

WORKSHOP: POLICE DISCRETION (within the local police)

Chair: **Prof. Dr. Jelle Janssens**

Institute for International Research on Criminal Policy (IRCP), Ghent University

In this workshop, we will take a closer look at the topic of police discretion. In two short presentations, current research projects related to police discretion will be outlined. These studies will be discussed and reflected upon by a panel of both academics and police professionals.

Presentations

(1) Inès Saudelli (Ines.Saudelli@vub.be)

PhD-student, VUB

Inès Saudelli holds a Master's degree in Criminology. Being a member of the research group Crime & Society (research line: Policing & Society), she is currently preparing a PhD on the application and use of identity checks by Belgian local police forces.

Identity checks are one of the most practised police powers worldwide. Within the police great importance is attached to this practice when it comes to crime detection and enforcement. However, international research has already shown several times that identity checks generate a lot of controversy. Especially the decision to stop a person seems to cause public uproar. Police officers would be led by prejudices causing the decisions to possibly be made on discriminatory grounds and citizens to be treated unequally. In various countries, such as the UK and the US, these observations led to riots which compromised police legitimacy. So far, little research into identity checks has been carried out in Belgium. Therefore, we do not know if the above also counts for our country, even though some human rights organisations have already accused the Belgian police of ethnic profiling and discrimination. With this research we wish to gain insight in the practice of identity checks performed by the Belgian police. Data will be collected through an ethnographic study with local police forces. The research will last four years and will be completed in December 2020.

(2) Yinthe Feys (Yinthe.Feys@UGent.be)

PhD-student, Ghent University

Yinthe Feys holds a Master's degree in Criminology. She is a member of the Institute for International Research on Criminal Policy (IRCP) from Ghent University and is currently preparing a PhD on the ethical decision-making processes of Belgian local police officers (promotor: Prof. Dr. Antoinette Verhage).

In this research, the ethical decision-making process of police officers is taken into account. By means of different research methods (exploratory phase, online survey, semi-structured interviews, systematic social observations, field check), we explore this decision-making process in regard to moral dilemmas. We specifically focus on factors that may influence police officers' decision-making process. We intend to study the intended decision-making process (how police officers think they make decisions) and the actual decision-making process (how police officers make decisions in practice). The study lasts for four years and will be completed in January 2022.

Panel

(1) Jeroen Maesschalck (Jeroen.Maesschalck@kuleuven.be)

Professor, KUL

Jeroen Maesschalck studied Public Administration and Philosophy at the University of Ghent (Belgium) and at the London School of Economics and Political Science (UK). He holds a PhD in Social Sciences from the University of Leuven (Belgium). He was the founding director of the Leuven Institute of Criminology, where he works as a full professor. His research and teaching focus on public administration ethics and on management and policy making in the criminal justice system, particularly within the police.

(2) Kenneth Coigné (Kenneth.Coigne@police.belgium.eu)

Head of local police (Arro Ieper)

Kenneth Coigné is head of the police force Arro Ieper since 6 June 2019. He studied law and criminology. After his studies, he started with the officer training of the 'Rijkswacht' (former police force) in 1999. He performed multiple functions within the Federal Police (Brussels), for instance officer logistics within the direction General Reserve, head of the unit Security and co-founder of the unit Specialized Intervention. In 2013, he started working for the Unit for Coordination and Support in Kortrijk (and later on West-Vlaanderen). In 2015, he became head of command of the Navigation Police 'Kust' (Scheepvaartpolitie). As of 2017, he is involved in the training for inspectors and chief inspectors in different policing schools. Up until 2019, he was also the chairman of the National Task Force Transmigration.

(3) Maria De Sterck (Maria.DeSterck@police.belgium.eu)

Head of local police (Hamme-Waasmunster)

(4) Inès Saudelli

(5) Yinthe Feys

Reporter: Jelle Janssens/Antoinette Verhage