

# Summary

Thesis "**Stalking – From the Police Perspective. A comparative analysis on the basis of the Cologne and Bremen Police Headquarters**" by Britta Plath

Although the phenomenon stalking has been discussed at a scientific level, until now there have only been a few studies at a national and international level as to how police are dealing with this subject.

The police, whose task it is to avert danger and to prosecute criminal offences, are the contact partners for the victims of stalking, and are therefore supposed to be made more aware of the phenomenon. After the introduction of a penal provision "Stalking" in the German Penal Code (Strafgesetzbuch) on 31/03/2007 (Section 238 of the Penal Code), the police handling of stalking incidents has been made a greater priority. The present study focusses on the formulation of the question as to the integration of the handling of stalking cases within an authority structure, the state of knowledge and its conveyance to the individual organization units<sup>1</sup> of the police regarding stalking. On the basis of two selected authorities – the Cologne and the Bremen Police Headquarters – these questions are looked at scientifically by employing document analysis and through interviews with experts to elaborate upon it. A central result of the present study is the uncertainty of the police officers that resulted from the introduction of Section 238 of the Penal Code. The wording of the definition of the legal terms contained in the new section is open to various interpretations and is therefore a challenge for the drafting of advanced vocational training syllabi, the drawing up of instructional brochures or the exchange of knowledge through the network, and therefore becomes ipso facto a subject for the police in the future. Suitable concepts have to be developed in order to counteract this problem. Above all, the motivation of the individual police officers should be uppermost in this regard and has to be promoted on the one hand, and on the other hand has to be supported by the authorities through appropriate practical measures.

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<sup>1</sup> "An organization unit is an element of the structural organization that is as a rule indicated in the organizational chart." <http://www.projektmagazin.de/glossar/gl-0678.html> [09/11/2007]

Furthermore, it was found in the course of the present study that the phenomenon stalking had already been known to the police authorities, and had already been taken up as a theme before the introduction of the legal provision. The Bremen Police Headquarters has an advantage in so far that it has already been dealing in detail with stalking since the year 2001 via the course of a project, and has adopted the necessary organization structures to deal with it. This gap needs to be closed. By comparing both authorities, though, it has been ascertained that the integration of the new criminal offence within the organization structure has been carried out and that an exchange does take place within the scope of networks.

It was possible to draw suggestions for the optimization from the experts' tips in particular during the course of the interviews. In North-Rhine Westphalia, the training and advanced vocational training concept should be rethought to the extent that stalking in all its thematical complexity is to be covered. Especially the drafting of a seminar as well as a disseminatory advanced vocational training for the staff members of the Cologne Police Headquarters is recommended in order to be able to fill in any gaps resulting from inadequate information. Furthermore, both in Bremen as well as in Cologne, information materials should be updated with the statutory status quo and be distributed nation-wide. The proposal of an interview partner of a knowledgeable person integrated into the authority structure, who acts as a "stalking-" expert and therefore also as a contact person for the authority, seems to make sense and to be feasible. (S)he could, for example, follow the latest jurisdiction, and could be integrated into the Police – Judicial Authorities network.