



# Beyond Caseload: the Organizational Burden of Probation Work

*Public protection , Staff Burnout, and Organizational justice*

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MINISTERUL JUSTIȚIEI  
DIRECȚIA NAȚIONALĂ DE PROBAȚIUNE

# The study on staff morale and burnout

Probation work is emotionally demanding, administratively heavy, and mission-critical for public safety.

In the 2025 study, burnout is approached not as an individual deficit, but as a systemic vulnerability with impact on:

- staff well-being;
- organizational effectiveness;
- professional motivation;
- the mission of probation.

## Research aim

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The research aimed at identifying how legal language and policies translate into actions and measurable outcomes.

The emphasis was not only on whether policies exist, but whether they become actual procedures, activities, and measurable interventions.



# Methodological approach



## STAFF SURVEY



Maslach Burnout Inventory - HS used to assess emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment.

## ORGANIZATIONAL SURVEY

Bespoke-20 item survey based on JD-R model addressed to senior probation managers / organizational directors.



# Jurisdictions involved



21  
countries/  
22 jurisdictions

# Organizational prevention model



## PRIMARY PREVENTION

Training  
Work–life balance  
Communication  
Anonymous feedback  
Workload governance

## SECONDARY PREVENTION

Burnout risk assessment  
Targeted support  
Reflective Supervisor  
Peer support  
Resilience training

## TERTIARY PREVENTION

Mental health services  
Confidential help-seeking  
Workload adjustment  
Leave  
Reintegration



# Main findings – individual perspective



## MBI PROFILES

**34%** were engaged

**32%** were ineffective

**23%** were overextended, or disengaged

**12%** met the criteria for burnout

## JURISDICTION CLASSIFICATION

**7 advanced jurisdictions** in staff protection policies.

**4 emerging jurisdictions.**

**12 underdeveloped policy-based systems.**



# Supportive systems



The present exceptions and variation

They are not perfect, but that they show more formalized  
commitment to staff well-being.

## Connecting individual outcomes to organizational context

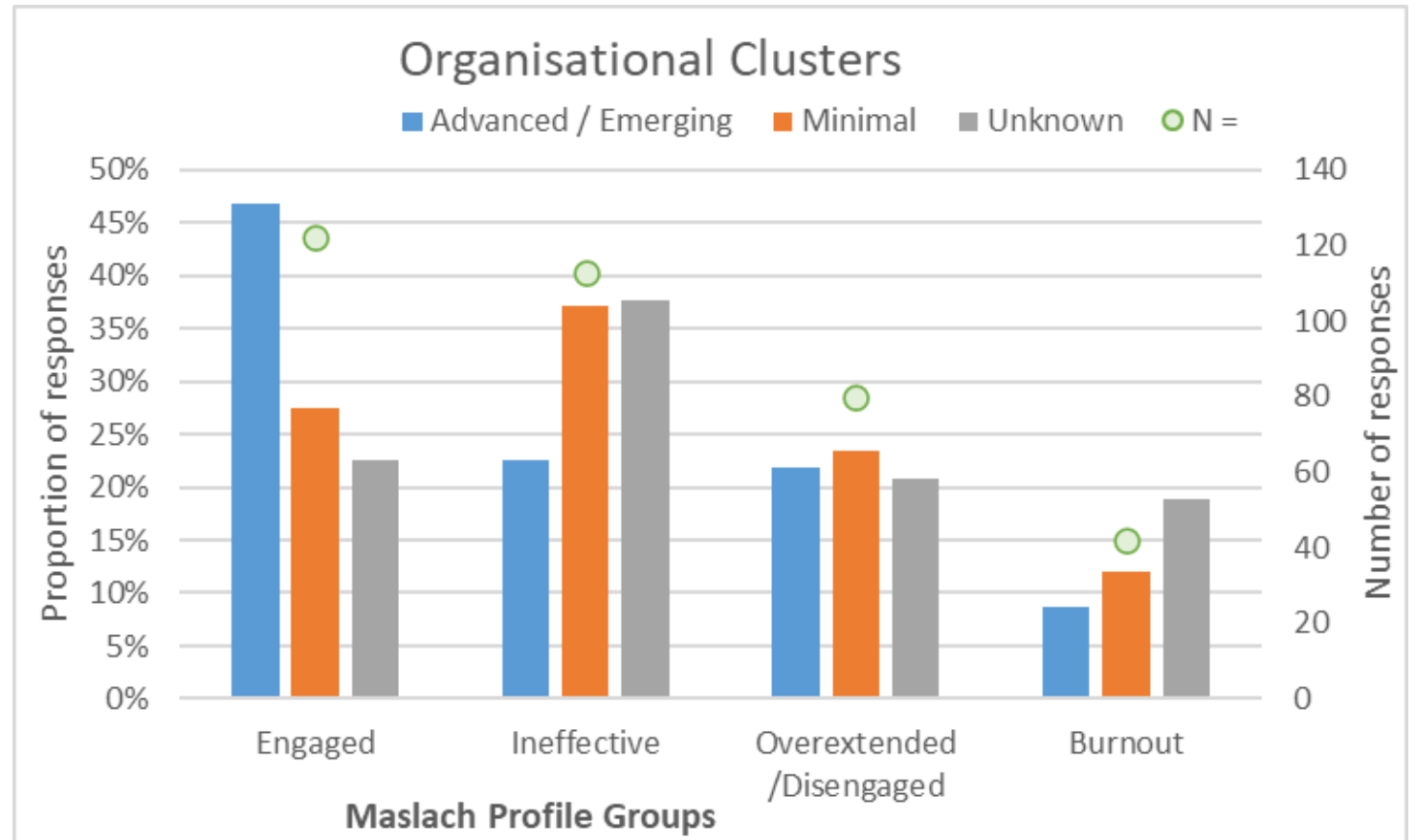
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The combined analysis shows where burnout risk becomes organizationally visible.

# 01 Burnout follows organizational care capacity

Advanced and emerging protection systems were associated with the highest levels of staff engagement and the lowest observed prevalence of burnout.

Minimal-protection systems showed intermediate outcomes, whereas jurisdictions for which MBI responses were received without corresponding organizational survey data — displayed substantially higher proportions of staff in the burnout and overextended/disengaged profiles.



Individual characteristics such as tenure, age, and gender were not statistically significant predictors of burnout levels.

# 02 Organizational justice and internal legitimacy

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Availability of support does not, by itself, amount to an institutionalized culture of care.

Formal workload tools, routine monitoring, confidential feedback mechanisms, and guaranteed access to treatment are the types of structures that strengthen the internal legitimacy of probation systems.

# 03

**Inconsistencies in prevention tiers creates destructive loops.**

**Table 4. Organisational Staff-Care Capacity Across European Probation Systems**

Country	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary	Overall	Revised classification
Croatia	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	Advanced protection
The Netherlands	0.90	0.80	1.00	0.90	Advanced protection
Austria	0.90	1.00	0.75	0.88	Advanced protection
Estonia	1.00	0.40	1.00	0.80	Advanced protection
Jersey	0.75	0.70	0.75	0.73	Advanced protection
France	0.70	0.80	0.50	0.67	Advanced protection
Norway	0.70	0.80	0.50	0.67	Advanced protection
Switzerland	0.63	0.67	0.67	0.66	Emerging protection
Germany	0.70	0.60	0.63	0.64	Emerging protection
Latvia	0.80	0.60	0.50	0.63	Emerging protection
Bulgaria	0.50	1.00	0.00	0.50	Emerging protection (uneven)

## Designed to thrive

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By integrating all three tiers of prevention, advanced protection systems foster an institutionalized culture of care in which probation counselors are not merely supported to endure the demands of probation work but enabled to thrive.



# Conclusions



Sustainable probation practice requires more than managing workload.

It calls for shared European standards that place staff well-being within probation system governance and sustainability.

Thank you.

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