



## **Blurring boundaries; making and breaking connections**

Report of the 11th European electronic monitoring conference  
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Report prepared by:

Dr. Eszter Párkányi (University of Leeds) and

Dr. Lucija Vejmelka (University of Zagreb)

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## **Introduction**

The 11<sup>th</sup> Electronic Monitoring conference was organised by the CEP in cooperation with the Republic of Croatia's Ministry of Justice in Zagreb in April 2018. The conference was attended by 230 participants from more than 40 countries, representing five continents. This report provides an overview of presentations and the discussions which took place in the workshops. Presentations and workshop findings can be found on the CEP website: <http://www.cep-probation.org/11th-electronic-monitoring-conference>.

Previous CEP electronic monitoring (EM) conferences have focussed almost exclusively on criminal justice and during this time EM has matured into a commonplace penal tool used widely across Europe and beyond. The potential of EM has now spread beyond a pre-trial and sentencing measure. Its applications appear limitless and its purposes diverse. It is viewed increasingly as a universal solution for a range of challenges within and beyond criminal justice. This has led to numerous uses including in the areas of mental health, domestic abuse; terrorism and immigration and diverse target groups including mental health patients, children and young people, victims of domestic abuse as well as offenders. This expansion has contributed to a 'blurring of the boundaries' within which EM is used. The aim of the conference was to begin to discuss some of the challenges and opportunities presented by the increasing varied use of EM and other related technologies drawing together lessons about how EM can be most effectively deployed in different sectors but with a particular focus on criminal justice. The discussions at the conference contributed to a greater appreciation of the use of EM in a wide range of contexts and the shared and unique challenges and opportunities it presents for assisting with tackling some of the most difficult issues facing societies today.

### **Learning from the newcomers: EM pilot in Croatia**

This session examined a pilot project of Radio-Frequency EM which ran in the Republic of Croatia in 2017. The Probation Service operated the pilot with the support of the Norwegian Probation Service. The pilot was designed to meet the needs of both probation staff and offenders.

During the preparatory phase: i) the equipment was procured, adjusted to work effectively in Croatia including translating and customising the interface; ii) administrative procedures and processes were put in place; iii) probation officers were trained; iv) a 24 hour monitoring centre was set up; and v) a protocol was signed between stakeholders including the Ministry of Justice, the Probation Service, the Prison Administration and the Ministry of the Interior, courts and the State Attorney's Office of the Republic of Croatia.

EM was used in five cases over the 100 days the pilot operated. Four offenders were monitored on conditional release and one on home detention. The pool of suitable candidates was limited by the current legislative framework which allows EM to be used for two judicial measures, conditional release and home detention. There were no problems with the equipment or its use during the pilot. The pilot was implemented by the Probation Service but required close cooperation between all stakeholders. Communication between stakeholders was excellent throughout the pilot and resulted in the occasional problems which arose being resolved quickly and appropriately.

At the conclusion of the pilot, there was a consensus among all relevant stakeholders that EM should be implemented permanently. Guidelines have been prepared subsequently for its introduction which will ensure its sustainability, effective functioning and responsiveness. If EM is to be introduced permanently then the range of judicial sanctions for which it is available will need to be expanded. It will also be necessary to ensure that effective support is provided to offenders and that staff are recruited who champion the use of EM and cross-sector cooperation.

### **Blurring boundaries: setting out the terrain**

The first plenary presentation was given by Anthea Hucklesby, who outlined the current and future uses of EM technologies across a range of sectors and raised important ethical questions and dilemmas. She highlighted the specific challenges which may arise and the lessons which can be learned from using EM in different sectors. Currently EM is used in a range of settings including immigration, terrorism-related cases, domestic abuse, mental health and dementia, with the elderly and to safeguard young people. It is important to reflect the different needs of users and service providers in these settings in terms of the purpose of using EM. The purposes of technologies fall into three broad purposes: care, control and convenience (Michael et al, 2006). Needs should also dictate the design of devices including their functionality and wearability. EM devices might have multiple functionalities but they should be adapted to specific user groups. The technology which is deployed should be the one which: i) fits the purpose it is intended for; and ii) meets the users' needs best, considering removability and functionality, including visibility, method of communication, alarms and battery life. The colour of devices is also important.

Hucklesby also addressed different practical challenges as well as ethical questions in the use of EM across different sectors. General and specific issues were addressed including removability, cost, supervision and support requirements. Practical challenges include the need for support and violation response to be available at all times. Ethical questions reflected the specific characteristics and issues regarding the needs of the users. For example, consent and informed decision-making are particularly challenging when working with people with dementia and children. Privacy, data ownership and data protection are important issues in professional and public discourse, which is also reflected in the EU legal framework. Overall, it was concluded that EM can only be effective if it is designed and implemented specifically for the groups it will be used with but that lessons are transferable between sectors.

During the workshop<sup>1</sup> participants identified numerous advantages of using EM in a variety of sectors with different groups of individuals, including mutual learning and innovation. Participants stressed that lessons can be learnt from using EM in different sectors and EM has the potential to enhance cross-sectional cooperation and communication. It was also acknowledged, however, that working across sectors requires additional effort from service providers. EM was described as a service which provides both control and support and assistance which can be more cost-effective and safer than

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<sup>1</sup> Workshop questions for all workshops are presented in appendix 2.

some other interventions. It was also confirmed that many participants share similar concerns and challenges in implementing EM in their countries. Primary amongst these were ethical questions which it was agreed must be communicated to an agency starting to use EM. It was agreed that issues of consent and privacy were especially challenging if individuals do not have the capacity to make decisions for themselves.

Assessments were viewed as a significant prerequisite for implementation of EM to ensure that the service meets the needs of all stakeholders. EM should align with the goals and purposes of service for which it is being used. Ground rules for its implementation can be codified by the development of protocols and internal policies. Participants also agreed that pilots provide useful feedback before EM is implemented in specific settings. Several risks were identified including inadequate preparation time to implement EM; overreliance on technology at the expense of human contact; and the use of inappropriate technologies. Concerns were also expressed about the level of trust officials and decision-makers have in EM technologies and the risk of having different visions of how EM technologies can be used in non-stigmatising and non-discriminatory ways.

### **Facilitating behaviour change: the use of apps in probation practice**

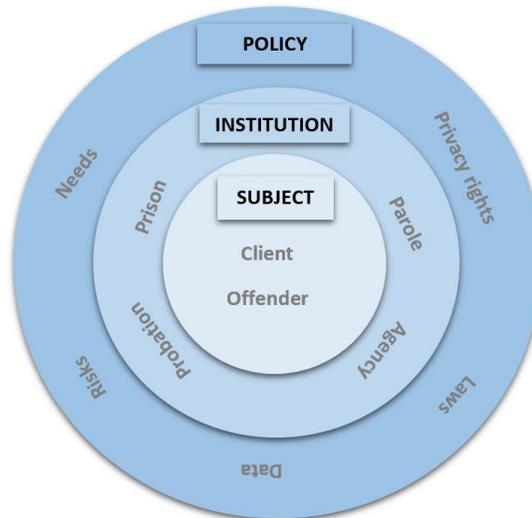
Deborah Thompson opened her presentation on the use of mobile applications (apps) in probation by outlining her vision of how EM can be more than purely a means of control. She suggested that mobile apps have the potential to bring out behavioural change by: i) reflecting on the life events and relationships of offenders; ii) supporting self-reflection; and iii) facilitating effective information-sharing. She argued that people's attention tends to escape important details of real-life events and that being able to revisit situations and draw attention to things that matter is useful during supervision sessions. This is what the mobile app developed by the Dutch Probation Service aimed to do. The app provided support in three areas of personal perceptions: (i) life; (ii) contacts; and (iii) risk. Using the app, self-reported data were collected about positive and negative aspects in these three areas and data were analysed during supervision sessions. The aim was to create awareness of the risks in individuals' environment. For example, when certain friends or situations increased the risk of offending. Using the app was voluntary which dealt with issues of privacy. Users were made fully aware of the role of the app and the advantages and consequences of their participation.

Take up of the app was lower than expected. It was used in 400 cases from a total caseload of 20,000. It was used across the full age range of service users despite an expectation that it would be appeal more to younger people. Feedback suggested that low use was explained by: i) a lack of knowledge of the app amongst probation staff; ii) a lack of time to learn about the new technology; and iii) a perception that no value was added by the app. It was also suggested that use would be increased if it was championed and/or required by managers. Researchers realised that further evaluation was required about the needs of both clients and probation staff in order to truly exploit the potential of the technology. Before further apps are developed three important questions need to be addressed: i) whether the app can be made; (ii) whether it will be used; and most

importantly, (iii) what the limits of using the technology should be. The main finding from the pilot was that the app is useful for some but not for all.

Hannah Graham's presentation about '*App technologies, monitoring and probation*' questioned the validity of 'innovative' technologies in the criminal justice systems. Although various projects are experimenting with app-technologies in justice (e.g. for the purpose of collecting evidence, providing support for drug users or to support mindfulness), there is no evidence that these projects achieve their aims or that the apps add value. Thus, our current knowledge about their effect and impact raises doubts about the practice which uses technologies because they are available rather than first asking *why* it is needed. Graham argued that we should never lose sight of the needs which are served by the new tools. She highlighted three angles of the app technologies that should be examined before adopting a tool: i) digital justice; ii) data justice; and iii) social justice. She defined digital justice as the move towards public services using digital platforms. In the process of digitalisation, agencies should be aware of the human rights/dilemmas concerning data collection (data justice) and have clear rules about who owns the data and who has access to them. Most importantly, she argued that the social justice aspect of the app technologies should never be forgotten, which is reflected in a clear purpose and well-established processes for dealing with compliance and non-compliance. Currently, agencies struggle with addressing many questions regarding these issues which results in conflicting professional views on technologies' role and effectiveness. Graham suggested that the impact of remoteness and distancing on how probation is experienced has yet to be addressed. She closed her presentation with asking a wide range of further questions about the role of apps in the criminal justice system.

Inspired by the presentations, participants of the workshops proposed a number of ways app technologies might be utilised in order to serve the rehabilitative needs of individuals subject to probation and the needs of the agencies which support them. Some participants suggested that an app reflects the requirements of modern communication by providing the possibility of real-time and intensive contact between individuals and probation staff. However, apps can also be multi-functional, with the potential of providing information about practical questions in a user-friendly manner, including registering for free public health services or claiming housing benefits. Amongst these, the possibility for scheduling appointments and setting up reminders could directly support compliance with the sentence/licence conditions. It was also suggested that the barriers to using apps are merely administrative, such as long and complex legislative processes and lack of funding. One group depicted the clusters of needs in the model below where each layer represents a different type of interest.



Despite a general enthusiasm about app technologies, participants found that ethical considerations play an important role in setting boundaries for their use. Some participants echoed Graham’s concerns about committing to the latest technologies without a purpose other than being ‘innovative’. Accordingly, apps would only have a role in probation work if they enable individuals to play an active role in their own rehabilitation. It was also agreed that it was important to establish the needs targeted by the app and the information provided about these to the subjects. Participants agreed that informed consent was important because it ensured a clear understanding of the expectations and the responsibilities by the users, which in turn may reduce the stress experienced from using an app for criminal justice purposes. Further ethical concerns were raised about the potential discriminatory nature of a tool which disregards the unequal access to modern technologies (for example because of age, poverty or learning disabilities) and the protection of the data collected through the apps, especially when it concerns ‘unintended’ knowledge of personal information.

Participants representing a variety of institutional cultures and different target groups struggled to agree on a single purpose of apps but agreed that a combination of control and support is the ideal mix but that support should be preeminent.

### **Police involvement in EM**

Jeff Hodgkinson provided an introduction to how EM is used in Integrated Offender Management (IOM) in the United Kingdom, focusing specifically on the role of the police. One element of IOMs is the use of GPS technologies to track individuals on a voluntary basis. Hodgkinson demonstrated the potential benefits of GPS tracking through three case studies: i) positive engagement with the police and compliance with licence conditions (case A); ii) feedback provided about daily activities which may help to reveal relapses in drug use (case B); and iii) data which supports police investigations and enhances their efficacy (case C). He recognised that using EM to support rehabilitation was a challenge for the police but that it was facilitating cultural change. The new national

strategy, however, draws attention to further considerations, such as the effect of EM on the tracked persons and their environment.

Using GPS with high risk offenders requires a robust decision-making process and appropriate protocols to identify the responsibilities of the different agencies. Hodgkinson stressed that a clear understanding and agreement about the purpose(s) of tagging was required by all stakeholders and it was crucial to ensure that this was reflected in implementing EM and any subsequent decisions. He also stressed the importance of professional decision-making and dismissed the use of computer-led risk assessments. In terms of the data produced by EM, he suggested that these should be shared effectively but within limits agreed by stakeholders.

Hodgkinson closed by claiming that GPS tracking serves the needs of the agencies by providing a cost-effective alternative to custody, while also supporting the rehabilitative needs of offenders by offering a less intrusive intervention than imprisonment. It could effectively contribute to reducing the remand population of England and Wales, 75% of whom are not convicted. However, when talking about extending the use of EM, the perceptions of the public and the interest of political stakeholders need to be considered.

In her presentation on '*Responding to police involvement to EM*', Anthea Hucklesby questioned whether the interests of the police and the needs of the monitored individuals could be reconciled. She explained that the police show growing interest in EM in the United Kingdom (UK) partly because of shrinking resources but also because it provides data which are useful for intelligence purposes. Apart from their involvement in IOM schemes already discussed, the police are involved in schemes using EM with individuals with dementia, children and young people in care and domestic abuse. Hucklesby highlighted some of the many questions which still need to be addressed including the type of data which should be available to the police, in what circumstances and how these would be accessed and the boundaries to prevent the misuse of these data. Furthermore, she argued that the lack of clearly defined roles within multi-agency schemes creates a risk of overlapping responsibilities and conflicting interests. The increasingly blurred boundaries and the increased involvement of the police raise real issues about the purposes of EM and the data which derive from it. IOM schemes in the UK also raise questions about 'voluntary participation' – how voluntary is a decision when the alternatives are always qualitatively worse and/or when incentives are offered? In her conclusion, Hucklesby raised questions about the implications for EM of the increasing role of the police in its use. How does police involvement have impact on the engagement of offenders? What is the impact of police involvement on the legitimacy of EM?

Workshop participants had different views about police involvement in EM. While everyone agreed that the police can provide information that is essential to understand the risk posed by offenders, some participants believed that their formal involvement in the decision-making would hinder the development of a trusting relationship with offenders. It was claimed that offenders tend to perceive the police as the 'enemy', therefore any association with them would decrease the level of trust throughout the decision-making process and supervision. The difference between the institutional values and interests of the police and probation was mentioned as another unbridgeable

obstacle to formal cooperation. Collecting intelligence about offences and offenders is an important role of the police, assisting with this raises considerable ethical issues for probation services. Participants who already worked in partnership with the police were more open to multi-agency working. They suggested that it led to additional opportunities to cooperate and that independence could be maintained by defining the boundaries of the formal relationship and separating responsibilities. It was argued that an essential element of cooperation was that the partnership was of equal value for those involved.

Voluntary schemes were generally viewed as means to encourage compliance but participants highlighted uncertainty about the level of engagement conveyed by consent. As previously mentioned by Hucklesby, consenting to EM is not always based on a conscious and unrestricted choice. However, it was pointed out that in some jurisdictions prisoners opt out of EM early release schemes because they consider the conditions or consequences of breach too onerous.

Discussions took place about how to deal with EM violations by high risk offenders. Participants generally agreed that protocols should be in place so that violations by those who pose a serious risk of harm are responded to immediately. The threshold for action was subject to debate, however. Considerations included who the individual was, victim protection and agency cooperation. Some participants argued that the system in which police are alerted only when victims are at risk protects the credibility and integrity of probation services. Immediate responses were thought to be necessary in cases of domestic abuse. Contacting the police when minor violations occur may result in increased levels of distrust in EM and between agencies. By contrast, it was also noted that downgrading alerts may have a similar effect and result in additional offences. Some participants rejected the idea that any violation requires immediate police intervention. Outsourcing the responsibility for dealing with violations to a third party was advocated by some who suggested that that EM measures should be detached entirely from the police.

### **Net-widening and EM**

The last day of the conference began with Kristel Beyens' presentation on EM and net-widening. Beyens defined net-widening, highlighted the potential relationship between net-widening and EM and identified possible reasons why EM might result in net-widening. In general, net-widening refers to the problem of expanding levels of social control through the implementation of new programmes and services. Instead of these acting as alternatives to existing sanctions (usually imprisonment) they supplement the available sanctions thereby widening, deepening and intensifying the 'net' of social control or punishment. Widening the net implies an increasing number of individuals are drawn into criminal justice systems by new technologies but that they may also change the nature of interventions into the lives of individuals and their families. The potential for net-widening, makes it crucial that the risks and challenges of EM are considered with a particular focus on what the problem is that needs to be addressed, how EM might assist with dealing with it, and whether EM is the most effective measure to solve the problem.

Beyens stressed the need for good empirical data to assess the extent of any net-widening effect but also how challenging and difficult it is to gather good reliable data. She referred to the longitudinal study of Aebi and colleagues (2015) which suggests that increased use of community sanctions and measures (including EM) has not resulted in reductions in European prison populations. Jurisdictions were categorised into two groups: i) those with high prison and probation populations and ii) those which maintain low prison and probation populations. According to Beyens, the results suggest a net-widening effect. She also referred to the EU study on EM undertaken by Hucklesby and colleagues (2016) which showed that EM is used most in countries with high rates of imprisonment suggesting that the introduction of EM may not have reduced prison populations. By contrast, she highlighted the recent decrease in the prison population in Belgium which has coincided with an increased use of EM although no causal effect can be confirmed. None of these data provide definitive proof of net-widening but suggests that net-widening appears to be an important unintended consequence of introducing new alternatives to imprisonment. Beyens concluded that the potential for net-widening should be a general concern and it is a useful concept for EM research. Although EM may be an alternative to prison, it is as likely to supplement rather than replace the existing punishment system. The focus should be on improving existing measures rather than replacing them with new ones.

During the workshops discussions took place about the potential for net-widening in different countries depending on the ways in which EM had been implemented. EMs use as a front or back door measure differs within and between countries so the potential for net-widening varies within and not simply between countries. Participants concluded that in most countries data are not available on the use of EM and there is a lack of research to evaluate the extent of net-widening. Nevertheless, participants agreed that net-widening is an important, but not the only, criterion to evaluate EM policies and practices and that is necessary to have a deeper understanding about the features of net-widening and the risks posed when using EM.

## **Conclusions**

The conference was closed by the Secretary General of CEP, Willem van der Brugge, and the President of the CEP, Gerry McNally, who thanked the Ministry of Justice in Croatia and the CEP team for the organisation of the conference and the sponsors for their generous contribution to the event. In their conclusion, they highlighted that EM poses an ever growing challenge. Whilst EM technologies move forward rapidly, there is lack of agreement on the theoretical and pragmatic foundations of using these new technologies within probation and beyond. Therefore, the main challenge for the future is to create frameworks for the different uses of EM that clearly state their objectives, purposes and the needs they respond to. The understanding of the ways in which EM operates will continue to be enhanced by sharing experiences. The collection of data and research and evaluation are crucial for the continued evidence-based development of EM. They further stressed that the conference provided evidence about challenges which need to be addressed including net-widening and uncertainty about the objectives of EM. They reminded the audience that looking back is always helpful when searching for

answers to current challenges, to find out what still needs to be known and what the most appropriate methods of research and evaluation are.

### **Implications for the future**

The discussions of the speakers and the participants of the 11<sup>th</sup> Electronic Monitoring Conference were not only important, because they reported about the current state of art in research and implementation of EM, but also because they set out the topics for the future conversations. Revisiting the thoughts of Jana Špero about the Croatian EM pilot, the contemporary approach on EM is based on advanced technologies that are available today. However, their availability does not necessarily mean that these technologies will provide a solution to the problems that need to be tackled. For example, the Dutch app-project suggests that a new technology should consider a variety of needs in order to fulfil its full potential. This example warns both practitioners and providers that we might have to radically rethink the dynamics of technological development. A future-oriented approach should move away from the technology-led implementation of measures and instead focus on users' needs to create needs-based innovations. For this to happen, information on the needs of all target groups and stakeholders across the justice system is required. This process has already started and conference participants contributed the following: the personal relationships and life events of users, personalised support and respect for family life. Institutional needs were also outlined and included data on the use of EM and additional support for assisting compliance, keeping intensive contact and for transferring information. The importance of discussing the limits to the use of EM was also highlighted, emphasising the importance of respecting human rights, particularly the right to privacy.

## Appendices

### Appendix 1 – Conference programme

#### Monday 16 April

- 14.00-15.30     **Registration with Coffee/Tea and Opportunity to visit sponsors' displays**
- 15.30-16.00     **Welcome speech**  
*Mr. Dražen Bošnjaković - Minister of Justice Croatia*  
*Mr. Gerry McNally (President of CEP)*  
*Ms. Jana Špero - Assistant Minister Croatia (CEP board)*  
*Conference Chair: Mr. Willem van der Brugge – Secretary General CEP*
- 16.00–17.00     **Croatian Electronic-monitoring build-up**  
*Mr. Juro Martinović - State Secretary Croatia*  
*Ms. Jana Špero - Assistant Minister Croatia*  
*Mr. Goran Brkić - Head of Probation Sector Croatia*  
*Ms. Vesna Zelić Ferenčić, Head of Probation office Zagreb II*  
*Interviewer: Mr. Pedro Ferreira Marum – Deputy Director General Belgium*
- 17.00-17.30     **Coffee/Tea and Opportunity to visit sponsors' displays**
- 17.30-18.30     **Blurring boundaries with Electronic monitoring; (mental) health, immigration and radicalisation**  
*Prof. Anthea Hucklesby*
- 19.00-20.00     **Reception in the foyer of the Grand Ballroom, Sheraton Zagreb Hotel**
- 20.00             **Buffet dinner in Grand Ballroom of Sheraton Zagreb Hotel**

## **Tuesday 17 April**

- 09.15-10.30 **App technologies, Probation and Electronic monitoring**  
*Ms. Deborah Thompson and Ms. Hannah Graham*
- 10.30-11.15 **Coffee/Tea and Opportunity to visit sponsors' displays**
- 11.15-13.00 **1st Series of Workshop Sessions**
- 13.00-14.15 **Lunch**
- 14.15-15.30 **Police and Electronic monitoring**  
*Prof. Anthea Hucklesby and Mr. Jeff Hodgkinson*
- 15.30-16.30 **Coffee/Tea and Opportunity to visit sponsors' displays**
- 16.30-18.00 **Bus or walking tour of Zagreb**
- 19.00 **Departure by bus to dinner location**
- 20.00 **Traditional Croatian dinner at restaurant Lido**

## **Wednesday 18 April**

- 9.15-10.15 **Electronic monitoring and the problem of net-widening**  
*Prof. Kristel Beyens*
- 10.15-11.00 **Coffee/Tea, Opportunity to visit sponsors' displays and hotel checkout**
- 11.00-12.30 **2<sup>nd</sup> Series of Workshop Sessions**
- 12.30-13.00 **Conclusions from the workshop sessions and closing words**  
*Mr. Willem van der Brugge and Mr. Gerry McNally*
- 13.00 **Lunch and depart**

## Appendix 2

### Workshop questions

The questions raised by the plenary speakers were explored in the four workshop sessions. The participants were asked to discuss three specific questions in groups and submit their conclusions using the online application of Mentimeter. The findings of each session are also published on the website of the CEP: <http://www.cep-probation.org/11th-electronic-monitoring-conference>.

Workshop 1: Blurring boundaries with Electronic monitoring; (mental) health, immigration and radicalisation (Prof. Anthea Hucklesby):

1. What are the advantages of using EM technologies across sectors?
2. What are the main lessons that you would communicate to an agency starting to use EM outside of criminal justice?
3. What are the main challenges to using EM technologies across different domains?

Workshop 2: App technologies, Probation and Electronic monitoring (Ms. Deborah Thompson and Dr. Hannah Graham):

1. What are the opportunities and the problems or barriers to integrating uses of apps and electronic monitoring technologies in probation?
2. What are the key ethical considerations in advancing more innovative uses of apps and electronic monitoring technologies in probation?
3. What are the most important purposes underpinning why online tools and app technologies can be used in probation?

Workshop 3: Police and Electronic monitoring (Prof. Anthea Hucklesby and Mr. Jeff Hodgkinson):

1. What are the benefits of the police being more involved in the decision-making process when probation services are considering applying EM?
2. Voluntary/Consensual use of Electronic Monitoring of offenders has raised a number of questions. Do you think this type of application encourages engagement and compliance with supervision?
3. Managing High Risk Offenders who are subject to GPS tagging is likely to generate high levels of alerts which the police will have to respond to. What processes could be put in place to ensure that alerts are responded to appropriately and in a timely manner?

Workshop 4: Electronic monitoring and the problem of net-widening (Prof. Kristel Beyens):

1. Is there a sensitivity for net-widening in your country with regard to EM policies or the use of EM? Can you give an example of this?
2. Which kinds of (potential) net-widening do you perceive in your country? Back-end or/and front-end net-widening? Examples?
3. Are there any evaluation studies showing net-widening with regard to EM in your country?
4. Do you think net-widening is an important criterion to evaluate EM policies and practices in your country? Why/why not?