

# THE TREATMENT & MANAGEMENT OF PEOPLE WHO HAVE COMMITTED SEXUAL OFFENCES

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COUNCIL FOR PENOLOGICAL CO-OPERATION  
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**UWE  
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**NOTA**  
Supporting Professionals to  
Prevent Sexual Abuse

**ATSA**  
MAKING SOCIETY SAFER

# CURRENT OVER ARCHING POLICIES & PRACTICES

- PC-CP examined policies and practices in 2004, with recommendations;
  - Definitions of sexual abuse;
  - Minorities & special interest groups;
  - Prevention of sexual abuse;
  - Pre, during and post sentencing;
  - Treatment;
  - Staff training.
  - **No further work was done by PC-CP. In the intervening years these issues have remained the same, or have become more pressing.**
- The Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation & Sexual Abuse (2007)
- Recommendation concerning dangerous offenders (2014): Definitions & basic principles.
- Recommendation European Rules on community sanctions and measures' (2017)
- Repeated mentions of “dangerous offenders” in the rules & guidelines, not people who have committed sexual abuse per se..

# EPIDEMIC OF SEXUAL ABUSE (?)

- Sexual harm is a high profile local, regional, national, international & transnational issue.
- Across Europe the number of perpetrators entering and being managed by the Criminal Justice System is continually increasing as a result of a “perfect storm” created by
  - increased social/traditional media reporting;
  - increased visibility of the offences;
  - increased trust in the criminal justice system to take victims seriously and respond appropriately;
  - the impact of high profile as well as historical cases; &
  - More punitive government policies, practices and strategies.

# NUMBERS, POLICIES, PRACTICE & THE REALITY

**The reporting, sentencing, incarceration of people who have committed sexual offences is increasing; posing an issue for prison, management and community integration – especially in challenging political, community and financial climates.**

- See “Management and supervision of men convicted of sexual offences” report & “Serious Offending by Mobile European Criminals” report.
- Country by country stats
- SPACE data (10 year review and 2016 data)
- CEP data (2018) – total of 16 countries, all CoE member countries
- ATSA international data (2018) – total of 19 countries, with 6 being CoE member countries
- IATSO special edition (2018) – total of 12 countries, with 6 being CoE member countries

# PEOPLE WHO COMMIT SEXUAL ABUSE

- Complex and multi-faceted population – not one size fits all;
- Sexual abuse is an everyday/community issue and people who commit these offences are not necessarily abnormal members of the community;
- Developmental pathways and pre-cursors act as signals, not one simple typology;
- Mental health issues (sometimes low level and other times more pronounced);
- Social, health and well being issues;
- Strong, stable and supportive environment contributes to a reduction in re-offending.

# ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

- Changing population who have been convicted of sexual offences and the challenges these pose to prison and/or probation.
- Reality of the evidence base vs misconceptions/stereotypes (Public, Media & policy).
- Political will to respond to individuals who commit sexual abuse in innovative/adaptive ways – being proactive/long term and not reactive.
- Re-offending, risk management & public protection.
- Staff recruitment & retention.
- The impact of austerity on “offender” management and the reality on the frontline.

# INCONSISTENT RISK ASSESSMENT, TREATMENT & MANAGEMENT PRACTICES ACROSS EUROPE

- **Arrest & Prosecution** (e.g., offences, semantics, thresholds & sentences);
- **Risk assessment of individuals** (e.g., scales, assessors, training & responsibility);
- **Incarceration/prison** (e.g., type of prison, length of sentence & what prison “provides” varies);
- **Treatment** (e.g., scope, nature, responsibility & access);
- **Community management** (e.g., community management?; providers?; multiagency working; alternatives);
- **Registration & disclosure/notification practices** (e.g., a register?; who manages it?; who goes on/for how long?; & who has access to it?);
- **Data sharing within and between countries** (e.g., what gets shared?; why?; the role of organisations & individuals).

# EMERGING ISSUES/DEBATES

- **Prevention of sexual abuse**, working with at risk populations.
- **Life-course perspectives** (Adverse Childhood Experiences, Trauma, mental health).
- **Alternatives to traditional criminal justice** (Circles of Support & Accountability, restorative Justice, etc)
- The “**service user**” voice.
- **Desistence.**
- **Treatment vs management.**
- Consider the “**Key Performance Indicators**” and how that relates to practice.
- **Training, selection and support of staff** – valuing the professional knowledge base



# RECOMMENDATIONS (1/2)

- Consistency in language used to describe individuals who have committed sexual offences;
- Consistency in defining offences, sentences and sentencing guidelines – especially for “emerging” populations;
- Consistency in concepts of risk, risk assessment tools & use;
- Consistency in access to treatment, who provides it & what it is;
- Consideration of what the relevant treatment, management and integration back into the community Key Performance Indicators are, and why;
- Consistency in, and greater investment in, recording and data sharing within as well as between countries;

## RECOMMENDATIONS (2/2)

- Examining the need for alternatives to, and to work in parallel with, traditional criminal justice;
- Better develop multi-agency working beyond CJS and relapse prevention/offender management;
- To embed emerging research, practice and narratives more firmly in existing practices and training;
- Sexual abuse is a health, psychological, developmental, social, cultural and societal issue with all related actions (prevention/responsive) integrated within these issues.