

Draft proposal training school on legitimacy anno 2020 – Edinburgh June 2020

This training school is organized by the COST network POLSTOP and will deal with the idea of ‘legitimacy’ in policing. We will examine what it means for the police and their position in society and, more particularly, we will focus on the execution of stop and search, one of the most widely used and controversial police powers. To put it simply, a stop and search is an interaction between two actors, namely a police officer and a citizen, whereby the first actor disposes of a considerable authority towards the latter. The way in which citizens experience this interaction determines the perception they develop of the police and by that its legitimacy, a notion that is described by Tyler (1990) as “*an acceptance by people of the need to bring their behavior into line with the dictates of an external authority*” (p. 25). Loss of legitimacy is detrimental to any institution, such as the police, that relies on the cooperation of the citizens for a large part of their duties.

In this training school we want to explore the way in which police legitimacy is influenced by stop and search powers from different angles that represent each of the four working groups of this COST network.

The **first** topic that will be discussed is about **doing of police stops**. We want to understand how police officers themselves perceive the notion of legitimacy, especially when performing a police stop. Possible research questions are ‘What does legitimacy mean for police officers?’, ‘How do police officers believe legitimacy is obtained during a police stop?’

The **second** topic is the **experiences of citizens with police stops**. Various studies have already shown that certain population groups are not only stopped more often but are also treated more negatively. In other words, the police would proceed in a discriminatory way. This affects the image that the population has of the police in a negative way and may lead to a loss of confidence in the police and their law enforcement officers. Possible research questions within this framework are: ‘What does legitimacy mean for citizens?’, ‘How do citizens (and more in particular minority groups) experience police stops?’, ‘How can citizens formally and informally report that they experienced discrimination during a police stop?’,

Beliefs that the police would engage in discriminatory profiling inevitably damage police legitimacy. Several popular disturbances and riots in numerous countries (notably the UK but also in France and elsewhere) originated from poor relationships between citizens and the police, typified by the overuse of police stops. Different human rights organizations criticized the police for their discriminatory behaviour and demanded more transparency. In some countries the police responded by implementing recording practices and control mechanisms, so that the use of stop and search could be (more strictly) supervised. Issues like these are a part of our **third** main topic, namely the **governing of police stops**. Possible research questions are: ‘How do policing organisations try to restore legitimacy damages caused by the use of stop and search? ‘Which accountability measures have been taken to restore legitimacy breaches after stop and search incidents? Which organisations are involved in governing police stops in order to prevent the erosion of legitimacy? , ...

Events like riots and protests also become a political issue, urging societal leaders to take responsibility for the misuse of this police practice and to publicly discuss the reforming of it. These topics will also be discussed in the training school and are part of the **fourth** topic, namely **contextualising police stops**. Possible research questions are: ‘When are police stops the subject of public and/or political debate?’, ‘What are possible turning points that formally changed the ways in which police stops are performed?’, ‘How do human rights organizations influence police legitimacy and by that urge the police to make changes in their stop and search practices?

Practical information

Date and location

From 2nd of June till 5th of June 2020 in Edinburgh (more specific information concerning the venue will follow)

Timetable

Tuesday 2nd of June (10 am – 5 pm):

Expert seminar on stop and search and the role of legitimacy (*speakers/trainers to be confirmed*)

Discussion on the submitted papers of the trainees

Wednesday 3rd of June (10 am – 5 pm):

Workshop on improving the practice and governance of police stops: Scotland as a case study (working groups 1 & 3)

Thursday 4th of June (10 am – 5 pm):

Symposium on contextualising police stops (working group 4)

Friday 5th of June (10 am – 1 pm):

Training school reflections and conclusions:

- What are possible collaborative opportunities?
- How to continue our work in the future?
- What are possible research outputs and how to include them in existing WG COST action plans?
- ...

Who can participate?

According to COST, trainees must be engaged in an official research programme as a **PhD Student** or **postdoctoral fellow** or can be employed by, or affiliated to, an institution, organisation or legal entity which has within its remit a clear association with performing research. Having **research experience on the use of stop and search and legitimacy** is a must.

Requirements:

Before the training school, trainees will be expected to send in advance a text they're working on or have recently finished (article draft, conference paper, book chapter, project proposal, ...). The text should be sent to ines.saudelli@vub.be **by the 1st of May** and will be forwarded to the trainers.

During the training school, trainees will be asked to summarise the learning from the different workshops for further COST purposes.

Granted travel and accommodation expenses:

If selected, each trainee will get an amount of maximum 160 EUR a day for accommodation and meal expenses.

If you are willing to participate in this training school, please send an e-mail to ines.saudelli@vub.be motivating your interest in this event and research experience before the **1st of March**.