

Circles of Support and Accountability

Community engagement keeps everybody safer

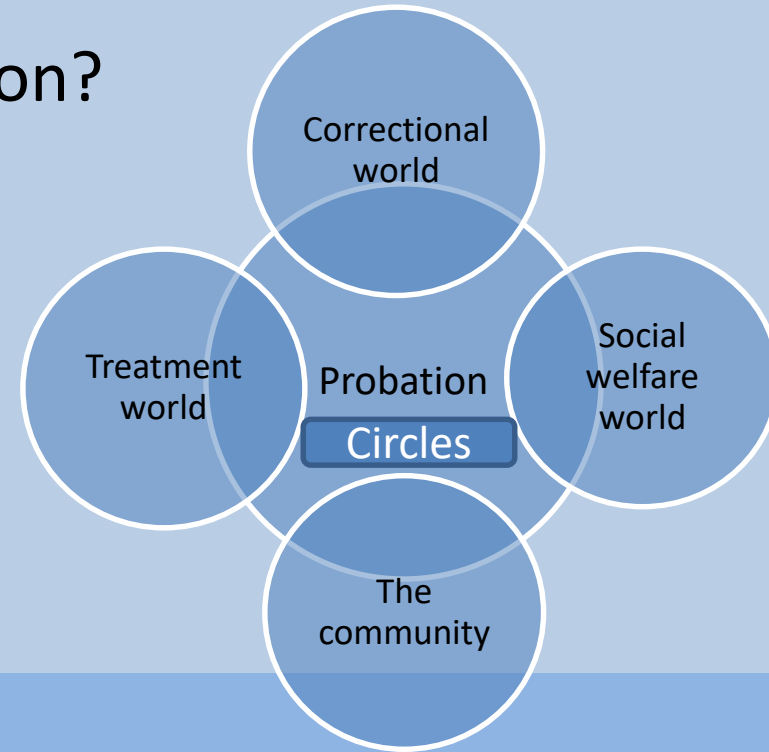
International Conference on Sex offender Management,
Riga, November 22, 2018

Dr. Mechtild Höing

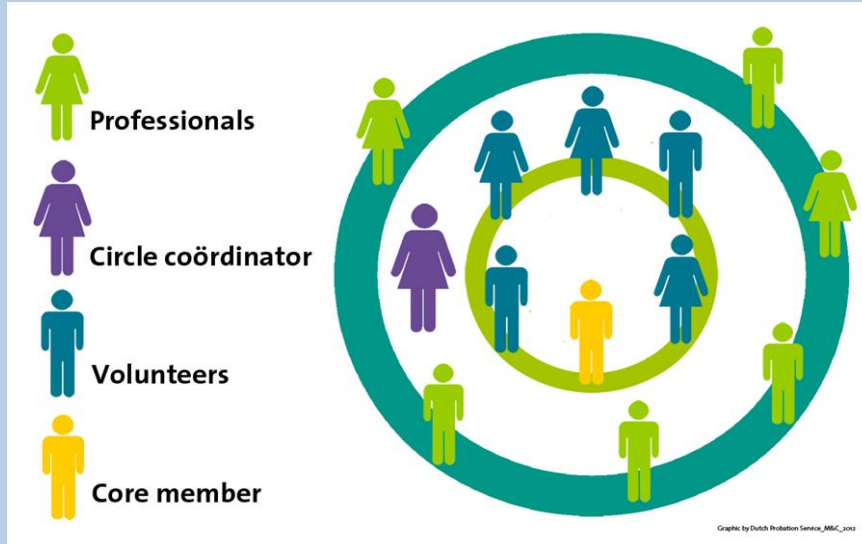
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Sex offender management: a challenging task

- Risk management or rehabilitation?
- Fear and anger
- Social isolation and social exclusion
- Diversity of needs
- Operating in different worlds



Circles of Support and Accountability



An effective approach
for medium to high risk
sex offenders ?

Duwe, G. (2018). Minnesota Circles of Support and Accountability (MnCoSA) at 50: Updated Results from a Randomized Controlled Trial. Minnesota Department of corrections
Clarke, M., Brown, S., & Völlm, B. (2017). Circles of support and accountability for sex offenders: A systematic review of outcomes. *Sexual Abuse*, 29(5), 446-478.

Key factors for CoSA effectiveness:

- Circle addresses social needs
 - provides practical and emotional support
 - provides a sense of belonging & trust
- Circle encourages and supports change
 - Volunteer selflessness enhances core members' motivation and engagement
 - Circle provides a safe space to open up, practice problem solving skills and experience autonomy and self-determination, offers role models and social learning
- Circle addresses risk and holds accountable
 - Core member discusses offence and risk factors with volunteers -> circle coordinator
 - Volunteers question and monitor
- Circle is reflective & adaptive
 - Formal and informal evaluation
 - Diversity of circle volunteers
 - Circle coordinator coaches group dynamic

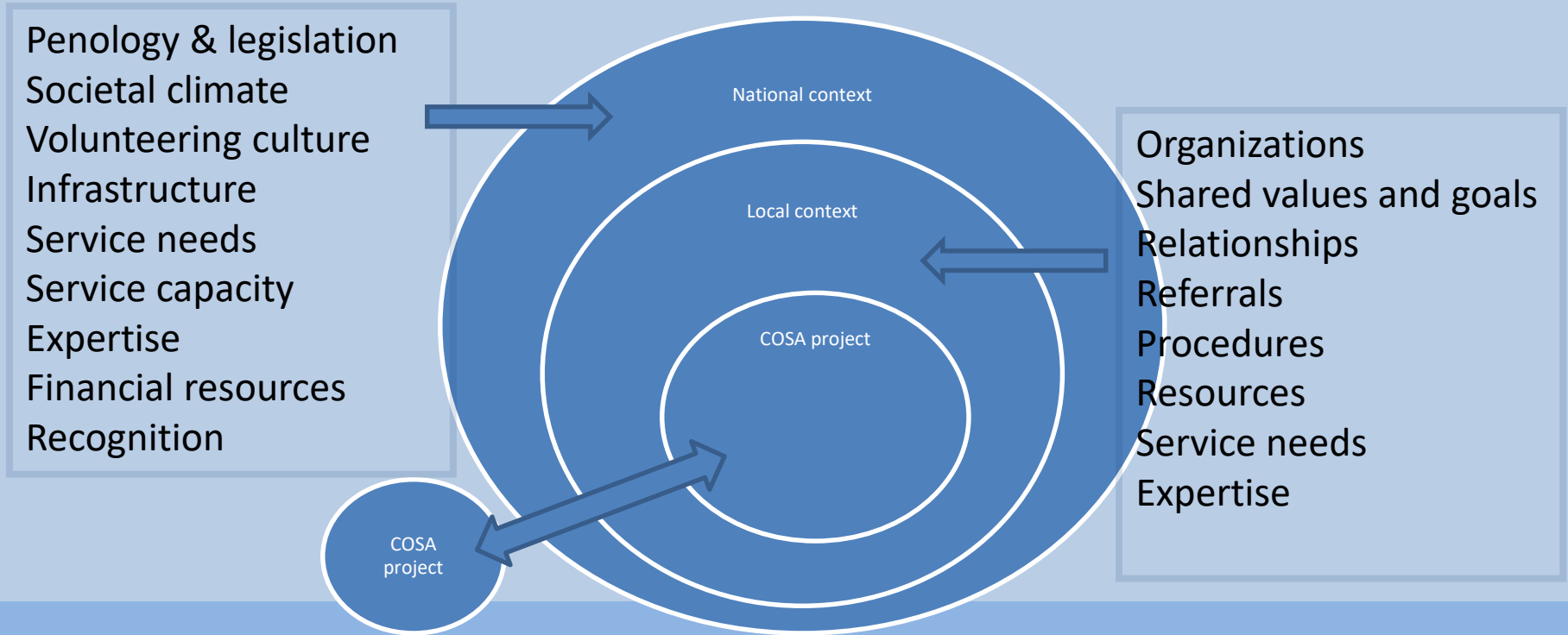
Höing, M., Bogaerts, S., & Vogelvang, B. (2013). Circles of support and accountability: How and why they work for sex offenders. *Journal of Forensic Psychology Practice*, 13(4), 267-295.

Chouinard, J.A. & Riddick, C. (2015). An evaluation of the Circles of Support and Accountability demonstration project: Final report..Ottawa, ON: Public Safety Canada / University of Regina Collaborative Centre for Justice and Safety.

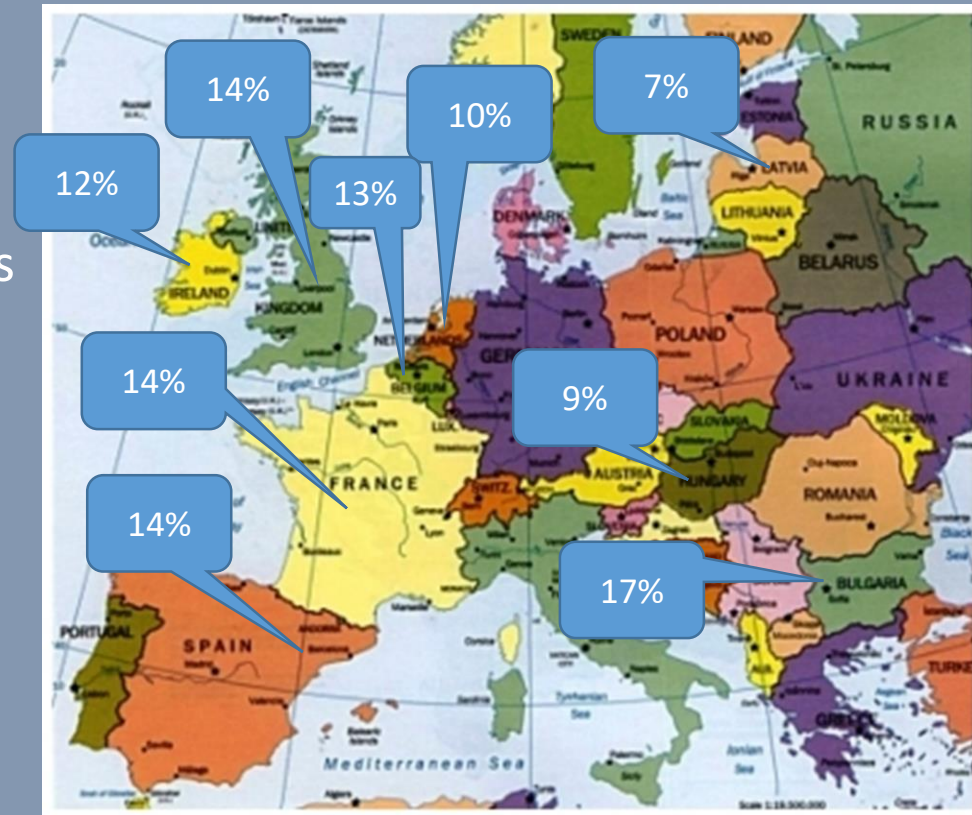
How to run effective circles?

- Stick to the model and be accountable!
- Selection of sex offenders, based on risk and needs
- High quality volunteers through careful selection and training
- High quality supervision and support by well-trained and dedicated circle-coordinators
- High quality relationships with professional agencies
- Organizational and financial sustainability

COSA projects are embedded



Community support for sex offenders is low, support for CoSA is substantial:
“ I would be interested in becoming a CoSA volunteer”



Variations in CoSA projects:

- Community organisations -> bottom up
e.g. Canada, USA/California, Bulgaria, Australia, Netherlands 2
- Justice organizations -> top-down
e.g. Netherlands1, Belgium1, USA/Minnesota, New Zealand, Catalunya
- Joint ventures/social services -> hybrid
e.g. Belgium2; USA/Vermont, Ireland, Latvia?

Elliott, I.A. & Zajac, G. (2015). The implementation of Circles of Support and Accountability in the United States. *Aggression and Violent Behavior*. Published online first.

Höing, M. Hare-Duke, L. & Völlm, B. (2015). *European Handbook: CoSA, Circles of Support and Accountability*. S'Hertogenbosch, Netherlands: Circles4EU; c/o Centre for Public Safety and Criminal Justice, Avans University of Applied Sciences.



**Want to know more?
Join the founding event
tomorrow morning: 8:15 am**

**Circles Europe
Association:
Stronger together**



Thank you!

Questions and suggestions?

