiple European penologies.

European criminology as a comparative exercise

Amy Nivette, Associate Editor
Utrecht University, The Netherlands

In his inaugrual editorial, David Smith (2004) listed comparative research as a key priority for the journal and European criminology. The diversity of European nations regarding various social, institutional, political, and cultural features provides rich opportunities for comparison and theory testing. Publishing in the EJC necessarily requires one to think comparatively, even if data are drawn from a single country. The goal of this piece is to evaluate the geographical and comparative coverage of EJC articles since 2004. Specifically, I extracted information on the sample and countries named in the abstracts or methods and described patterns of comparative research across empirical articles. I find that, while the majority of studies were based on single-country data, authors often framed the goals and analyses of a given study within the relevant social, political, or institutional European context. However, despite establishing these comparative frameworks and goals, there was still a substantial bias towards case studies and data from certain countries: namely, the UK, the Netherlands, Sweden, and Germany. In essence, this means that the EJC reflects primarily Western European criminology. However, the idea of a truly European criminology, and likewise journal with similar ambitions, is inherently comparative. For that reason, we must continue to push the boundaries of European criminological theories and knowledge by advocating for comparative designs, high-quality comparable data, and international collaborations beyond Western Europe.

Roll call of Editors-in-Chief of the *European Journal of Criminology* and Presidents of the European Society of Criminology

Editors-in-Chief of the European Journal of Criminology

2001–2005: David Smith
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2011–2016: Paul Knepper
2017–2020: Dario Melossi
2021–present: Kyle Treiber

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2001–2002: Josine-Junger Tas
2002–2003: Paul Wiles
2003–2004: Ernesto Savona
2004–2005: Sonja Snacken
2005–2006: Hans-Jürgen Kerner
2006–2007: Kauko Aromaa
2007–2008: Krysztof Krajewski
2008–2009: Elena Larrauri
2009–2010: Sophie Body-Gendrot
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2011–2012: Henrik Tham
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2022–2023: Klaus Boers
2023–2024: Josep M. Tamarit-Sumalla
2024–2025: Michele Burman
2025–2026: Anna-Maria Getoš Kalac

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