

# Risk assessment & management in Belgium (and beyond): We are not there yet

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Risk assessment?

Risk management?



18 June 2019  
PC-CP\docs 2019\PC-CP(2019)3 Rev3\_E

PC-CP (2019) 3 Rev 3

**EUROPEAN COMMITTEE ON CRIME PROBLEMS**

(CDPC)

**Council for Penological Co-operation**

(PC-CP)

**DRAFT RECOMMENDATION REGARDING THE ASSESSMENT, MANAGEMENT AND INTEGRATION BACK INTO THE  
COMMUNITY OF INDIVIDUALS ACCUSED OR CONVICTED OF SEXUAL OFFENCES AND ITS DRAFT EXPLANATORY  
REPORT<sup>1</sup>**

# High-profile cases

- A necessary evil for policy change?
- Dutroux (1996): ° cooperation agreement
  - supervision and /or treatment become obligated for sex offenders who want to make use of any specific early release modality
- Bakelmans (2019): ↑ necessity of risk assessment
  - E.g. probation services: Implementation of risk assessment
  - E.g. High Council of Justice: recommendations, incl. risk assessment



# Risk assessment: Where are we now?

- In Belgium:
  - Psychiatric/psychological assessment for court: structured risk assessment & unstructured clinical judgment
  - Prison: obligated by law (cooperation agreement)
  - Specialized outpatient centres: more, but no structured approach yet
  - Residential centres: more, but no structured approach yet
  - Probation services: start of the implementation of risk assessment
- Not yet fully embedded in the judicial and forensic mental health system

# Risk assessment: Who's better? Who's the best?



*Sexual Abuse: A Journal of Research and Treatment* (© 2006)  
DOI: 10.1007/s11194-006-9003-6

**Evaluation of the SORAG and the Static-99  
on Belgian Sex Offenders Committed  
to a Forensic Facility**

C. Ducro<sup>1,4</sup> and T. Pham<sup>1,2,3</sup>

10. It is recommended to use Structured Professional Judgement (SPJ), as it is a research-based professional approach and is a transparent and comprehensive basis for decision taking.

*Law and Human Behavior*, Vol. 28, No. 3, June 2004 (© 2004)

**Predictive Validity of the SVR-20 and Static-99  
in a Dutch Sample of Treated Sex Offenders**

Vivienne de Vogel,<sup>1,5</sup> Corine de Ruiter,<sup>2,3</sup> Daan van Beek,<sup>1</sup> and Gwen Mead<sup>4</sup>

**EVALUATING THE PREDICTIVE  
ACCURACY OF SIX RISK  
ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENTS  
FOR ADULT SEX OFFENDERS**

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MICHAEL C. SETO  
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EDWARD J. PEACOCK  
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# Risk assessment: The pitfalls, the problems

- *Do we fully understand the purpose of risk assessment?*

- Aim of risk assessment ≠ prediction, but prevention

“Risk assessment: the process by which risk is understood: it examines the nature, seriousness and pattern of offences; it identifies the characteristics of the individual and the circumstances that contribute to it; it informs appropriate decision-making and action with the aim of reducing risk.”

(McCartan & Fuglested, 2019, p. 4)

- How can risk assessment be imbedded in our judicial system? E.g., higher risk, longer sentences?

“...with his STATIC-99R score of 1 Mr. Peeters falls into the low risk category”

“In the norm group of STATIC-99R, 5.5 to 9% were reconvicted ... ”

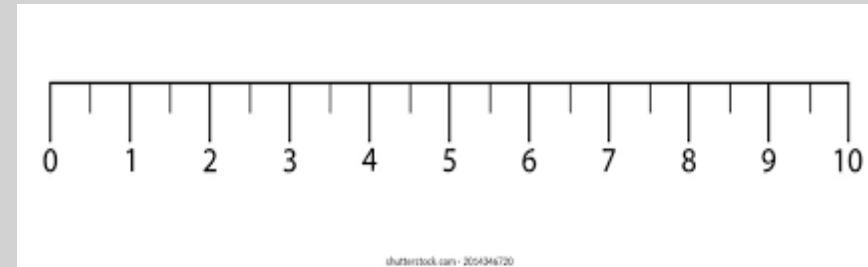
# Risk assessment: Do we understand risk?

## Risky business: Communicating about the risk for sexual re-offences

Kasia Uzieblo<sup>1,2,3</sup>, Jeffrey Lauer, Vivienne De Vogel<sup>1,4</sup>, & Wineke Smid<sup>1</sup>

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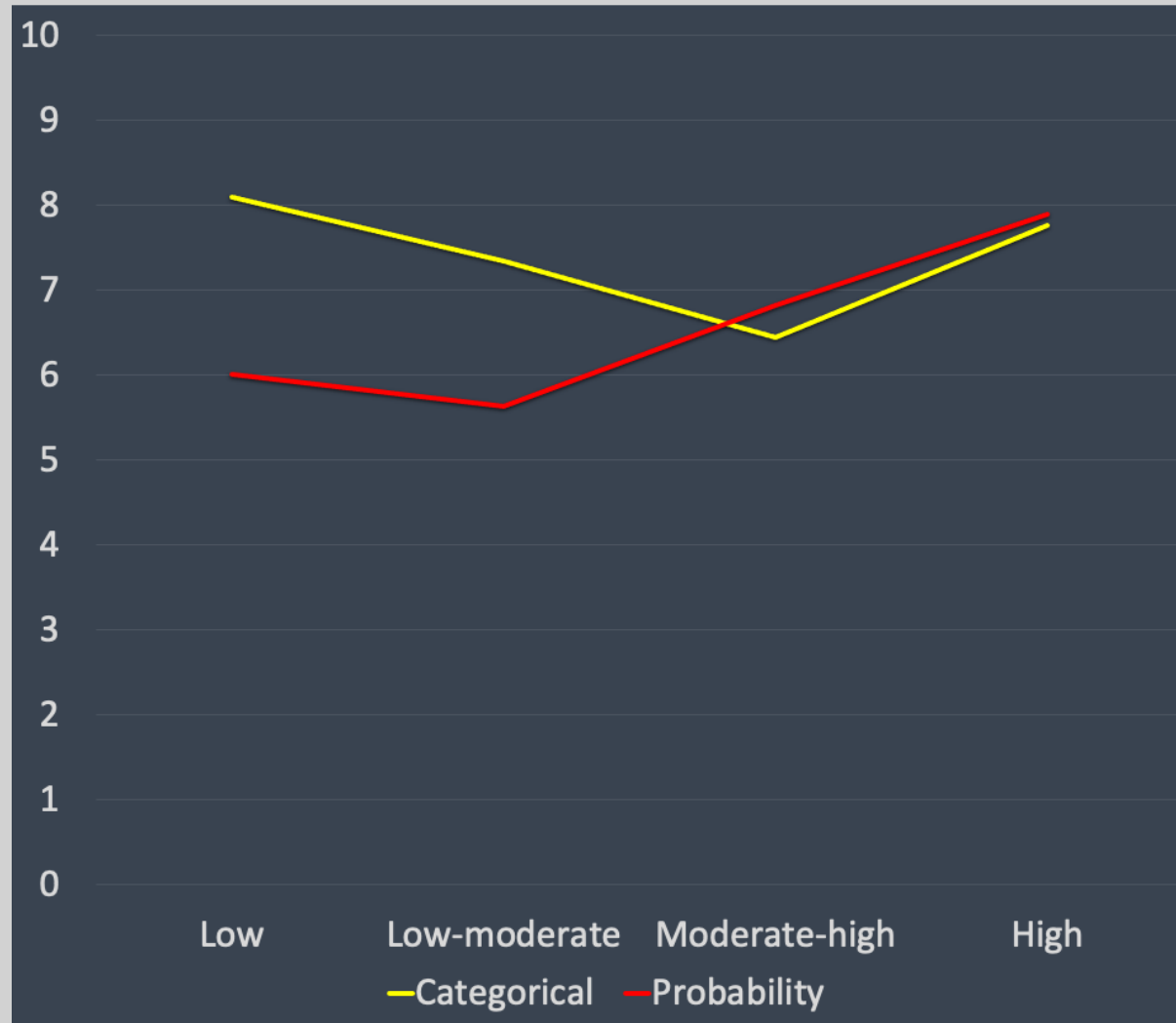


“...with his STATIC-99R score of 1 Mr. Peeters falls into the low risk category”

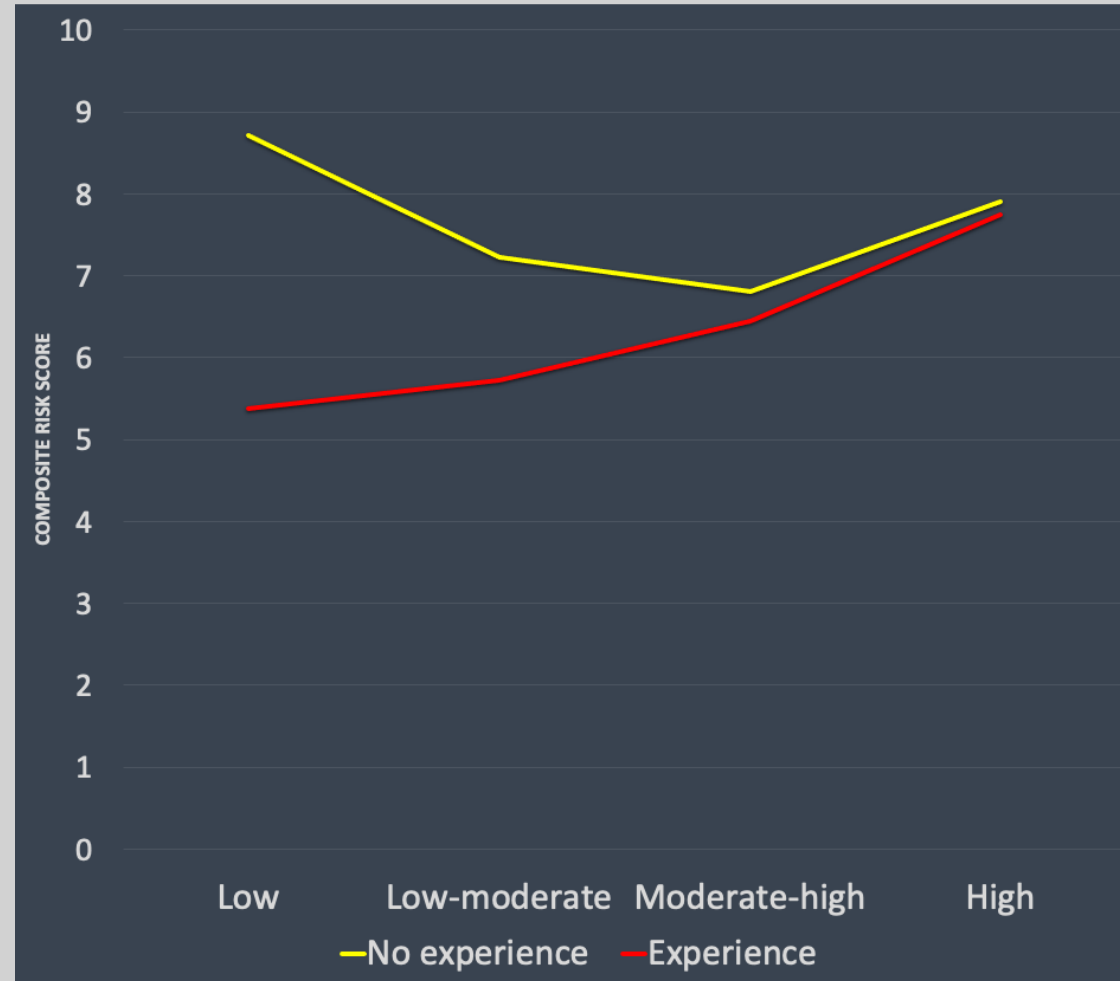
“In the norm group of STATIC-99R, 5.5 to 9% of men with a score of 1 were reconvicted ... ”



# Risk assessment: Do we understand risk?



# Risk assessment: Do we understand risk?



# Risk assessment: Do we understand risk?



Offence



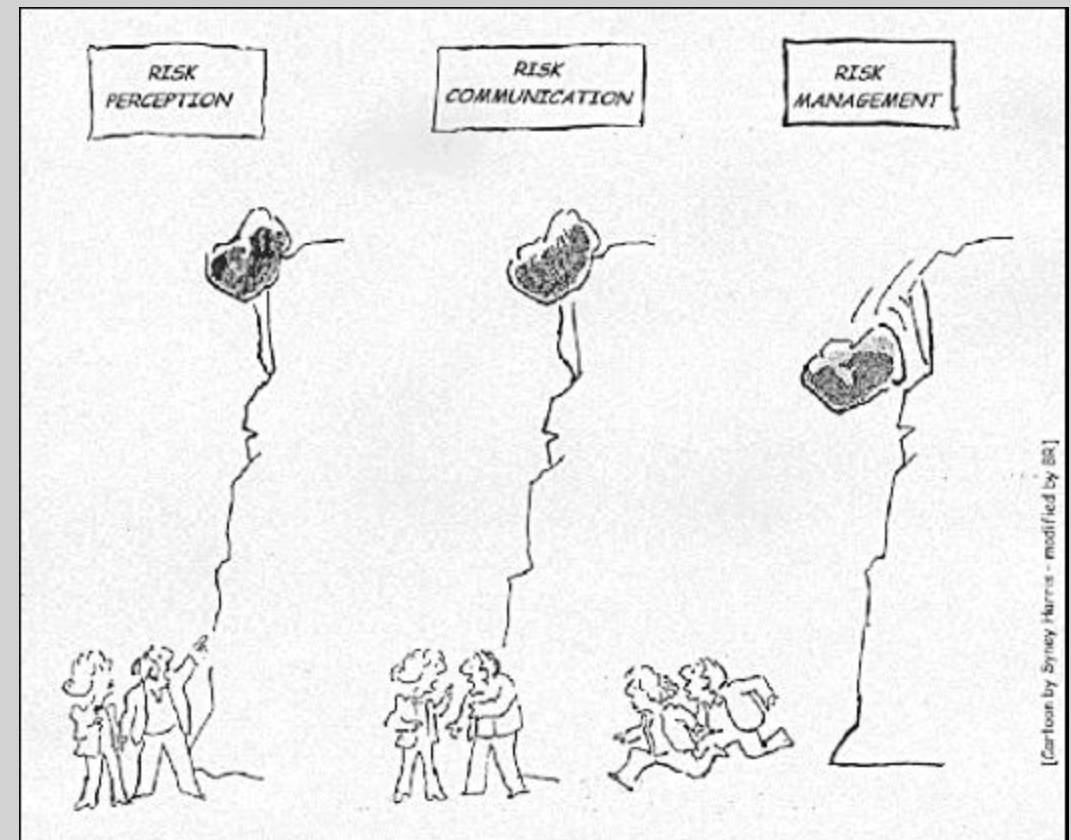
Suspect/offender



Addressee

# Risk assessment: Do we understand risk?

- *Do we fully understand the risk assessment outcomes?*
  - Risk communication is the link between risk assessment and risk management
  - Influence on decision making process in e.g., judges, clinicians, ...
  - Incorrectly executed & incorrect or unclear communication may have severe negative outcomes for all those involved and for society



# Risk assessment & management

- *Do we know how to adhere risk management to risk assessment?*

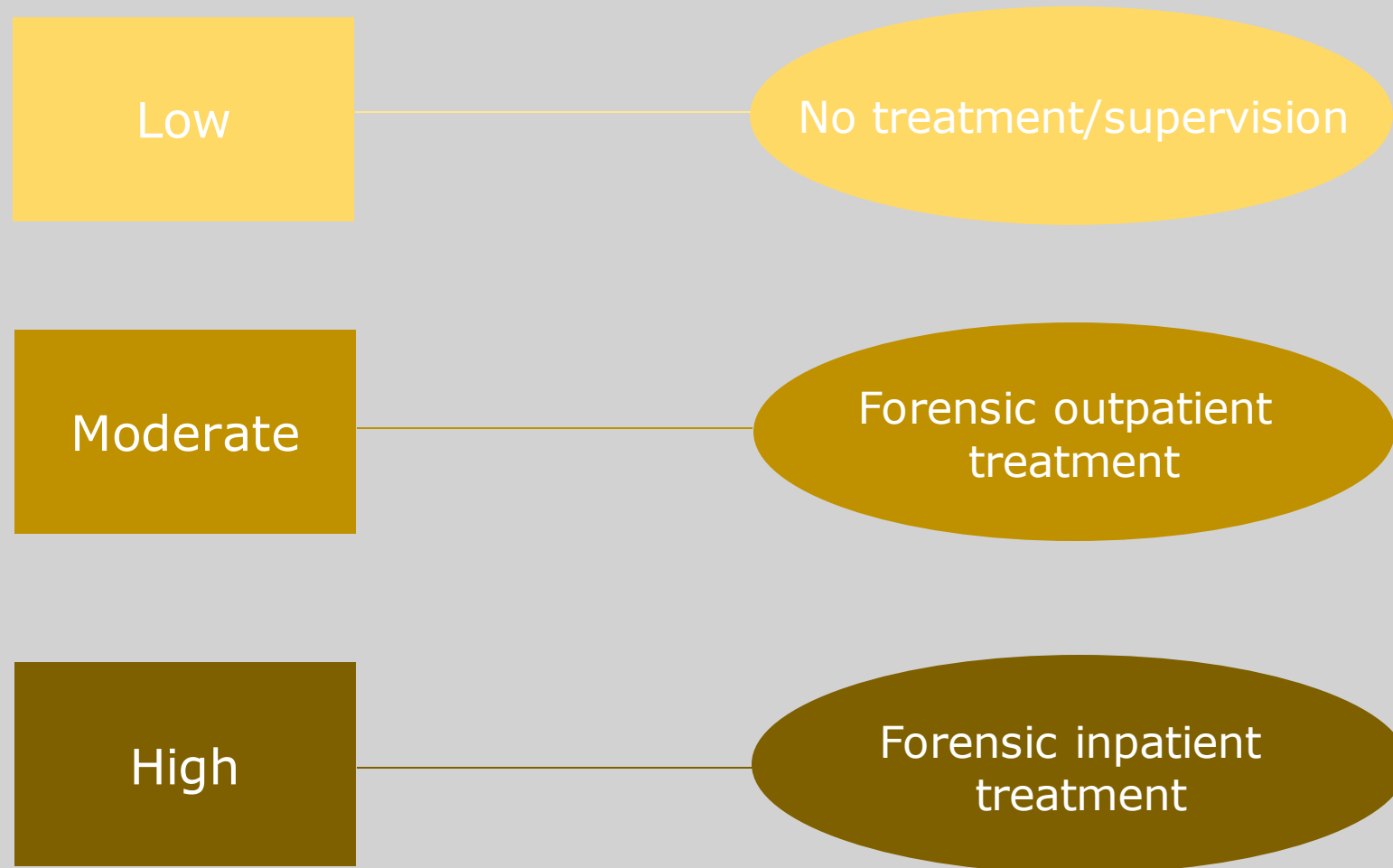
“Formal risk assessment is recommended to inform the judiciary and other competent authorities and agencies **regarding the best sentencing, management or treatment plan** for a given person.”

“Programming ought **to vary according to the specific risk and ought to target the issues that correlate with recidivism**. Researchers (Hanson, Bourgon, Helmus and Hodgson, 2009) have demonstrated, that sex offender programs which comply with the RNR model, have the greatest impact on reconviction.”

“In practise, a RNR-compliant program must have clear policies about risk-based allocation/or different treatment routes for different risk groups.”

(McCartan & Fuglested, 2019, p. 6)

# Risk assessment & management: A match?



**Table 2.** Distribution of Risk Levels Based on STATIC-99R Scores for the Three Samples.

	Outpatient Treatment Group (n = 80)	Dutch National Sample (n = 145)	Canadian Sample (n = 2,011)
Low risk %	43.8 (35)	42.1 (61)	39.6 (796)
Low to moderate risk %	30.0 (24)	28.3 (41)	34.7 (698)
Moderate to high risk %	15.0 (12)	21.4 (31)	18.1 (364)
High risk %	11.3 (9)	8.3 (12)	7.6 (153)
STATIC score M (SD)	2.2 (2.6)	2.3 (2.3)	2.3 (2.5)

Note: No significant differences were found.

(Smid, Kamphuis, Wever, & Verbruggen, 2015)

**Do intervention plans meet criteria for effective practice to reduce recidivism?  
 How probation officers forget about social capital and basic needs**

Jacqueline Bosker  
 Cilia Witteman  
 Jo Hermanns<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract**

*The increased use of instruments for assessing risks and needs in probation should lead to intervention plans that meet the criteria for effective practice. An analysis of 300 intervention plans from the Dutch probation service showed that the match between the assessed criminogenic needs and the goals and interventions in the intervention plan is fairly low. It was also found that the so-called risk principle is not fully applied by probation officers. In addition, personal goals that the offender values are often not taken fully into account. Finally, the intervention plans have a strong focus on improving human capital, while improving social capital and basic needs often is not part of the intervention plans, even if they were assessed as dynamic criminogenic needs.*

Risk assessment &  
 management: A match?

# Risk management: The real world

- *Do we know how to adhere risk management to risk assessment?*
  - Populations are mixed in both outpatient and residential centres
  - We don't really know what to do with risk assessment outcomes.
  - How to align risk assessment with management strategies?





# Risk assessment: The pitfalls, the problems



Do we fully understand risk assessment outcomes?



How do we communicate about risk assessment?



How can we ensure that risk assessments lead to adequate risk management strategies?

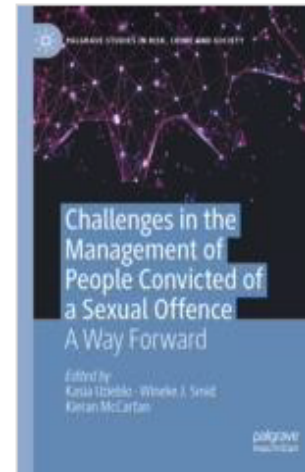
Thank you!

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Palgrave Studies in Risk, Crime and Society



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## Challenges in the Management of People Convicted of a Sexual Offence

A Way Forward

Editors: **Uzieblo**, Kasia, **Smid**, Wineke J., **McCartan**, Kieran (Eds.)

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