



# CIRCLES4EU



Funded by  
the Daphne Programme  
of the European Union





# Research & Best Practices in Circles4EU

Bas Vogelvang & Mechtild Höing  
Avans University of Applied Sciences

Barcelona, November 20, 2013



# Outline

- The role of research in project development
- Research (workstream 3) as 'best practice'
  - *CoSA British Columbia Movie Fragments:*
  - Circles and the national context
  - Circles standards
  - Circles operation
  - Circles results
- Conclusions



# Why research?

What knowledge does practice need:

(Pawson & Tilley, Realistic Evaluation)

- Circles outcomes:
  - Do they work? What effects do they have?
- Circles processes:
  - How do they work? How can we improve this?
- Circles context:
  - By what, how and when are Circles outcomes and processes affected ?



# Why research?

## FAQ's in the media

- Who are these volunteers?
- How many Circles are there?
- Does it work?
- Do core members tell volunteers everything?
- What do core members think of CoSA?
- What do they do in a Circle?



# Who can profit from research

- Circles project staff
  - Capacity
  - Selection
  - Training, coaching, supervision
  - Quality management
- Funding agencies & policy makers
- Media & general public
  - Materials (brochures, leaflets etc)
  - Media publications (factsheets, interviews, ect)
- Professional public
  - Professional publications
  - Materials (brochures, leaflets etc)



# Circles and the national context

**CoSA BC movie fragment 1: 1.00 - 6.41 min**

***Fragment theme: Do we know the facts?***

- Sex offenders
- Legislation: notification; conditional release
- Sex offender management in the community: collaboration and cooperation
- Conditional release
- Probation/court mandated supervision
- Community reactions



# National adaptation & feasibility studies

Starting countries:

- Latvia
- Catalonia
- Bulgaria

Orienting countries:

- Ireland
- France
- Hungary







# Latvia

Līga Rasnaca & Anvars Zavackis  
University of Latvia

Project provider: State Probation Service

- Short tradition of specific sex offender legislation, supervision, and treatment.
- Expertise and tools imported from Canada, UK and Norway:
  - Structured risk assessment (2011)
  - Sex offender treatment programme (2011)
  - Pilots of MAPPA-like structures (2010)
- No tradition in volunteering and restorative justice
- Heavy cutbacks in budget due to financial crises
- ***CoSA model is adding to the national expertise and capacity;***
- ***CoSA is modeling restorative justice practice***





# Catalonia

## Cercles Cat Team

Project provider: Directorate of Prison Service

- Consolidated sex offender treatment in prison
- Long term supervision (up to ten years)
- Collaboration between police, prison system, social services and volunteer organizations
- Open regime to support rehabilitation
- Structured risk assessment informs decisions
- Collaboration with University: Evaluation and Quality Control
- ***CoSA model fits well in the current landscape***
- ***Support from professional and community organizations***





# Bulgaria

Andrey Momchilov, IGA

Project provider: IGA crime prevention fund (NGO)

- Sex offender management not high on the political agenda
- Sex offenders seldom released on probation
- Lack of expertise and capacity in sex offender treatment
- No structured risk assessment in place
- Little commitment from professional institutions
- ***Import of expertise on structured risk assessment from Latvia***
- ***Apply the Canadian approach: CoSA fills a gap***





# France

Florent Chochez & Alice Delage; ERIOS

- COSA enjoys professional support and community interest
- Specific sex offender policies re treatment and supervision are in place
- Volunteering is common in social services; but not linked to probation
- ***National context is meeting all essential criteria, but:***
- ***No experience with structured risk assessment***
- ***Funding by government: only secular orgs.***





# Ireland

Brian Dack; Probation Service

- High level of professional and political support
- Structure for embedding CoSA in professional network is in place
- ***Pilot project by Probation Service, transfer to NGO***
- ***Media planning and media strategy is crucial in Ireland***





# Hungary

Sarolta HORVÁTH, Géza GOSZTONYI et al.;  
**Budapesti Szociális Forrásközpont**

- Penal code and legislation have been renewed lately
- Re-organization of probation system: close supervision is difficult
- No accredited treatment programs for sex offenders
- Structured risk assessment is not yet available (start 2015 in probation, 2016 in prisons)
- ***Secure funding for NGO's is more than difficult***
- ***Hungary may not yet be ready for CoSA in 2015.***





# Websurvey

Mechtild Höing, Romulus Petrina, Birgit Völm,  
Susan Brown, Bas Vogelvang & many others

- Knowledge about sex offenders
- Community notification needs
- Attitudes towards
  - sex offenders
  - sex offender treatment
  - sex offender rehabilitation
- CoSA awareness
- Intentions to volunteer
- Support for CoSA volunteers
- Attitudes towards volunteer work with sex offenders
- N=200 per country



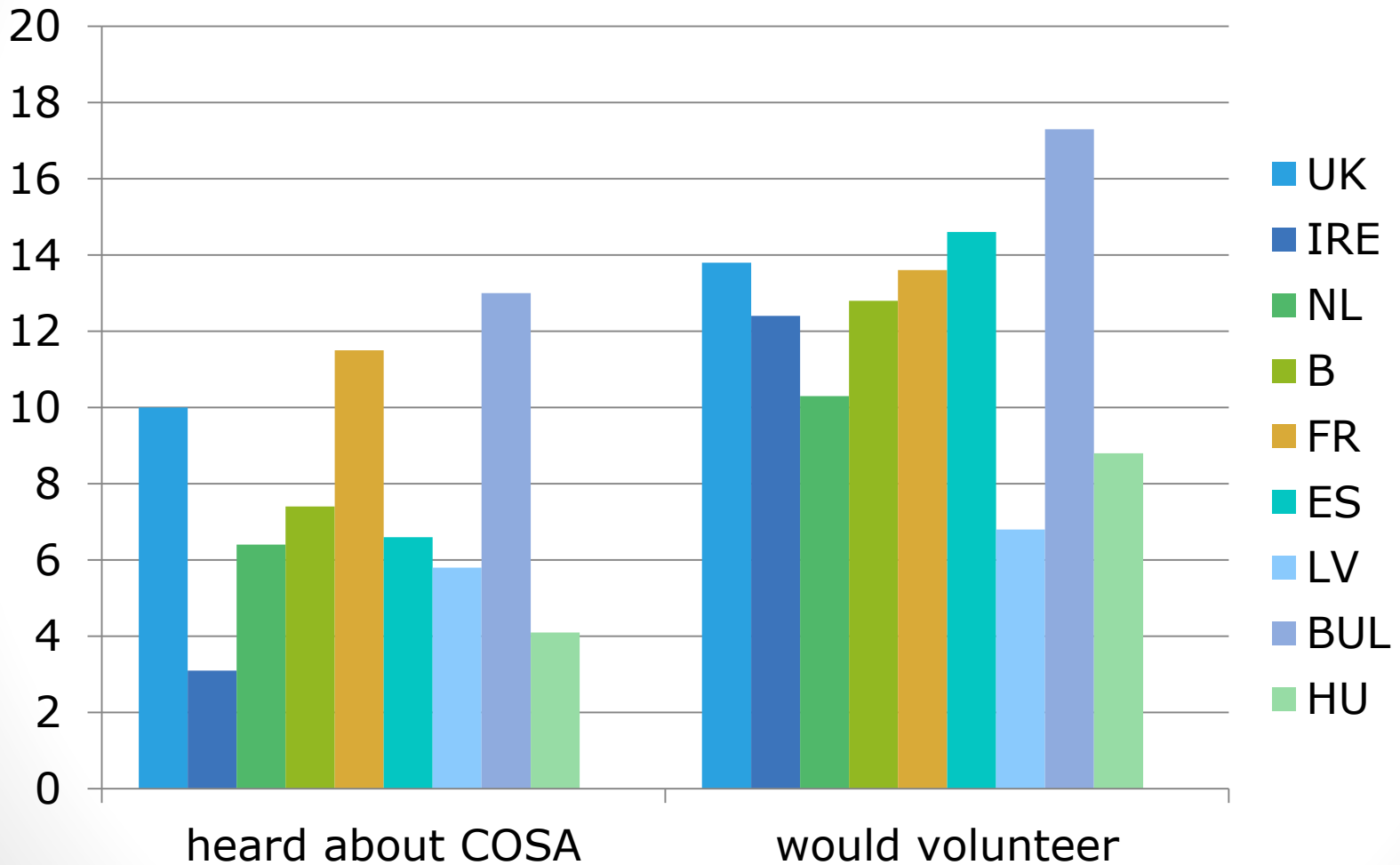
# Some results

- Low number of misperceptions (< 22%)
- Notification needs vary by country
- Negative attitudes, but not extreme
- Pessimism about capacity to change is universal
- Yet: high support for mandatory treatment
- High support for CoSA volunteers
- National differences : Uk ← → NL/B/H
- Lower education → more negative attitudes





# CoSA potential: % of pop.



# Circles standards

**Movie fragment 2: 6:41 – 14:44**

***Fragment theme: building a circle***

- Outer circle
- Inner circle
- Volunteer selection criteria
- Volunteer training
- Volunteer-victims; can they do it?
- Core member selection criteria



# Quality standards

Susan Brown, Birgit Völlm, Nottingham University

## **Circles4EU** **Definitions and Standards**



created through a process of consultation amongst members of the Circles4EU network.

[www.circles4.eu](http://www.circles4.eu)



# Guiding principles:

- **Safety** – We work towards the objective of no more victims
- **Responsibility** – Holding individuals and organisations to account for their actions
- **Inclusiveness** – Managing risk through inclusion not exclusion
- **Community Involvement** – Recognizing the importance of community involvement
- **Growth and Learning** – Recognizing that with necessary support and challenge, people have the ability to grow, learn and change their behavior
- **Individuality and Respect** – Treating people with humanity and respect



# Operating principles:

- **Formal processes**
  - selection and training of volunteers
  - selection and training of circle coordinators
  - recruitment of outer circle members
  - recruitment of core members
- **Formal exit strategy**
  - for core members
  - for volunteers
- **Formal procedure**
  - for recidivism



# Best practices

Romulus Petrina, Mechtild Höing, Avans University  
Audrey Alards, Dutch Probation

Blog via Circles4EU website



Examples of topics:

- Monitoring and support beyond the formal circle
- Circle activity when a core member is imprisoned
- The contribution of circles to very high risk sex offenders



# Circles in operation

## **Movie fragment 3: 14:40 – 20:20**

*Fragment theme: effective circles processes*

- Core member motivation
- Risk factors
- Monitoring
- Accountability of the circle
- Safety mechanisms
- Volunteer motivation



# Process evaluations

Implementing countries:

- Latvia
- Bulgaria
- Spain

Some results:





# Latvia

- 3 circles in operation
- Expertise and dedication of circle-coordinators
- Three day volunteer training, additional training and supervision sessions
- Difficult to find motivated core members, almost no conditional release for sex offenders
- Inner-outer circle cooperation: good relationships, formalized exchange of information



# Catalonia

3 circles

Evaluation of volunteers (training) needs: (n=12)

- Training needs questionnaire reveals priority of training needs
- High satisfaction in CoSA volunteers
- Coordination and organization needs
- Want to share experiences with other volunteers
- Fast communication is needed (e.g. Whatsapp)
- Provide accurate Information on investment in time and emotional commitment



# Bulgaria

- 3 circles in operation, 4 th being prepared
- Grass-roots approach: starting from almost nothing, mainly social support available
- Volunteer motivation is high
- Core member motivation high: self referral
- Structured risk assessment in place within project
- High risk sex offenders present challenges to volunteers; training needs to be expanded
- Supervision by expert forensic psychiatrist
- Building professional network is in progress



# The impact of circles on volunteers

Chris Wilson, Circles UK

Mechtild Höing, Avans University

Stefan Bogaerts, Tilburg University

Birgit Völlm, Nottingham University

Circles 4EU research proposal

Part of research agenda

What is the impact of circles on victims?

- As circle volunteers?
- In the community?



# Circles Results

**Movie fragment 4: 20:20 - end**

***Fragment theme: Circles outcome for core members***



# Circles Database

Susan Brown, Birgit Völlm, Nottingham University

- Template for routine data collection
- Anonymized database
- Separate by country, merging during projects only
- Achieved through discussion in research group
- Info about:
  - Demographics
  - Start/End of circle
  - Offence history
  - Risk
  - Detention
  - Mental health
  - Treatment
  - Recidivism



# Effectiveness studies designs

Stefan Bogarts, Tilburg University  
Mechtild Höing, Avans University

- Research proposals for Circles EU Research Agenda
- Feasibility of RCT's
- Longitudinal desistance study; combining ROM instruments and Dynamic Risk Review



# Concluding

- Cirles4EU research:
  - indispensable for practice development
  - structured careful implementation
  - supported communication
  - gives credibility
- Sustainability:
  - CEP to adopt Circles EU Research Network

*Thanks for all research efforts!*

*Bas, Mechtild & Romulus  
Avans University*





This presentation has been produced with the financial support of the Daphne III Programme of the European Union. The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of Avans University of Applied Sciences and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Commission



Funded by  
the Daphne Programme  
of the European Union

