

NSfK Meeting minutes 2/2024

Responses to Hate Crime in the Nordics: Understanding Emergent Policy, Legislation and Policing

Working group meeting: 19 June – 20 June 2024

Host and minute taker: Rune Ellefsen

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The opinions expressed in these meeting minutes are the author's own and do not reflect the view of the Nordic Research Council for Criminology.

Background

Hate crime is commonly defined as acts which constitute a criminal offence and involve victims who are deliberately targeted because of their ethnicity, “race”, religion or other minority status, such as sexual orientation or disability. This crime type is increasingly acknowledged as a challenge by policy makers and in public debate across Western liberal democracies. A range of offenses motivated by hate or bias committed against minority groups can now be prosecuted as hate crimes in these countries, including the Nordics.

The aim of this working group meeting was to gather scholars from the Nordic countries to discuss ongoing research and identifying knowledge gaps about hate crime in the Nordics. A secondary aim was to initiate a Nordic research network to generate future cross-country collaboration and research projects that may address these knowledge gaps.

Outcomes

- There were seven different presentations about ongoing research, including feedback and discussion, followed by a separate workshop on knowledge gaps and potential for future collaboration. The presentations covered different aspects of two overarching themes:
 1. First, “The developments, responses to and impacts of hate crime in the Nordics” covered historical developments of hate crime policy, legislation and policing, as well as the shifting attention towards this issue across the Nordic publics.
 2. Secondly, “The limits and potential of countering hate crime within and beyond the criminal justice process” explored various outcomes of the criminal justice responses specifically, while also addressing challenges and uncovered needs (e.g. for covering victims needs) of societal responses that primarily address hate crime through the criminal justice process.
- There was discussion about how to advance Nordic hate crime research, as well as what research projects that would be worthwhile and which could generate new knowledge covering the current gaps in this field of scholarship.
- There was agreement to develop a Nordic research project by the end of 2024 with the aim of applying for funding as soon as possible, based on the research ideas and identified knowledge gaps identified.
- The participants agreed to establish The Nordic network for hate crime research, and to do this by a first workshop by this network 28 November 2024, in continuation of the International Network for Hate Studies Biennial Conference.

Recommendations

- Generate new knowledge about the societal response to hate crime in the Nordics by developing joint Nordic research projects with a comparative and international approach, and strong qualitative component.
- Create knowledge that describe and compare the ways in which hate crime policy and legislation is constructed, implemented and steers policing across the Nordic countries to generate

an important knowledge foundation, of high relevance to criminology and to both criminal justice and other areas of policy.

Knowledge gaps and future research needs

- There was agreement that there is a strong need to move beyond the single-country focus of current hate crime scholarship in the Nordics to generate insights on differences and similarities across countries, and how they could be explained. There is also a related lack of scientific knowledge about differences and similarities between the societal responses to hate crime in the Nordic versus other geographical regions.
- Four core aspects of societal responses to hate crime were emphasized as crucial to cover in research about each country and for enabling comparison between them and non-Nordic regions:
 1. Policy (e.g. the history and current situation regarding hate crime in public policies; is hate crime a criminal justice issue exclusively, or is it also prominent in other policy areas?)
 2. Legislation (e.g. how is hate crime defined; how is it punishable; what groups are and have been protected in legislation?)
 3. Policing (e.g. how are the societal responses to hate crime configured; how does the police handle hate crime; what actors are involved beyond criminal justice and the judiciary?)
 4. Victim and perpetrator support (e.g. what types of support are provided to victims and perpetrators during the different phases of the criminal justice process; who offers support and with what requirements?)
- The lack of in-depth knowledge about those committing hate crime was emphasized during discussion, and the related need for qualitative studies covering their experience with and views of the criminal justice process, as well as the views of being charged for hate crime and its impact it has had on them.
- While there are quite substantial knowledge generated by victimization survey, in crime statistics and other quantitative data, there is more lack of qualitative studies exploring the experiences of police, policy makers, victims and perpetrators about societal responses to hate crime, and to better understand the limitations of crime statistics and, for example its variation of frequency of reports from different minority groups we know are frequently subjected to hate crime.

Host and minute taker

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Working group meeting

Working group meeting serve
as a cross-professional expert
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NSfK

The Nordic Research Council for
Criminology serves to promote
criminological research in the
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