Crime institute profile

Scandinavian Research Council for Criminology

Purpose and organization
The Scandinavian Research Council for Criminology was established in 1962 by the governments of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden. By statute, the purpose of the Council is to further criminological research within member countries, and it is also to initiate and advise the Scandinavian governments and the Nordic Council on issues related to criminology. The Council awards research grants, arranges conferences and seminars with the participation of criminologists and practitioners, and publishes books, reports and newsletters.

The Council consists of 15 members, three from each member country, nominated by the Ministry of Justice. Two members from each country are acknowledged criminologists, while the third member represents the Ministry of Justice in the respective countries. The chair of the Council rotates every three years between the Scandinavian countries. The daily administration is carried out by a secretariat located in the country of the chairperson. It is placed in Iceland in the period 1995-1997, and will then move to Denmark.

Research policy
When established in 1962, the Council initiated an co-ordinated comparative research in several areas of criminology, such as hidden criminality, police research, and victimology. In the late 1970s the Council changed its policy to a more pluralistic model of supporting criminological research on the Scandinavian level.

Research grants
Scandinavian researchers can annually apply to the Council for grants to implement comparative projects in criminology. As a rule, only projects with a clear Scandinavian relevance are supported, such as replications of studies between countries, co-operation between researchers from at least two
countries, and literature reviews on the Scandinavian level. However, studies involving only one country can be supported if their aim is to fill a gap in Scandinavian research, or if their results are likely to be relevant to researchers in other Scandinavian countries. The projects supported include such diverse aims as violence against women, white collar crime, juvenile delinquency, alternatives to prison, pornography, tax evasion, prison conditions, drunken driving and environmental criminality.

Some examples of research projects currently supported by the Council are:

- Men, masculinity and culture of violence; ethno-methodological study of school-age boys' socialization to masculinity, masculine behaviour and culture of violence;
- Battered immigrant women in the Nordic countries. A study into the legal situation of these women; development of methods to help ensure their legal protection; consolidation of the existing network of support groups at a Nordic level;
- Comparative sentencing project: sentencing policy and practice. An examination of factors affecting the sentencing choice between custody or community sanctions in five European jurisdictions;
- Several projects on civil offer/victim mediation, e.g. on the effects of mediation on the parties and their surroundings.

Seminars

Annually the Council arranges thematic research seminars with 50-60 participants from all member states. These conferences rotate between the member states and are organized by the host country. The themes of these seminars have included Constructions and reality, Ideology and empirical research, Theory and methods, Alternatives to imprisonment, Town planning and criminality, Drug prevention policy, and Conflict solving.

Every second year the Council arranges contact seminars on specific topics between Scandinavian criminologists and practitioners from a specific area of administration. Such groups have included the prosecuting authorities, judges, defense lawyers, prison authorities and the police, as well as members of judicial committees from the Scandinavian parliaments. The papers presented at the research and the contact seminars are published as anthologies mainly in Scandinavian languages.

In addition to the seminars organized by the Council, financial support is given to Scandinavian workshops on specific issues. The importance of close ties between Scandinavian criminologists and the international criminological community is stressed by seminars with international participation, as well as by travel grants to Scandinavian criminologists who wish to participate in criminological conferences abroad.