

Experiencing offender supervision in Europe: The Eurobarometer – Lessons from the pilot study

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to describe and evaluate, as a potential research template, a pan-European quantitative survey, the Eurobarometer on Experiencing Supervision (EES). The tool was developed and tested across eight jurisdictions in order to evaluate its accuracy and utility with regard to comparative research. In addition, the paper illustrates the type of data this tool can generate and how this data can be used to improve supervision practices around the world. In brief, EES covers eight core domains of supervision: supervision as a human service, offender's perception regarding the supervisor, the relationship between the offender and the supervisor, supervision and practical help, supervision and compliance, breach practice, supervision and rehabilitation and the offender's involvement and participation. Overall, the tool is considered useful and promising. However, further research is required in order to demonstrate its full potential.

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Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to describe and evaluate, as a potential research template, a pan-European quantitative survey, the Eurobarometer on Experiencing Supervision (EES). The survey was developed during a COST Action on Offender Supervision, and piloted in eight jurisdictions during 2015: Croatia, England, Ireland, Lithuania, Norway, Romania, Serbia and Spain.¹ The overall aim of the EES is to address the lacuna in current literature regarding the experience of the offender under supervision, specifically at a comparative level, as identified by Durnescu et al. (2013). To fulfil this aim, the EES employs the following core objectives: a) to capture a description of supervision from the perspective of the individual service user, and b) to gain a broader view of the collective experience of supervisees across eight European jurisdictions. This paper examines the methodology and substantive content of the EES, before discussing how the survey meets the required objectives. It is submitted that the EES has the potential to serve as a useful tool in gaining a deeper, comparative understanding of supervision in Europe, from the unique perspective of the offender.

Since the 1960s, offenders' voices have become an important factor for correctional services in conducting criminal career research (Wootton, 1959; Bottoms and McWilliams, 1979; Davies, 1979). Briefly, this line of research argues that the situated and subjective experience of offenders is essential in predicting the way in which they will react to punishment, and, ultimately, to anticipating the outcome of a criminal justice intervention (e.g. Bieker, 1982). More recently, the focus on the experience of the offender has been augmented by studies in the area of desistance, which suggest that effective interventions are those that: engage with offenders in a positive and respectful way (Maruna and Farrall, 2004; Rex, 1999); encourage them to co-participate in the supervision process (Rex, 1999; McCulloch, 2013); facilitate the subjective transformations of self (Maruna, 2001); use wisely the potential of a 'good relationship' (Burnett and McNeill, 2005; Morash et al., 2015; Skeem et al., 2007); and provide practical help when needed (Farrall, 2002). Weaver and Barry (2014) state that the process of change which is fundamental for the intended outcomes of supervision (community safety, social rehabilitation and reintegration) cannot be achieved without the offender's participation and active involvement in the process, and Ansems and Braam (2016) found that probation officers realize the importance of involving probationers and act upon this belief.

Studies on compliance argue that although practitioners are often focused on short-term compliance (e.g. attending meetings, reaching specified goals, etc.) it is, in fact, long-term compliance that facilitates desistance (Tyler, 1990; Bottoms, 2001). Long-term compliance describes the offender's active and meaningful engagement with the requirements of the criminal law. McCulloch (2013) associates short-term and long-term compliance with Robinson and McNeill's (2008)

concepts of 'formal' and 'substantive' compliance, with a view to demonstrating the general need to 'shift attention from the practicalities of enforcing compliance toward a more conceptual engagement with compliance as a complex and multi-dimensional dynamic' (McCulloch, 2013: 48). In terms of its practical manifestation, it has been argued that substantive compliance can be developed in circumstances where offenders perceive staff behaviour as positive, respectful and fair (Ugwudike, 2010; Phillips, 2011). On the contrary, non-compliance appears to be fostered when offenders perceive staff behaviour in a negative way. Similarly, the concept of legitimacy appears to play a crucial role in determining the level of offender participation in his/her own rehabilitation. Research suggests that offenders are more likely to comply, engage and progress if they perceive the exercise of state authority as fair, just and reasonable (Bottoms, 2001; McIvor, 2009; Robinson and McNeill, 2008).

The significance and the reach of research relating to the phenomena of desistance, compliance and legitimacy is demonstrated by the fact that many of the interventionist approaches outlined above are echoed in various human rights or Council of Europe recommendations. To give just one example, Recital 6 of the Council of Europe Recommendation on Probation Rules (2010) 1 stipulates that: 'as far as possible, the probation agencies shall seek the offenders' informed consent and *co-operation regarding interventions that affect them*' (emphasis added).

The experience of supervision from the perspective of the offender has been evaluated across various jurisdictions and from diverse standpoints. Most studies evaluate the offender's satisfaction with the process of supervision (Abraham et al., 2007; Brandes and Cheung, 2009; Levenson and Prescott, 2009; Mair and Mills, 2009), the characteristics of the supervision process such as procedural fairness (Padfield, 2012), risk factors in supervision (Holliday et al., 2013) or probationers' level of informed consent to supervision and active participation in drafting their individual treatment plan (Sučić et al., 2014). Other studies analyse the negative effects of supervision on the offender (Durnescu, 2011; Vander Beken, 2012). However, there is no comparative study that assesses the offender's experience of supervision in a broader sense.

Employing a comparative analysis is useful on two levels. First, having an overview of what is happening, in terms of the experience of offender supervision in a given time and place, provides a unique opportunity to gain insight into the impact of recent trends in the area. Second, and from a more practical perspective, knowledge can result in more meaningful outcomes: the more we can uncover and understand about the pathway to desistance from the perspective of the offender across member states, the more we can effect transformation in policy and practice.

In promoting a pan-European approach, then, the EES operates on the basis that with cooperation comes innovation. Though cultures, policies and procedures may differ across member states, the human change process is a common thread, as is the overarching goal of desistance. Of course, any such study must come with a realization of the potential hazards involved in conducting a comparative project of this size. Thus, underlying the structure and analysis of the EES is an awareness of the need to negotiate both the risk of being 'ethnocentric' or 'assuming that what we

do, our way of thinking about and responding to crime, is universally shared or, at least, that it would be right for everyone else' (Nelken, 2009: 291), together with the risk of 'relativism', that is, 'the view that we will never really be able to grasp what others are doing and that we can have no basis for evaluating whether what they do is right' (Nelken, 2009: 292). Thus, as Nelken suggests, our analysis of the data will be conducted with an awareness of the time and place from which it emerges, but also with a view to acknowledging that the collective information may be classified, described and evaluated according to cosmopolitan criteria (Nelken, 2009).

Linked with the need to better understand offender supervision from a comparative perspective is the recognition that we have a responsibility to 'market' our findings effectively. As a result, a truer picture of the field of offender supervision may be brought to the attention of the public, with a view to shifting negative mentalities and having a greater influence on policy discourse. For example, Maguire and Carr's (2013) exploration of the 'brand' of probation in the Republic of Ireland shows how negative media coverage can have an impact on resourcing and public perception within the context of offender supervision.

Finally, it is noteworthy that the field of offender supervision has not escaped the penal expansionism trend in recent decades, with the probation population increasing significantly across many countries, to the extent that it outnumbers the prison population in some (Wacquant, 2009; McNeill and Beyens, 2013). The nuance of this trend has been captured by Phelps' 'paradox of probation', where she speaks of probation (in a US context) acting as an alternative to imprisonment, yet conversely as a criminal justice net-widener, depending on the conditions present at a given time and place (Phelps, 2013). Similarly, at a European level, Aebi et al (2015) have shown that both rates of imprisonment and community sanction numbers continuously increased in almost all European countries between 1990 and 2010. The increase in the use of offender supervision has an impact on the number and the 'type' of offenders undergoing supervision (McNeill and Beyens, 2013). Thus, for the purposes of the EES, an underlying question is: 'how have these changes affected the experience of supervision for those subject to it' (McNeill and Beyens, 2013: 23)?

The remaining sections of this paper outline the rationale underpinning the EES, explain the structure and themes of the pilot survey, and discuss the potential of the survey as a pan-European research template on the experience of the offender under supervision.

Rationale

The EES draws on the methodology of Bieker (1982) and Cornel (2000), with a view to constructing a more standardized and comparative European survey of the attitude of offenders towards their supervision experience (McNeill and Beyens, 2013). To date, it appears that the offender's experience of his or her supervision is somewhat nebulous and highly dependent, not just on their situation, social systemic context, disposition, and attitude, but on their relationship and interactions with their

supervisor, as the 'face' of the supervision system, who herself is influenced by her own situation, social systemic context, disposition, and attitude (McNeill and Beyens, 2013: 41).

If implemented on a larger scale, the survey has the potential to provide a meaningful indicator of the experiences of supervision in each participating member state, and from a cross-national perspective. On a national level, member states would be better positioned to gauge the effectiveness of their criminal justice interventions, in addition to empowering countries (and European institutions) to benchmark supervision practices and assess policy at a pan-European level. Of course divergences in approach across participating states are inevitable, but the clear and comprehensive structure of the survey will offset such challenges to a significant degree. The EES does not claim to be the last word on the experience of offenders, but, if utilized on a broader scale, it could go some way towards filling the gap in current literature, particularly from a comparative standpoint.

The project employs a quantitative research method based on survey design. This method is appropriate because it fulfils the research objectives of the project. The first research objective is fulfilled because an individualized description of the experience of supervisees is captured across various pre-identified themes of their supervision. The second research objective of gaining a broader view of the collective experience of supervisees is fulfilled by having the capacity to generalize across a whole population. Thus, the data collection and analysis is systematic and comparable across member states for the benefit of any potential future phases of the project.

The survey is cross-sectional, with data collected at one point in time in all locations. The data collection is based on a self-administered questionnaire (with assistance provided where necessary). The questionnaire is paper-based. Data is gathered which allows the assessment of statistical correlates, such as age, relationship status, parental status, education and employment. Furthermore, though in a questionnaire format, the study attempts to capture how the offender views himself in the context of his supervision, in addition to how others may perceive his identity in the circumstances. Questions regarding compliance, breach and rehabilitation draw on the offender's experience of and attitudes towards transformation and desistance. In addition, the offender's experience and perception of the supervisor, in terms of role, relationship and assistance, is investigated with a view to identifying how supervisors may support compliance, and ultimately desistance, in a more meaningful way.

The pilot study

Comparative research issues cannot be separated from discussions of policy relevance, methodological challenges, technical feasibility and value for money. Thus, this pilot study aims to assess the general feasibility of a cross-national European survey of experiencing supervision. Although some preliminary findings are presented, the sample is small and so they are provided simply to illustrate what this tool can achieve.

Sampling

The project stems from research undertaken by the Experiencing Supervision Working Group, one of four Working Groups of the COST Action on Offender Supervision (Action IS1106). The remaining groups focused on Practicing Supervision, Decision-Making and Supervision, and European norms, policies and practice. The participants of the Experiencing Supervision Working Group were concerned largely with the lived experience of those undergoing supervision, and those affected by it. The EES is just one projection from the group, and the sampling, by necessity, reflects the nationality of the members engaged with the project.

Due to lack of financial means and restricted project duration, sampling was limited to convenience samples of probationers in several European countries under the supervision of an authorized probation office. Since the aim was to collect data from a small number of respondents having similar characteristics to the population of probationers at the national levels, probationers from both sexes, with different educational background and different ethnic origin, were chosen to participate in this pilot research in each country. Each researcher negotiated access to probationers with probation officers and obtained ethical approval for the survey from national authorities and authorized institutions in her/his own country. In addition, each participant signed a consent form to participate in the study. Data from pilot studies was collected in eight jurisdictions: Croatia, England, Ireland, Lithuania, Norway, Romania, Serbia, and Spain. Approximately 10 respondents were recruited on average in each jurisdiction.

Procedure

The general goal was to test the research questions, and perform initial evaluations of the scales' validity and reliability, in addition to illustrating the utility of the tool for future studies. Questionnaire construction was performed through the two stages of piloting. First piloting consisted of conducting interviews with probationers, and second piloting consisted of the administration of the questionnaire.

The interview protocol was translated into national languages, and interviews were audio recorded. Interviews were transcribed and translated into English, or if that was not feasible, the answers were analysed and clustered under specific survey categories/themes. During the interviews, open questions were primarily used, but some of those questions were followed by alternative questions to test feasibility of predicted probationers' answers. Interviewers were instructed to pay special attention to the following issues: Are the questions easy to translate into your language? Are there specific words/concepts that are difficult to translate into your language? Are the questions understood by the subjects? Are there too many questions for the subjects? Is there repetition? And how can the answers be classified into potential groups for the survey?

Based on what the literature review and the Council of Europe recommendations consider as important in the arena of offender supervision, eight broad themes related to experiencing supervision were included in the questionnaire, namely:

supervision – general aspects; supervision and supervisor; the relationship with supervisor; supervision and practical help; supervision and compliance; supervision and breach; supervision and rehabilitation, and; supervision and involvement. Data related to demographics (14 questions) and probationers' criminal justice history (11 questions) were also collected. Each question contained a 'can't say/don't know' option.

After initial questionnaire construction, the answer options in the questionnaire were revised and adjusted according to national legislation, and the questionnaire was then translated into national languages using a back-translation procedure. The fieldwork was conducted in national capitals as far as possible during 2015 and 2016. Questionnaires were administered individually, and interviewers assisted probationers with questionnaire completion.

Themes and questions used in EES questionnaire

As mentioned above, there were eight broad themes included in the EES. Most of the questions included in the questionnaire were accompanied by different options to choose from or by a 5 point Likert scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

Six questions were used to assess *supervision as a general experience*. In brief, the following aspects were taken into account: average duration of the appointment with the supervisor (see Bonta et al., 2008), purpose/meaning of the supervision (see Allen, 1985; Van Voorhis, Browning, Simon and Gordon, 1997; Fariello-Springer et al., 2009) and primary and secondary stigmatization of probationer/labelling (see Schneider and McKim, 2003).

The *offender's perception regarding the supervisor* is captured in another six questions. The following aspects are included here: number of supervisors in the last 12 months; the duration of supervision with the same supervisor; the gender of the supervisor; general satisfaction with the supervisor; the understanding of the supervisor's role (see Trotter, 1993); and an adapted version of the Dual Role Relationship Inventory (see also Mair and May, 1997; Fariello-Springer et al., 2009; DeLude et al., 2012; Skeem et al., 2007).

The *relationship between the offender and the supervisor* is evaluated in one question with 14 items that can be classified in negative or positive (e.g. the relationship with my supervisor is positive, formal, distant, tense, etc.) (see also Tickel, 1994; Skeem et al., 2007). *Supervision as a practical help* activity is covered in one question with 13 items (e.g. my supervisor helped me look for, find, or keep a safe place to live) (see Farrall, 2002).

The relationship between *supervision and compliance* is covered in three questions: likeliness of completing the sentence (see Olson and Lurigio, 2000) and external/internal motivation for (not) complying with the sentence requirements. *Supervision and breach practices* are the focus of four questions: number of times probationer failed to turn up for the supervision session without notice, number of times supervisor considered taking probationer back to court for breaching the order, number of times probationer breached current sentence, and a possible reaction of the supervisor in one vignette.

Three main questions with multiple answering options cover the relationship between *supervision and rehabilitation*, focusing on the following items: the probability of moving away from crime in the future and contribution of supervision to it, and probationers' perceptions of the relative severity of probation in relation to prison sentence (see Petersilia and Deschenes, 1994; Main and May, 1994; Fariello, Springer, Applegate et al., 2009; DeLude, Mitchel and Barber, 2012). Relative severity of probation in relation to prison sentence has been studied by comparing severity of types of criminal sentences, using methodological tools in which comparisons are made by the degree of severity of the sentences (Buchner, 1979; Morris and Tonry, 1991; Petersilia and Deschenes, 1994).

The last four questions refer to *supervision and offender's involvement* (McCulloch, 2013) in the drafting of the supervision plan or other decisions regarding their supervision.

Socio-demographic characteristic of the probationers

Data was collected from up to 15 probationers per country who were normally scheduled to visit their probation officer on a particular day. A total of 78 respondents from eight countries participated in the research. The majority of probationers were male (86%), on average 39 years old (19 to 72 years old), unemployed (59.7%), had a child or children (64.9%), and lived in the family apartment (53.2%). Many probationers were single (41.6%), and 34.6% had completed secondary education. On average, probationers were 26 years old when they committed an offence for the first time and served, on average, two prison sentences. In addition, 35 per cent of probationers were currently under supervision of between one and two years, and 36 per cent had met their supervisor once in the last month.

Results

Since data was collected from a small convenience sample, data presented here is by no means representative either within or across countries, but serves to illustrate the potential impact a comparative survey on experiencing supervision in Europe can have. Also, for the sake of illustration, observed trends and differences are interpreted based on absolute values, and not on actual statistical significance between values. Thus, caution is needed when reading the results of this small-scale pilot-study. Results illustrate each of the themes covered by the EES.

In the majority of countries probationers observed that supervision has both a rehabilitative and punitive purpose (Figure 1). With the exception of Spain and Lithuania, probationers in other countries perceive that there is a greater rehabilitative than punitive purpose underlying supervision. In all countries, except England, probationers felt better about themselves since being under supervision, while in Ireland this experience was perceived as the most positive.

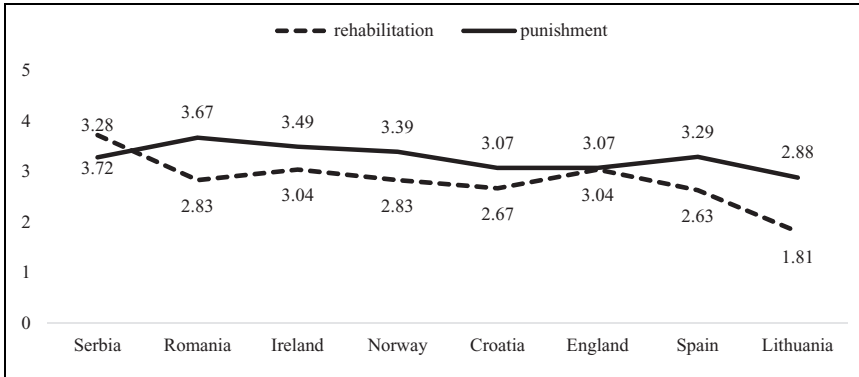


Figure 1. Supervision as a general experience.

Table 1. Feeling about yourself since being under the supervision (%).*

Country	Feeling about yourself since being under the supervision (%)		
	Better	The same	Worse
Ireland	83.3	16.7	0.0
Serbia	70.0	30.0	0.0
Croatia	66.7	22.2	11.1
Norway	50.0	25.0	25.0
Lithuania	44.4	33.3	22.2
England	40.0	60.0	0.0

*Data from Romania and Spain are missing.

Table 2. Self-observed influence of supervision on different aspects of life.*

Country	Aspects of life						
	health	future prospects	family life	quality of life	social life	job or education	finances
Ireland	4.33	4.17	4.50	4.17	3.67	4.00	3.67
Croatia	3.67	3.67	3.67	3.33	3.56	3.43	3.00
Serbia	3.18	3.22	2.92	2.67	2.67	2.45	1.73
Norway	3.00	3.57	2.88	2.78	2.71	2.50	1.89
England	3.20	3.14	3.33	2.71	3.00	3.00	2.43
Spain	3.00	2.89	2.22	2.56	2.22	1.89	2.22
Romania	3.00	2.17	3.00	2.57	2.86	2.25	2.80
Lithuania	2.50	2.56	2.75	2.29	2.29	2.11	2.57

*Scale range: 1 (much more negatively) to 5 (much more positively).

On average, probationers observed that supervision had neither positive nor negative influences on different aspects of their lives, and a slightly more negative influence on their finances. The most positive influence was observed on their health

and future prospects. Observed influence of supervision on different aspects of life was the most positively assessed among Irish probationers and the most negatively assessed among Lithuanian probationers (Tables 1 and 2).

Generally, probationers were very satisfied with their supervisors. However, a small proportion of probationers reported dissatisfaction regarding supervision.

The perception of the supervisor in all countries was very positive. Probationers considered that supervisors treat them with respect, cared about them, assisted them, etc. The relationship with supervisors was perceived as the most positive in Serbia, Croatia, and Romania (Figures 2 and 3).

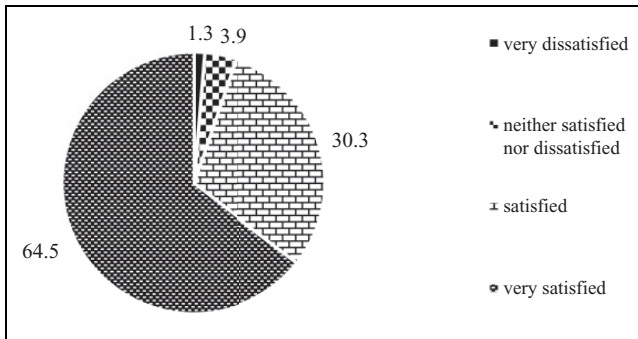


Figure 2. Level of satisfaction with supervisor.

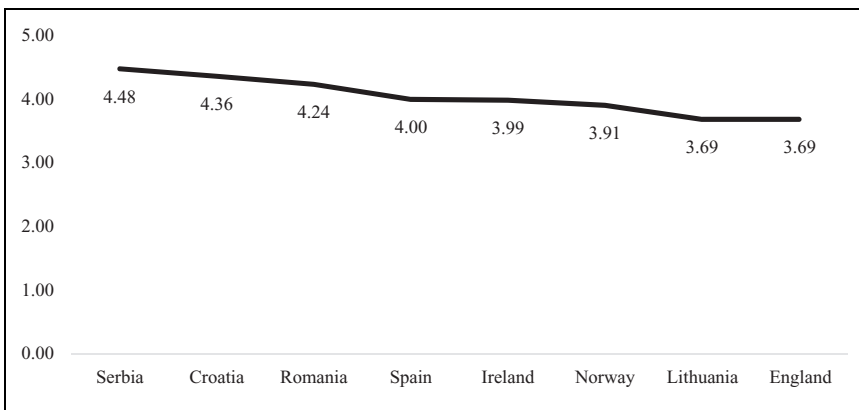


Figure 3. Offender's perception regarding the supervisor.

The role of the supervisor was understood in most countries in terms of a supervision or advisory role (Table 3). However, it should be emphasized that this section presents the most difficulties for translation purposes, regarding the terminology used for supervisors in different countries. It is acknowledged that the specific national term used for the probation officer may have an impact on his or her

Table 3. Understanding of the role of a supervisor.

Country	Role (%)					
	Supervisor	Advisor	Friend	Counsellor	Advocate	Prison officer
Lithuania	80.0	20.0				
England	71.4	28.6				
Spain	70.0	10.0	10.0	10.0		
Romania	33.3	22.2		22.2	22.2	
Croatia	11.1	44.4	44.4			
Norway	10.0	10.0	10.0	70.0		
Serbia	7.1	42.9	35.7	7.1		7.1
Ireland		28.6	28.6		42.9	

perceived role. For example, if the probation officer is known as a ‘supervisor’ in a specific country, then it is likely that the offender will describe him or her as such, even though they may have a friendly rapport.

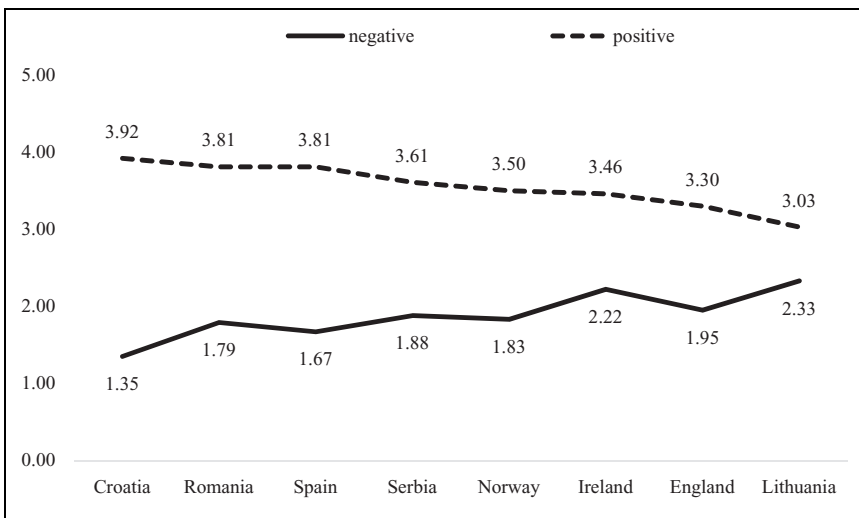


Figure 4. Positives and negatives of the probationer-supervisor relationship.

Probationers from all countries on average perceived more positive elements and fewer negative elements in the probationer-supervisor relationship (Figure 4). By using this measure it is possible to simultaneously estimate the perceived presence of positive and negative elements in the probationer-supervisor relationship. For example, to probationers in Croatia, the probationer-supervisor relationship was observed as the most positive and the least negative, while probationers in Lithuania observed a much smaller discrepancy in the estimated average presence of positive and negative aspects of probationer-supervisor relationship.

With regard to practical help probationers received from supervisors, they needed and received help in 106 cases, while in 33 cases they believed that they needed help but they did not receive it from their supervisors (Figure 5).

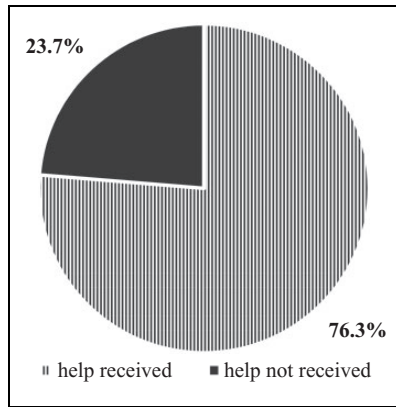


Figure 5. Supervision as a practical help.

In the majority of countries probationers estimated that both internal and external factors contributed to complying with the supervising sentence, but that internal factors contributed to it to a higher degree than external factors (Figure 6). Only Irish probationers on average do not agree that external factors contributed to their complying with the supervising sentence, and among Norwegian and Spanish probationers external motivation slightly exceeded internal motivation.

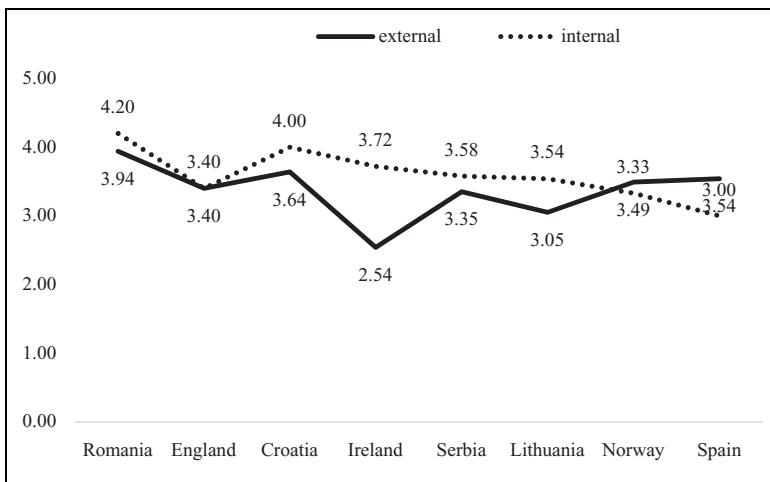


Figure 6. Motivation for complying with supervising order.

Most probationers have never breached their supervision sentence (85%), and only 4 per cent breached it several times. As Table 4 illustrates, supervisors' reaction to breach of supervision sentence, as anticipated by probationers, would vary across different European countries. For example, in Ireland the probable action of the supervisor would be to pay a home visit to the probationer, in Spain to make a phone call, and in Romania and Lithuania, to inform the court or send a warning letter.

Table 4. Supervision and breach practices.*

Country	Probable action (%)						
	Home visit	Sent warning letter	Inform the court	Initiate the start procedure of replacing supervision with imprisonment	Inform probation service	Phone call	Don't know
Croatia	11.1		11.1			55.6	22.2
England		57.1		14.3			28.6
Ireland	83.3	16.7					
Lithuania	14.3	28.6	42.9	14.3			
Romania		33.3	50.0	16.7			
Serbia	40.0	20.0	10.	20.0	10.0		
Spain		10.0				80.0	10.0

*Data from Norway are missing.

Although most probationers are rather optimistic about their rehabilitation prospects, as Figure 7 shows, there is still room for improvement. It may be that supervision is not enough to achieve rehabilitation. Other inputs may be needed to generate or facilitate rehabilitation (e.g. employment, family support, etc.).

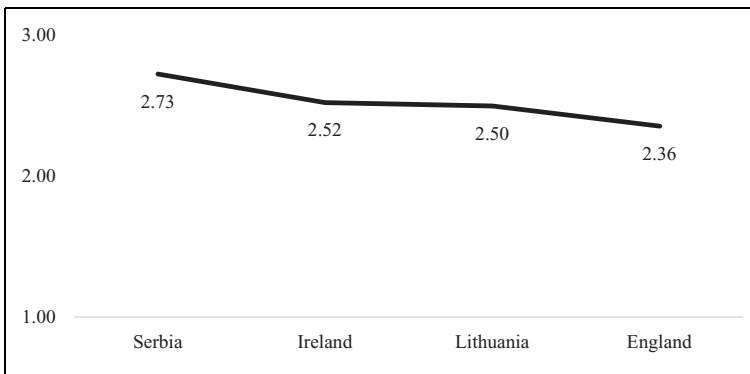


Figure 7. Supervision and rehabilitation.* Data from Croatia, Spain, Norway and Romania are missing.

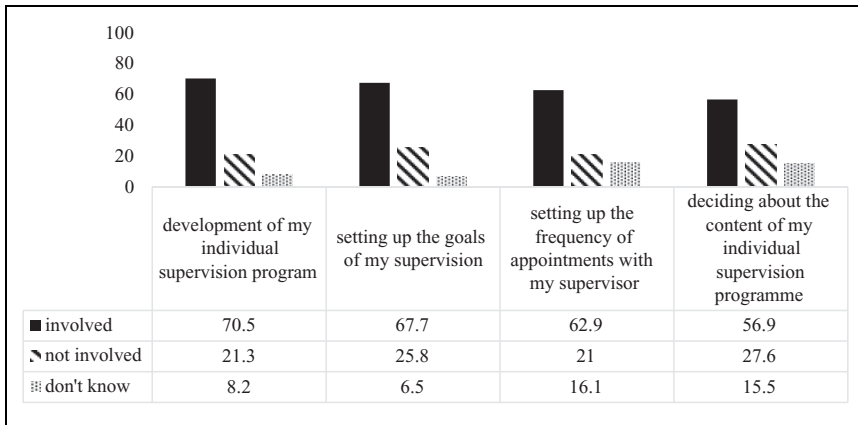


Figure 8. Supervision and offender's involvement.

The probationers mostly collaborated with supervisors in activities related to their supervising sentence (Figure 8). More specifically, the majority of them were involved in setting up the frequency of appointments with their supervisor (62.9%), deciding about the content of their individual program (56.9%), setting up the goals of their supervision (67.7%), and the development of their individual supervision programme (70.5%).

Discussion

The overall aim of the EES is to provide the means by which researchers can add to the literature regarding the experience of the offender under supervision, specifically at a comparative level. The pilot survey shows that the EES tool has the capacity to measure the perceptions of offenders under supervision in a deep and significant manner, thus fulfilling a core objective of the initiative. Though the findings of the pilot study are limited by its nature, the individual perspectives of service users were captured through a variety of cross-sectional themes. Furthermore, refining and testing the questionnaire across eight European jurisdictions demonstrates the validity and reliability of the scales employed at a comparative level. As a result, the EES presents as a useful tool for future pan-European studies.

A key advantage of the EES is that the time consuming and costly part of the questionnaire construction has been completed. Themes and questions were selected and integrated by a team of international multidisciplinary experts; questions as well as answer options were revised and adjusted according to national legislations; and the questionnaire was translated into different European languages. Furthermore, after the initial pilot study, and even on the basis of small convenience samples, the psychometric properties of the scales were shown to be acceptable (Cronbach alpha score above .60 for most of the items). Thus, if further developed and properly tested for psychometric properties on larger samples, the EES has the capacity to facilitate a systematic comparison of probation practices

around Europe, and a more comprehensive illustration of the experience of supervision. Its use in different European countries will make it possible to compare and contrast different cultural and environmental aspects, yet, simultaneously, to separate probationers' and supervisors' behaviour from such contexts.

Many difficulties have been encountered in designing and testing the tool. The first question was when to stop in introducing new dimensions in the tool. Many aspects seem to shape the lived experience of supervision. Some are connected with the offenders, some with the supervisor, and others seem to be associated with the context. The working group members held many discussions before deciding what should go in the tool and what should stay out. Another difficulty was the language barrier. Although concepts like probation, supervision, supervisors and so on may sound familiar and easy to understand, their meanings or their translations in the participating countries was not always straightforward. For instance, there is no equivalent in Serbian for 'supervision'. The members of the working group dealing with the Eurobarometer spent many hours in trying to find ways to ensure comparability. Once a greater understanding of the characteristics, attitudes and experiences of the offender is achieved both within and adjacent to a structural, social and cultural framework, supervision practice and criminal justice policy will be better equipped to support the offender on a pathway to desistance.

In addition to the comparative application of the tool, the EES could contribute to research on phenomena such as the probationer-supervisor relationship, and the significance of practical help, etc. In recent times, what was thought to be the cornerstone of supervision practice, the relationship between the offender and the supervisor, has been overlooked at a policy level in many jurisdictions, for example, England and Wales (Burnett and McNeill, 2005), becoming somewhat lost in a managerial discourse. Though there are some signs of change, given the saliency of the relationship in terms of influencing and motivating the human change process (Rex, 1999; Robinson and McNeill, 2008; Healy, 2012), the aim of the EES is to understand more deeply and to bolster the significance of the relationship, so that a more targeted approach may be taken towards informing change and enhancing professional skills. For, as Rex's (1999) study reveals, probationers are more inclined to place value in features such as the level of engagement of their officer than surveillance and managerial orientated features, such as monitoring. This is echoed by Healy's (2012) study, where the provision of practical help and having someone to talk to about problems emerged as the most useful features of probation. Studies also suggest that how the offender views the officer and the institution is an important indicator of desistance because, if offenders are under the impression that they have been subject to unfair treatment, they are less likely to comply (Robinson and McNeill, 2008).

The current literature also emphasizes that change can come from social bonds and structural contexts. It follows, then, that the more practical help received from the officer, the more positive the relationship. Secondly, from a more internalized, psychological perspective, the offender needs assistance and support from their officer in constructing a new script or identity, a new self-story (Burnett and McNeill, 2005; Maruna, 2001). Accordingly, a key aim of the EES is to ascertain the specific

interpersonal skills employed by officers which trigger and support the desistance process. This is achieved through asking questions about the relationship between the offender and officer, first, from a practical viewpoint, for example, length of appointment and number of meetings and, second, from a substantive viewpoint, for example, the offender's view of the role of their supervisor, and the nature of the specific relationship in terms of listening and understanding.

As this paper suggests, the EES is a versatile tool that can measure, on a comparative basis, how the subjects of supervision experience this process. In addition, it may be employed at a deeper level, to explore more particular topics, such as the quality of the probationer-supervisor relationship, the construction of rehabilitation, compliance and breach, and so on. Furthermore, supervision practice and criminal justice policy will be better equipped to support the offender on the pathway to the successful completion of a period of supervision and/or desistance. Firstly, the experience of supervision becomes measurable and comparable. This outcome is very important in the context of transferring probationers from one jurisdiction to another. Secondly, effects of supervision could be further understood in relation to different components of what supervision means for the probationers. For instance, it may be inferred that countries that focus more on the quality of relationship and providing more practical help are more effective in reducing reoffending during or after supervision. Thirdly, the EES may be applied in the same jurisdiction at different times (to measure the dynamic or the trend) or in different areas (to compare the performance between different offices).

The purpose of this paper is to illustrate the potential of the EES. Evidently, in order to produce accurate conclusions, the tool requires further refinement if it is to meet the requirements of particular jurisdictions, and be applied to representative samples.

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