

CEP Expert Groups on Caseload and Workload

22 February 2024, CEP Office (Utrecht, The Netherlands)

Number of participants: 8 EG members + 3 guest speakers, CEP President, CEP Vice-President, CEP Secretary General and Policy Officer

Background

The 2022 evaluation audit on caseload and workload recognized that excessive workloads threaten the effectiveness and quality of probation work; have negative impacts on the experience and treatment of offenders, mental health and well-being of probation staff. The size of the community sanctions caseload is determined by many factors that lie beyond the control of probation bodies but reflect the broader penal and economic climate.

The importance of adequate time and resources for probation work is clearly stated by the Council of Europe in its Probation Rules. The evaluation showed that probation staff across Europe want to talk about caseload and workload, especially the ways that probation bodies are responding to increasing caseloads and systems for measuring the volume of work, the steps that probation organizations are taking to manage large and growing workloads as well as measures to prevent workloads becoming excessive, ensuring that probation work is adequately resourced, and that probation supervision is purposeful and proportionate.

CEP finds highly important that broader use of alternatives at all stages of criminal procedure is addressed on both national and European levels in connection to the effort to reduce the net-widening in probation and criminal justice in general.

Participants and state of play

Joachim Tein, Germany – Head of Executive Department Victim Protection at the Schleswig-Holstein MoJ. In 2022 a new law came into force, article 38 covers the standards of service delivery that define structure, processes and outcomes of the services (incl. how can we measure success and define our cases). There is a need to discuss quantitative and qualitative criteria with a focus on how many cases a probation officer can work full time and what is the best number.

Martin Lulei, Slovakia – Division of Probation, Mediation and Crime Prevention, Department of Criminal Law, MoJ. Modern history of probation in Slovakia has 20 years. In 2022 they were facing around 8000 incoming cases (both probation and mediation) each year on approximately 88 probation officers. One of the strategic

objective is to increase a number of probation officers. Slovakia ranks among jurisdictions with a high probation as well as prison population rate.

Marian Badea, Romania – Probation inspector with the R&D in Romania. In 2014 changes to the criminal code introduced. Probation officers face unbalanced caseload – average is 136 clients / 1 probation officer (taking into consideration the stock number and the flow of exits during 2023), in 2 probation centers the tasks (specializations) are divided, otherwise probation officers do all the work. Currently working on an analysis of the amount of time allocated to each activity and introduction of a special variable to measurement matrix (i.e. time for managing interruptions and overlapping tasks). A in-depth workload study in progress with some data available later this year – will share with the group.

Vesna Zelic Ferencic, Croatia – Head of Probation Service, Ministry of Justice and Public Administration of Croatia where probation service falls under. Croatian Probation service is a young service that is still establishing and developing standards regarding caseload and workload. Vesna was part of the 2022 CEP audit on caseload and workload together with Dr. Jane Dominey results of which are a good combination of academic and probation practice. More to be explained in the presentation (shared with the group only).

Alexandra Kerna, Latvia – A leading expert from the State Probation Service of Latvia with a workload measurement responsibility. First measurement system introduced in 2007. Current system provides for evidence and fact-based data that help to support the work of the Service in the government. 7000 active clients in January 2024/300 specialists to work with. The average is 30 cases / 1 specialist, nevertheless, e.g. when it come to high-risk offenders the reality is that the caseload is 10 cases / 1 specialist.

Ida Ulveryd, Sweden – An analyst at head office for the SPPS responsible for budget and organization development, allocations of budget – basis for the caseload management. A number of probationers has doubled and it keeps growing in fast pace. There is a need to evaluate the possibility for increased efficiency without decreasing the quality of provided services.

Marie-Sophie Biggio, France – Penitentiary Director of Integration and Probation since 2011 heading a mixed department of directors and probation officers. In charge of the distribution of the workload that is both the most equitable but also the most adapted according to the realities of the Department, the local specificities and the needs of the public welcomed. In France there are large gaps between cities. The average is 100 clients / 1 probation officer.

Ben van Heesch, Belgium – Policy Advisor at Flemish Probation Service Head Office that is facing a massive increase (25% increase and it keeps growing) in cases

since Covid-19. Challenging is the complexity of the cases – more sex offenders, clients with severe psychological problems, etc., that are combined with higher expectations from probation officers. Risk assessment not very well established right now which then causes another challenge to keep up with increasing cases. 700 probation officers for Flemish part of Belgium. Currently there is a resource planning system to measure caseload which is hard to maintain.

Olga Tesovic, Serbia (guest speaker) – Research Fellow at the Institute for Criminological and Sociological Research. Probation service in Serbia established back in 2014. For more information please see the presentation and “Impact Assessment of the Application of Alternative Sanctions and Measures in Serbia, 2015 to 2020” from the Repository of Institute of Criminological and Sociological Research: <http://institutecsr.iksi.ac.rs/356/>

Cristina Neves, Portugal (guest speaker) – Head of the Community Sanctions Division at the Prison and Probation Service of Portugal facing concerns on heavy caseload and workload. In the last few years already critical situation has worsened for a decrease in numbers of probation officers (not necessarily decreasing numbers of probationers), burnouts of probation officers, high complexities of cases. Probation service has tried to find solution efficient in a way to manage the work of probation officers. More in the presentation including the results of the survey.

Žilvinas Miliauskas, Lithuania (guest speaker) – Chief specialist of International Affairs at the Lithuanian Probation Agency. Law on probation passed by the government 5 years ago. Before prison and probation were merged services. 1,5 year ago the two institutions got separated. The probation service now deals with the workload and caseload. More in the presentation.

Marta Ferrer, Catalonia-Spain (CEP Vice-president) – caseload established among 60-70 cases / 1 probation officer. There is so called waiting list established for probationers waiting to be assigned by the court to the probation service. There is an ongoing request for increase of number in probation officers vs more probationers / 1 probation officer.

Presentations:

1. [Olga Tesovic \(Serbia\) – Caseload and Workload – Serbian Experience](#)
2. [Zilvinas Miliauskas \(Lithuania\) – Caseload and Workload – Lithuanian Experience](#)
3. [Ana Cristina Pestana Neves \(Portugal\) – European practices regarding case management – survey](#)

Discussion and outcomes

1. To define services and key terms in accordance with the definition of the Council of Europe Probation Rules ---> each country provides different services, e.g. in Croatia Probation Service works with adults only, in Germany all tasks divided in 12 different services etc.
2. Counting system: Number of active cases vs number of cases handled within 1 year ---> difference.
3. Offices where tasks (specializations are divided) vs offices where one probation officer does all the work.
4. Juveniles not part of probation (France, Croatia etc.) vs part of probation (e.g. Czech Republic)
5. Time needed for transportation to carry out supervision tasks varies – difference between cities and rural areas also taking into account possibility for remote supervision.
6. Type of offences falling under probation – e.g. driving fast in Croatia does not fall under probation service.
7. Community unpaid work – working hours differs all across Europe (e.g. Slovenia can place 1400 hours to serve).

Actions

- To produce a report and share with others for comments (Mirka) – end of February 2024.
- Summary of work plan shared with the group (Vesna) – end of February 2024.
- Background information for the website (Mirka and Vesna), shared with group – end of February 2024.
- Template including defining services and key terms in accordance with the definition of the Council of Europe Probation Rules to be completed by all members - **30 April 2024**.
- Online meeting – proposals are: **Tuesday 24 September (14 CET) or Thursday 26 September (11 CET)** – presentation from Alexandra (Latvian system) – **please come back to Mirka with your preferred date by 30 April 2024**.
- Upcoming f2f meeting – February 2025 – possible host Slovakia – Mirka to check on it.

Links (to the website, YouTube, social sites etc): <https://www.cep-probation.org/recap-expert-group-meeting-on-caseload-and-workload/>

