

CEP Expert Group on Caseload and Workload

19 February 2025, Ministry of Justice, Public Administration and Digital Transformation, Zagreb, Croatia

Number of participants: 6 EG members, CEP Secretary General and Policy Officer

1. Vesna Zelic Ferencic (Croatia)
2. Aleksandra Kerna (Latvia)
3. Ida Ulveryd (Sweden) – *last minute apologies*
4. Joachim Tein (Germany)
5. Marie-Sophie Biggio (France)
6. Ben van Heesch (Belgium)
7. Marian Badea (Romania)

Background

The second face to face meeting of the Expert Group on Caseload and Workload took place on 19 February 2025 in Zagreb, Croatia. Building on the work completed in 2024, the group began developing guidelines to provide, among others, its professional advice on caseload and workload, their definitions as well as an overview of caseload and workload across Europe to the CEP member jurisdictions. The issue of caseload and workload is of significant concern for probation organizations throughout Europe, which are seeking effective solutions to manage the rising number of cases and the increasing workload associated with probation work.

The meeting took place at the premises of the Ministry of Justice, Public Administration and Digital Transformation in Croatia and was opened by Ms. Vedrana Simundza Nikolic, State Secretary, Mr. Zvonimir Penic, Acting Director General, Mr. Goran Brkic, Head of Probation, together with Ms. Jana Spero Kamenjarin, CEP Secretary General.

The next face to face meeting will take place in February 2026. The workshop to present the guidelines is to be organized in 2026.

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.

Update 2025 – A law on probation and victim support to be evaluated after the certain time – preparation is on for the evaluation, link to the caseload and workload (what the tasks are and how much time is needed to deliver good results etc). Average caseload is 60 cases per PS.

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.

Update 2025 – increase of 10 times in the probation supervision (141 thousand cases), similar with pre-sentence reports, average of over 90 cases per PS. Romania deals with the juvenile delinquency – only two services with specialized tasks, after the legislative changes the shortening of probation period to the maximum of 6 months. In relation to the guidelines - important to differentiate between probation systems where tasks are specialized or not, the way it is measured.

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).

Update 2025 – huge differences among offices, some smaller offices are facing staff shortages. Currently, workload became more issue than the caseload – the goal is to do more treatment work, case management and supervision, not administration. Difficult to standardize across the offices as there is no tools to see how people are working especially in terms of quality. A plan is to create a working group to have standards and guidelines to what is needed to consider, how much time in average it takes to do RNR, inc. need to take into account all the work around.

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.

Update 2025 – in 2024 changes in the criminal law that influenced amount of community work (decreasing) and probation supervision (increasing) --> changes have influenced the workload level (not caseload). The amount of time PS spend working during community work is less than with supervision. But currently, the workload situation is considered normal (aka PS can do all work during the working hours) even though with more supervision cases. Different in capital and other cities -> balancing the workload between cities. More attention is paid to logistics – how these are organized, sharing information vs having people travelling, obligatory is to have 2 specialists for the visit but 4 in the car, plus collection of more clients in the area at the same time.

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.

Update 2025 (provided in writing) - the client volumes in the Swedish Prison and Probation Service continue to increase significantly, and the prognosis suggests that this trend will continue until 2030. The cost per client per day needs to decrease due to the sharp rise in the number of clients. A project aimed at improving efficiency within the organization is being developed. The budget is based on allocation keys, and we are now reviewing these allocation keys. The focus is to maintain the quality of client work and ensure that client interactions are not reduced. Instead, we are concentrating on minimizing travel time, increasing the number of digital meetings, reducing administrative tasks, and shortening meeting durations.

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.

Update 2025 – A summary of in open environments and workloads provided in November 2024. Proposed three ways of working that will be piloted in some of the offices with a focus on the reduction of workloads: 1. First level of reduction of workloads: the length of sentences handed down by criminal courts, 2. Second level of reduction of workloads: the duration of sentences decided by the Judge of the

Application of Sentences, 3. Third level of reduction of workloads: the monitoring level proposed by the probation service.

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.

Update 2025 – in 2024 a new government in the office and a new 5y plan imposed. Both federal and regional MoJ aim to invest more in probation services (using it more, not financially). Overall increase in cases is around 7% (2500 cases in a year), overcrowding is high causing lots of effect, e.g. parole cases are increasing, more offenders with MH issues released on trial, but there is a lack of places in forensic hospitals. Currently, PS busy with implementing the new RNR – to be used for all cases, and to differentiate better between low-, medium- and high-risk cases. Analysis on caseload performed – comparison of different regions in Flanders, different methodological approaches and local implementation of procedures.

The discussion then continued with the Guidelines and article for the German probation magazine. The group agreed on the upcoming steps as well as the structure of the guidelines and division of tasks. Priority is to deliver the article – online follow-up meetings will take place.

Key outcomes

- 2026 – Workshop on Caseload and Workload to take place
- 1 April – deadline to provide the first article for the German probation magazine
- Guidelines – structure as agreed will be uploaded to the shared file. Priority is to send a questionnaire to members to gather the answers as piloted in 2024 among group members.

To do

- 1) Draft a report – Mirka
- 2) Update the shared folder – Mirka
- 3) A follow up online meeting – Mirka

Links: <https://www.cep-probation.org/events/expert-group-on-caseload-and-workload/>