CIRCLES4EU

European Handbook

European Handbook

COSA, Circles of Support and Accountability

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Preface

He drew a circle that shut me out —
Heretic, rebel, a thing to flout.
But Love and I had the wit to win:
We drew a circle that took him in.
Edwin Markham, "Outwitted"

It was June, 1994 and Dr. Bill Palmer, a psychologist at one of our federal penitentiaries was driving Charlie back to the community after he had served every day of his 7 year sentence for a sexual offense against a young boy.
I had known Charlie for 15 years through my previous work with a ministry of friendship that linked prisoners with Christian sponsors. Now I was serving as a pastor in a small Mennonite congregation in Hamilton, a steel-producing town with a population of less than 500,000 people.
Bill had called me a few months before wondering if we could put Charlie on a Mennonite farm upon release, in a caring and structured home without children. He was 41 years old but he had been raised in foster homes and large institutions where he himself had been sexually abused as a child.
Trying to place Charlie on a farm proved futile, but I told Bill that maybe we could create a 'circle of support' for Charlie in Hamilton. I recruited members from my congregation and community to be part of a small circle so that Charlie would have somebody in the community when he landed, like a surrogate family. We informally called our group 'Charlie's Angels'.
We had no idea what we were getting in for!

At the beginning, when this all started, we never conceived of this as a program**.** We just wanted to do something to help one guy, Charlie. I also knew that if nothing was done there would be another victim.
Within two days of his release the police made his picture available to the media and warned the community of his presence among us. He was front page news. One headline read, *'Streets of Fear'*. The school boards photocopied the press release and gave it to the primary schools in our region. When the flyer landed on the desk of my 8 year old son, he picked it up and announced. *"I know him! He was at our place for supper last night."*
The police mounted 24 hour surveillance on Charlie because they felt sure he would re-offend within a short period. We heard later that the cost of the 6 week surveillance amounted to more than $ 350,000 in 1994 dollars.
All of this community uproar was unnerving for our little community. We had two congregational meetings at which everyone was invited to speak. Fears for our kids were expressed. What resources did we have as a little group to cope with this complex, polarizing issue?
In the midst of the discussion, dear Eleanor, one of the most vulnerable of our community, spoke up, *"If Jesus hadn't welcomed me, where would I be today?".* The group decided unanimously to welcome Charlie, recognizing that we would all need to work together to help him avoid problem situations.
Charlie's circle met with him regularly. Individually we contacted him every day, taking him to do laundry, to shop for groceries and to find furniture for his apartment. And we would listen, listen, listen.

For the first 6 weeks every time we took Charlie out of his apartment major crime detectives in two unmarked cars followed us everywhere. The principal detective actually attended some of our circle meetings and gradually the police became supportive of what we were trying to do.

Charlie's circle of support filled a number of roles: *advocating* with the system to secure the benefits that were rightfully his; *confronting* Charlie about his attitudes and behaviour; *walking* with him through emergencies; *providing financial* backing when his kitten needed emergency surgery; *mediating* landlord-tenant conflicts; and *celebrating* anniversaries, milestones and all the small advances in Charlie's journey of reintegration.
The circle felt keenly a dual responsibility: to be a ***caring*** community for Charlie in the midst of the hostility of the larger community, but also to a ***responsible*** community, concerned that there be no more victims. We always hoped that our presence might avert a situation in which another child would be hurt.

Three months after Charlie's release to Hamilton, another high profile offender named Wray returned to the City of Toronto and colleagues who had been observing and supporting our efforts in Hamilton created the second Circle of Support and Accountability. Before we knew it, a movement had begun - a community-based response that allowed ordinary citizens to move from fearful rejection to active, compassionate involvement, supported by experienced professionals in creating sanctuaries where despised offenders could be treated with respect but also with accountability.

Both Charlie and Wray lived with chronic medical conditions. Charlie lived on his own in Hamilton for 12 years before he died of a heart attack. Wray lived 14 years in Toronto before succumbing to cancer. Neither man ever committed another sexual offense. For both men their community of support remained steadfast and a profound, mutual caring emerged that transformed us all.

In 'Tattoos on the Heart', Fr. Gregory Boyle writes about a lifetime of ministry with gang members in Los Angeles. *"What is the delivery system for resilience",* he asks? *"In part, it's the loving caring adult who pays attention. It's the community of unconditional love, representing the very 'no matter whatness' of God."*

Circles of Support and Accountability are just that – 'deliveries systems of resilience' for offenders and communities who are both trying to put the pieces together again. Often the natural, visceral response in our communities is to clamour for exclusion when an offender returns from prison. As circles of unconditional, tough love we can make an incredible impact in restoring wholeness right where we live.

I am amazed and inspired to see how you in the European community have joined this movement. I am confident that you will add to this surprising narrative of grace.

Harry Nigh
Toronto, September 2011

Acknowledgements

Circles of Support and Accountability have proven to be a welcome complement to sex offender treatment and reintegration efforts by probation in different national contexts. There is growing interest in Circles from different European countries. An international cooperation between British, Dutch and Belgian organisations (Circles Europe: Together for Safety; CTS) has led to the joint application for a two year grant from the Daphne III program of the European Union to support the international proliferation of COSA throughout Europe. This grant enabled the production of the European handbook and co-financed the introduction of COSA to Belgium, some extra pilot Circles in The Netherlands and the further development of Circles standards, assisted by Circles UK as a consultant. The success of that project led to a second project grant from the Daphne program, named Circles4EU, which aimed at the further dissemination of COSA throughout Europe. It involved three project partners that were ready to initiate a COSA pilot (in Catalonia, Latvia and Bulgaria) and three more project partners who were not yet ready to start a project, but were orienting themselves on the COSA method (in France, Ireland, Hungary). The second project also lasted for two years (January 2013 – December 2014).

Partners in this second cooperation were (in alphabetical order):

- Avans Centre for Public Safety and Criminal Justice (The Netherlands)
- CAW Antwerp (Belgium)
- Centre Hospitalier Charles Perrens (France)
- Circles UK (United Kingdom)
- Dutch Probation Organisation (The Netherlands)
- Budapesti Szociális Forrásközpont (Hungary)
- House of Justice Antwerp (Belgium)
- IGA - Crime prevention fund (Bulgaria)
- Latvian Prison Administration (Latvia)
- Latvian University (Latvia)
- Ministry of Justice (Hungary)
- Prisons General Directorate (Autonomous Government of Catalonia)
- CEP, The European Organisation for Probation (Netherlands)
- State Probation Service (Latvia)
- Tilburg University (The Netherlands)
- The Probation Service (Ireland)
- University of Barcelona (Catalonia)
- University of Nottingham (United Kingdom)

This European Handbook brings together the lessons learnt from Circle projects in the UK, Netherlands, Belgium, Latvia, Catalonia and Bulgaria, and aims to support the implementation of Circles in other European countries while maintaining the high quality of deliverance that has been established thus far. This task could not have been accomplished without the contribution of many project partners, who shared their experiences at several points during this project.

A special word of thank is owed to Reverend Harry Nigh, the 'Founding father' of the Circles concept, for writing a preface to this Handbook.

Content

Guide to the European Handbook

This handbook provides new COSA initiatives with all necessary information to start a project that meets the quality standards that have proven to be effective.

Chapter 1 gives a basic overview over the Circles' aims by outlining the type of problems that emerge from sex offenders re-entering society. Concerns from the various parties involved are described, as well as practical and ethical concerns. Then the way COSA addresses these problems is described with attention for the different models for Circles that are evolving in Canada and in Europe. Next, the European model is explained in more detail from a practical viewpoint – how do Circle projects work? Finally, theoretical evidence for this model is derived from contemporary theories on sexual offending and of effective interventions, and the intervention theory for Circles is briefly explained.

Chapter 2 outlines the necessary groundwork, which is to be done before a COSA initiative can be started: a thorough evaluation of the feasibility of Circles and of the national judicial context, in order to have a clear picture of the strengths and difficulties a COSA project is going to encounter in the development process. Also, some No-Go criteria are formulated, stating that under specific conditions it may be wiser not to start Circles. The No-Go criteria are to be converted to Go criteria in order for the establishment of Circles to be possible.

In chapter 3 the necessary steps in the implementation process are described. The requirements that need to be in place are defined and best practices and lessons learned are shared, from acquiring sustained finances, to volunteer recruiting, to project monitoring and evaluation.

Chapter 4 provides a guide to protocols and manuals and offers an overview of all materials available under a license agreement with Circles UK. In a standardized format their aims, utilization and target groups are described.

Chapter 5 is a monitoring and evaluation guide which describes the different monitoring and evaluation procedures that ensure accountability of the project on various levels, from monitoring Circle meetings to evaluation of adherence to the code of practise for the whole project.

Chapter 6 deals with research issues, linking different types of research to different developmental stages of a Circle Project. Different research types and –strategies are briefly explained, practical and ethical concerns in doing research into COSA are described and an overview over examples of the different research strategies – from adaptation studies to effect studies – is given.

1 COSA: what it is and how it works

1.1 The problem with sex offenders re-entering society

Why would any given society want to provide sex offenders with a Circle of Support and Accountability? The first Canadian Circle initiative gave a simple answer, rooted in deeply felt beliefs about humanity and compassion of a religious community: because we want no more victims and because no one is disposable. In our more secular Western European societies the answer to this question needs to be more elaborate and rational – and needs to be legitimized by scientific evidence. The short cut to this answer is: because Circles try to meet the various concerns of all those that are confronted with the problem of sex offenders re-entering and re-integrating into society.

Victim concerns: the impact of sexual abuse and the need to heal
Becoming a victim of sexual abuse is a very real and not very uncommon risk in all societies. Representative national prevalence studies show that in European countries 12 - 36% of all women and 3 – 18% of all men report being sexually abused as a child (Martinez, 2006). The differences are due to actual differences in prevalence rates and differences in the definition of (types of) sexual abuse and violence.

In past decades, the detrimental consequences of sexual abuse have been studied extensively and are widely acknowledged throughout western countries. Experiences of sexual abuse are among the most pathogenic traumatic events in human life. They can have a negative influence on the development of a stable, healthy personality, on the development of a healthy, fulfilling sexual life and on general mental and physical health. In addition, once a person has experienced sexual violence the risk of re-victimization is higher than the original risk. The material and immaterial costs of being victimised can be high, both to the victim and to society. Not all victims develop serious mental health problems. Age of onset, relation with the perpetrator, the nature of the abuse, a general vulnerability stemming from early childhood experiences are significant moderators. Also, the immediate emotional response of the victim, the appraisal of the event and the social support being offered are relevant mediators in recovering from the trauma. Alternatively, rejecting and blaming reactions from friends, family and professionals can add to the burden and lead to secondary traumatisation (Ullman, 1999).

Judith Herman (1992, 2005) is a long time researcher and advocate of victims' needs in the process of recovery. Based on in-depth interviews with male and female survivors of sexual and/or domestic violence she identified several basic needs that have to be met in order to overcome trauma (2005). The first priority for victims is safety for themselves and others who are dependent on them (e.g. children). For victims, preventing perpetrators from committing new crimes to them or others is more important than punishment for crimes already committed. Rehabilitation of the offender into the community -although seen as a desirable goal- is viewed with scepticism in case of their own perpetrator, based on an educated estimation of risk. Lengthy periods of supervision and control of the offender are often necessary in the victim's perception. Retributive as well as restorative elements are part of the victim's views on how the justice system should function in order to serve their need for reconciliation – not between victim and perpetrator but between the victim and his/her community. In the victim's view, exposure and even disgracing of the perpetrator are key to the restoration of these bonds, because in the abusive act a moral balance was destabilised by

the perpetrator: the victim's rights and dignity were violated in order to serve the perpetrators own needs. Community vindication thus legitimizes the victim's claim of entitlement to dignity and basic human rights. A more restorative view is expressed in the victim's interest in making things good for the future, rather than to avenge the past through lengthy punishment. But their main interest is in relieving their own burden of shame and humiliation first – by putting the blame where it belongs and by holding perpetrators accountable with the support of the community (Herman, 2005, McAlinden, 2007).

Society concerns: the need for safety and social cohesion

In the past decades, the need for safety is not only expressed by victims of sexual violence, but also has become a growing concern of communities at large, especially in Western countries. In this respect, sociologists speak of 'fear driven societies' (e.g. Bauman, 2007). This need for safety is expressed in reaction to all kinds of criminal threats to community values but especially and most intense in reaction to the sexual abuse of children. When news about paedophiles re-entering society gets in the open, this often causes emotional upheaval and in some cases violent outbursts of community fear and anger. In fact it was these kinds of community reactions that led to the start of the first COSA Circle.

According to Boutellier (2011), this need for safety is a way for citizens to express the need for social organisation and social cohesion that all human societies need to address in order to survive and sustain a peaceful way of living together. Following the erosion of traditional moral institutions and values like faith, church, unions and family, there is a need for a new organizing framework for survival and peaceful cohabitation. Punitive systems in this context transcend their original function to canalize revenge into proportionate vindication, to prevent new crimes and to re-habilitate the offender, and now also function to express the moral standards of society. Because moral standards and values have become highly individualized in our societies, the boundaries of individual freedom have been collectively chosen as the grid that needs to be secured in order to maintain social cohesion.

Safety (and also 'security') has become an organizing principle for society - or at least is presented as a reasonable option by those who believe in a 'safe new world' (Boutellier, 2011). While the need for safety seems to grow in a more and more undefined world, the trust in the power and competency of politicians and governments to secure these needs has declined. There is a growing call for civil commitment and participation of members of society in order to make safety a shared responsibility. Neighbourhood watches and notification orders are examples of citizens being involved in the 'operation safety'.

Participation - joining in - is seen not only as an effective way to maintain security, but also to prevent people from becoming criminals. Social cohesion is not only realised by setting the boundaries of individual freedom, the key extra principle is to provide people with a sense of belonging by which they feel compelled to incorporate and maintain shared values and standards.

In this respect, society is also the place where people inherit and build their social capital. Social capital is a sociological concept that has been much theorized upon by 'the great three', Bordieu, Coleman and Putnam. The latter has introduced the concept to a larger audience, describing social capital as 'features of a society that help facilitate and coordinate actions within that society. These features include social networks, norms of reciprocity, and levels of trust' (Pell, 2006). The recent focus in Western societies on the boundaries of individual freedom as a new grid for safety ('don'ts') is thus complemented by social capital ('do's').

Sex-offenders' concerns: the impact of guilt and the need for re-habilitation

Offenders who have trespassed the boundaries of other individuals' freedom place themselves outside the community of shared values. Their self-exclusion is – if the offender is caught - followed and affirmed by exclusion from the community by court decision. Detention not only serves as punishment for the offender and electronic monitoring or conditional release help to manage his risks: these measures also lead to a complete or partial exclusion from his earlier habitat. Loss of social capital (job, housing, contact with the social network) is inevitable. Stigmatisation is an even more effective way to block the road back into society.
The emotional reaction of the offender to his offence may vary, but those who admit their offence usually feel shame and guilt (Gudjonsson, 2006). Particularly shame is a self-devaluating emotion that may lead to social withdrawal, while guilt may activate pro-social behaviour and prevent the punished individual from retaliation (Hopfensitz & Reuben, 2009). Accepting responsibility and feeling guilt however may also increase feelings of shame and thus lead to ego damage, because of their self devaluating effects. High self criticism and shame in offenders reduces capacity to effect change. Some authors have argued that sex offenders' minimizing the offence may be an effort to secure the survival of the ego (Rogers & Dickey, 1991).

While rates of sex offender recidivism are on average low (less than 15%; mean follow up 6 years, Hanson & Morton Bourgon, 2005), they typically increase over time in contrast to other types of offending and the perception in society of the dangerousness of sex offenders is greater. Shaming of sex offenders is becoming more and more common practice in Western societies, and evidence of its detrimental effects on re-integration is growing. Public sex offender shaming has a devastating effect on his or her social network, families and friends. Return to the old job becomes difficult if not impossible, and new jobs are often below their level of competence. Employees and colleagues are lied to about the offence. Feelings of isolation and despair are very common as are feelings of persecution (Robbers, 2009).

In most European countries, the offenders' need to develop profound change of behaviours and beliefs in order to be able to stay away from trouble is met by offering him some kind of sex offender treatment. Mostly the objectives of sex offender treatment are aimed at risk reduction through acquiring relapse prevention strategies and change of cognitions; thoughts and beliefs that support sexual offensive behaviour. Deviant sexual fantasies and patterns of arousal are more difficult to influence and are sought to be controlled through enhancing of self-regulation skills and pharmacological interventions. In the past decennium the 'What works' paradigm has had a tremendous influence on sex offender treatment and interventions and some authors argue that his has led to a one-sided focus on criminogenic needs of offenders that needs to be complemented with the acknowledgement of offenders' basic human needs and strengths (Ward & Steward, 2003) and human rights (Mc Neill, 2009).

Sex offenders face a complex problem in their process of rehabilitation: on one hand they need to acknowledge the impact of both their offensive behaviour and their personal guilt and take responsibility, on the other hand they have to hide this aspect of their personal history from others, and lead a double life in order to be able to re-integrate.

Practical concerns: limited effects of common practices

Victims and the society at large ask for effective ways to prevent recidivism and restoration of community bonds.
However approaches to relapse prevention differ between countries, four general categories can be distinguished: (preventive) detention, sex offender treatment, interventions by probation

organisations, and, more recently, specific sex offender laws like notification and restriction orders. Often a combination (e.g. (preventive) detention and sex offender treatment; sex offender treatment and electronic monitoring is applied. The effectiveness of these approaches vary.

At the moment, the concerns above are not met effectively through exclusion strategies in the management of sex offenders in society. Examples of exclusion strategies are long term (preventive) detention and specific sex offender laws like restrictive orders and notification orders. While (preventive) detention (without treatment) is effective by definition for the time of the detention period, proof of post-release effectiveness has yet to be delivered. The effects of registration, public notification and restrictive orders are probably counterproductive. First studies show that residence restrictions lead to an increase in dynamic risk factors and registration does not contribute to more effective prevention of relapse (Levenson & Cotter, 2005, Mercado, Alvarez & Levenson, 2008, Freeman and Sandler, 2009).

Also the effectiveness of other strategies, like sex offender treatment and probation has limitations. In recent years cognitive behavioural therapies have shown to be able to reduce the re-offence rates by 36%, though not as effectively as organic treatment like chemical or surgical castration (Lösel & Schmucker, 2005).

Probation activities can be divided into three categories: supervision and monitoring, community reintegration planning and training programmes. The contributions of some of these efforts to relapse prevention for all kinds of offenders have been reviewed extensively by Lipsey and Cullen (2007). In their review of meta analyses supervision by parole officers reduced recidivism by 2 – 8%. Whether these figures are representative of the effectiveness of supervision on sex offenders is not clear. Recent evaluations show that community integration planning is effectively contributing to the reduction of risk factors like unemployment and housing problems (Weijers & More, 2010; Willis & Grace, 2008). The effects of transferring the responsibility for sex offender management in the community to professionals (versus commitment and empowerment through community involvement) on feelings of fear and anxiety in society are yet to be evaluated.

Ethical concerns: the balance between criminogenic needs and human needs

Concerns with treatment effectiveness have dominated the scientific discourse since Martinsons review in 1974 (Nothing works) and have culminated in the more positive Andrews & Bonta's 'What works' criteria (2003) and the Risk Needs Responsivity (RNR) model, that has been widely accepted as the most valid, data-driven model for offender assessment and rehabilitation. Lately, this perspective has been criticised for being too limited and too focussed on criminogenic needs alone. In the ' Good Lives Model' of prevention of reoffending (Ward & Stewart, 2003; Ward & Gannon, 2006), the importance of a more comprehensive, whole person, approach is stressed including the integration in the offender life plan of pro social ways to meet primary human needs. When discussing sex offender rehabilitation, Ward (2009) argues, a normative perspective has to be included in the discourse to complement the scientific (evidence-based) view and ethical questions need to be addressed as well as issues of best practice on risk reduction.

Mc Neill (2009) marks the difference between normative and utilitarian principles by posing the question: Is rehabilitation of sex offenders viewed as an end in itself or as a means to achieve reduced recidivism? He stresses the need for professional reflection on the role of probation:

what is its principal concern - public protection or offender rehabilitation? The first is impossible without the latter, according to Mc Neill (2009).

A communitarian approach to rehabilitation is an attempt to overcome the false dichotomy between the concerns of the offender on one side and the victim and the community on the other. Duff (2001) outlines a communicative theory of punishment for these approaches by stating that all parties involved are members of a normative community and are bound and protected by liberal democratic values of autonomy, freedom, privacy and pluralism. Human rights and human dignity are basic concepts and values to be respected, while offenders need to be included and at the same time need to be held accountable (and take responsibility for their crimes). Repentance, reform (of behaviour) and reconciliation are main goals of rehabilitation in this view.

In the communitarian view, restorative justice is a two sided process: not only is the offender expected to restore damage done to the victim and society, by acknowledging responsibility, and changing his behavior, the community is also restoring the harm done to the offender's resources and opportunities (through social exclusion, detention and punishment) by getting involved and actively supporting his re-entry into society (Raynor & Robinson, 2009; Duff 2001).

The Canadian projects

Circles started in Canada in 1994 as a community-based initiative to support the reintegration of WED sex offenders (sex offenders who have no form of support after serving their sentence). Although there are 'Circles' for sex offenders under a Long term supervision order, these are not incorporated into the COSA scheme. Today there are over 18 sites where currently 200 Circles are running (COSA Ottawa, 2014). The Correctional Services Chaplaincy provides assistance by incorporating COSA into their Community Chaplaincy projects and by providing basic materials like project guidelines and training manuals through a website[1]. Until September 2014, Circles received a large proportion of their funding through a 5-year project grant from Canada's National Crime Prevention Centre. As there is no national COSA organisation in Canada, this project was managed by the Church Council on Corrections and Justice.

The regional COSA projects are managed by a regional project-coordinator and usually run under a Board of Directors or are driven by Faith communities. Connections with local institutions are established through their representation in a Steering Committee or an Advisory Board. In the day to day functioning of the Circles, good relationships with local professionals are of great importance. Professionals assist COSA on a voluntary basis as advisors or trainers. A local project coordinator (LPC) assists and facilitates Circles on a day to day basis and supports the forging of a healthy Circle dynamic. The LPC also is the 'liaison officer' to the professionals involved with a specific Circle and keeps the professional community informed about COSA in general.

Since COSA has been developed and disseminated through local faith communities and the Chaplaincy of the CSC, the involvement of church organisations with COSA in Canada is a natural consequence. In Canada, the COSA is viewed not only as a means to prevent recidivism, but also as a way to community building within a faith driven framework of community values. This is also reflected in the double mission statement of COSA: 'No more victims' and 'no one is disposable'.

[1] http://www.csc-scc.gc.ca/chaplaincy/002008-0003-eng.shtml#4

COSA in the UK

The success of Canadian COSA projects was transferred into the UK through another faith Community, the Quakers. In 2002 government funding (UK Home Office) was acquired for a national project run by the Lucy Faithfull Foundation (LFF), which served sex offenders who had left the LFF clinic and returned to their local residence throughout the country. The LFF now provides consultancy services for new Circles. A second regional project (the Hampshire and Thames Valley Circles Project, now called Circles South East) was also set up. In 2008 a national Circles charity, called Circles UK, was established as an umbrella organisation to provide support to other new projects through training and education, media representation and providing basic materials like training materials and other guidelines. Circles UK ensures the maintenance of consistency of quality standards in regional projects through a membership/licensing system. Regional and local projects are members of Circles UK and can renew their membership licence on an annual basis on the successful completion of an operational review of compliance with the national standards. Circles UK is funded in part by the Ministry of Justice, with the member projects also funded from a variety of other sources. There are currently 120 circles operating through 14 member projects across the UK with almost 850 volunteers.

The British Circles follow the Canadian principles of support and accountability but operate within a different national legal context. In the UK all sex offenders who are released into society are managed within MAPPA (Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements). In MAPPA, all relevant professional institutions are mandated to work together in the supervision and support of registered sexual and/or violent offenders, most of whom are on conditional release. A key feature of the Circles in the UK is their close connection to MAPPA. MAPPA have to be supportive of new Circle projects, and MAPPA are informed about all Circle proceedings through Circle minutes. Together with the Circle coordinator, MAPPA decide about issues of risk and the need for intervention from outside the Circle. Volunteers are obliged to inform MAPPA about risky behaviour and any transgression of conditions for release by the core member. Thus MAPPA are in fact a formalised outer Circle.

In the British model, COSA have made a distinct move into a more secular, more formalised and professionalized approach. The twofold mission of the Canadian projects is encapsulated in a single aim: 'no more victims'. Rehabilitation of sex offenders no longer appears to be a goal in itself but is a function of preventive and restorative justice.

Circles in The Netherlands

In 2008 the English COSA model was introduced to the Dutch Probation Organisation (Reclassering Nederland, RN) through the Centre for Public Safety and Criminal Justice (Expertisecentrum Veiligheid, EV) of Avans University of Applied Sciences. The Dutch project worked closely together with Circles UK, having acquired the English basic materials and protocols through a license agreement. However, first an adaptation study was conducted in order to evaluate what changes to the COSA model were necessary in the Dutch context, as the judicial system, forensic mental health care and professional network and public opinion may be quite different (Höing, Caspers, Vogelvang, 2009). In the Dutch judicial system for instance, there is no mandatory treatment of sex offenders in prison, neither is there a mandatory co-operation during probation between professionals like in the English MAPPA. On the other hand, the Dutch system offers extensive and long term mental health care within secured institutions (TBS) for offenders with a psychiatric and/or sexual disorder. In the Dutch situation, COSA is reserved for sex offenders with a moderate to high risk of reoffending and a high need for social support, who are on a conditional release with a court supervision order of at least 12 months.

Additionally the core member must have followed at least some kind of sex-offender therapy in which they have established some insights about their offence cycle and risk signals. In the course of 2009 a Dutch national project organisation (Circles NL) was developed, one regional Circle project was established where two Circle coordinators were trained, volunteers were recruited, assessed, and trained, and core members and professionals were selected. By the end of the year two pilot Circles were able to start. Since then, government funding was prolonged each year, and by the end of 2014, 5 regional projects were in operation, which have run over 60 circles by then.

The Belgian COSA project

In 2009, the successful cooperation between Circles UK, Circles-NL (represented through RN and EV) inspired parties to acquire European funding for further European dissemination of Circles. Together with the Flemish Probation Organisation in Antwerp (Justitiehuis Antwerpen), the European Probation Organisation (CEP) and the University of Tilburg, funding was acquired from the EU Daphne III funds for a European project (Circles Europe: Together for Safety; CTS). This European partnership encompassed a Belgian pilot project, the development of joint strategies to support further dissemination in Europe and the start of research on the effects of Circles. Within this project, the Belgian pilot was run as a regional Circles project, and was provided with basic materials and training facilities through Circles-NL, since structural financing was not yet established. In Belgium also an adaptation study was conducted to explore the Belgium situation and be able to fit the model into the Belgian context (Höing, Snatersen, Pasmans, 2010).

Finding staff to build a regional project appeared to be extremely difficult, since the Antwerp House of Justice was not allowed to employ Circle coordinators. Finally, one Circle coordinator was contracted from a public welfare organisation (Centrum voor Algemeen Welzijnswerk, CAW) that offers community based treatment for sex-offenders. The Belgium COSA project developed only slowly into a fully operating project, which is partly due to the complex governance structure of the Belgian authorities, and also to the relocation of responsibilities from the Ministry of Justice to the Ministry of Welfare. By the end of 2014, the operation of the COSA project was transferred from the probation to the CAW. Also, a second COSA project has started in Brussels in 2014, which is run by a sex offender treatment facility (I.T.E.R.).

Cercles Cat, COSA in Catalonia

In Catalonia, the COSA pilot started in 2013, after a careful review of the national context and after building professional and community support for the project through a well-designed media and communication strategy. The project is hosted by the Prison Service, and all staff (one project manager, three circle coordinators) are experienced professionals from the prison service. The project could easily adopt the European COSA model, since professional services were in place and willing to cooperate. Additional financial support was secured through the social funding program of La CAIXA, one of the biggest banks in the country. At the end of the Circles4EU project, the project team (Cercles Cat) had three circles running and had secured future financial support to continue the project.

The Latvian project

In Latvia, the State Probation Service (SPS) had shown interest in COSA long before the start of the second Daphne project, but due to the financial crisis following from the bank crisis in 2008, which hit Latvia harder than many other countries, they were not able to start a project. With the funding from Daphne, a project organisation could be built, and the project could start its first pilot circles. Soon, it became clear that the Latvian context provided specific challenges.

Sex offenders were rarely released from prison on probation, which meant that the probation service would not be paid for COSA for sex offenders not under supervision. There was not culture of volunteering, and recruitment of volunteers was difficult. These circumstances, together with a lack of social services for sex offenders, were also resulting from the political heritage of the Soviet occupation, which ended in 1992. Nevertheless, SPS succeeded in building a project organisation and had three circles running by the end of the Circles4EU project. Volunteers, however, were partly recruited from SPS staff, which was seen as a potential hindrance to develop the effective relationship of trust and equity within the circles. To meet these challenges, SPS is seeking to turn the project over to a non-governmental organization, which also can work with sex offenders who are in the community without probation.

Bulgaria

The Bulgarian circles project is run by an NGO (IGA-Crime Prevention Fund), and starting a COSA project that meets the European quality standards as outlined in the first edition of the European Handbook, proved to be almost impossible. Whilst some No-Go criteria were converted to Go at the start of the project, others were not. There was almost no expertise in sex offender treatment in the country, structured risk assessment was unknown, and finding sustainable funding would be extremely difficult. However, IGA succeeded in building a project organisation that could work according to the Canadian model, which was also built in a situation were almost no other resources were available. One of the nations most experienced sex offender therapist supported the project and was willing to take an advisory role; and expertise and instruments for structured risk assessment were imported from Latvia. By the end of the project, IGA had three circles in operation.

European interest and dissemination

Through these two European projects, the COSA concept has gained more and more attention of professionals within forensic mental health care, probation organisations and other stakeholders in different European countries. Two of the three orienting countries in the Circles4EU project (France and Ireland) will soon be starting their own COSA projects. In Hungary, the status quo of the legal and organisational context is not very supportive, and a COSA pilot will need more careful preparation. Nevertheless, the orienting project partner is still interested in continuation of the exchange of COSA expertise.

Since COSA seems to become better known and is perceived as a possible answer to national problems in sex offender management, creating a European platform for the dissemination of COSA was a logical development. One step into that direction was the deliverance of a European handbook, in which basic information about COSA is given and the implementation expertise from different countries is brought together and shared through practical guidelines and references.

Circles4EU thinks it is important to support and keep on track with national initiatives, in order not to lose control on the quality of the COSA concept. Hasty and ill-informed implementation of COSA should be avoided, since negative results (= recidivism) could damage the project and credibility and reputation of Circles wherever they are in operation. All current project partners have stated their interest in continuing and possibly expanding the network, and underscore the importance of quality control.

In the future, it is intended a European platform will be able to act as a centre for quality control and offer guidance to new initiatives. After having done the necessary ground work,

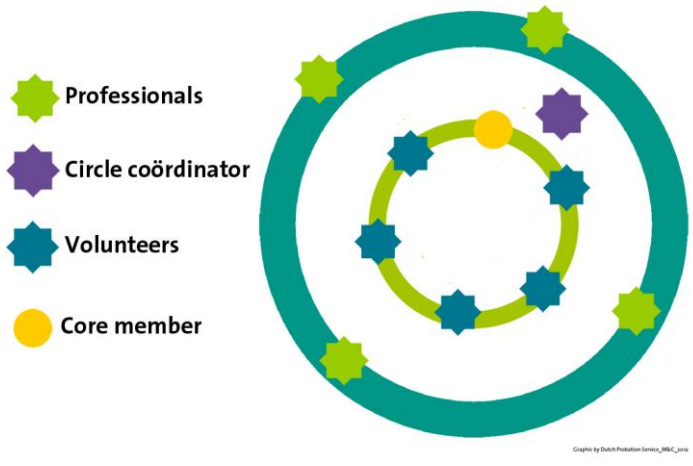
interested parties should be able to acquire a license that includes the necessary materials to get started.

1.2 Circle dynamics: how Circles are operated

Circle projects
Circles are operated through a regional or local Circle project organisation. Project staff in most cases includes a project manager and one or more circle coordinators, who are experienced professionals. The local project recruits, selects and trains volunteers, selects core members, informs professionals in the outer Circle, and maintains and monitors all quality standards for the deliverance of Circles, described in the code of conduct. The regional and/or local project organisation is assisted by a steering committee or advisory committee in which local stakeholders and experts are represented.

The Circle model
COSA is aimed at preventing recidivism by addressing some of the key risk-factors for reoffending: social isolation and emotional loneliness.
A Circle provides a medium to high-risk sex offender with a group of 3 – 6 trained volunteers, preferably from the local community, who meet with the sex offender (core member in a Circle) on a weekly basis. Volunteers support the core member by modelling pro-social behaviour, offering moral support and assisting with practical needs. They hold the core member accountable by challenging pro-offending attitudes, beliefs and behaviour. The volunteers are assisted by an outer Circle of professionals. Volunteers report their concerns to the professionals who, when necessary, can take appropriate measures to prevent the core member from reoffending. Volunteers do so not directly, but via a Circle coordinator whose task it is to mediate between inner and outer Circle and support and supervise the Circle process.

Figure 1: The Circles model



The Inner Circle
The inner Circle is constituted of the core member and preferably four to six volunteers. In specific cases, a well functioning Circle may choose to go on with less members, but should be able to maintain a sufficient level of personal contact.

The core member is a male or female sex offender who has been sentenced and has a medium to high risk of reoffending and a high need for social support. He or she is participating in a Circle voluntarily and is willing to subscribe to the Circles goal: no more victims. He or she must be, at least to some extent, willing and able to share information about his/her offence and personal risk factors with the volunteers.
The Circle volunteers are recruited from the local community and are carefully selected, screened and trained by the Circle coordinators. The inner Circle should reflect the diversity in the community and be constituted of both male and female members from different ages and backgrounds. Although a Circle should offer core members the opportunity to learn from different perspectives, all Circle volunteers should share some key qualities. Competent Circle volunteers are able to express empathy and belief in restorative justice. They have good communication skills, are good problem solvers and team workers. They have a balanced lifestyle and can handle emotions of self and others. They can set and maintain clear boundaries, and act in a respectful and constructive manner. They also should be able to accept supervision and support from the Circle coordinator. The selection procedure and training of volunteers is described in chapter 3 of this Handbook. Circle volunteers must be insured and get compensated for all costs they make in their function. Some basic safety rules are set up in order to prevent any unnecessary risk. The Circle coordinator is informed about all contacts between volunteers and core member through minutes of Circle meetings and individual contacts (including telephone calls).
The Circle's goal is to prevent the core member from offending again. It does so through four basic principles:

Figure 2: COSA Key Principles

Circle goals:	Social capital formation	Human capital formation	Relapse-prevention	Circle redundancy
Who?	Inner circle	Inner and outer circle	Inner and outer circle	Circle coordinator, inner and outer circle
Circle functions: Activities:	Social inclusion: - Be available and offer support - Model and stimulate respect, openness and trust - Offer and stimulate social activities/pro-social relationships	Behaviour change: - Hold accountable - Develop targets and cooperation - Offer advice, guidance and encouragement	Risk reduction and risk management: - Monitor and discuss risk and problem behavior - Confront core member - Share information - Intervene	Evaluation and improvement: - Evaluate and support group proces - Evaluate and discuss core member process - Safeguard model and program integrity
Consequences for core member:	Sense of belonging Self-esteem, hope and motivation Trust in others	Engagement Improved life-skills and self-regulation Improved self-efficacy	Risk awareness Offence free life	Effective circle
Consequences for society:	No more victims Public safety			

The Circle's main function is to reduce the likelihood of reoffending by providing the core member with a temporary surrogate social network, and to help him or her to establish a supportive social network of his own. Usually a Circle lasts for about one year and a half, but in some cases it may be necessary to maintain a Circle for a very long or even lifelong period. In all cases a Circle goes through different stages. In order to establish a good working relationship, all Circle volunteers meet a couple of times without the core member. In these meetings they get to know each other, deal with practical issues like day, time and location of the Circle meetings and exchange telephone numbers. After these initial meetings, the core member is introduced to the Circle and the Circle starts to meet on a weekly basis and offers 24/7 support to the core member by telephone. During the first weeks, starting with the very first meeting, the core members' offence, his offence cycle and risk factors are openly discussed. This part of the Circle process usually lasts about 8 weeks, but this is very dependent on the ability of the core member to understand and share his relapse prevention plan. This phase provides the volunteers and core member with a certain basis of shared knowledge that enables open communication (no secrets) and provides volunteers with the information they need for their monitoring function. Although a necessary phase, it is not sufficient to make the Circle 'work'. It is important that the relapse prevention function and the monitoring by the Circle is embedded in a trusting relationship, that is built through offering practical and moral support, treating the core member as an equal member of society and acknowledging his strengths and responsibilities. In order to work on the building of a supporting social network of his own, the Circle supports and encourages the development of social and communication skills, for example through modelling behaviour. A Circle may also engage in social activities with the core member in order to offer 'training on the spot'. After some time the Circle may decide to lower the frequency or attendance of their meetings and may start one-on-one meetings with the core member. A formal Circle may evolve into a less formal stage and finally into an informal stage (mentoring), when the core member, volunteers and the Circle coordinator feel a Circle is no longer necessary, based on a thorough evaluation. Usually, in an informal stage, one of the volunteers stays in contact with the core member as a mentor, which means they are having contact on a less frequent basis, (e.g. once a month) to be in touch with the core members process. An informal Circle can be 'revived' and become formal again whenever necessary.

The Outer Circle

The outer Circle is formed by the professionals who are involved in the core member's process of re–entering society. Often, the following organisations and professionals are involved: forensic mental health care (therapist), probation organisation (probation officer) and local police officer, preferably with special assignment to the neighbourhood where the core member lives. Also local welfare organisations or housing institutions may be directly involved in the reintegration process of a specific core member and can be represented in the outer Circle. Members of the outer Circle have their own professional responsibility and involvement with the core member and operate within the rules and regulations of their organisation and profession. Often one of these professionals is the one who suggests participation in a Circle to the core member and refers him to a regional Circle project. It is good practice to introduce volunteers and professionals to each other in the beginning of a Circle or to invite professionals into the Circle during the first weeks. Thus inner and outer Circle get to know each other and are able to exchange views and expectations and set clear boundaries between their distinct roles. In an ongoing Circle the role of the outer Circle is primarily to support the core member in his functioning within the Circle (as part of their own professional involvement with the core member) and to give advice to volunteers (through the Circle coordinator) on specific topics. They monitor the Circle process through monthly updates they get from the Circle coordinator.

In The Netherlands, the outer Circle holds periodically network meetings, organised by the Circle coordinator (e.g. twice a year) to evaluate the Circle and the process of the core member. In the UK, cases are discussed regularly by professionals at the MAPPA meeting. In case of immediate risk, the professionals are informed directly through the Circle coordinator in order to be able to take whatever steps are necessary to prevent relapse, e.g. inform justice authorities. Professionals of the outer Circle often are involved in the training programme for volunteers.

The role of the Circle coordinator

Each Circle is supported and supervised by a Circle coordinator, who is a professional with specific expertise in coaching and supervision, as well as expertise in sex offender management. The role of the Circle coordinator is crucial in the whole Circle process. He or she is involved in the recruiting, selection, training and supervision of volunteers. In the UK, in established projects, experienced volunteers are assisting the Circle coordinator with recruiting and organizing tasks, but the selection, training and supervision, should only be undertaken by a coordinator who is an appropriately qualified professional.

Together with the regional project coordinator (if there is one), the Circle coordinator is assessing the core member's appropriateness for a Circle, and delivers the training for volunteers together with a co-trainer. The Circle coordinator, together with other members of the regional project, evaluates the core members needs and the volunteers competences and matches both in order to build a functional and effective Circle for a specific core member. The Circle coordinator deals with all practical issues that need to be solved before a Circle can get started. He or she supports the Circle process by attending the first three preparatory meetings (without core member) and the first Circle meeting with the core member. After that, the Circle coordinator steps back and is informed about the ongoing Circle through Circle minutes from the volunteers and through contact minutes. The Circle coordinator contacts the volunteer(s) whenever the minutes give him or her reason to. Whenever necessary, the Circle coordinator may suggest interventions to the volunteers and/or attend Circle meetings. Volunteers are also individually supported and supervised by the Circle coordinator through quarterly evaluation interviews, in which all concerns and individual issues can be discussed. Whenever necessary, the volunteers may consult the Circle coordinator in between. Also on a quarterly basis, the Circle coordinator assists the volunteers in the evaluation of the core member's dynamic risk and strengths with the Dynamic Risk Review, a standardized evaluation instrument. Apart from that, some regional projects offer a 24/7 back-up by telephone to the inner Circle, in case of any emergency that might occur. The volunteers also get a list with all telephone numbers of each other and the project members. In other projects, Circle volunteers are provided with contact cards, so that in the event of a problem there is a professional person they can call. As a last resort they are told and know that the Police will respond 24/7.

Exchange of information

The exchange of information within the inner Circle, between inner and outer Circle and between members of the outer Circle is, apart from the personal engagement of the volunteers, one of the strengths of the Circles model. The key motto 'no secrets' forms the basis of this open exchange of information. From the very first Circle meeting onwards, the core member is invited to talk freely about what will help avoid reoffending and the risk factors he experiences in daily life. Volunteers and core member sign a Circle agreement in which rules about honesty, openness, privacy policies and exchange of information with each other and with other institutions are set. Basic information about each Circle meeting and each individual or telephone contact with the core member is delivered to the Circle coordinator through minutes, written by one of the volunteers. If necessary, the Circle coordinator is informed immediately

by telephone. The Circle coordinator delivers monthly reports to the outer Circle members about the proceedings of the Circle and issues that need attention. In case of alarming situations or acute risk the Circle and the Circle coordinator decide whether members of the outer Circle should be informed immediately in order to be able to react directly and in an adequate way. Whenever necessary and at least twice a year, the outer Circle should meet and exchange information and views about the core members' process in the Circle.

Getting information about the core member from professionals may be helpful for the Circle, but is often restrained by privacy policies of professionals organisations. A possible solution to this is to invite the professional into the Circle, where he or she can directly ask the core member's permission to deliver information or may assist the core member in delivering the information himself.

Best practice: open communication

There is an open communication among the Circle members, which is essential to build a trusting relationship between the volunteers and the core member. This relationship already exists, the Circle works as a team of 5 people. Although the Circle deals with sensitive issues, volunteers try to make the core member feel comfortable enough to talk freely. Volunteers express their own point of view about any subject, without judging him. Thanks to the key role of the Circle coordinator, the inner and the outer Circle also communicate with each other. Thus one of the Circles program key principle ('no secrets') is followed. The following situation is an example of this exchange of information:

The psychologist in charge of the core member's treatment informs the Circle coordinator that the core member has some sexual fantasies with one of the volunteers from the Circle. The two professionals wonder if it is appropriate to address this situation in the inner Circle, this could entail a loss of the core member's confidence in his psychologist. Finally they decide to share it with the inner Circle. They proceed in the following way:
- Meeting of the Circle coordinator with the core member;
- Meeting of the Circle coordinator with the concerned volunteer;
- Meeting of the Circle coordinator with all volunteers (without the core member);
- Meeting of the complete inner Circle.

The core member and the volunteers deal maturely with this situation. Volunteers help the core member to find strategies to channel his sexuality in an appropriate way. In contrast to what the Circles organization expected, the Circle emerges stronger from this and the core member expresses his need to keep involved in his psychological treatment. The core member also accepts the transparency principle and shows he is conscious of the possible effects of not following this principle.

Local support

Each Circle project is situated within a local network of organisations who are involved in sex offender rehabilitation and risk management. Although the constellation of all organisations in the field may vary from region to region, it is important that the Circles project is well introduced and known to these institutions, both on the management level and on the level of workers, since they often may be asked to get involved as members of an outer Circle. Periodically these organisations should be informed about the developments in the Circle project for example through a local conference or (mini) symposium. Since the re-integration of

sex offenders into society is often also an issue of public safety and managing public opinion, it is also important to establish good relationships with the local administration and local media.

National support
On a national level, the success and financial sustainability of Circles depends on government policies, justice authorities' decisions, non-governmental sources of income such as charitable trusts and not least, public opinion. Therefore it is important to establish and maintain supportive relationships with influential persons within national boards and for instance the justice department, with journalists from national media and to keep them well informed. Since the first goal of Circles is 'no more victims', especially victim organisations can also be important ambassadors for Circles, although they may have an understandable suspicion towards them and sense of injustice where Circles are seen to receive government funding.

National Circles Organisation
On a national level, in some countries, Circles are supported by a National Circles Organisation, that aids the development and management of regional and local Circle projects, through the deliverance of basic materials and protocols, a training for regional Project coordinators and Circle coordinators and by offering consultancy and advice for regional Project coordinators. Such a national Circles organisation monitors the program integrity and quality of deliverance of regional Circle projects through an auditing system. The National Circles Organisation informs national stakeholders and the general public about Circles and supports and coordinates scientific research on Circles. It can also provide a co-ordinated national response on behalf of Circles to the media when necessary.

European versus Canadian model
The model described above is reflecting the European situation. The Canadian model shows differences from the European COSA model in some essential features. The Canadian Circles are particularly meant for WED (Warrant Expiry Date) offenders, with no Court Supervision Order that enables intervention when things get out of control. Also, professionals are participating in the outer Circles on a voluntary basis, and need not be involved directly with the core member. Since there is no licensing organisation or monitoring of program integrity and quality standards, there may be great regional differences between projects. In the Canadian model, circles are mainly run by community based organisations, and therefore less prone to 'proto-professionalization' of the volunteers, and probably less suspicious for core members.

1.3 The theory behind the practice of Circles

The Circles concept has been developed from a pragmatic viewpoint, based on ethical values, religious motives and community needs, rather than scientific knowledge on effective prevention strategies. Nevertheless, Circles have proven to be highly effective. So far, a meta-analysis of one RCT and three controlled trials evidenced a 44% reduction of any reoffending and a 67% reduction of sexual reoffending (see chapter 6 for a more detailed description of these studies). When closely examined, the effective mechanisms in Circles are in accordance with contemporary theories about effective prevention of sexual reoffending. Below, these theories are briefly outlined.

Sex offenders on average appear to show relative low sexual recidivism rates, compared to other offenders and offence types (10 - 15% within 5 years, Hanson & Bussiere, 1998). But the

risk of re-offending is a very permanent one. Sexual offenders, especially child abusers, seem to have more problems than other offenders to change their behaviour and life style permanently and effectively. When longer follow-up periods are taken into account it appears that 52% of child abusers reoffend within 25 years and 23% of rapists (Hanson & Bussiere, 1998). This has of course consequences for the kind of support they need in this process. Theories about how this is best accomplished are dependent on the views on the nature of the deficits that lead to sexual offending and re offending (a theory of problem) and the views on how these deficits can be effectively altered into competencies that help to avoid reoffending (a theory of change). Below we will give an outline of the most prominent examples of both types of theory, their empirical evidence and how they relate to the COSA model of change.

Theoretical models of sex-offending and recidivism

Finkelhors pre-condition theory of sexual offending (Finkelhor, 1984; also described in O'Reilly & Carr; 2004 and Ward & Beech, 2006) was the first model that tried to explain why and how some men are capable of violating one of the strongest taboo's in our society: to have sex with children. Based on literature about sex-offenders he distinguished four factors that he assumed to contribute:

1. Emotional congruence with children;
2. Deviant sexual arousal (e.g. by children);
3. Blocking of appropriate sexual gratification;
4. Failing inhibition of inappropriate sexual behaviour.

In order for sexual abuse to occur, four pre-conditions must be fulfilled: motivation, overcoming of internal inhibition, overcoming external inhibitions and overcoming the resistance of the victim (e.g. by first establishing and then exploiting an emotional relationship). According to Finkelhor, the four pre-conditions are met in a temporal sequence: each precondition builds upon the previous. While Finkelhors model offers more of a categorisation and labelling of theoretical building blocks, others have tried to develop a more causal framework for the processes that lead to sexual offending.

Marshall and Barabaree's Integrated Theory (1990) is based on their work with sex offenders who have been sentenced (and thus represent the more extreme end of a scale). They describe how these sex-offenders have grown up under harsh and abusive parenting conditions and thus developed distorted internal schema's of relationships, sex and aggression. Adverse conditions hinder the development of adequate social competences and self-regulation. In adolescence, when peer-relationships have increased importance, this process leads to a 'syndrome of social inadequacy'. The attachment and behaviour problems acquired early in childhood then may lead to aggressive sexual abuse of younger, more vulnerable children. These experiences have the capacity to evoke and through masturbation reinforce, deviant sexual fantasies and abusive sexual behaviour.

In their quadripartite model Hall and Hirschman (1992) have located 4 factors that contribute to sexual offending in general and should be further investigated when looking for an explanation: physiological sexual arousal, inaccurate cognitions that justify sexual aggression, affective dyscontrol (i.e. the lack of skills to control negative emotional states), and personality problems. With the explicit attention for cognitive distortions their model explains how sexual fantasies and motivations are transferred into conscious and sometimes planned actions. Affective dyscontrol is the main mechanism behind the disinhibition of normally suppressed impulses. While the three fore mentioned factors are states that can vary rapidly during time,

personality problems that emerge from adverse experiences in childhood and youth are of a more stable character (traits).

Ward & Siegert (2002) have made efforts to combine the need to differentiate between subtypes of sex offenders and the search for a unifying concept to explain child sexual abuse. They argue that there are four different mechanisms or pathway's that may lead to child sexual abuse, accounting for five subtypes of sex offenders, based on the dominant mechanism. A combination of all pathways is typical for the fifth, most disturbed subtype. The four pathways are: intimacy and social skill deficits, distorted sexual scripts, emotional self regulation problems and anti-social cognitions. In the fifth pathway all dysfunctional mechanisms occur, but the sexual script is deviant in a typical way: these sex offenders have an early and distinctive preference for children as sexual objects, and therefore they can be described as 'core paedophiles'.

Ward & Beech (2006; also described in Ward & Gannon, 2006) have tried to knit the best elements of the above mentioned theories together with more general ideas about human functioning and neuropsychology into an 'Integrated theory of sexual offending'. In this model, they identify three sets of factors that usually influence human behaviour (biological, socio-ecological and neuropsychological). The origins of human behaviour are located in the neuropsychological functioning of the brain. Biological factors influence brain development and thereby vulnerability to sexual abusive behaviour. These factors are: evolutionary selection processes, genes and neurobiological features of the brain. Socio-ecological factors are the former (distal) or current (proximal) natural, social and cultural environment of the offender and his personal circumstances, which are key contributors to sexual offending through processes of social learning. Both biological pre-conditions and socio-ecological influences are processed in the neuropsychological functioning of the individual brain through three distinctive, but interlocked systems: the motivational/emotional system that primarily identifies and evaluates emotional states and translates them into goals, the 'action selection and control' system that translates goals into actions and the 'perception and memory' system that constructs mental representations of incoming sensory information and thus provides the cognitions (or cognitive distortions) both other systems work with.

In this theory, sexually aggressive behaviour is basically interpreted as maladaptive behaviour. Distinctive features in the biological and socio-ecological antecedents of a person can contribute to clinical symptoms that may lead into sexually abusive behaviour. Since problems may occur in all three systems and in a variation of combinations, the explanation of individual sexually abusive behaviours is also very variable. Nevertheless four clusters of problems are usually described in sex offender literature:

- emotional regulation problems;
- cognitive distortions;
- social difficulties; and
- deviant sexual arousal.

Each of these clusters reflect dysfunction in one or more of the three neuropsychological systems. These vulnerabilities may or may not result in sexually aggressive behaviour. According to Ward and Beech it is basically the influence of proximal socio-ecological factors (acute triggers) that lead to sexually abusive behaviour in the first place and that abusive behaviour in some cases in itself (through a positive feed-back loop) contributes to worsen the situation of the offender and maintains the sexual abusive behaviour. More distal ecological

factors (like cultural beliefs and/or policies that support or discourage sexual abusive behaviour) enable sexual aggression to occur or even to maintain sexual offending.

There is growing evidence for some of the key factors of these models. Hanson & Morton-Bourgon (2004) have executed a meta analysis on 95 recidivism studies involving more than 31,000 sex offenders and 2,000 recidivism predictions. They identified the following significant predictors of sexual recidivism:

- deviant sexual arousal;
- anti-social orientation/lifestyle instability;
- sexual preoccupation;
- emotional identification with children;
- hostility;
- general self regulation deficits; and
- attitudes tolerant of sexual assault.

However low social skills and loneliness are perceived to be common in sex offenders, they were not directly related to persistent sex offending in their study. The authors assume that it is not these deficits alone, but the dysfunctional strategies to cope with them (like turning to children) that are increasing the risk to reoffend. The same explanation is given for the fact that negative emotional states (i.e. depression and anxiety) are very common in sex offenders, but show no direct relationship with recidivism (Hanson and Morton-Bourgon, 2004).

While this study has contributed hugely to the knowledge on sex offender recidivism, a critical remark is necessary, since the recidivism studies in this meta-study rarely involve proximal ecological factors (like deviant social networks, social marginalisation, probation interventions e.g.).

Theoretical models of change

Theoretical models of sex offending explain why sex offending happens in the first place, and identify the determinants of sexual offending. Interventions that aim at preventing recidivism of course should take into account these determinants, and target them. Processes of behavioural change however have to take into account not only the determinants of sexual offending, but also evidence about effective ways to work on them. What is needed are theories of change. Some of the most influential are outlined briefly below.

In the past decade, the Risk/Needs/Responsivity model (RNR-model, Andrews and Bonta, 2003) has become a very influential theory guiding treatment and training efforts to reduce recidivism. Based upon a large number of effect studies, Andrews and Bonta identify several preconditions to optimize intervention effectiveness. They describe three basic principles. The risk principle states that the level of intensity of interventions should meet the level of risk. The most intensive treatment and intervention efforts should be allocated to offenders with highest risk of reoffending. Not only because these offenders need longer and more intensive treatment, but also because too intensive interventions imposed on low risk offenders can have negative effects, due to the stigmatising effect and spill over of negative values and behaviours from more delinquent members in treatment groups. The needs principle states that intervention targets should concentrate on the criminogenic needs of the offender. The responsivity principle states that interventions should be tailored to the learning style of the offender and including taking account of complex presentations, such as learning difficulties/disabilities or personality disorder traits . Derived from effect studies, this model is also supported by evidence from more recent studies. Research by Lovens, Lowenkamp &

Latessa (2009) supports the risk principle. Evidence for the responsivity principle is gathered by Looman, Dickie and Abercen (2005).

There is a growing concern in the field of experts however, that dealing with criminogenic needs alone is only one way to look at prevention of recidivism. Effective treatment is only gained in case of treatment attendance, and treatment dropout is a serious problem and risk factor for reoffending.
The Good Lives Model (Ward & Stewart, 2003; Ward & Gannon, 2006) is a more holistic approach to risk reduction and addresses the problem of lacking motivation. In the Good Lives Model, sex offenders are seen as beings that seek primary human goods as we all do. Primary human goods are activities, experiences and emotional states that contribute to our well being, like relatedness and intimacy, autonomy and agency. Sexual (re)offending is seen as a failure in the strategies to achieve these primary goods. The main goals of behavior change therefore should be to acknowledge the acceptable primary goals behind the behavior, and to address inappropriate strategies and train skills and cognitions to develop acceptable and healthy goal seeking behavior and self regulating competences.

Evidence for the effectiveness of this approach is given by Simons, McCullar & Taylor (2008). Wilson & Yates (2009) argue that an integration of the RNR and the Good Lives Model may best serve sex offenders to make sustainable behavior changes and develop a responsible self-determined lifestyle, by addressing not only problem areas and risk factors, but also by developing strengths and enhancing protective factors.

Another new theoretical viewpoint on preventing recidivism is taken by authors like Farral and Calverley (2006) and Maruna & Toch (2003). They support the idea of striving for primary goods like agency, autonomy and intimacy as a key motivating factor. They place the offenders behaviour in a more biographical context in which the building and changing of a narrative identity is a key concept. They explicitly include the experiences and evaluations of an offender after his release in their theory. The absence of recidivism is described not as an outcome of treatment of intervention, but as a result of an individual process a former offender may or may not go through; becoming a desister or not. In this process, six underlying processes or stages that a desister goes through are described by Farral and Calverly (2006). First, while in detention, desistance from crime is not necessarily an internal virtue, but imposed on the incarcerated mainly by lack of opportunity. Being exposed to hospitalising conditions and antisocial peers in prison may even have a negative effect on social skills and increase the risk of reoffending once released. In the period following detention, in most cases monitoring by probation officer or other institutions in the field of sex offender management is also only an external incentive to the desistance process. But well timed reintegration efforts may be first contributions to the (re)building of a positive identity, free from crime. Housing and work are crucial, since they may challenge new or old social skills and require adequate role behaviour, different from that being an offender. Also these experiences may lead to a (renewed) sense of citizenship and participation in society, with all obligations and rights coming along with it. To maintain this status of inclusion egocentric values and antisocial behaviours must be left behind – the former offender has something to loose. However, he also realises that his opportunities in life from now on are restricted by societies judgement on offenders, and feelings of being victimised and resentment can slow down the process of building a pro-social identity. At this point the balance may turn to desistance or recidivism. The choice of environment may be crucial, since situations and locations come along with role expectancies and thus structure the behaviour. Desisters deliberately choose to stay away from situations and locations that may trigger negative or offending behaviour. In a parallel process desisters learn over time to

structure their emotions and to handle the negative states that go along with negative aspects of their self image.

The motors of these processes according to McNeill (2009) are three characteristics of the offender and his environment: his human capital (skills and social competences), his social capital (the quality of his social network, in terms of bonding within intimate relationships, linking him to external resources and bridging diverse lifestyles and life experiences) and the transitions in his narrative identity – the cognitions he holds about himself.

The COSA model of change

The COSA intervention model is practice based, with a sound empirical and theoretical underpinning (Höing, Bogaerts & Vogelvang, 2013). It includes aspects of different models of change as described above, thus building theoretical evidence for effectiveness. It is in line with the RNR model, since Circles are most appropriately provided to medium to high risk sex offenders with issues of particular isolation and high need for social support. The responsivity principle is met by a careful selection of volunteers and thorough matching of volunteers with the sex offenders needs. The holistic and strength based approach of the Good lives/Self-regulation model is also represented in COSA both in the humanistic view on sex offender reintegration as in the fact that Circles work with the sex offender as a whole person with acceptable primary goals but inadequate skills and strategies to achieve them. The key feature of COSA, the selfless engagement of citizens, is addressing one of the primary needs in the Good Lives Model (relatedness to others). Core members often voice their appreciation of the Circle as being the group of people there for them, with motivation other than professional interest, with its negative components, in their eyes, of working for money and possessing power and authority (Hanvey, Philpot & Wilson, 2011)

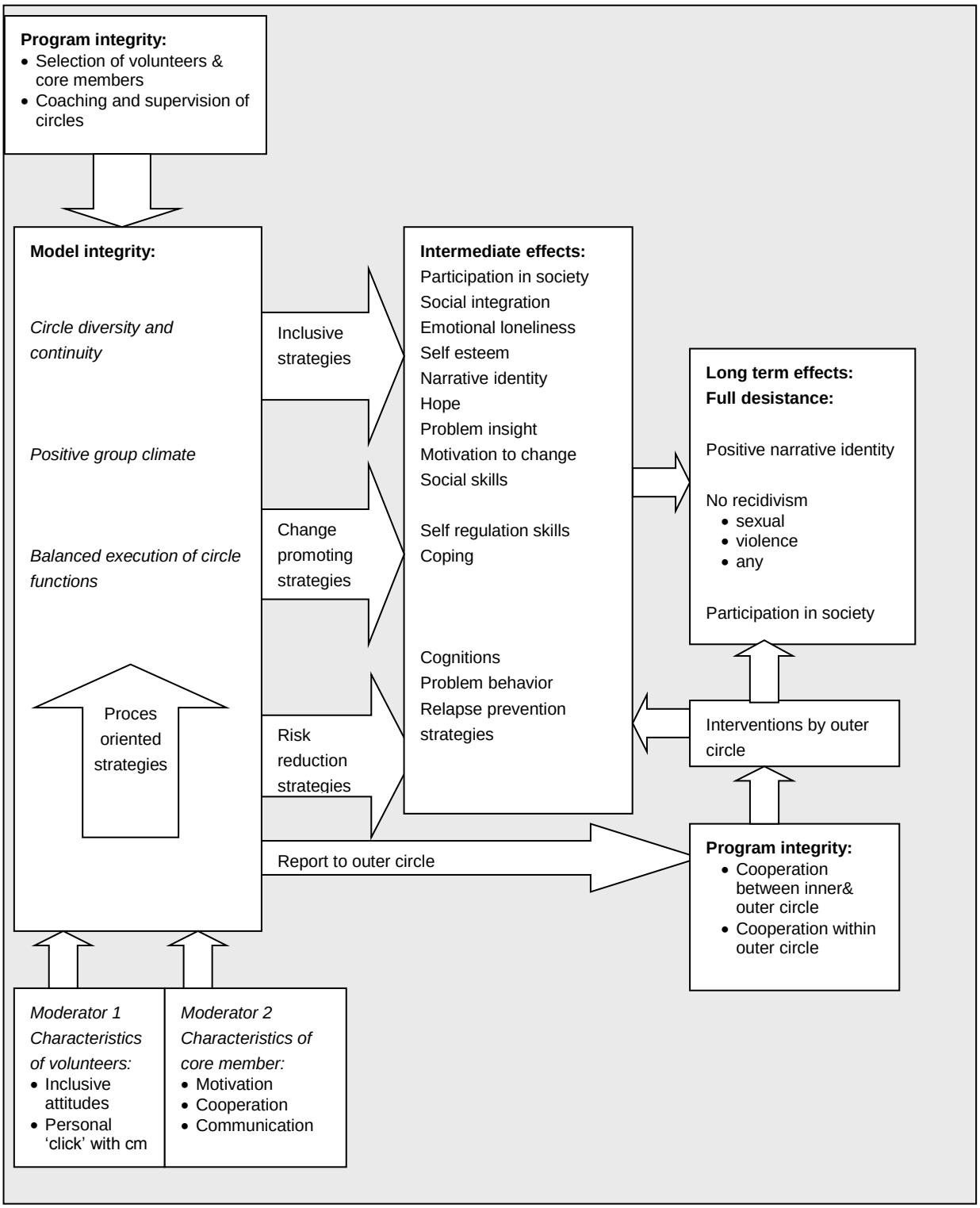
Finally, it acknowledges the fact that sustainable desistance is a process that takes time and knows its relapses– therefore Circles offer long term support and in some cases - when necessary life time guidance. Circles however add a unique aspect to these models: change does not only come from the sex offender himself, but also from society (through the volunteers) that takes responsibility for the safe re socialisation of sex offenders.

The COSA model of change is based on four mechanisms that contribute to the prevention of recidivism (Höing et al.2013) 2): social inclusion, behaviour change, risk reduction and constant evaluation. The model is closely related to the 'desistance as process' theory in that the Circle efforts are targeted at building and enforcing human and social capital, and supporting and encouraging the development of a positive narrative identity. Social capital is built by offering a surrogate social network and supporting the development of an own social network and/or enhance the quality and management of relationships within the existing social network of the core member.

The building of human capital (social skills, adequate coping strategies, self-regulation skills) is supported by offering modelling behaviour, holding the core member accountable for his actions and encouraging him to practice and enforce the skills and strategies he has learned in sex offender therapy. Building a positive narrative identity is supported by offering the core member a safe space to incorporate his offence history into the narrative about himself and to experience this not leading to exclusion and rejection by others, as long as he is accepting responsibility and is allowed to be held accountable. The unique monitoring role of the Circle addresses the fact that desistance is not a linear process and that not all core members are at all times able to show appropriate coping strategies to refrain from reoffending. The monitoring capacity of professionals organisations like police and probation is enhanced by frequent

contacts and explicitly discussing the emotional state of the core member and confront him with signs of deterioration, thus reducing the opportunity to isolate himself and fall back into problem behaviour unnoticed. The exchange of this kind of information with professionals in the outer Circle allows for immediate and adequate intervention.

Figure 3: The COSA intervention model



Important preconditions for the effectiveness of this model are program integrity with regard to selection and training of volunteers and the selection of core members (he must be able to give insight into his personal risk factors and offence chain, which implies some kind of sex offender treatment[2]). Also, monitoring risk and informing the outer circle adequately asks for good working alliances between the inner and outer Circle and cooperation between professionals in the organisations involved in sex offender management. The function of the Circle itself (the quality of volunteers interactions) is highly influenced by Circle coordinator supervision and interventions.
Personal characteristics of individual volunteers (knowledge & skills, personality) contribute to the Circle dynamics and the level of model integrity (balanced execution of Circle functions), while personal characteristics of the core member determine the possible range of change in dynamic risk and protective factors.

The need for high quality deliverance of Circles
The theoretical model of change, which explains how Circles can be effective in reducing sex offenders recidivism, outlines the need for program integrity (adherence to guidelines and protocols in operating Circles) and model integrity (establishing a balanced and healthy group process within the Circle). Managing high risk sex offenders in society is not an easy task and volunteers at all times should be protected from negative consequences of their work within the Circle. Also the COSA model should be protected from hasty and ill advised implementation that can cause failure of the approach (in preventing recidivism) and can damage Circle projects operating elsewhere.

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[2] However Circles can sometimes also be very effective with core members who have not had treatment, who don't have insight into their behaviour. In this case, a Circle probably needs to last considerably longer or even life long. An example of this is Charlie from the very first Circle.

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2 Getting started: COSA in the National Context

The news about COSA is gradually spreading throughout western countries. After having started in Canada in 1994, the UK has adopted and further developed the model since 2002. The UK model has been introduced in The Netherlands in 2009 and in Belgium in 2010. In 2013 and 2014, pilot projects were started in Latvia, Catalonia (Spain), and Bulgaria. Circle projects have also been successfully introduced in the US, with a growing number of projects in different States.

Organisations that develop a COSA initiative
Circles of support and accountability have initially been developed in Canada by a local Church community. The model has then been recognized as potentially effective and has been adopted by the Chaplaincy of Correctional Services of Canada (CSC), who delivers guidelines, training materials and support to local COSA initiatives through its website, and also delivers some financial support. Local Circle initiatives in Canada are often run by church congregations, assisted by a steering committee in which local stakeholders are represented. The national Church Council on Justice and Corrections (CCJC) is functioning as an umbrella organisation for coordination between 15 sites (of 16 in Canada) that participate in a national project to stimulate research and quality development of COSA.

The kind of organisations that have started or are operating local COSA projects in Europe are diverse:

Outside the justice context:
- Church congregations
- Welfare institutions
- Charity organisations
- Educational Institutes
- Non-governmental organisations that provide social services

Within the justice context:
- Probation services
- Prison services
- Sex offender treatment facilities
- Organisations in the field of crime prevention or restorative justice
- Partnerships between police, probation and others

The need for assessment of the national context
COSA is not a simple method or a protocol, that can be copied and pasted into any given national context. COSA is based on community involvement and involvement of a local network of professional organisations. Since Europe counts almost 50 different sovereign states and each nation has its own jurisdiction and set of institutions involved in sex offender management, the possibilities for COSA and the issues that need to be solved to install Circle projects are too many to be accounted for in a European Handbook.

The unique approach of Circles of Support and Accountability requires a thorough assessment of the feasibility of Circles within the given national context and research into the possibilities and needs for adaptation of the model within its ultimate – and not negotiable - quality

standards. Any organisation thinking of introducing COSA for the first time and developing a COSA initiative should start with an adaptation study.

In this chapter a blueprint is given for such an assessment of the national context. Based on the experiences in the UK, The Netherlands and Belgium, Latvia, Catalonia and Bulgaria, a checklist of 'No Go' criteria for feasibility is provided. If some basic conditions are completely absent, further investigation is probably a waste of money, and these issues should be dealt with first.

A critical evaluation of the No Go criteria is a must!

In order to outline the project needs, the definitions of core concepts for any Circle initiative are given (see box: definitions). Then the issues that need to be addressed in the assessment are outlined and illustrated with examples of issues in countries that already have done an adaptation study.

To carry out an adaptation study, it is advised to contact a research institute that is experienced in the field of probation. Having an overview over national jurisdiction, probation and aftercare organisation is helpful to guarantee that all issues are dealt with.

2.1 'No Go' Criteria in order of priority

- The problem of sexual violence is denied by the government
- There is very little or no chance to find sustained financial support for Circle projects
- There is very little or no professional expertise available in sex offender treatment
- There is no structured risk assessment available to circle projects and circle staff members are not competent to apply structured risk assessment by themselves
- There are no professional institutions that are involved in sex offender rehabilitation
- The project organisation has no legal status and is not involved in the local network of sex offender aftercare
- There is no willingness to comply to the basic quality standards of COSA (the code of practice)
- There are no legal possibilities for mandated supervision of sex offenders
- There is no likely engagement of citizens in some form of non-paid activities for community development or community justice
- There is no willingness to cooperate with other Circle Projects in an international framework

Denial of the prevalence of sexual violence by the government:
Sexual offences occur in any society, although prevalence rates differ from country to country. Risk management of sex offenders re-entering society is primarily the responsibility of any national government in order to protect citizens from risk of being victimized. If the problem of sexual offending is not recognized by the national government, basic human rights of citizens are not acknowledged, and money and efforts should be directed to the recognition of victims needs first.

No chance of sustained financing:
Circles are operated by volunteers, but are installed and supervised by a professional organisation in order to guarantee basic quality standards and safety for volunteers and core members. Circle projects need a careful preparation which has appeared to be a time-consuming and costly process (QPSW, 2005; Höing & Vogelvang, 2011). After a project organisation is developed and local partnerships are established, Circles need to be able to operate in stable conditions in order meet the risk and responsibility they are dealing with. If financing of the supportive structure is not guaranteed for at least two years, it is better not to expose volunteers and core members to these responsibilities at all.

No expertise in sex offender treatment available:
Circles offer support, monitoring and accountability by focussing on specific risk and needs of the core member. Therefore the Circle (including the core member) needs to have - or be able to acquire - some basic understanding of the specific offending behaviour, specific risk factors and relapse prevention strategies. If sex offender treatment is not available, at least there should be professional expertise in the outer Circle to provide volunteers with necessary information and training. If not, the quality of the COSA model cannot be guaranteed.

No structured risk assessment:
Circles are a high impact/low capacity intervention, which uses a lot of financial and professional resources, and therefore should be reserved for sex offenders with medium to high risk of reoffending. While many low risk sex offender have social needs and would profit from the social support a circle can offer, circles main aim is to prevent new victims, which is also the main goal of volunteers. Careful selection of potential core members, based on valid risk assessment tools, is an absolutely necessary procedure to ensure that circles are provided to those who are most in need of supervision AND support. If structured risk assessment is not available, projects should consult European partners for expertise and training.

No legal options for mandated supervision and intervention:
The primary goal of Circles is: 'no more victims'. Since processes of behaviour change take a long time with occasional setbacks, levels of risk of reoffending will vary during the course of the Circle and may become dangerously high. In such a case, it is to be preferred that professional organisations are able (and responsible) to intervene and have legal options to withdraw the core member from society. Core members, who are not under state supervision can also profit from circles, but then volunteers need extra coaching and supervision.

No professional institutions involved in sex offender rehabilitation:
In line with the previous, sex offender management in society is primarily the responsibility of the government and of professional institutions. Circle projects need to be able to embed Circles in a local infrastructure of professionals in order to provide Circles with the necessary outer Circle. If no professional organisations are available, the basic quality standards of Circle projects cannot be met.

No legal status and no local embedding:
Based on the experiences so far, organisations that develop COSA initiatives should have some experience with offender rehabilitation and volunteering or seek for partnerships that ensure incorporation of such expertise into the project. The organisations should be part of the local infrastructure of aftercare for sex offenders. Also, the organisation should have a legal status in order to be able to hire personnel and offer insurance to the volunteers.

No willingness to comply with the code of practice:
Circles have shown to be effective when basic quality standards are met. Compliance with the code of practice ensures these quality requirements. If standards are not met this is not only harmful for the status and funding of local projects, but also for the COSA – model in general and for COSA initiatives in other countries.

No tradition of citizens involved in unpaid community building activities:
Circles are in principle and concept based on a volunteer, unpaid, 'work-force' . A large part of their effectiveness is due to the particular relationship formed by selfless engagement of 'ordinary' members of the local community with the core member, with no professional power dynamic at play. Such volunteers can of course provide information which could result in the core member being recalled to prison, but so too can any responsible member of society. It is not unusual for core members to voice their appreciation of the Circle as being the group of people there for them, with motivation other than professional interest, with its negative components, in their eyes, of money, power and authority (Hanvey, Philpot & Wilson 2011).

No willingness to cooperate in an international context:
The COSA concept is being closely watched by a growing international community of experts and policymakers. Since all COSA initiatives are negatively influenced when national projects fail to live up to the quality standards, there is a need for international cooperation and exchange of information.

2.2 Definitions

A clear understanding of basic quality requirements for Circle projects is necessary to be able to evaluate the results of a national adaptation study and translate them into recommendations. In the box below some basic concepts that are used throughout this European handbook are defined, based on the definitions and standards document, that was produced in the Circles4EU project (Brown & Völlm, 2013).

Guiding principles
The following guiding principles serve as backbone for the existence of COSA, and provide an answer to the question "Why do we need Circles?". These are the underlying principles for the work that takes place in a Circle, and communicate the beliefs and values that are in action when a Circle is provided.

Safety:
We work towards the objective of no more victims
Responsibility:
Holding individuals and organisations to account for their actions
Inclusiveness:
Managing risk through inclusion not exclusion
Community Involvement:
Recognising the importance of community involvement
Growth and Learning:
Recognising that with necessary support and challenge, people have the ability to grow, learn and change their behaviour
Individuality and Respect:
Treating people with humanity and respect

Definitions

Code of practice
The code of practice is a list of connected mandatory standards that describe the quality requirements for any local Circle project. A national code of practice is in line with those of other countries, and is only adapted to specific national circumstances, without changing the COSA model itself.

Circle project
A Circle project is a local or regional partnership or organisation that has the primary task to develop and operate one or more Circles of support and accountability. A Circle project consists preferably of a project coordinator, or manager, at least one Circle coordinator* and is advised by a steering committee. A Circle project works in compliance with the national code of practice.

Circle
A Circle of support and accountability consists of an inner Circle and an outer Circle and an mediating Circle coordinator. The inner Circle is formed by a sex offender (core member) and three to six volunteers. The Circles' aim is to prevent new victims of sexual violence and to support the core member to establish a responsible, offence free life. The outer Circle is formed by professionals.

Core member
A core member is a sex offender with a medium to high risk of reoffending and a high need for social support, and is voluntarily participating in a Circle and willing to discuss his personal risk and problems openly with volunteers.

Circle volunteer
A Circle volunteer is a fellow citizen who has passed the selection process and a training program provided by the regional Circle project and is willing to support and if necessary hold the core member accountable for his or her behaviour.

Professional in the Outer Circle
A professional in the Outer Circle is a trained and experienced professional who is, through his or her function within the organisation he or she works for, involved in and responsible for the aftercare of the core member and is willing to comply to the expectations or a Circle project.

Circle coordinator
A Circle coordinator is a professional, who is trained and experienced in working with sex offenders and coaching volunteers and who is pivotal in the communication between inner and outer Circle and for the accountability between Circle and the organisations in the local network.

*The Dutch standard is to assign two Circle coordinators, but this is a more expensive model. In the UK, projects with only one staff member have been able to operate Circles successfully. With only one coordinator, sickness, vacation and supervision have to be arranged very carefully.

2.3 Issues for a national adaptation study

Before starting a new Circles initiative, it is advised to undertake a feasibility study or an adaptation study (if feasibility is guaranteed since all 'No Go' criteria are checked beforehand). There are several parts of the national landscape of sex offender management that should be explored.

- The societal and political climate towards sex offender rehabilitation
- Possible financial resources for Circle projects
- The judicial context
- Availability of sex offender treatment
- Infrastructure for sex offender aftercare and risk management
- Volunteering

2.3.1 Evaluation of the societal and political climate towards sex offender rehabilitation

The start of Circle projects usually triggers the public opinion and provokes both negative and positive reactions. In order to estimate the kind and amount of resistance or support any new Circle initiative is likely to expect, it is advised to describe the societal and political climate towards sex offenders. Usually the awareness of the magnitude and impact of sexual victimisation is affecting the support for preventive efforts. Since this type of awareness is often raised by women's movement and child protection movement, in countries where these movements have gained terrain, sex offender management and treatment is more developed. (Frenken, 1999). The societal climate can be described by public and expert opinion and shared values towards offender rehabilitation and restorative justice. Of course, the general opinion (and policies) may be changing due to incidents that have been extensively covered in the media (Konrad & Lau, 2010; De Kogel & Nagtegaal, 2006).

In the UK, local and national newspapers, especially tabloids, have reacted very fiercely and generally in negative wordings to the start of new Circle projects. In The Netherlands and Belgium, the public opinion also is usually very suspicious of any sex offender re – entering society. Here, and also in Catalonia, local and national media however have proven to be helpful in explaining the COSA principle to a wider public.

The political climate can be described by the general attitude of politicians, especially of the leading parties within the legislative power, towards sex offender rehabilitation and restorative justice. Is the political opinion informed by scientific and professional expertise or rather by 'gut feelings' of fearful citizens? What are opinions about restorative justice, or about naming and shaming of sex offenders? What are opinions about registration and notification? What are recent trends in national politics regarding rehabilitation and restorative justice?
As part of the Circles4EU project, a survey of the attitudes of the general public towards sex offenders, sex offender rehabilitation and the support for COSA projects was held, showing that there is substantial support for COSA and willingness to participate, even if the general public is holding negative attitudes towards sex offender rehabilitation (Höing et al. 2014).

2.3.2 Evaluation of the possibilities of sustainable financing of Circle projects

Sustained financial support for Circle projects is crucial. Some amount of structural financing from the government (especially the justice department) is not only helpful, but also expresses the willingness of the government to address the problem of sex offender management in society in cooperation with community itself. However, up to now, no European government has guaranteed structural financing of Circle projects. In many countries church organisations or charity funds are contributing to probation services, or delivering probation services themselves. It will be helpful for any starting organisation to have an overview of possible funds and to do a brief assessment of their willingness to contribute to Circle projects.

2.3.3 Description of the judicial context

Penal climate
The description of the judicial context should encompass information about the penal climate regarding sex offenders, especially the type and duration of punitive measures imposed upon sex offenders and the general conditions in prison. This kind of information gives insight into the conditions that sex offenders have been exposed to, prior to entering a Circle and will be useful information to incorporate into the volunteer training.

> In England, Germany and Belgium there are special sanctions to protect society from the risk of recidivism of serious violent and sexual offenders. Through these sanctions, it is possible to impose indeterminate prison sentences, or extend the sentence or keep someone detained once his sentence has been served. In England this is called *life sentence, imprisonment for public protection* and *extended sentence*, in Germany *Sicherungsverwahrung* and in Belgium *terbeschikkingstelling van de regering* (de Kogel & Nagtegaal, 2006).

Conditional release
Since COSA is usually offered within a context of court ordered supervision (often at least for the first year of the Circle) a description of the different legal frameworks and modalities of conditional release, conditional sentences, or suspended sentences is necessary to identify target groups for potential core members. Also the types of conditions need to be explained.

Risk assessment
COSA should be reserved to sex offender with moderate and high risk of reoffending. This implies a thorough and valid risk assessment. Not all countries have yet established 'state of the art' procedures for risk assessment. The policies and practices regarding risk assessment and risk management therefore should be investigated. Who is assessing risk at what moment with what purpose and with what kind of instruments? If risk assessment is not provided by the judicial system, Circle projects themselves need to do the necessary risk assessment on behalf of the selection of core members. Evidence based risk assessment is also necessary for any future research into the effectiveness of Circles.

In the UK, structured risk assessment of offenders through the OASys (Offender Assessment System) is routinely used for all offenders that need a pre-sentence report, requested by the court. In the aftercare, structured assessment of risk and the identification of the factors that have contributed to offending, are the starting points for all work with offenders.

For sexual and violent offenders, the approved assessment tools throughout England and Wales are OASys plus, Risk Matrix 2000 (RM2000; NOMS/PPU, 2009).
In Germany, structured risk assessment is not yet common practice, for instance the decision to place sex offenders in preventive detention is usually based on clinical judgement with incomplete data (Habermeyer et al, 2009).

In Latvia, instruments and expertise for structured risk assessment was imported by the State Probation Services from Canada (Static 99, Stable and Acute 2007).

Aftercare and risk management
In most European countries probation activities like assistance to and supervision of offenders are executed by state funded government bodies. In some countries probation services are delivered by private organisations (Van Kalmthout & Durnescu, 2008). In the adaptation study the kind of activities of probation services and the organisations and policies involved in risk management need to be described in order to have a clear picture of the kind of services already available for the core member and the needs that are not served and probably need special attention by a Circle. This is necessary information for the adaptation of the volunteer training programme. The organisations involved need to be assessed in order to adapt the guidelines for the requirements of the outer Circle.

In Latvia, the State Probation Service (SPS) supervises offenders on conditional release and offers individual case management in order to draft and coordinate a rehabilitation plan. The State Probation Service offers several programmes to support the reintegration of offenders, including cognitive behavioural interventions and resettlement programs, which include housing in a half-way house, financed by SPS (Zeibote 2008 in: Van Kalmthout & Durnescu, 2008).

In Spain, offering offender aftercare and social assistance is the responsibility of the general vice -directorate of open environment and alternative measures within the directorate general of Penitentiary Institutions. Supervision and social interventions are carried out by social workers both inside and outside open environment prisons through interview, training programs and searching and coordination of community services for the target group (Espartero, 2008 in: Van Kalmthout & Durnescu, 2008).

2.3.4 Treatment facilities for sex-offenders

Treatment providers
One of the basic functions of a Circle is the reduction of risk of recidivism through monitoring risk and holding the core member accountable for reacting to risk in an adequate way. To be able to do so, risk factors and relapse prevention strategies are openly discussed within the Circle. This implies that the core member must have at least some insight into his own risk

factors and relevant relapse prevention strategies (Höing & Vogelvang, 2011). Therefore the core member should have been or should be in sex offender treatment. The Circle then can build on treatment goals and reinforce them in a natural environment. The availability of sex offender treatment should be assessed. In order to be able to identify the organisations that can be involved in a Circle project and deliver professionals for the outer Circle, also an overview of possible providers should be given.

In Belgium, sex-offender treatment is usually mandatory for sexual offenders who apply for conditional release and is provided by assigned forensic teams within Mental Health Care institutions and Welfare institutions. Treatment attendance and progress is guided and supervised by the justice assistant. On an individual basis mental health care and welfare–institutions may start sex-offender treatment with those who are to be released soon, in order to bridge the gap between incarceration and living in the outside, but the facilities are very limited (Höing, Snatersen & Pasmans, 2010).

In Bulgaria, sex offender treatment expertise is scarce. In Circles4EU, the Bulgarian COSA project has managed to arrange support and supervision from one of the most experienced psychiatrists in the country.

Treatment modalities

An assessment of sex offender treatment must describe the modalities in which sex offender treatment is offered (e.g. in prison or in the community, ambulant versus residential). The timing of the start of a Circle is influenced by the modality in which offender treatment is available. When specific sex offender treatment is offered in prison or the core member has been in sex offender therapy in forensic psychiatric care, a Circle can start almost directly after the (conditional) release of the core member. If not, core members should be admitted to sex offender treatment after release. In many countries mandated specific sex offender treatment is a condition for suspended sentence or probation. If mandated sex offender treatment is not available a core member will probably need specific assistance from the Circle in identifying his personal risk.

In The Netherlands, high risk sex offenders can get a hospital order for mandated residential forensic psychiatric care if they are diagnosed with psychiatric disorder (or personality disorder). The forensic psychiatric institutions have a wide range of forms of treatment. However, not every person is given the treatment that seems to be most promising according to literature, and in many cases, the treatment is not given 'according to protocol' (De Kogel & Nagtegaal, 2006). A lot of sex offenders however go to prison, were no sex offender treatment is offered at all.

In Sweden there are specific sex offender treatment programs in prison which are being evaluated by an accreditation committee (Hasselrot & Fielding, 2010).
In Belgium, since there is no specific sex-offender therapy in prison, and the number of treatment facilities for interned sex-offenders is very limited, treatment often only starts after the (conditional) release is in effect. In recent years, more and more sex – offenders choose to serve their term to the end instead of applying for early release in order to avoid mandatory treatment and long term supervision. (Höing, Snatersen & Pasmans, 2010).

Treatment models and treatment goals

United States' and Canadian Sex offender treatment programs have been highly influential in the development of sex offender treatment in Europe, and many countries have adopted these programs (De Kogel & Nagtegaal, 2006). Most popular treatment models in the US and Canada are the cognitive behavioural model (CBT), relapse prevention (RP) and the Self-regulation/Good Lives Model (SR-GLM) (McGrath et al. 2009). Often, a combination of approaches is used, especially CBT and RP. The type of treatment model used is probably of consequence to the core members needs when entering a Circle. However, all of these specific sex offender treatment models in general should provide the core member with basic skills to discuss risk factors and relevant relapse prevention strategies within the Circle. More generic treatment approaches like training basic life skills or aggression management are probably less supportive to the Circles' goals.

2.3.5 Describe the professional network of sex offender management

Professional networks and partnerships

The development of professional networks and partnerships in the management of sex offenders re-entering society has primarily two goals: protection of public safety on one hand and serving sex offender aftercare needs in order to reduce risk of recidivism on the other. Risk management of sex offenders re-entering society and protecting public safety in many countries is a task of several organisations in the field. In many cases the following organisations are involved: police, prosecution, probation, municipality, forensic mental health facilities. On the other hand, the institutions that are involved in sex offender aftercare can also include housing corporations, welfare institutions, employment agencies etc. Not only the parties involved, but also the degree co-operation and formalisation of this cooperation will differ from country to country. Since COSA is to be embedded in the local professional networks and partnerships, it is important to map the organisations involved and assess policies and practices regarding the coordination.

In the UK, the supervision and aftercare of sex offenders re-entering society is coordinated by MAPPA (Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements). MAPPA are mandated local partnerships (by the Criminal Justice act, 2003) between, police, probation and prison services, who are operating as the 'responsible authority' in the aftercare of sex offenders and other violent offenders. This local cooperation is also mandated for other partners in the professional network, like social welfare, employment agencies, housing corporation and electronic supervision services (NOMS/PPU 2009). In the UK, Circles are functioning within the MAPPA.

In Belgium the most relevant agencies that are involved in the managing of sex offenders during their re-socialisation process are: the probation organisation (houses of justice), the ambulant treatment facilities for interned sex-offenders, the specialized forensic teams for the treatment of sex offenders within mental health institutions and public welfare institutions, the police force and the federal prosecution office. Cooperation between these agencies is less formalised than in the UK, especially direct information sharing between the probation officer and the police is not common practice, and is in fact not in line with the working guidelines of the House of Justice (Höing, Snatersen & Pasmans, 2010).

In Latvia, the supervision and treatment of sex offenders is provided by the Police and the State Probation Service, and the prison services. Formal cooperation documents provide a legal basis for information sharing. Social services for sex offenders are less available, due to financial constraints (Rasnaca & Zavackis, 2013).

Exchange of information
An important precondition for COSA is a well-established basis of co-operation and clear information sharing agreements with the local organisations, as they deliver the professionals for the outer Circle. These professionals need to be well-informed about the process of the core member, in order to be able to intervene in time – when necessary – and prevent recidivism. Laws, policies and practices concerning the sharing of information between organisations involved in the local networks should be assessed in order to deal with difficulties in advance

Forensic mental health organisations in The Netherlands are restricted in their information sharing by privacy laws. With the probation organisation, however, a bilateral information sharing protocol has been agreed. Exchange of information between outer Circle and inner Circle is the responsibility of the Circle coordinator, who is a professional of the probation organisation (Höing & Vogelvang, 2011).

In Belgium, information sharing between some treatment providers and Circles has proven difficult, when there has been no clear understanding of each other's role. Careful establishment of cooperation with treatment facilities is necessary (Taeymans & Sivri, 2014).

2.3.6 Describe possibilities for recruitment of volunteers

No Circle project is without volunteers ,which is why the most exciting part of starting a COSA initiative is the recruitment of volunteers. In the assessment of the national context, it is advised to investigate the problems and opportunities that can be expected in the recruitment process when starting a Circle initiative.

Social climate
In many countries, the involvement of members of the community in processes of public protection and change is becoming more and more positively evaluated. Participation, nodal governance[3] and the 'big society' are some key concepts of this trend. An adaptation study should describe the societal climate towards volunteering. Is it very common or very unusual to volunteer for community services? What are trends in volunteering in recent years? Who is volunteering - in terms of age, gender, education level etc.? What kind of community services are delivered by volunteers? What are general motivations of volunteers? These kind of questions help to estimate the amount of community support for COSA volunteering and to address potential volunteers in an appropriate manner by information brochures and local or national media campaigns. In many western societies there is a growing awareness of the need for a pluralistic approach to volunteer recruitment, engagement and management. The role of the government in supporting and facilitating volunteerism can be understood in differing ways (Merril & Safrit, 2003). The websurvey by Höing et al. (2014) has provided an overview of willingness to volunteer for COSA in nine European countries.

Volunteer organisations
Organisations that are involved in support, coordination and management of volunteers can be helpful in the recruitment process, or deliver valuable information about successful strategies,

[3] Nodal governance is an elaboration of contemporary network theory explaining how a variety of actors operating within social systems interact along networks to govern the systems they inhabit. (Burris, Drahos &Shearing, 2005)

especially local organisations. However, it must be very clear that COSA volunteers need to follow a specific training and are going to deliver highly specialized volunteer services. Therefore in the adaptation study it is necessary to assess not only the goals and activities of these organisations, but also their practices and policies with respect to volunteer management and their willingness to cooperate with a Circle project.

Expertise and experiences in volunteering & rehabilitation of (sex) offenders
In many European countries, probation services started in the 19th century as activities of charitable and religious institutions and were delivered by non-professional volunteers. This kind of volunteerism was more and more professionalised and in most countries, the government has now taken over the probation activities. In the central and eastern part of Europe (the former communist countries) there is little or no tradition of voluntary (probation) work, these activities have always been carried out by paid workers (Van Kalmthout & Durnescu, 2008). Voluntarism and offender rehabilitation therefore are not to be taken for granted in all countries. An assessment of organisations that are experienced in working with volunteers in the field of offender aftercare and rehabilitation is helpful in order to localise organisations that are probably able to deliver volunteers and/or Circle coordinators who are experienced in coaching volunteers in this field.

In the UK, there are many organisations involved in engaging and managing volunteers in the criminal justice field. Also, in the MAPPA, non-professionals are involved in the risk management of sex offenders (Armstrong et al, 2008).
In Belgium a specialised welfare organisation known as Assistance services for Law Subjects (Justitieel Welzijnswerk, JWW) offers support and assistance to detainees and their families. These organisations are familiar with recruiting and working with volunteers, although due to a substantial budget cuts, these activities are now very limited (Höing, Snatersen & Pasmans, 2010).

2.4 Assess the views and support of stakeholders

National adaptation studies have been carried out in Scotland (Armstrong et al, 2008), The Netherlands (Höing, Caspers & Vogelvang, 2009) and Belgium (Höing, Snatersen & Pasmans, 2010). Unpublished adaptation studies were carried out by the starting and orienting project partners in Circles4EU. In all studies, interviews with stakeholders were conducted to assess the views, experiences and possible support. These stakeholders were professionals from a variety of state or private organisations, both on a local and a national level.

Key stakeholders to be involved in an adaptation study are generally:
- government representatives (especially from Ministry of Justice)
- local government administrations
- police
- public prosecutors
- probation organisations
- local public safety networks
- prison services
- forensic psychiatric services
- welfare organisations
- volunteer organisations.

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3 COSA in real life: the implementation process

Introducing a new COSA initiative in a given context is like going on a challenging journey without knowing all the details. A basic road map can be provided, but many experiences underway will be unique and will ask for tailored solutions. In this chapter, the basic steps, and challenges of the implementation process will be described, based on the experiences in six European countries.

3.1 Basic requirements

Not being a quick-fix, any COSA initiative needs months of preparation (9 months is not unusual). Some basic requirements need to be in place, in order to prevent incomplete and therefore ineffective implementation, which can lead to unsafe practices and can damage the whole COSA enterprise. This vital work needs to be done and is also a way for all involved to really grasp the principles of what COSA is all about: a bold community response to fear and anxiety, based on inclusion, openness and hope.

In the box, the basic requirements for a successful implementation process are outlined. They are described in more detail below.

1. Financial resources to develop and sustain Circle projects
2. An adaptation study
3. A comprehensive description of the method
4. An implementation plan (scenario, time-table for dissemination, milestones)
5. A strategic communication plan
6. A network of professional organisations in the field of risk management
7. Personnel that is capable and willing to run Circle projects
8. An organisational structure of the Circle project with clear description of tasks and responsibilities, lines of communication and span of control
9. Systematically research and quality management and monitoring, in co-operation with a research institute
10. International cooperation with Circle Projects in other European Countries

In order to help the reader understand what might be considered' mandatory' standards of organisation and operational delivery, as opposed to 'good and desirable' practice, a symbols appear in the margin indicating the status proposed in this hand-book. Where the symbol ***!*** *this indicates a definite and non-negotiable standard vital to achieve the European COSA brand. Where the symbol* ✓ *then this represents good practice, with a recognition that local variations and resources may mean a different approach to achieve COSA aims is acknowledged.*

Financial resources
As stated in chapter 2, sufficient financial resources to start a COSA project are absolutely necessary to guarantee sustainability. The necessary budget should at least cover the following expenses:

Material costs for Circles:

- ! any expenses regarding volunteers (travel expenses, phones and phone costs, insurance, etc.);
- ! facilities for weekly Circle meetings (room, drinks, etc.);
- ! facilities for training and social meetings (room, drinks, lunches, etc.);
- ! facilities for meetings with the outer circle members every six months.

Professional staff cost for Circles projects:

- ✓ preferably two (part-time) professional Circle coordinators in one Circle project (max. 10 Circles per 1 fte)[4];
- ! a local/regional project coordinator[5];
- ! a steering committee (expenses for meetings, drinks, etc.);
- ! office costs: rent, stationary, archive, computers, printers, travel expenses;
- ! training costs: training of Circle coordinators (in any experienced country or by qualified national trainers).

A national COSA organisation (optional in the beginning, but then the tasks should be executed by regional/local projects):

- ✓ a project coordinator;
- ✓ a quality manager;
- ✓ a trainer/supervisor to train and supervise Circle coordinators;
- ✓ a communication & media expert;
- ✓ an office manager;
- ! an advisory board (expenses for meetings, etc.);
- ! annual meetings with professionals (room, drinks, lunches, etc.);
- ! material costs (e.g. rent, folders and brochures, paperwork, archive, computers, printers, travel expenses);
- ! costs for annual audits.

Research costs (personnel, material costs, travel expenses) for:

- ! an adaptation study;
- ! a process evaluation;
- ✓ an effect evaluation (over time);
- ✓ costs for international cooperation (travel costs, translation of materials).

The costs of developing national and regional support for COSA are easily underestimated. Giving presentations, attending conferences and congresses and personal communication are all time consuming but necessary to develop a fertile soil for any Circle project. Also, in the beginning, much time has to be invested into volunteer recruitment and selection, involving probably much travel costs. Depending on the scale of the project it is possible to start with a regional or local project first and incorporate necessary functions of a national organisation (quality management, training and supervision of Circle coordinators, communication and media, etc.). If the Circle project expands and multiplies, a national COSA organisation can be developed in a second stage.

[4] Projects in the UK and Belgium sometimes operate with only one Circle coordinator, which is a viable option, provided the Circle coordinator is supported by other project staff.

[5] In The Netherlands, there is one national project coordinator, overseeing 11 regional operating circle coordinators.

The estimation of research costs should be done in cooperation with a research institute, since it is difficult for non-researchers to adequately budget the requirements. The costs of international cooperation should at least cover two annual visits to international COSA meetings for two people. If necessary, also costs for translation of materials should be included in the budget.

! ***Adaptation study***
The requirements for an adaptation study have already been outlined in chapter 2 of this Handbook.

! ***Comprehensive description of the method***
It is absolutely necessary to provide all people involved in a COSA initiative with correct and comprehensive information about goals, principles and implications of COSA and to describe the procedures that need to be followed to ensure high quality deliverance of Circles.

Because of the appealing simplicity of the basic idea and structure, COSA is easily misunderstood as being a 'simple' intervention, which it is not. To be able to live up to the goals and principles, a high level of communication, cooperation and program fidelity is needed. At different steps in the implementation process a sometimes large and diverse group of stakeholders have to be informed about COSA and they will be informed by different COSA staff members.

✓ In order to develop a shared body of knowledge and values, and prevent the growth of false expectations or role confusion it is necessary to develop clear and comprehensive written information to this end. Also standard presentation sheets are very helpful. The information should be tailored to the needs of the specific audience and user. Circle coordinators, (regional) project coordinators and quality managers are in need of the most detailed information, since they are basically responsible for the quality of deliverance.

In each type of material at least some key topics should be covered:

Key topics: values and goals of COSA (no more victims, no secrets):
- the target group (medium/high risk - high need sex offender)
- the volunteers (diversity in background, non-professionals, local community members)
- the structure of a Circle (inner/outer Circle, Circle coordinator)
- the four basic functions of a Circle (inclusion, behaviour change, risk reduction, evaluation)
- the interaction between inner and outer Circle
- tasks and responsibilities of those addressed
- procedures to be followed by those addressed
- research
- where to get more information

Types of information material that has proven to be useful so far are:

For the general public:
- Website
- Reliable media communications

For stakeholders:
- Presentations
- (Executive summary of) adaptation study
- Information seminar (e.g. kick-off meeting)

For professionals in the outer Circle:
- Information brochure
- Information seminar (e.g. kick-off meeting)

For future volunteers:
- Information brochure

For future core members:
- Information brochure

For selected volunteers:
- COSA training and information handbook

For (regional) Circle project staff: all mentioned above, plus:
- Code of practice
- Implementation guide
- Organisational plan
- Strategic communication plan
- Training manuals (project staff training, volunteer training)
- Supervising plan
- Monitoring and evaluation guide
- Exit strategies for planned and unpredicted situations

For auditing staff:
- Audit manual

For research staff: all mentioned above, plus:
- Research section

Useful websites in English are: www.circles4.eu , www.Circles-uk.com. There are also diverse Canadian websites giving information about COSA.
See annex 1 for COSA websites.

The protocols and manuals for the (regional) project staff are described more detailed in chapter 4. The monitoring and evaluation guide is explained in chapter 5. A basic overview of research and research implications is given in chapter 6.

! Implementation plan

An implementation plan outlines the scenario and steps that must be taken, provides a time table for dissemination and defines milestones. Based on the experiences so far, necessary steps include the following (milestones are bold):

- **Kick-off: Inform stakeholders about project plan (nationally, regionally)**
- Build partnerships with regional stakeholders
- Form a board of advisors (national) and steering committee (regional)
- Build a (national and/or regional) project organisation
- Train project staff (Circle coordinators/regional project manager)
- **Inform general public about project plan through mass media (nationally)**
- Recruit, select and train volunteers
- Recruit core members
- Recruit professionals for the outer Circle
- Build a supervision and coaching structure for Circle coordinators
- Build an evaluation and audit structure
- Develop an extended training program for volunteers
- Organize social events and information meetings to support project commitment
- **Inform stakeholders about project proceedings**
- **Inform general public about project proceedings**
- **Acquire sustained financing**

Best practices and lessons learned in the implementation process are described more detailed below (chapter 3.2).

! ***Strategic communication plan***

Sex offender management in society is a very sensitive topic in most European countries, and is easily raises fears and concerns. All dissemination of information about the project should be carefully planned. Goals, target groups, lead staff member, protocols for volunteer engagement with the media and messages to be conveyed should be defined in a strategic communication plan from the very beginning.

In the UK, Netherlands, Belgium and Catalonia, media and communication experts in participating organisations have been very helpful in the development of such a plan and assisted with contacting the media and building helpful relationships with editors and journalists working for local and national media.

Network of professional organisations

The implementation of COSA asks for cooperation between regional or local organisations involved in sex offender management and after-care services. Professionals from these organisations are asked to participate in the outer Circle and to exchange information between each other and with the Circle coordinator, in order to maintain a shared view on the process of the core member and to be able to intervene in a coordinated way in case of increased risk or special needs of the core member.

! At least the following organisations should be cooperating in a Circles project:

- Probation organisation
- Sex offender treatment facility
- Local police[6]
- Public prosecutor

[6] In Belgium, this would imply a change in policy, since the probation organisation is not allowed to convey information to the local police, except for administrative data.

These key partners should have or develop clear protocols and agreements about information sharing that comply with national privacy laws.

Probably many other local or regional organisations can be helpful partners in a regional Circle project, in order to support the volunteers or the core member in case of special needs:

- Organisation to support volunteering
- Welfare organisations
- Housing corporations
- Local government

! ***Personnel that is capable and willing to run Circle projects***

On a day to day basis, Circles should be supported and guided by Circle coordinators who, in the European model, have relevant professional backgrounds and experience. Their main concern is model integrity (does the Circle establish a trusting relationship and provide the four basic functions to contribute to relapse prevention?). In order to achieve a high quality inner Circle, the primary responsibility of the Circle coordinator is the selection and training of dedicated Circle volunteers, monitoring, coaching and supervision of the Circle process and of the individual volunteers and the evaluation and exchange of the information within the Circle and with the outer Circle.

! Circle coordinators must:

- be experienced in working with volunteers;
- have strong knowledge and skills in group training;
- have strong knowledge and skills in group coaching and management; and
- have good knowledge and skills in sex offender risk evaluation and rehabilitation.

! They should be team players and be able to establish and sustain excellent working alliances with all parties involved. A Circle coordinator should have a clear understanding of the COSA values, principles and procedures; therefore all future Circle coordinators need to follow the extensive COSA project staff training program.

Being a Circle coordinator is not a nine-to-five job. Most Circles meet in evening hours and Circle attendance is necessary in the first four Circle meetings. Attendance also may be advisable from time to time as the Circle proceeds. On the other hand, being a Circle coordinator is a challenging job that involves flexibility, autonomy and responsibility and offers a high level of immaterial gratification and work satisfaction (Höing & Vogelvang, 2011).
Due to different professional cultures and attitudes towards working with volunteers, the way in which volunteers are supported by the outer Circle is different. In some projects, all volunteers are given contact cards with details of the various professionals involved with the core member, so that someone can be contacted. All volunteers are told, should there be an issue and they cannot immediately contact anyone on the contact card they should contact the Police who are paid to be there 24/7. In other projects, professionals in the outer Circle cannot be contacted directly by volunteers, therefore Circle coordinators operate as 24/7 backing for Circle volunteers, who can call them when a situation calls for immediate action or supervision. Therefore, regional projects in The Netherlands employ two (part-time) Circle coordinators who can work together and take shifts. In other countries a less expensive model is maintained, involving only one project coordinator who is also a Circle coordinator, and who is answering to a project board.

✓ Where there are regional project coordinators, they should also be professionals. Their main responsibility is: to inform local and regional stakeholders and develop regional support and assist development of local support for the Circle projects; to make sure that Circles are incorporated in a local network of sex offender management; recruit volunteers and core members; supervise the program integrity (make sure all procedures are followed as intended); organise training and social events; take care of the safe administration and storage of all project information. Informing local and regional media may also be one of the project coordinators responsibilities.

! Regional project coordinators should have good communication skills, presentation and organising skills, should be team players and since they screen future core members, should have expert knowledge in sex offender risk assessment and rehabilitation. Future project coordinators also need to follow the extensive COSA project staff training.

! ***The organisational structure of the Circle project***

A new COSA initiative may start on a local or regional level, a national level or both. There are some functions that can only be developed on a local or regional scale:

- Recruiting, selecting and training volunteers for a Circle;
- Building and coaching a Circle;
- Developing a local network of professional organisations that participate in the outer Circle.

✓ Other necessary functions of a COSA initiative may first be developed on a regional scale, but with the proliferation of new Circle projects throughout a country it is advised to build a national consultation and support organisation that provides these functions:

- Training and supervision of project coordinators and Circle coordinators;
- Development of training programmes and monitoring and evaluation manuals and procedures;
- Development of information materials;
- Quality management and support;
- Research;
- Media contacts;
- Advocacy.

As a Circle initiative expands and regional and national functions split up, it is important to develop a clear description of tasks and responsibilities, communication lines and span of control.

! All Circle projects should be assisted by an external steering committee or advisory board that advises, supervises and evaluates the project progress and efficiency and supports local and regional embedding of the project and ensures the representation of the community voice.

! Any national consultation and support organisation (program bureau) should also be overseen by a steering committee or an advisory board that also can support the advocacy and media and communication function of the nation organisation. Such a body must have clear terms of reference, responsibility and liabilities.

Research, quality management and monitoring

Accountability is not only a function of the inner Circle, also the project as a whole needs to guarantee a certain level of accountability. In most cases a COSA initiative will be sustained by public funding and therefore needs to guarantee quality standards and be able to deliver evidence of its results. COSA also aims to serve public interests in enhancing public safety and

reducing risk of sexual offending. These expectations need to be realistic and therefore any COSA initiative should be able to provide information about its results, its quality and its limitations.

High quality deliverance of the COSA model needs to be ensured and supported by rules and guidelines that are laid out in a mandatory code of practice with respective protocols and manuals which are to be followed strictly by the project staff. They are monitored through quality assurance procedures like supervision and a regular review and auditing system.

The process of first implementation will deliver a wealth of information for the further development and for future Circle projects. Also the outcome of the implementation process must be evaluated in order to account for the money and effort spent. It is advised to cooperate with a research institute to conduct a process evaluation. In later stages, when COSA is heading past the first pilots, the effects of Circles should be monitored in order to be able to contribute to the growing body of knowledge about successful sex offender rehabilitation and risk reduction. Several research strategies are available and outlined in chapter 6.

International cooperation with Circle Projects in other European Countries
The growing international interest in COSA, as an alternative and complementary service alongside existing sex offender rehabilitation practices, points to the potential of COSA in the eyes of professionals in the field. Since Circles deal with high risks, existing and developing projects are also closely watched by public, professionals and policy makers. International cooperation between Circle projects can be very helpful when introducing COSA to a wider audience. Experienced Circle staff from other countries can have a useful consulting function and can give presentations or interviews and answer questions about the practical implications of the COSA approach. Especially mass media are asking for experienced 'ambassadors' when paying attention to COSA. In the early stages of project development, this kind of experience and examples can only be delivered by projects that have been in place for a longer time.

International cooperation is also necessary to guarantee the COSA concept is not drifting away from its original principles and values and is able to sustain the high level of quality standards. International exchange of research results and project development issues can give momentum to any new Circle initiative.

3.2 The implementation process: best practises, and lessons learned

In the following section successful implementation strategies and lessons learned will be outlined, based on the experiences in the international COSA projects (Circles Together for Safety 2010-2011; Circles4EU 2013-2014) so far.

Project financing
In the UK and in The Netherlands the first COSA pilots were financed through government funding (Ministry of Justice). In the UK, financial resources were initially guaranteed for three pilot programmes over a number of years; in The Netherlands the initial finances were guaranteed for one year and one pilot location. Getting financial support from the government was achieved through an influential lobby of experts and through international cooperation with other projects. First-hand information from those who have successfully operated Circles for years appears to be a key success factor in developing support from experts and to acquire

financing. Examples of how these experts contributed to the successful introduction are described below.

In the UK, the Quaker organisation, Quaker Peace and Social Witness, who had close connections to the Mennonite church in Canada– (who developed the concept of COSA) together with the charity the Lucy Faithfull Foundation, introduced COSA to the Home Office through a conference:

> "The Home Office agreed to co-host the workshop, which took place in June 2001. Five Canadians flew over – a Director of Parole, a member of Toronto Police sexual assault squad, a psychologist from the Correctional Services, the Executive Director of Circles and the National Chaplaincy Coordinator. At the meeting were representatives of: Home Office, parole, police, probation, prisons, sex offender treatment, chaplaincy, Victim Support, NSPCC and several churches."
> QPSW (2003)

In The Netherlands, Avans University of Applied Sciences and a regional office of the Dutch probation organisation (Reclassering Nederland) introduced COSA to professionals and policymakers in a symposium to which Circles UK had been invited to give a presentation on COSA. This presentation was received with enthusiasm. After this, the director of the Dutch Probation organisation, who had been present, lobbied vigorously and successfully with the Ministry of Justice. The following year a grant was provided for the preparation of one regional pilot project. Since then, project funding has been continuously granted via the Ministry of Justice and has enabled the further dissemination of COSA projects, with now national coverage and over 60 Circles.

The international cooperation between Circles UK and the Dutch COSA project, together with a Belgian Probation Organisation (Justitiehuis Antwerpen, House of Justice Antwerp) has led to the joint application for a two year grant from the Daphne III program of the European Union to support the international proliferation of COSA. At the end of this project, organizations from more European countries expressed their interest in the project. Via a special interest group of the CEP (the Centre Européenne de Probation; the European Umbrella Organisation for Probation) partners from nine different countries applied for a second grant from the Daphne III programme, which enabled the support of COSA initiatives in three starting countries (Catalonia, Latvia, Bulgaria), and three orienting countries (France, Ireland, Hungary).

Difficult situations
The national political and financial situation can present major barriers to find sustainable project funding. In Belgium, gaining sustained finances has been a major concern from the beginning. Here the situation was complicated by the complex governance structure of Belgium and the shifting of probation services from the Ministry of Justice to the Ministry of Welfare, and also a shifting of federal responsibilities to the communities. Here, COSA began as a stand-alone project in Antwerp, with a circle coordinator which was employed by the local welfare institution, while the project coordinator was working for the probation organisation. The lack of resources and professional capacity made project development a very difficult task. Recently the project coordination has been turned over to the welfare institution. Finding sustainable funding is still difficult, but the Ministry of Welfare of the Flemish community has agreed to support the project.

In Eastern European countries, public finances have seen major cut backs as a result of the financial crisis in Europe, and this has especially been the case in Latvia. Also, political priorities have been elsewhere, and sex offender rehabilitation policies and services are still very much in development (Latvia, Bulgaria) or are even being reduced (Hungary). In such a situation, finding structural financing for COSA projects is extremely difficult.

National and regional support from stakeholders

Apart from financial support, gaining national and regional support from stakeholders appears to be relatively straight-forward, since the COSA model has an obvious and appealing logic and effectiveness in the eyes of rehabilitation experts and politicians. Successful strategies to inform them include presentations at conferences, symposia and training sessions. More specific information will best be conveyed through bilateral communication.

✓ It is important to inform stakeholders on different organisational levels, to make sure that both managers and personnel in executive functions are well informed (Höing & Vogelvang, 2011).

✓ Contacting volunteering organisations in an early stage may be helpful, but needs careful communication and relationship management, since COSA may be viewed as a possible competitor for recruiting volunteers. Also, concerns about volunteer safety and insurance and specific training needs must be dealt with. On the other hand, once shared goals can be established, the help and expertise of these organisations in volunteer recruitment and raising political support and public awareness can be very valuable.

It has also been the experience in the UK that developing a good understanding and links with organisations representing and providing support through help lines, and self-help groups for survivors of sexual abuse is vital from a number of viewpoints. Firstly, because the shared aim of 'no more victims' unites the services, secondly it is important for Circles organisations to listen to the experiences and views of those who have been abused, and thirdly to prevent the media from being able to present organisations committed to reducing sexual abuse and its awful impact in their awareness-raising work as being in opposition and bitter competition for scarce resources.

Also it is helpful if well-known and influential people in the Justice and Welfare domain act as ambassadors of a COSA project or take part in a steering committee. These need not be experts in the field of sex offender after-care, their contribution is one of a role model to influence the public opinion.

The support of stakeholders can be made visible to the general public and to the political arena by inviting them to take place in a national or regional steering committee or advisory board. In the UK the support of child protection organisations has been very meaningful in the acceptance of Circle projects by a wider public.

Project set up and organisation

In the UK a division of tasks and responsibilities between a national level (Circles UK) and a regional level (regional Circle projects) has been successful. On the national level, the national COSA organisation can support and monitor regional Circle projects and generate national support for COSA by informing professionals, policymakers and the general public about the method. They initiate and coordinate research on Circles. They develop a training programme for volunteers and deliver a training for Circle and regional coordinators.

While in the UK a national organisation and office emerged from the first regional Circle projects, in The Netherlands, a national bureau was formed right from the start of the project, and the regional projects were instigated by the national bureau. Over time, the national bureau was dissolved and replaced by a national COSA project coordinator from the Dutch Probation organization, and service level agreements for research and development and quality control with a research institution. This was seen as more effective, since the Dutch probation organisation also has a national 'headquarter'. In Belgium, the COSA initiative started as a regional project driven by a regional probation organisation, and no national COSA organization was formed. According to the project coordinator this meant that the project lacked the contacts for political influence on a national level which hindered the implementation process. In the past year the Belgian COSA initiative is moving towards a national project coordination.

In Catalonia, a regional project organisation was set up, with a central board of directors, the local University and important social funds of one of the nation's biggest banks as partners, and a network of stakeholders (prison service, volunteer organisations, victims organisation, media), a project team, and an executive team.

In the UK, Circles UK is operating as an autonomous voluntary sector organisation, accredited by the Ministry of Justice for its Circles development work, while in The Netherlands and in Latvia, the project organisation and coordination is organized within the probation organisation, which has a national coverage.
Both approaches have pro's and con's. A separate organisation guarantees a clear positioning of Circles as an autonomous partner in the field of sex offender aftercare,– but on the other hand may set it in direct competition with regional or local projects in finding long-term funding. In case of a partnership between two or more organisations, cultural differences and practices may complicate the development of a shared body of knowledge, values and practices, but it can also enhance the quality through sharing and exchange of specific expertise. Positioning COSA entirely within a public service is guaranteeing short lines of supervision, and probably generating more funding opportunities, but can also blur the lines between professional services and the volunteer and self-less character of COSA.

Circles are operated by regional Circle projects or local co-ordinators, who generate support for Circles within the network of local organisations, recruit and train Circle volunteers, recruit core members, and build, support and monitor Circles.

! At the start of a new project, a local steering committee needs to be established, with written terms of reference that helps with the preparation and later monitoring of the regional project, within the guidelines of the code of practice.

Local Circle projects can be operated by partnerships in different constellations. These partnerships comprise statutory and voluntary sector organisations and one of these agencies on behalf of the partnership will hire personnel, ensure the volunteers are covered by their insurance policy etc. In The Netherlands and in Latvia, regional projects are operated by delegated professionals of the Probation organisation. Here COSA has developed more as one of the methods of probation. Projects which are run entirely by probation usually cannot provide Circles for core members who are not under court ordered supervision.

All Circle projects need to develop strong relationships with local professional organisations involved in sex offender re-integration arrangements. In the UK, all Circle projects work closely together with MAPPA (Multi Organisation Public Protection Arrangements). MAPPA result from

the 'Criminal Justice Act' (2003) which mandates the cooperation between Police, Prosecution and Probation organisations as a 'responsible service' for the aftercare of violent and sexual offenders. Also other local partners are mandated to work together. In the UK, the functions of the outer Circle are formalised within MAPPA and executed by MAPPA professionals. In other countries, these infrastructures are not available and l embedding locally needs to be developed by the project. In Belgium, the regional project is also closely working together with a network of professional organisations (Stuurgroep Alternatieve Maatregelen; SAM) involved in supervision of alternative sanctions for offenders. These cooperation's appear to be very useful for the embedding of Circles in the total of sex offender aftercare services (Pasmans, 2011).

In Bulgaria, an infrastructure of sex offender management is almost absent, and sex offenders are seldom released from prison on probation or conditional release. The COSA project has struggled to organize professional supervision of the project, but has managed to establish cooperation with one of the nations most experienced sex offender therapists. In Bulgaria, COSA is operating from a grass-roots level up, and is more comparable to the Canadian model.

✓ ***Recruiting and training Circle projects' staff***

When starting a COSA initiative, best practises concerning the recruiting and training of Circles project staff are:

- Hire preferably two (part-time) Circle coordinators per regional project (where resources permit).

Starting as a new Circle coordinator in a new project is a very challenging task. Many issues will need creative solutions and questions and uncertainties will arise around all kinds of issues once a Circle is running, especially around group dynamics and risk. Having a fellow Circle coordinator allows mutual support and exchange of experiences around worries and successes. Also back up in case of illness or vacation is a must since a Circle doesn't stop. However, since this is a costly model, projects with a single coordinator appear to work well in the UK, if the coordinator is answering to a project board which is supervising the project.

- Arrange for the first Circle project staff to follow the COSA staff training and the volunteer training in a more experienced project abroad.

The complexity of COSA procedures and the nature of the risk involved makes high quality training necessary for the project staff. The international cooperation between COSA initiatives enables new projects to learn from experienced partners and to consult them for any questions l arising during the training. In Circles4EU, project staff from all starting countries were trained by experienced Circle coordinators from UK and Netherlands.

Recruiting and selecting volunteers

Finding enough volunteers to start a Circle is of course crucial to any new COSA initiative. Experiences in the UK, Netherlands, Belgium and Catalonia show, that a combination of local and national dissemination of information about COSA works best, especially if respected media (TV and national newspapers) are reporting positively about COSA.

✓ A media campaign can be very effective. Since these media often ask for pictures or interviews with volunteers,– which new COSA initiatives of course cannot provide, support from Circle projects abroad is very helpful in this stage of a project. For instance, an interview with a UK volunteer appeared in a Dutch news item on national TV. Later, Dutch volunteers also gave

interviews in national newspapers and appeared in a television show, together with the CEO of the Dutch probation organisation. In The Netherlands within a couple of weeks about 100 new volunteers had applied. Dutch COSA experts have given interviews in a Belgian TV show and in a national newspaper; as a consequence of this, 20 volunteers applied, enabling the start of the first Circles in Belgium. In the UK, where media attention is often less favourable towards COSA, nevertheless negative media attention frequently leads to interest from new volunteers. Here, negative media coverage by tabloids has led to countering reactions from the general public and led to a public debate about sex offenders in the community. In Catalonia, a successful media strategy was a working lunch with 30 journalists, which generated much positive media coverage.

Using volunteers to recruit volunteers is a powerful method because of the modelling effect. Careful selection and preparation of volunteers for these media tasks however is necessary, since they often are not aware of the way media appearance can affect their personal lives and the Circle they are involved in.

! The media strategy should cover these arrangements, including some training and preparation for the volunteer in advance.

! The application of a volunteer should be followed up by immediate and personal response of the project organisation. A written application form is used to obtain all necessary information from the volunteer, but the selection process is best started shortly after the information is received through a personal interview by one of the Circle coordinators.

In The Netherlands in two different regional projects two different strategies have been tested: in one region applying volunteers were invited to an information meeting before having a personal selection interview, in the other region all applying volunteers were directly personally interviewed at their home. With the first strategy, the drop out was 64%, since many volunteers never showed up at the information meeting, while with the second strategy the dropout rate was only 25% (Höing & Vogelvang, 2011).

Preparing pilot Circles

Preparing and building pilot Circles is a task of the Circle coordinator. The following steps have to be taken in this process:

! ***1.*** *Select and inform the core member*

Make sure the core member is meeting the selection criteria and no exclusion criteria are present.

Selection criteria are:

- Sex offender;
- (Somewhat) motivated to participate in a Circle;
- Able and willing to share information about risk en relapse prevention strategies with Circle members;
- Medium to high risk of reoffending;
- High need for social support.

The level of risk should be assessed through structured risk assessment according to the state of the art procedures, and not be based on clinical judgement alone. This is necessary to guarantee that COSA is reserved for medium to high risk sex offenders. Also future research into the effectiveness of Circles makes structured risk assessment absolutely

necessary. Make sure the core member is voluntarily joining a Circle and is not manipulated to do so. Core members need to be informed about goals and procedures in COSA. A combination of personal and written information about COSA is appreciated by core members.
Motivation to change is a key factor in COSA which should not be compromised. This motivation can be somewhat external at the beginning (e.g. when participation in the Circle is highly recommended by the probation officer), it needs to be transformed into an internal motivation during the Circle process.

Exclusion criteria:
Certain exclusion criteria may be applied by some existing Circles providers, and it is likely that new starter and orienting countries will consider applying exclusion criteria. Individuals classed as 'psychopath' (e.g. displaying high scores on the PCL-R checklist) and those with significant psychiatric disorder are most likely to be excluded.
However, there is no evidence to suggest that these people will not benefit from Circles. In addition, where provision of Sex Offender Treatment Programs exists, individuals are no longer excluded on the basis of personality pathology or other mental disorder. As such it is suggested to not apply strict exclusion criteria, but consider each person individually in terms of their likely engagement and response to Circles. However, it is also of note that if working with offenders with significant psychiatric morbidity, additional training and risk management procedures may have to be in place, and where this may not be possible, this may lead to a decision by the project to exclude certain individuals.

! ***2.*** *Recruit and inform professionals in the outer Circle*
Make sure all professionals involved in the aftercare of the core member are informed about their clients' involvement in a Circle, and have a clear understanding of their role as a professional in the outer Circle. Explain the way the information is shared between inner an outer Circle and solve any issues around privacy regulations at forehand. This may introduce new forms of cooperation in the local network and needs careful attention and clear protocols. In Belgium for instance information sharing between probation and police is not a standard procedure, except in very urgent cases. In The Netherlands also, the involvement of the police asks for special attention and communication efforts. Also, therapists often are prohibited to share information about their clients through their professional codes. Written consent of core members and specific information sharing protocols may be necessary.

! ***3.*** *Select volunteers carefully for this particular Circle*
Volunteers that have passed the selection process and the training must be interviewed about their preferences and sensitivities with regard to a core member. The forging of a Circle is a delicate process that needs to take into account these issues. For instance, experiences with sexual abuse of a certain type within the volunteer's own social network may be a key motivator for volunteering, but the volunteer may choose not to want to work with this specific type of offender. Also the core member will be interviewed about his preferences and sensitivities with regard to volunteers. For example if he has been abused by a very dominant father himself, he may have difficulties to deal with a very dominant male in his Circle. On the other hand, it may be a challenging experience that helps him overcome his past.
In order to provide the core member with a rich social network that enhances his social capital in the greatest possible extent, it is important to build a diverse Circle, involving volunteers of different ages, sexes and backgrounds. In case of special needs of the core member, it is advised to engage volunteers with special skills to match these needs.

! ***4.*** *Solve practical issues*

- Find a suitable location for Circle meetings
- Buy pre-paid cell phones for Circle volunteers
- Organise insurance for volunteers

The location for Circle meetings should be confidential, discrete and neutral. The core member is making essential changes in his life and is trying to regain his place in society. The location for Circle meetings should reflect this process and therefore should not be connected to detention or probation. On the other hand, the location should enable anonymity in order to prevent negative attention to the Circle. Examples of appropriate meeting places are community centres, church facilities and professional education institutions. Finding an appropriate, low budget location that is available on a fixed day each week for a very long period of time is often very difficult and therefore the search is best started at the very beginning of a project.

✓ As the Circle progresses, Circle meetings can be also held in the core member's house, and purely social meetings can be held in a café or a sports accommodation, providing there are no risks for the core member to be exposed, or to indulge dangerous fantasies or 'groom' children, young people or vulnerable adults at the location.

Best practice: guard your boundaries

One circle meets in a community center. As time progresses and the circle members grow together a disagreement with the manager of the community center appears. Several times, under the influence of alcohol, the manager appeared too late to open the door of the community center. In winter time circle members wanted to make a statement and discussed the problem directly with the manager. There was a discussion going on the street (shouting) while the circle coordinator by chance arrived at the circle meeting. The circle coordinator asked the circle members to leave and go to a motel lobby nearby. Meanwhile the circle coordinator tried to reason with the manager. After a few minutes he calmed a bit but he did not want to meet this circle member ever in his life.

From then on there was no venue available for circle meetings. Until a few weeks later when the group decided to meet each other at the home of one of the volunteers. The circle coordinator did not know how to properly handle this wonderful initiative. Considerations were made: does the volunteer have younger children in the house? Is someone in the surrounding of the volunteer (indirectly) endangered by the presence of the core member at the volunteer's home? Do other volunteers agree with the venue? Is the likelihood of recidivism present? What is the opinion of the forensic therapist? Will the volunteer be safe as the core member knows where she resides? Does the volunteer guard their own boundaries? What does this 'gesture' mean for the core member?
At some moment all questions could be answered positively and there were no foreseeable problems to expect. The circle coordinator (with consent from colleagues, therapist, probation officer, volunteers and core member) agreed to hold meetings at the home of the particular volunteer. The other volunteers were told that they would not hold accountable if they would not make the same gesture to the core member. The message for other circle members is: stick to your own needs, your own feelings and your own boundaries. Do not feel obliged to make the same gesture because of the fact that any one of your own circle does. Guard your boundaries.

In the following period the circle met weekly at the home of the volunteer. Weekly, experiences of the week were shared and Alan soon became a full member of the group. There was an equal and reciprocal relationship.

✓ ***5**. Introduce volunteers to each other*
Organize three Circle meetings prior to the formal commencement of the Circle, without the core member present, to ensure that volunteers feel comfortable enough with each other to start the Circle with the core member.

Quality management and supervision
The management and supervision of quality standards is a shared responsibility of the regional project staff, steering committees and if present, the national COSA organization. It has two objectives: to support model integrity (to enable the inner Circle to develop a trusting relationship from which all three Circle functions are emerging in a balanced way) and to ensure program fidelity (make sure that the project is in line with the devised and agreed national or regional 'code of practice' and all procedures are followed up as they are meant to, in order to guarantee the high quality support for the inner Circle).
Some helpful procedures are:

! Monitoring of Circle progress by Circle coordinators through Circle minutes;
! Structured quarterly evaluation of the core members' process with the Dynamic Risk Review;
✓ Supervision and coaching of Circle coordinators by an external professional supervisor;
! Quarterly assessment of volunteers' specific support, coaching and training needs;
! Additional training program for volunteers tailored to their needs;
✓ Peer-coaching for Circle volunteers;
! Supervision of (regional) project quality by (regional) steering committee;
! Research into model and program integrity;
✓ Annual auditing through external and peer auditors.

These instruments and procedures are explained in more detail in chapter 4: 'Guide to protocols and manuals' and chapter 5: 'Monitoring and evaluation guide'.

Obtain and ensure commitment
A COSA Circle is a long term approach that benefits from long term commitment of volunteers, professionals and project staff. It is good practice in the European projects to support the commitment of all involved in a COSA initiative by regular social meetings or educational meetings like lectures, conferences or symposia.
These meetings offer the opportunity to exchange COSA experiences and expertise and to build and renew social ties that support the motivation to stay engaged in Circles. Especially volunteers can benefit from these meetings. In the UK, a national Circles conference is organized each year for all COSA professionals, volunteers and projects staff and other interested people. Also core members may be invited to this annual conference and in some cases contribute through personal testimonies about their own process and the process of their Circle. In The Netherlands, a national COSA volunteer day is organized each year, which is partly social event, partly training event. Other social events can be an annual celebration at birthdays and appropriate with volunteers and core members of one regional project. Volunteers' commitment may also benefit from peer coaching. In Belgium, COSA volunteers are also invited to other (non-COSA related) public activities of the House of Justice.

✓ ***Information about the project***
As a COSA initiative is on its way, stakeholders, professionals, volunteers and the general public should be informed about the proceedings from time to time. In the UK, a digital periodical newsletter is distributed through a mailing list by Circles-UK, to keep everybody informed. Anyone who is interested can apply for this newsletter. In the UK, Catalonia, and The Netherlands, the general public is informed through a website and through the media. To this

end, projects staff and media experts of the organisations that are involved have developed good contacts with dedicated journalist and editors. In Latvia and Bulgaria, seeking public attention is not deemed helpful, since the general public holds very punitive attitudes towards sex offenders. These projects prefer to keep a low profile while still in their starting phase.

Timing of project development
Starting a new Circle project requires a lot of ground work as described above. Project staff will gradually become more experienced and should be granted some 'learning time', before the maximum amount of Circles is dedicated to their supervision. This makes projects more expensive in the beginning, compared to fully operational and experienced regional projects. Also, new regional projects should be able to profit from earlier experiences. If proliferation of COSA throughout the country is undertaken by a single organisation (e.g. a national probation organisation), it is important to utilize the experience of first projects. Therefore gradual expanding the number of Circle projects is advised. On the other hands, projects with too little capacity can find it difficult to build expertise and to gain professional and government support.

3.3 References

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4 Guide to protocols and manuals

4.1 Introduction

The quality standards of COSA are outlined in a **code of practice named 'Circles Definitions and Standards',** which has been developed during the Circles4EU project and has been agreed upon by all project partners (Brown & Völlm, 2014). In this document, available at www.circles4.eu, basic quality standards are outlined. It includes three types of principles (guiding principles; provision principles, and operating principles) which together form the normative framework for Circles and two types of standards (operational delivery standards and governance standards) which together form the quality demands that each COSA Project needs to adhere to, in order to ensure high quality delivery.

To implement these standards, a body of protocols and manuals is available from project partners, covering different aspects of implementation. Poor implementation in any country can lead to reduced effectiveness and bad publicity and can harm Circle projects in other countries too. Therefore in this European handbook, only the goals and contents headings of these protocols manuals are outlined, and the complete documents are not provided.

There are some materials that are obligatory for any COSA project (marked **!**).
Also, some protocols and manuals are delivered under a license agreement and may be obtainable through Circles UK[7] (marked **L**).
Other materials are advised for being helpful, but are not obligatory in the establishment and operation of COSA (marked ✓).
Materials which need to be adapted to the national or regional context of the project are marked "**#**".

The documents will be described in a standardized fashion, giving information about:

Description
Aim
Content
To whom this document should be available (target group)
At what moment in the implementation process this document should be made available
Other remarks

[7] In the future, materials will be made available through a planned European platform which will regulate the proper use of such materials.

The following documents described here are :

The code of practice
Implementation guide
Organisational plan
Strategic communication plan
Training program for Circle coordinators
Training manual for volunteer training
Volunteer application form
Volunteer policy plan
Volunteer agreement
Supervision and coaching protocol
Core member referral form
Core member needs evaluation form
Protocol for the selection of a core member
Intervention protocol for professionals in the outer Circle
Circle agreement
Exit strategy

Documents and manuals that are used for monitoring and evaluation purposes are described in chapter 5.

4.2 European Code of practice

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Description	A document, which describes the criteria for starting, operating and managing 'Circles of Support and Accountability' (Circles), with which all organisations and persons who have or seek a formal relationship with a COSA initiative need to comply. The European code of practice document: 'COSA definitions and standards' is available in English via www.circles4.eu
Aim	To develop a common understanding of COSA principles and standards, and through a high quality implementation and high level of program fidelity.
Content	1. A description of the primary goals and fundamental values of COSA; 2. A short description of the effective processes behind Circles; 3. A description of mandatory operational principles on: - Circle operation; - Project governance.
Target group	Steering committees; Circle project staff; Professional organisations and volunteer organisations that operate Circles or want to start Circles.
Availability	It should be present and available for all members of the above target group from the beginning of the implementation process.
Other remarks	Translations and adaptations of this document may be necessary for the national context.

4.3 Implementation guide

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Description	The implementation guide is a step by step description of the planned implementation process and of operational actions and requirements to safeguard high quality delivery of Circles and Circle projects. It needs further adaptation to the local context.
Aim	The aim of the implementation guide is to instruct new and future project coordinators and project staff, about the necessary preconditions for any Circles project and the steps that have to be taken in the implementation process, in order to maintain program integrity. The implementation guide needs to be tailored to the national context, which has been explored in an adaptation study, and therefore must be developed by each new national COSA initiative for the specific circumstances.
Advised content	1. A short description of COSA, the primary goals and fundamental values, and the theoretical model; 2. Description of organisational structure of the COSA initiative; 3. Preconditions for Circle projects to start (e.g. a checklist); 4. Description of steps and procedures in the preparation stage of a Circle project, e.g.: - building regional[8] support and a regional network - recruitment and selection of volunteers - recruitment and selection of core members - building an inner Circle - building an outer Circle; 5. Description of steps and procedures in the operational stage of a project, e.g.: - planning of Circle meetings - coaching and supervision of volunteers - evaluation of Circle process.
Target group	Regional project staff; Regional steering committee.
Availability	The national document should be developed before the start of a regional project. Due to the growing practical expertise, it will need in some cases to be adapted in the course of the implementation process.
Other remarks	Since changes in the document may be necessary beforehand due to specific national conditions, an adaptation study should be conducted before an implementation plan is developed, in order to assess the feasibility of the implementation conditions and processes.
	The implementation guide is a leading document in any evaluation of program integrity.

[8] Where the word 'regional' is used it is not intended to imply that this tier of organisation is vital to the COSA structure, and some COSA initiatives will begin and remain at a geographically confined and 'local' level. The words 'regional' and 'local' will therefore be used inter-changeably, at times one being the more suited level of organisation than the other, or being a fore-runner to the other.

4.4 Organisational plan

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Description	The organisational plan describes the governance structure of the project, as well as roles and responsibilities of project staff and associated partners and advisors. Examples are available via Circles4EU project partners.
Aim	To inform project partners and project staff about the project governance structure, and to clarify accountability issues.
Content	1. Description of tasks, responsibilities and members of the national steering committee; 2. Description of tasks, responsibilities and members of the regional steering committee; 3. Description of tasks, responsibilities and members of the national bureau (if relevant); 4. Description of tasks, responsibilities and members of the regional projects; 5. Description of other associate functions, e.g. research.
Target group	Grant provider; National and regional steering committees; National and regional project staff.
Availability	The organisational plan needs to be developed by the project itself, it should be agreed upon by the funders and all steering committees involved in the preparation stage of a Circles project.
Other remarks	The organisation plan is a document that will need regular updating when a Circles project is expanding.

4.5 Strategic communication plan

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Description	A strategic communication plan describes how to deal with media attention, how to co-operate with media and roles and responsibilities of project partners with regard to media contacts. Examples can be obtained from Circles4EU project partners.
Aim	To support effective media communication, in order to manage risks and opportunities associated with interest from the press and wider public.
Content	1. Basic information about COSA and the project; 2. Situation analysis: challenges and supportive features in the media landscape; 3. Core messages; 4. Target groups and communication aims; 5. Communication media per target group; 6. Scheduling of communication actions, recommendations and roles / training; 7. Practical tips: dealing with the media / crisis management.
Target group	Steering committees; National and regional project staff; Volunteers.
Availability	It is advised to develop a strategic communication plan early in the preparatory phase of a project and especially to inform volunteers, since they often are approached by the media.
Other remarks	Circle initiatives easily attract media attention. This attention can be very useful in the recruiting of volunteers, but always needs to be dealt with carefully, in order to prevent the dissemination of incorrect information.

Best practice: dealing with the media in a high profile case

A swimming trainer and owner of a swimming school for children was convicted in 2010 to 10 years of prison for the sexual abuse of 57 young girls. The sex offender was convicted on the basis of video pictures, made by himself. According to the officer of justice, he was a clear danger for society and had a high risk of recidivism. The case is especially interesting because it attracted a lot of publicity; it was discussed in newspapers, on TV shows, it was becoming a media issue.
The huge media impact was even more problematic when the sex offender was released on probation after 4 years of prison. When it became publicly known that he was going to live in the city of Leiden, demonstrations were taking place and the community of the city of Leiden was very alert at once. The mayor of Leiden had to publicly explain his decision of permitting this person to live in his town. This media hype was neither good for the worried parents in the town, nor for the reintegration of the sex offender. The mayor confirmed is decision repeatedly in public and said that he should not be sent away as the protesting mob was demanding, but just accepted and helped to rehabilitate.
The Dutch Probation Service built a COSA circle around him immediately after his release. After this was disclosed to the media, the demonstrations silenced away. The media was since then given as little information as possible and the message to the public was: everything is under control. The municipality of Leiden also supported the decision of the mayor to let this person live in Leiden and they publicly explained their decision by discussing their inclusive views on offender rehabilitation.
The result is that the media have lost their interest. The case is now still going on, but at the moment one hears little about it in the media. There were rumors that that person had moved to Germany, but The Dutch Probation Service did not confirm nor denounce this news. Our conclusion; not reacting to the 'provocation' of the mass media is maybe a solution to media hypes.

4.6 Training manual for Circle coordinators training

!#L

Description	The training manual for the Circle coordinators program describes the aims and program of the mandatory training for Circle coordinators. It provides a schedule for the three day training of Circle coordinators. It needs to be completed with relevant information about the national context.
Aim	To maintain the quality of the Circle coordinators training, to ensure a good understanding of the COSA principles and operations by the Circle coordinators and development of COSA specific skills and attitudes.
Content (not necessarily in this order)	1. Basic information on COSA and project organisation; 2. Basic materials: code of practice, implementation plan, evaluation and monitoring guide; 3. Core member selection; 4. Volunteer selection, training and coaching; 5. How to deal with risk and responsibilities; consultation and supervision; 6. Exit strategies; 7. Theoretical background of the COSA model & scientific research; 8. Licence agreement and availability of materials.
Target group	Project co-ordinators; Circle coordinators; Trainer/supervisor; All others involved in the training.
Availability	The basic training manual needs to be available for all involved well before the first training of Circle coordinators.
Other remarks	The Circle coordinators training is delivered by the national COSA organisation. If no national organisation is in place, the local trainer/supervisor and the first circle coordinators need to be trained by COSA providers from more experienced projects (or from other countries). After this, they can deliver the training themselves. Since the training manual also contains nationally developed material (e.g. the implementation guide) it needs to be partly adapted.

4.7 Volunteer training manual for Circle coordinators

!#L

Description	The training manual for volunteer training is a resource book for members of the project staff who deliver the initial two day volunteer training. It needs to be completed with information which is relevant in the national context.
Aim	To provide Circle coordinators with all background information needed for the volunteer selection, training and their coaching and supervision role.
Content	1. Background information about COSA - Theoretical background - Organisation - Volunteers; 2. Volunteer selection interview; 3. Training starters (to break the ice and support group process in the training); 4. Values and history of COSA; 5. Roles and responsibilities of volunteers; 6. Working with professionals; 7. Public safety: risk and risk management, basic models and methodologies of working with sex offenders; 8. Volunteers self-care needs; 9. Supervising and managing volunteers; 10. Profile and training demands for Circle coordinators.
Target group	Circle coordinators; Trainer/Supervisor; Co-trainers (e.g. professionals in the outer Circles).
Availability	The manual for the volunteer training must be available for the Circle coordinators before they start with recruiting and selection of volunteers.
Other remarks	Future Circle coordinators must have taken part in the Circle coordinators training and in at least one volunteer training themselves, before they can deliver the volunteer training. The training manual needs adaptation to the specific national context, information about the COSA projects and its embedding in the network of sex offender aftercare, information about sex offender treatment.

4.8 Volunteer application form

!

Description	A document which is sent to individuals who have applied for a role as volunteer in a circle. An example of the volunteer application form is available via project partners.
Aim	The volunteer application form is asking for all information needed in the selection of volunteers.
Content	1. Contact information; 2. Experiences in work and volunteering; 3. Relevant skills and expertise; 4. Motivation; 5. Availability; 6. References; 7. Consent to check criminal background.
Target group	Volunteers; Project coordinators; and/or Circle coordinators.
Availability	The volunteer application form needs to be available from the start of the recruiting activities. Volunteers who apply will be asked to fill in this form before the first personal interview.
Other remarks	Make sure all volunteer information is safely filed. This best done in a regional and/or national volunteer database

4.9 Volunteer resource book

!#L

Description	The volunteer resource book provides Circle volunteers with all information needed during the initial training. It needs to be completed with information relevant in the national context.
Aim	To improve the effectivity of the volunteer training and help circle volunteers to understand COSA values, aims and operational principles.
Content	1. Mission statement, principles and values of COSA; 2. Basic information about the COSA model; 3. Risk management: the network of organisations; 4. Circle process model; 5. Tasks and responsibilities of volunteers; 6. Examples of Circles; 7. Volunteer support and supervision; 8. Personal boundaries and self-regulation; 9. Personal statements of volunteers, core members and professionals.
Target group	Volunteers; Circle coordinators; Regional project coordinators.
Availability	The volunteer resource book should be provided to all volunteers who follow the initial training.

4.10 Volunteer policy plan

!#L

Description	This document completes the volunteer resource book with information about the volunteer policies of their circles project, including legal and other accountability issues. It needs to be completed with information relevant in the national context.
Aim	To provide volunteers with all information they need for their performance in the inner Circle.
Content	1. Mission statement, principles and values of COSA; 2. Privacy regulations; 3. Volunteer profile, selection and de-selection criteria; 4. Tasks and responsibilities of volunteers; 5. Basic training and additional training program; 6. Circle process: different types of Circles and procedures, the first Circle meetings; 7. Volunteer support and supervision; 8. Personal boundaries and self-regulation; 9. Circle agreement; 10. Other volunteer jobs within the project; 11. Practical issues; 12. Safety regulations; 13. Complaint procedure.
Target group	Volunteers; Circle coordinators; Regional project coordinator.
Availability	The volunteer policy plan is one of the first documents that should be available in the course of the implementation process. Since recruiting, selecting and training volunteers is crucial to the project, all project members should have a shared knowledge on volunteer policies, so that any questions of future volunteers can be answered correctly. Volunteers receive the volunteer policy plan in the course of the initial volunteer training.
Other remarks	The volunteer policy plan needs to be adapted to the national project conditions. Any adaptations however need to comply with the code of practice and the implementation plan.

4.11 Volunteer agreement

! L

Description	The volunteers agreement is a formal and signed declaration of compliance with the volunteer policy plan.
Aim	To support high quality operation of the inner circle and volunteer safety and compliance with COSA operating principles
Content	Statement of being informed about volunteer policies and willingness to comply.
Target group	Volunteers; Project coordinator; Circle coordinator.
Availability	The volunteer agreement is signed when a volunteer is definitely taking part in the project.

4.12 Core member referral form

! L

Description	This document provides a format for collecting and delivering information about a potential core members' characteristics and background, as well as risks and support needs. To be used by professionals when referring a core member to a COSA project.
Aim	To provide the regional Circle coordinator with all information needed for the selection of the core member and to enable systematic data collection.
Content	1. Client's contact information, name, date of birth, criminal history; 2. Referring professional contact information; 3. Agreement of information sharing; 4. Judicial information about the client; 5. Motivation for referral; 6. Risk assessment; 7. Treatment information; 8. Victim information; 9. Specific needs, relapse prevention plan if extant; 10. Other professionals involved in aftercare.
Target group	Professionals in the regional network of sex offender aftercare; Project coordinators; Circle coordinators.
Availability	This format should be made available to professionals in the local network in the process of core member recruitment.
Other remarks	Make sure all core member information is safely filed. Aggregated core member information for research purposes should be collected in an anonymous core member database. A format for the **European standard database** is described in chapter 5 and can be obtained from www.circles4.eu.

4.13 Core member information form

! L

Description	A document in the form of a questionnaire with open questions, to be filled in by the core member (with help of referring professional or Circle coordinator, if necessary)
Aim	To provide regional/local projects with information about the needs of the future core member.
Content	1. Contact information; 2. Information about conviction(s); 3. Personal documents needs/relapse prevention plan; 4. Living conditions; 5. Household management skills; 6. Mobility; 7. Work; 8. Income; 9. Health; 10. Leisure time; 11. Relationships; 12. Treatment; 13. Offence history; 14. Relapse prevention strategies; 15. Rehabilitation skills and fears; 16. Agreement to share information.
Target group	Future core members; Regional project coordinator; Circle coordinator.
Availability	The core member information form should be available when core members are being referred by professionals.
Other remarks	Make sure all core member information is safely filed.

4.14 Core member selection protocol

√#

Description	A checklist or protocol for local COSA project staff, which outlines the necessary steps in the selection of core members. Examples of such protocols can be obtained from Circles4EU project partners. The protocol will need adaptation to the national context.
Aim	To support program integrity.
Content	1. Selection criteria; 2. Selection procedure.
Target group	Regional/local steering group; Regional/local project coordinator; Circle coordinators; Referring professional.
Availability	The core member selection protocol should be available from the beginning of the core member recruiting.
Other remarks	This document can also be helpful in evaluating program integrity.

4.15 Circle agreement

! L

Description	A formal document, stating agreement on circle targets and operating principles, to be signed by all circle members.
Aim	The Circle agreement is the formal basis of the Circle, it holds all Circle members accountable to the main goals of the Circle: no more victims.
Content	1. Compliance with Circle targets; 2. Compliance with Circle procedures; 3. Compliance with Circle supervision; 4. Agreement to being a 'good Circle member'; 5. Names and signatures of all Circle members, including the core member.
Target group	Volunteers; Core member; Circle coordinator.
Availability	The Circle agreement is signed by all Circle members in the first Circle meeting with the core member.

4.16 Information brochure for professionals in the outer Circle

√#

Description	An information brochure to inform professionals in the outer Circle about COSA, and their role and responsibilities in the outer Circle. Examples can be obtained via Circles4EU project partners.
Aim	To support the cooperation between inner and outer circle and to create support from professional organizations for the COSA project.
Content	1. General information about COSA; 2. Information about how Circles proceed; 3. Information about the project organisation; 4. Theoretical model of COSA; 5. Operational principles of COSA; 6. Operational procedures of COSA - selection of core members - selection of volunteers - forging of a Circle; 7. Procedures in the operational stage of a Circle.
Target group	Professionals in the outer Circle.
Availability	This document is helpful in the dissemination of correct information about COSA and should be made available to professionals who are referring core members and/or are involved in the outer Circle.

4.17 Exit strategy

! #L

Description	A document which outlines the necessary steps to be taken in the safe closure of a project. It needs to be adapted to the national and/or local context.
Aim	To support safe and responsible closure of Circles and a project if necessary.
Content	1. Introduction; 2. Project governance actions; 3. Operational actions.
Target group	Local/regional project coordinator; Local/regional steering committee.
Availability	The exit strategy should be available to project staff and steering committees prior to the start of a COSA project.
Other remarks	An exit and contingency strategy to ensure the health and safety of staff, volunteers, core members and the community in case of closure of the project is one of the requirements in the code of practice.

5 Monitoring and evaluation guide

5.1 Introduction

Monitoring and evaluating COSA processes is a core activity of (national) project coordinators and of steering committees. There are three main reasons to put much effort into this:

- When introducing a new initiative like COSA, activities will probably be against the political grain and against public opinion on sex offenders re-entering society. A COSA project will be put under the looking glass and will be held accountable for the quality of deliverance and outcome – at least by the grant provider. Transparency and accountability are not only core features of the inner Circle, but also of the project as a whole.

- A project provider will feel the need to monitor and evaluate the processes that are going on in the project and in the Circles, in order to be able to comply with the code of practice, to identify bottlenecks and challenges, to learn from successful strategies and thereby improve the quality of Circles and of the whole endeavour.

- Scientific research into COSA and its effects is a must in order to legitimize the approach and the financial expenditures that are necessary to maintain the project. Also, research on COSA is contributing to the national and international body of knowledge on secure sex offender reintegration and successful rehabilitation strategies. The monitoring and evaluation tools that are developed so far offer a wealth of information for research ends.

In the following paragraphs, aims and procedures of monitoring and evaluation are outlined and the instruments are described in more detail. The instruments are available under the license agreement.

5.2 Aims and procedures

Aims
The main purpose of all monitoring and evaluation strategies is to support and improve program integrity and to learn from experiences and use them to improve the project. By program integrity we mean: adherence of all project members to the procedures and protocols that are developed to support and supervise the work of the inner Circle - which is where it all happens, and what makes COSA such an effective approach. Under the European code of practice, projects are mandated to develop sound monitoring and evaluation procedures, in order to be able to intervene and support when necessary. Obligatory procedures are marked **!**, best practices that are not obligatory are marked √.

Procedures
In the European model, a system of stepped monitoring and evaluation is developed. This system is outlined shortly below, and instruments that have been developed for this process are described in more detail in chapter 5.3.

! *Evaluation of volunteer training*
A minimum standard are personal interviews, held with all volunteers after the training. Additionally, the volunteer training can be evaluated for instance through a short questionnaire that is filled in by volunteers before and after the training to measure perceived knowledge and skills on relevant topics and to assess future training needs.

! *Minutes of all Circle meetings and all individual contact*
The volunteers write minutes of all Circle meetings and individual contacts and mail them to the Circle coordinator as soon as possible.

! *Quarterly[9] reports to outer Circle and program bureau*
The Circle coordinator writes quarterly reports to the members of the outer Circle about the process of the core members and any issues that are of relevance to them.
The Circle coordinator writes quarterly reports to the program bureau about the proceedings of the Circle, the contacts with the core member, the group dynamics in the Circle, the process of the core member and issues that are rising in the outer Circle.

! *Regular evaluation of dynamic risk of the core member*
On a regular basis (e.g. every three months) the volunteers and the Circle coordinator hold a Circle meeting without the core member to evaluate the core members process with a standardized instrument, the 'Dynamic Risk Review'. The scores in this instrument are obtained through discussion, leading to consensus.

! *Regular evaluation with individual volunteers*
On a regular basis (e.g. every three months), but also in between if necessary, the Circle coordinator has an individual interview with each Circle volunteer to evaluate his or her contribution and identify any specific coaching and training needs.

✓ *Circle coordinator supervision*
Every six weeks, all Circle coordinators meet in supervision groups with an external supervisor, to discuss any issues that are related to the deliverance of COSA services. The supervisor monitors the program integrity.

✓ *Quarterly project reports to steering committee*
Every three months the regional project manager or circle coordinator reports to the steering committee and (if present) the national COSA organisation about the project proceedings and delivers data on number of Circle volunteers, formal and informal Circles[10], number of core member referrals, etc.)

! *Annual audits (in case of several projects per country)*
Once a year, the adherence to the code of practice and additional support needs are assessed by an audit team. Such a team can be formed by members of a national COSA organisation (if available) and/or members of different COSA teams. Evaluations take place through interviews, file research and interviews with volunteers and/or professionals.

[9] In The Netherlands, these are monthly reports.

[10] An informal Circle is a Circle that has been dissolved, but keeps in touch with a core member through one or more volunteers who infrequently are in contact with the core member, also called 'mentoring'.

5.3 Instruments

For each step in the monitoring and evaluation process, formats and tools have been designed. Most of them can be obtained through project partners of Circles4EU or be designed by the project itself.
Some can be obtained through a license agreement with Circles UK, these are marked **(L)**.
The instruments are described below.

√ *Questionnaire for evaluation of volunteer training*

Name	**Training needs questionnaire**
Description	A short questionnaire for volunteers, to be applied before and/or after the training. An example is available via the Dutch and Spanish COSA project partners.
Aim	To assess training needs before and after the volunteer training.
Content	1. Name of volunteer; 2. Knowledge items; 3. Skills items; 4. Additional treatment needs.
Target group	Volunteers; Circle coordinators; Trainer/supervisor.
Implementation	There are two questionnaires that cover identical items: one to measure needs before the training, one to measure knowledge and skills after the training. The pre-training assessment can be used to identify specific training needs of a group that can be given specific attention in the training. The post- training evaluation can identify training needs that have not been met sufficiently and can be dealt with in an additional training programme.
Other remarks	The questionnaire has the format of a Likert scale and contains 15 knowledge items and 11 skills items and an open end question to assess additional training needs.

! Circle minutes and contact reports

Name	**Circle minutes**
Description	A format for writing circle minutes, provided to all volunteers. This format should be included in the volunteer resource book.
Aim	Monitoring of Circle process and process of core member.
Content	1. Circle identification + date of Circle meeting; 2. Short description of Circle meeting; 3. Comments on process of core member; 4. Comments on groups process/group dynamics; 5. Action plans/agreements made.
Target group	Volunteers; Circle coordinator.
Implementation	Circle minutes are written after each Circle meeting and sent to the Circle coordinator. The Circle coordinator reads the Circle minutes immediately and if necessary contacts Circle members to get more information or in order to coach the Circle.
Other remarks	Circle minutes are an important information source for a Circle coordinator. In order to be informative, Circle minutes should not be too formal. It is important that volunteers feel free to express their observations and concerns in a personal way, to convey the mood and processes in the Circle.
	Circle minutes need to be encrypted if sent by e-mail.

Name	**Contact reports**
Description	A format for writing minutes of all individual contacts with core members, provided to all volunteers. This format should be included in the volunteer resource book.
Aim	Monitoring of Circle process and process of core member.
Content	1. Circle identification code + date of contact; 2. Who initiated the contact; 3. Comments on subjects of conversation and/or type of activities; 4. Comments on the meeting.
Target group	Volunteers; Circle coordinator.
Implementation	Contact reports are written after each contact between the core member and one or more volunteers and sent to the Circle coordinator. The Circle coordinator monitors the contact reports and if necessary contacts Circle member to get more information or to coach the Circle.
Other remarks	All other Circle members are informed about intermediate contacts between the core member and the volunteer in the following Circle meeting.
	Contact reports need to be encrypted, if sent by e-mail.

Best practice: adaptation of the model to communication needs

Charles was diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder. The first thing the forensic expert asked me when she heard I wanted to start a circle for Charles was: "how on earth are you going to manage the communication with Charles and a whole group of volunteers?".
I did not have an answer to that. Loving challenges and customization I started a circle with an open mind and asked Charles to teach me what does work and does not work for him.
After two highly structured circle meetings with Charles and his four volunteers, everybody recognized that it was too difficult for Charles to process new information and new impressions. Despite the fact that everyone spoke at his own turn, did not change the subject and silently waited for Charles' answers and comments, it did not work to our satisfaction.
Charles wanted to know what the volunteers can do for him. He had a relapse prevention plan, but did not know how to use this during the week. His intelligence apparently is enough to arrange housing and health insurance. But during his actions to reach his goals, he got entangled in the rules of the Dutch government. He studied the details of the legislation and gradually became frustrated. He wanted to know what the value of the volunteers could be. How should he trust volunteers when professionals show that they are not trustworthy? To make this concrete as possible for him the group divided Charles' list of wishes and actions into smaller tasks. Now, one volunteer has the time and experience to guide the arrangements around housing. Another volunteer guides Charles during conversation with agencies, while another volunteer weekly has a hiking activity with Charles. Each volunteer has his/her own role and responsibility in the circle.
To keep in touch with each other, each volunteers makes notes and will share this with the other circle volunteers and circle coordinator. Additional the volunteers and Charles meet on a monthly basis to allocate new tasks and activities. Also, the group can evaluate and exchange their experiences over the last month. Charles can indicate what worked for him and what did not work for him.

! *Quarterly[11] reports to outer Circle and national COSA organisation*

Name	**Quarterly reports to professionals in the outer Circle**
Description	A format for Circle coordinators to write quarterly reports to the outer Circle and to the national COSA organisation (if present). These reports should not come in the place of regular face to face meetings with the outer Circle, and in case of acute risk, contacting the outer Circle immediately is important.
Aim	Monitoring of Circle by outer Circle.
Content	1. Name of core member and period of report; 2. Positive changes in the core member; 3. Signals related to risk; 4. Actions taken to deal with acute risk factors; 5. Actions taken to support core member.
Target group	Professionals in the outer Circle; Circle coordinator.
Implementation	The Circle coordinator writes these reports to professionals, based on Circle minutes and other information he or she gets from the inner Circle. If necessary, the Circle coordinator contacts professionals immediately.
Other remarks	In the UK, the outer Circle is formalized within MAPPA – therefore reports are sent to MAPPA.

Name	**Quarterly reports to the national COSA organisation**
Description	An extended version of the former document, to be sent to the national COSA organisation. Often this report is filled in first, and then a summary is prepared for the outer circle members.
Aim	Monitoring of program and model integrity; Research of COSA processes and best practices.
Content	1. Circle code; 2. Circle information (start, frequency of meetings, individual meetings, attendance of Circle coordinator, etc.); 3. Observations on group process; 4. Actions of Circle coordinator to support group process; 5. Observations on core member (positive changes in the core member, signals related to risk); 6. Actions taken to deal with acute risk factors; 7. Actions taken to support core member; 8. Observations about outer Circle (co-operation, issues that need attention, actions taken etc.); 9. General: issues that need attention next month.
Target group	Circle coordinators; Regional project coordinator; National COSA organisation (trainer supervisor).
Implementation	These more elaborate quarterly reports are an important instrument for regional coordinators and the program bureau

[11] Some projects prefer monthly reports.

	(especially trainer/supervisor) to monitor Circle processes. Unsolved issues emerging from these reports can be dealt with in supervision and/or may lead to adaptations in procedures. Also, in case of recidivism, the project can account for the process in the Circle and the steps taken.
Other remarks	The information in these reports is valuable for process evaluations and research into core members' re-integration process.

!L Regular evaluation of dynamic risk of the core member

Name	**Dynamic Risk Review**
Description	The Dynamic Risk review is an instrument to assess changes in dynamic risk and protective factors and has been specifically developed to be used in Circles. It comes as a complete manual, with introduction into theoretical underpinnings and scoring instructions.
Aim	Regular monitoring of dynamic risk and protective factors of core member to a schedule set by the national or regional manager. Research into COSA outcome and effectiveness.
Content	1. Circle code, no. of evaluation, date; 2. Evaluation of 19 dynamic risk and protective factors in four clusters: - Sexual interest - Offence related cognitions and attitude - Relationships - Self-regulation.
Target group	Volunteers; Circle coordinator; National COSA organisation.
Implementation	The DRR is scored by the Circle coordinator, after consulting with volunteers in an evaluation meeting without the core member present. Scores can be computed into a sum score, according to a scoring manual. Score development is used to identify progress or gaps in Circle (monitoring) activities. The anonymous DRR is sent to the national COSA organisation for research purposes.
Other remarks	Core members should be informed about the outcome of the evaluation. The DRR will be used in future international research into COSA, and therefore it is advised to introduce the use of the DRR right from the beginning of any project.

! *Regular evaluation of volunteers*

Name	**Topic list for regular evaluation interviews**
Description	This document is a tool for Circle coordinators to be used in their regular evaluation interviews with volunteers. It also can be used as a format to write a report of their evaluation interview.
Aim	To monitor specific coaching needs of volunteers and other issues related to the inner Circle, to a schedule set by the national or regional manager.
Content	1. Perception of volunteering; 2. Evaluation of impact of being a COSA volunteer; 3. Evaluation of group process; 4. Evaluation of core member process and goals; 5. Motivation.
Target group	Volunteers; Circle coordinators.
Implementation	Circle coordinators use this topic list in individual interviews with the volunteers and make written reports on relevant issues. They communicate specific training needs to the trainer/supervisor.
Other remarks	The evaluation interviews should be conducted on a regular basis (e.g. quarterly) in an informal, pleasant way in which the volunteer feels comfortable to discuss any issues that are relevant. The topic list therefore should help the Circle coordinator not to forget any important issues and should not 'dictate' the line of conversation.

√ *Quarterly project reports*

Name	**Quarterly project reports**
Description	A format to collect and report project operating information, to be used by regional COSA projects. This kind of structured information gathering is very helpful in providing the media, funding agencies, steering committees and others with up to date information about the size of the COSA project.
Aim	Monitoring of size of regional Circle projects and information needs. To inform external parties about the size of COSA
Content	1. Project identification and period of report; 2. Number of active Circles; 3. Information on recidivism and risk behaviour of core members; 4. Accounts on volunteers (active, passive, drop outs, waiting for training etc.); 5. Accounts of media activities; 6. Accounts of other PR activities; 7. Request for support, adaptation of materials etc..
Target group	Regional project coordinator; National COSA organisation; Steering committees.
Implementation	The regional project coordinator or circle coordinator sends quarterly reports to the national COSA organisation.
Other remarks	These quarterly reports are valuable for process and outcome evaluations.

!*L Annual audit plan*[12]

Name	**Audit plan**
Description	A national audit plan provides auditors and COSA projects with all necessary information about the auditing process, to ensure all Circles Coordinators and Managers are clear as to the various stages and processes of the auditing process.
Aim	To inform auditors and Circle coordinators and project managers about the role of Co-reviewer. In the UK, audits are linked to membership review and renewal under a licence agreement, in other countries, the main aim of an audit is to support projects in maintaining program integrity, quality standards and to adhere to the code of practice.
Content	1. Introduction to the purpose and process; 2. The 5 review stages/timetable; 3. Reviewing the requirements; 4. The process principles; 5. Gathering evidence; 6. Roll-out stages.
Target group	Project staff; Steering committees; Co-reviewers.
Implementation	The audit plan is sent to all Circle projects who work under the code of practice.

Name	**Review form**
Description	Format for data collection
Aim	To gather evidence about adherence to the code of practice.
Content	1. Requirements (items from the code of practice); 2. Supporting evidence; 3. Self-Assessment Comments by Project on evidence provided; 4. To be demonstrated evidence.
Target group	National bureau, lead-auditor; Project staff; Co-auditors; Steering committees.
Implementation	This form is used to gather and document the results of an audit in a summarized and standardized way.

[12] The audit procedure of Circles UK, which has been introduce to other Circles4EU project partners, is presented here.

Name	Review Report
Description	A format for writing the audit report
Aim	To inform project staff of reviewed projects about strengths and weaknesses of their project. To inform the national COSA organisation about the quality of Circle projects and their specific support needs.
Content	1. Project & audit information; 2. Deficits; 3. Deficit action plan; 4. Comments of project staff; 5. Outstanding/innovative practices.
Target group	Local/regional project staff; Local/regional steering committees; National Circles organisation.
Implementation	The review report is sent to the audited project and its steering committee by the auditors.

! ***Core member database***[13]

Name	**Core member database**
Description	An excel sheet, serving as a format for a database which contains anonymized information about all core members who have ever been in a circle.
Aim	It serves mainly research aims, and enables to monitoring of Circles results. To ensure basic data collection standards, which enable concerted international research projects in the future, as well as national effect studies.
Content	A spreadsheet with different types of items, to be entered a) at the start of a Circle: - Circle identification - start and end of Circle - core member information, such as: - socio demographic data - offence history - treatment history - mental health indicators - social indicators - risk b) at the end of the Circle: - risk - recidivism - social indicators - mental health indicators - type of circle ending
Target group	Project staff; Researchers; Steering committee.
Implementation	The research database should be implemented right from the start of the project. It is complemented by a database manual, which explains all items and scoring.

Name	**Core member database manual**
Description	A manual, explaining the use of the core member database spreadsheet.
Aim	To provide all information needed to implement the core member database.
Content	A general introduction to the database and its purposes A scoring manual, explaining the items and the way in which they can be scored.
Target group	Project staff; Researchers; Steering committee.
Implementation	The research database and the manual should be implemented right from the start of the project.

[13] The standard database is developed during the project Circles4EU.

6 Circle Evaluation

6.1 Introduction

COSA has been developed as a practice-based approach, out of a strong belief in ethical and practical principles and was less derived from theoretical insights into sex offender relapse prevention. However, social policy commissioners frequently demand a good evidence base as a condition of continued funding. There is also a need within COSA projects themselves for ongoing research into how Circles can be developed and best managed, for example in the selection of core members or the volunteer training. Good quality research is a way to inform these choices and assist advances. External accountability and internal development can be very well combined.

6.2 Overview of research so far

Research into the implementation, outcome and possible effects of COSA is still limited. In the paragraph below, examples of the different types of independent and scientific research that are published until now are briefly outlined.

Feasibility studies
Armstrong, Chistyakowa, Mackenzie & Malloch (2008) from the Scottish Centre for Crime and Justice Research conducted a feasibility study commissioned by the Scottish Government. They reviewed the implementation experience of Circles in areas where they have and have not become features of sex offender management, identified distinctive features of the Scottish criminal justice policy and practice that might affect implementation of pilots, considered the implications for volunteers working with sex offenders, assessed the evidence for effectiveness so far and set out relevant feasibility issues in case a decision should be taken to proceed with Circles in Scotland. Their research strategy was threefold. First, they reviewed the available literature on COSA, both peer-reviewed and independent research and self-evaluations of Circles projects. Second, they interviewed 31 Scottish stakeholders involved in or having knowledge of sex offender management in the community. Third, they conducted a field visit to the largest English Circles project, the Hampshire and Thames Valley Circles project (HTVC), where they observed office operations and conducted interviews with project staff, representatives from local statutory agencies, Circle volunteers and core members (25 interviews in total). They identified several issues that need to be dealt with before a pilot could be started.

In the Circles4EU project, all orienting countries (France, Ireland, Hungary) conducted a (limited) feasibility study, evaluating the national context and professional support for COSA. These studies have not been published. Information can be obtained from Circles4EU project partners.

Adaptation studies
Höing, Caspers & Vogelvang (2009) from the Avans Centre for Public Safety and Criminal Justice conducted an adaptation study for the Dutch Circles pilot project. They reviewed the implementation histories and experiences of the Canadian and English Circles projects, specifically the impact of criminal justice policies and practice on the organisation of Circle

projects, assessed the characteristics of the possible target group for Dutch Circles, described the Dutch context of criminal justice policies and practice, especially in the field of sex offender aftercare, and outlined the opportunities and challenges for Circle projects. They assessed the English and Canadian experiences with volunteer recruitment, selection and training and described the Dutch societal context of volunteering, assessed the evidence for effectiveness so far, and, finally, described opinions of national and regional stakeholders on the opportunities and challenges for pilot Circles. The adaptation study was conducted through desk research, combined with (group) interviews with professionals from 21 different organisations involved in sex offender management in the community or volunteering, and experience and information gathered on a field trip to the English national Circles office (Circles UK). The study revealed some characteristics of the national context (e.g. no mandated sex offender treatment in prison) that need to be dealt with through adaptations of protocols.

Höing, Snatersen & Pasmans (2010) conducted an adaptation study for the Belgium partner along the same lines as the one described above and assessed the Belgian context and needs for adaptation for the Belgian pilot Circles.

In the Circles4EU project, starting countries (Latvia, Catalonia, Bulgaria) each conducted an adaptation study for their own national project. These studies have not been published. Information can be obtained from the project partners.

Implementation studies

Höing & Vogelvang (2011) conducted an implementation study into the first Dutch pilot Circles. They described the implementation process and the adaptations to the original plans and protocols that were needed in the process, the conditions of implementation at the start of the pilot and how they developed during the implementation process. Once the pilot implemented, they evaluated the program and model integrity of the first pilot Circles and described the experiences of inner and outer Circle members and mangers in participating organisations. The research strategy was designed along the lines of a case study, gathering as much in-depth information as possible from different perspectives.

Methods of data collection were: participant observation of the operations of the Dutch program bureau (Circles NL), interviews at the start of the project with 6 project members, 9 volunteers, 2 core members, 5 professionals and 2 managers; project diaries of project staff, documentary analysis on implementation plans and protocols, project team minutes, Circle minutes, monthly reports from Circle coordinators and interviews at the end of the pilot period with 8 volunteers, 2 core members, 3 project members, 5 professionals in the outer Circles, and 2 managers from participating organisations. The study showed that overall the pilot implementation had been successful and resulted in many new ideas to improve the project.

Process evaluation

A process evaluation of the Dutch COSA project has been conducted when it had developed beyond its pilot stage by Höing, Vogelvang & Bogaerts (2014) together with a prospective study of COSA outcomes for core members. They developed two instruments to assess model integrity (the quality of the inner circle and its essential functions) and program fidelity (the quality of implementation of circle standards and supervision) of 17 circles. Data were collected via document analysis of monthly circle reports by circle coordinators, interviews with core members and professionals in the outer circle at three time points (before the start of the circle, 6 months after the start and 12 months after the start). The process evaluation revealed

that 25% of circles did not meet the criteria for program fidelity, and that the quality of the inner circle was associated with the level of program fidelity.

Outcome evaluation

An outcome evaluation measures to what extent the middle- and long-term goals of an intervention have been achieved (Van Yperen & Veerman, 2008). Several outcome evaluations of fully developed Circle projects have been conducted in Canada and the UK.

Wilson, Picheca & Prinzo (2007a) evaluated the outcome of Circles in Canada as experienced by key stakeholders. 24 core members, 57 volunteers, 16 professionals and 77 local community members completed a questionnaire about their experiences and the perceived outcomes of the Circle intervention. 88% of core members felt supported in their re-integration process, 67% thought that they might have re-offended without a Circle and 48% thought Circle volunteers were positive role models. Volunteers reported positive effects for themselves like more community integration (75%), feeling more emotionally attached to others (54%), and increased self-esteem (reported by 38% of the volunteers). The members of the local community thought that a sex offender re-entering community would raise less feelings of anxiety and resentment if he would participate in a Circle (67%) and of those who were aware of a Circle in their neighbourhood, 69% were 'happy' and 62% 'relieved' that the core member received support from a Circle.

Bates, Saunders & Wilson (2007) conducted a multiple case study on 16 Circles in the UK, evaluating the outcome of Circles with regard to Circle characteristics, Circle impact on prevention of offending, core member characteristics and recidivism of core members. Recidivism was defined in several ways: reconviction, breach of a sex offender prevention order (SOPO), recall following breach of conditions for parole and problem behaviour. The time at risk was at medium 18 months. Detailed information was gathered through documentary analysis on the core member files and through interviews with project staff. Of 16 core members, none was reconvicted, one was convicted for breach of SOPO, four were recalled for breach of parole conditions and five showed some kind of recidivist behaviour. A process evaluation showed that volunteers positively contributed to the prevention of possibly offensive behaviour in seven Circles.

Bates, Macrae, Williams & Webb (2011) extended the above mentioned study in a new multiple case series of 60 core members, which had been followed up for an average of 36 months (range: 1 – 84 months). Outcome variables were reconviction, breach of SOPO, and recall following breach of conditions for parole. Problem behaviour was not included as outcome variable, because the relationship with sexual offending is not clear. Data about the offenders' process had been gathered through documentary analysis on Circles files of 60 core members and categorized according to OASys pathways (a repeated structured assessment of offender criminogenic needs). In addition, various characteristics of core members and their Circles are described (e.g. level of risk, length of detention, duration of the Circle, status of the Circle). Some detailed descriptions of exemplary cases elicit the impact of volunteer engagement in Circles on core members. Bates et al. demonstrated that Circles can have a major impact on prevention of new crimes and stimulate healthy and pro-social behaviour. They also observed early drop out from the Circles, either through early recalls or voluntary drop out (16.7%), which was not observed in the earlier outcome study.

Three studies have examined changes in risk scores across time. Bates and Wager (2012) reported changes in risk (Dynamic Risk Review) for the 13 CMs who had completed three

assessments over a period of 12 months. There were significant changes in two of the three factors: Inappropriate Sexual Attitudes and Over-Confident Hostile Sexualization. Overall, positive reductions in scores for these factors were seen in 61.5% and 77% of CMs respectively. Of the final subscale, Inadequacy, 61.5% were found to have a positive reduction, 7.7% did not complete the scale, 15% remained unchanged and a further 15% were recorded as demonstrating a detrimental increase (Bates and Wagner, 2012). The DRR has also been used in The Netherlands where Hoing et al. (submitted) found a decrease in risk in 13 CMs between 6 months and 12 months after the beginning of the Circle, though this was non-significant.

Bates et al. (2012) examined CMs' files to identify how dynamic risk factors (as categorized in the OASys tool) had been reduced following Circle participation. Of these factors, the authors' found that 70% of CMs showed improvement in emotional well-being, 62% had displayed pro-social attitudes and behaviours, 50% had increased their engagement in age-appropriate relationships, and 48% had improved links with their families and increased their support networks**.**

Thomas et al. (2014) conducted a study exploring how COSA supports the reintegration of core members back into the community. Overall 70 interviews were conducted: 30 with Core Members, 20 with volunteers, and 20 with key stakeholders from Police, Probation and Project Coordinators. Interviews with volunteers suggested that meetings with Core Members had to be tailored to their individual needs. Meeting in informal, social settings was also seen as important to help further the progress of the Core Member. They all felt the importance of accepting the Core Member as a fellow-citizen rather than seeing him as a stigmatised 'outsider'. Core members themselves reported strong feelings of isolation and social exclusion, though believed that participating in a Circle offered a solution to some of these issues. Informal meetings, such as going to coffee bars or museums, were seen as important normalising activities.

Effectiveness evaluation

Gathering evidence about significant change (in problems) and the unique contribution of the program to this change distinguishes an effect evaluation from mere outcome study (Van Yperen & Veerman, 2008). Wilson, Picheca & Prinzo (2007b) conducted a first effectiveness study, comparing recidivism rates of 60 core members of one pilot project with 60 controls, who were matched on risk, sex offender treatment, and period of detention. In addition, rates of sexual re-offending were compared to expected rates. The medium follow-up period was 55 months for core members and 53 months for controls. The risk level of controls (assessed with Static 99 and RRASOR, both actuarial risk assessment tools) was slightly lower compared to the risk level of core members. While 16.7% of non-core members sexually re-offended, which is in line with the expected recidivism rate, only 5% of core members did – a reduction of 70%, and significantly different from the expected rate. Core members also offended less often with non-sexual offences (total re-offence rate 28.3% vs. 43.3% in controls), at a later time (first re-offence after 22 months vs. 18 months with control subjects), and the impact of the offence was smaller than the impact of the offences committed by controls.

In 2009, Wilson, Cortoni & McWhinnie conducted a national replication of the first Canadian effectiveness study, including 44 core members from Circle projects throughout the country, matched pair wise with 44 control subjects. The matching criteria were: risk for general criminality (measured by structured risk assessment), time and geographical location of release (within 90 days of each other, in the same location), time at risk, and treatment involvement.

Actuarial and dynamic risk of sexual recidivism (Static 99, RRASOR, Phallometric testing) and actual recidivism (being charged for or being convicted for a new offence – sexual or violent - including sexual -, or any) was assessed through file information in the CSC Offender Management system, a database containing all relevant information on Canadian criminals. Groups were comparable on all matching criteria except Static 99 scores, with the comparison group showing a higher level of risk. Time at risk was 35 months for the COSA group vs. 38 months for the controls. COSA participants showed 83% less sexual re-offending, 73% less violent re-offending (including sexual) and 71% less general offending. In total, the COSA group showed 74% less charges and convictions than the comparison group. However, Elliott and Beech (2013) noted that the assumptions of the $\chi 2$ test analysis were violated for this data. When they re-analysed the data using Fisher's Exact Test they found that the difference was not significant (albeit marginally). Wilson et al. (2009) also conducted further analysis in a sub-sample, with equal Static 99 scores and time at risk (3 years), consisting of 19 core members and 18 controls. Here comparable results were found: none of the core members re-offended sexually compared to 5 controls, core members had 82% less violent re-offending and 83% less re-offending of any kind. Also, comparison with expected reoffending rates on the Static 99 (with separate norms for high risk and 'routine' offenders) underscored these results. Core members had an 88% lower recidivism compared to what would be expected for a high risk sample from their scores on the Static 99. When compared to norms for 'routine offenders' they didn't differ significantly from expected recidivism rates. The comparison group showed recidivism rates as expected by their Static 99 score both for high risk and 'routine' offenders.

Bates et al. (2014) extended a previous outcome study (Bates et al., 2011) to investigate the impact of a Circles project upon recidivism using a case-control design. There were 71 Circles involved in the study with the control group consisting of sex offenders who were matched by risk status and community follow-up period and who had been referred to a Circle but were not currently involved in one. For recall, the findings indicated that 76% of CMs had not faced any legal sanctions during the follow-up period though comparison against the control group was not possible as data regarding recall to prison were not available for those offenders. On reconviction, the authors found that three CMs (4%) and two controls (3%) were reconvicted of a non-contact sex offence whilst three controls (4%) and no CMs were reconvicted of a contact sexual offence. Over a five-year follow up there were fewer sexual reconvictions for CMs and controls than was predicted (using the Risk Matrix 2000 assessment tool), though these differences were not significant. There were no significant differences found between SOPO breaches or complying with the SOR between the two groups.

The only RCT to date was conducted by Duwe (2012). This study randomly assigned 62 moderate-risk sex offenders either to a Circle or to a control group not receiving COSA support. Given the sample size, Duwe acknowledged that the reconviction outcome measure was not sufficiently powered. Across all of the five outcomes measured; re-arrest, reconviction, incarcerated for new offence, incarcerated for technical violation, any imprisonment,- CMs had lower rates of recidivism compared to the controls. However, only re-arrest (any offences) was significantly lower in the intervention group. For sexual offences specifically, no significant difference was found as only one of the control participants and none of the CMs were re-arrested for a sexual offence. In addition, there were significant reductions in three of the five measures of recidivism used in this study (any arrests, technical violation revocations, and any re-incarceration) for CMs, compared to controls, though differences in reconviction (any offence) or resentence to prison (for a new offence) were not significant.

A recent meta-analysis of controlled studies (one RCT and three controlled trials) found that CMs were 44% less likely to be reconvicted than controls. For sexual recidivism CMs were 67% less likely to be reconvicted than controls, which the authors found to be a significant effect (Clarke et al., submitted). There was no observed heterogeneity between these studies, though there was some discrepancy in how the outcome measures were defined. The analysis was also weighted, meaning that studies with larger samples and more events were given a higher weighting in the summary effect. Notably this meant that that the only RCT included (Duwe, 2012) was given the lowest weighting and therefore these effects must be interpreted with some caution.

Cost effect evaluation

A first study into the cost-effectiveness of Circles was conducted in the UK by Elliot & Beech (2011). They conducted a rapid evidence assessment (REA) based on the outcome study of Bates et al. (2011) and the effectiveness studies of Wilson et al. (2007b & 2009). Based on a risk-norm design, comparing actual re-offence rates with norms based on structured risk assessment prior to participation in Circles, estimates of reduction of re-offending were calculated. The REA results combined to an estimate of 61% reduction in sexual re-offending and a 55% reduction in any re-offending (sexual and non-sexual). Given that all re-offending (not just sexual offences) will generate costs, the 55% reduction was used in the cost benefit analysis. The average baseline re-offending rate for sex offenders, against both children and adults, was established as 15.1% (Barnett et al. 2010). The costs of running a Circle were estimated to be £11,140 per Circle, per annum. Costs included in the analysis were direct costs (like salary for staff members, training, travel & telephone costs for volunteers etc.), indirect costs (e.g. office running costs) but not costs for initial development of a project. The estimated cost, however, per re-offending was estimated to be £147,161 per offender. The researchers estimated tangible costs (direct costs of the criminal justice process) and a number of intangible costs (the indirect cost of crimes to health, education, and extra costs to policing) for re-offending. Extrapolating[14] these figures, the cost benefit ratio for savings in criminal justice expenditure through COSA was 0.03, a modest financial saving on the investment. This was calculated using a hypothetical cohort of 100 offenders; 50 of whom receive COSA and 50 of whom do not.

However, the authors argue that when the total intangible costs (societal costs) of sexual offending are including, accepted to be five-times the criminal justice costs, as is proposed by McGurk & Hazel (1998) and Miller et al. (1996), a saving of £654,044 can be predicted for a cohort of 50 core members. Extrapolating these figures, this amounts to a cost benefit ratio of 0.57 – meaning each £ invested is returning £0.57 in savings.

Any cost benefit analysis on COSA at this time can give only preliminary insight into cost-effectiveness. In the absence of national recidivism studies, the estimation of reduction in recidivism is highly dependent on the two Canadian recidivism studies of Circles, which probably show a higher reduction in recidivism than Circles elsewhere will do, due to the ceiling effect. In addition, the estimation of the costs of Circles is compromised by the higher project development costs in the early days of a Circle project, the variety in organisational and financial models in Circle projects, and the variety in the duration of Circles. Finally, the real and total societal costs of re-offending (e.g. loss of tax income from victims) versus total societal benefits of successful re-integration (e.g. gain of tax income through core members,

[14] Extrapolation conducted by the author of this handbook, cost benefit–ratio was not included in Elliot & Beech, 2011.

who otherwise had been on welfare) are difficult to establish and usually not taken into account.

6.3 How to evaluate Circles

There are three key characteristics of good quality research into policy interventions such as COSA (Van Yperen & Veerman, 2008). First it is recommended that the type of research should be linked to the developmental stage of the intervention (also known as 'linkage'). At each stage different types of research questions and, consequently, different research strategies are necessary. It is important that research and evaluation are embedded into Circles projects from the beginning. Second, research should also 'fit' into the procedures of program deliverance and should not add to the workload of professionals ('embeddedness'). Finally, research should be useful to different stakeholders: from the professional who is delivering the service, to the manager of institutions involved, to national policy makers (Van Yperen & Veerman, 2008).

Table 1 provides examples of different research designs for each stage in the development of Circles programmes. These research strategies are then outlined in more detail below. The first two types of studies (feasibility study and adaptation study) can be executed by project staff with research experience. The more evaluative types of study should be conducted by an external, independent researcher, to prevent that biased viewpoints influencing the research findings. Seeking the collaboration of researchers from qualified research institutes or universities is an advisable means of ensuring the quality and reliability of Circle evaluations.

Suggestions for further reading are made in the reference list.

Table 1: Research strategies

Developmental stage & tasks	**Research Question**	**Type of study**	**Research strategy**
Project proposal: Orientation on project goals, acquisition of funding, preparing protocols and manuals	1. Is a COSA project feasible in the given national context? 2. What adaptations need to be made to COSA standards and procedures given the specific national and regional context	1. Feasibility study (§ 6.3.1) 2. Adaptation study (§ 6.3.2)	Literature review Interviews with COSA experts Interviews with stakeholders Focus groups
Pilot implementation: Supervision of quality standards	1. Do the national and local adaptations to COSA standards prove to be valid and workable in real life? 2. How does the implementation of the pilot proceed and how can the implementation process be improved in order to meet quality standards?	Pilot implementation evaluation (§ 6.3.3)	Participant observation Interviews Focus groups Logbook

Developmental stage & tasks	Research Question	Type of study	Research strategy
Sustained implementation: 1. Implementation of quality management routines and 2. Deliverance of short-term goals	1. What is the extent of program integrity and model integrity? Do COSA projects deliver services as intended, when compared to quality standards? 2. Are re-integration and rehabilitation being reached as short-term effects[15]?	1. Process evaluation (§ 6.3.4) 2. Output evaluation (§ 6.3.5)	Documentation / In-depth case-analysis Interviews
Further proliferation of COSA projects; Advocacy and accountability	1. Are prevention of new victims and long-standing desistance from crime being achieved as long-term outcomes of COSA projects? 2. Which practices / interventions within the COSA model are effective ingredients in the general target population and in subgroups?	1. Output and outcome evaluation (§ 6.3.5) 2. Effectiveness evaluation (§ 6.3.6)	Multiple case study Recidivism study Randomised control trial (recommended) Recidivism study with matched controls Longitudinal multiple case study
Broad implementation: Program accountability	Are COSA projects cost-effective?	Cost–benefit analysis (§ 6.3.7)	Literature review Secondary data analysis

Qualitative Research

There are a number of different research questions concerning COSA programmes, for which qualitative research is often the most suitable approach. This is particularly true of questions into the feasibility, adaptation, implementation and process evaluation of Circles' projects.

6.3.1 Feasibility study

Features

A feasibility study is a form of market research to advise decision makers about the possible market opportunities and the expected impact and results of a project (Thompson, 2005). A feasibility study of COSA should at least thoroughly assess the following:

- The societal and political climate for sex offender rehabilitation;
- Possible financial resources for Circle projects and their sustainability;
- The judicial context;

[15] In the theoretical model of change (Chapter 1), the following short-term effects are to be expected: *decreased* emotional loneliness and risk behaviour, and *improved* participation in society, social integration, self-image (narrative identity), motivation, self-regulation skills and cognitions.

- Availability of sex offender treatment;
- The professional infrastructure of sex offender aftercare and risk management.

Research strategies

Literature review
Literature reviews often involve internet-based desk research with the aim to get an overview of what is already known about the topic of your research. Research into the feasibility of a COSA projects should start with a review of all accessible literature and documents about COSA. The websites of COSA projects in Canada, the UK and The Netherlands (see annex 1) can provide a lot of initial information, and this European handbook provides an overview based on the COSA literature and documents available thus far. Existing news media coverage of sex offender rehabilitation will provide an idea of the probable media reactions to the COSA project. In addition, documentation of local and national administration policies regarding sex offender management should be reviewed.

Interviews with COSA experts
Interviewing experienced COSA experts helps identify common challenges in project implementation. Visits to COSA projects abroad and interviews with project staff can provide a more realistic view on the practical issues to be anticipated in project implementation.

Interviews with stakeholders
The opinions of experts and stakeholders in sex offender aftercare will indicate how COSA might operate in local settings. Face to face interviews are the most practical way to do this. These interviews can have a triple function: firstly they generate the data that is needed, secondly they serve as a dissemination tool, since they offer the opportunity to inform stakeholders about COSA, and thirdly they also are a tool for building local and national working alliances.

Focus groups
Conducting focus groups instead of individual interviews is a more economical methodology and produces important interaction-based results. Focus groups are usually semi-structured group interviews around a central subject, involving around six to eight people who meet once for a period of around two hours. Focus groups generate data by interaction between group participants, thus sharpening and refining individual responses to a more considered level (Ritchie and Lewis, 2010).

6.3.2 Adaptation study

Features
An adaptation study for COSA project implementation assesses the core elements of COSA protocols and practices and the need for adaptations of these to the national context of sex offender management in the community on both a national and local level.

Core elements of COSA protocols and practises to assess are:
- Selection criteria and processes for core members and volunteers;
- Quality standards and protocols for Circle deliverance;
- Quality standards and protocols for project management and supervision.

An adaptation study of COSA should at least thoroughly assess the national context regarding (see chapter 2 for more details):

- The judicial context;
- Professional infrastructure regarding sex offender treatment;
- Professional infrastructure and common practices regarding sex offender aftercare and risk management;
- Volunteering;
- Sustainable financing.

Research strategies

Literature review
A review of documents about COSA procedures and principles and local and national policies regarding legal issues and sex offender management in the community, needs to be conducted. It may be difficult to obtain this information. So called 'grey literature', unpublished documents and policies, may be acquired through Circles4EU project partners (see chapter 4 and 5).

Interviews with professionals and managers
Since there is often a gap between written policies and common practice, interviews with professionals and managers in the field are necessary, in order to get a realistic picture of the infrastructure and common practices regarding sex offender aftercare and risk management. These interviews also give the opportunity to assess views, experiences and possible support, if this has not already been part of a feasibility study. In particular, rules and regulations regarding information exchange should be assessed. We suggest interviewing both managers and staff with direct contact with sex offenders, since both have different and valid perspectives on COSA implementation requirements.

It is often possible and more economical, to combine a feasibility and adaptation study.

6.3.3 Pilot implementation evaluation

Features
Implementation studies evaluate the implementation process of a new procedure or method in a comprehensive way: 'What is happening and why?' (Werner, 2004). Key questions for implementation studies (Werner, 2004):
- What are the program goals, what is the concept and design? Are they based on sound theory and practice; if not, in what respects?
- Does the responsible agency (or agencies) have the resources and capacity available and in place to implement the program as planned; if not, what is needed?
- Does the program, as resulted from the adaptation, really show us that it is suited to its environment?
- Are program processes and systems operating as planned;, if not, how are they operated and why?
- Is the program reaching the intended target population with the appropriate services, at the planned rate and 'dosage'; if not, what causes this?
- Are clients achieving desired outputs and outcomes; if not, what are plausible causes of lacking or undesired output and outcomes?

Implementation processes are evaluated on two levels: assessment of discrepancies between plans and actual practices *and* evaluating the short-term outputs and long-term outcomes through explanation of the way the implementation is proceeding and achieving results (or not). To explain the results of an implementation process, a theoretical model for successful

implementation of innovations is needed. Greenhalgh et al. (2004) provide such a theoretical framework.

Pilot studies give rapid feedback to program managers during the project's formative period (formative evaluation). It also provides rich contextual and cultural information, accounting for specific organisational and cultural issues and sensitivities. Furthermore, these types of study offer a good description of COSA projects 'as they really are'. Finally, such studies provide more tailored and strategic information for specific programmes.

Pilot studies can be performed either by an external researcher or through a more participative research approach like action research, involving all relevant parties in actively examining actions and reflecting critically on them in order to improve results.

To reduce the impact of research upon the project team, existing data such as minutes of project board and regional project meetings, volunteer registrations, project grant applications and implementation protocols, should be used wherever possible.

Research strategies

Documentary analysis
To assess the goals, planned processes and procedures of COSA pilots, project documentation should be compared against empirical data. In implementation processes, this may be difficult given that protocols and documents are often being further developed (Höing & Vogelvang, 2011). Informative documents in COSA projects are: the code of practice, the project plan, the implementation plan, the implementation protocol, training manuals, the monitoring and evaluation guide.

Project logbook
A useful strategy for data collection is keeping a 'project logbook', entering all kinds of qualitative and quantitative information about processes and strategies throughout the initial implementation. This provides a comprehensive picture and background information on key decisions during the project development.

Participant observation
Participant observation (meaning that the researcher is also taking part in pilot activities) can be applied in situations like project meetings, training sessions and Circle meetings to gather data on complex issues like cultural differences, management and decision making styles, coaching techniques etc. In the case of Circle sessions, attendance of an external researcher is not recommended. Instead the Circle coordinator can act as data collector.

Interviews
When conducting interviews all the relevant parties must be included: core members, volunteers, professionals in the outer Circle, and project staff. Managers of institutions involved in a local COSA project should be included to gain information about the level of embedding of COSA in local networks and of management constraints to implementation of COSA.

Focus Groups
Focus groups can deliver data on specific aspects of the pilot, like evaluation of training programs, successful strategies to recruit volunteers, bottlenecks in information exchange and many other topics.

6.3.4 Process evaluation

Features

A process evaluation examines whether the program is being delivered as intended and serves as a necessary precursor to outcome studies (Andrews and Bonta, 2003). This can be part of the implementation study, but should also be conducted when project deliverance has reached a more definite stage. Process evaluations only provide preliminary data when conducted in the formative stage of the project, when processes still may be adapted and further tailored to specific national or local needs. After the formative stage it is advised to repeat process evaluations when the project is 'settled', thereby securing model fidelity in the long run.

Service delivery on a *project level* is standardized and prescribed through implementation standards like the code of practice and the implementation protocol, and adherence to these protocols is,– in this context,- referred to as '*program integrity'.* Measuring program integrity of Circles not only involves the evaluation of adherence to implementation protocols, but also the evaluation of organisational preconditions, something which is not common practice in the evaluation of interventions (Van Yperen & Veerman, 2008).

Service delivery on a *Circles level*, is deliberately unspecified (within some boundaries), because each Circle must be allowed to develop a unique approach and momentum, tailored to the core members specific needs and personality and allowing volunteers to invest their specific expertise and competencies. Nevertheless, Circles are supposed to achieve a balanced way in delivering support, monitoring capacity and holding the core member accountable, and to build a supportive local network of professionals. In the context of COSA, proper delivery of these core elements of the Circles model is referred to as *'model integrity'.*

Consequently, process evaluations of COSA projects will deal with following questions:

Regarding program integrity:

- Do the core members meet the selection criteria?
- Do the volunteers meet the selection criteria?
- Do Circle coordinators meet the function requirements?
- Does the supervision and coaching of the Circle meet the requirements of the implementation protocol?
- Do the project organisation and monitoring processes meet the requirements of the implementation protocol?
- Does the constellation of the outer Circle meet the requirements of the implementation protocol?

Regarding model integrity:

- Are the three key functions of the COSA model (support, monitoring, holding accountable) established within the Circle within a reasonable time frame and in a balanced way?
- Are the Circle activities tailored to the specific needs of the particular core member?
- Do inner and outer Circle co-operate as intended?

As always, it is important to try and reduce the impact of research processes upon the project team. For process evaluations the use of existing information, such as volunteer recruitment criteria and training manuals, core member referral form, and the monthly and quarterly reports from the Circle coordinator can help to achieve this.

Research strategies
A general process evaluation of Circles may be undertaken by gathering data in retrospect, e.g. through interviews with Circle coordinators or project coordinators. A more detailed and more valid evaluation is highly dependent on naturalistic data collection (collecting data as they occur naturally). To get a realistic account of 'what happens', Circles need to be followed on the spot, avoiding as much as possible biased views that reflect hidden agendas, management policies, and good intentions, rather than the real challenges, difficulties and dilemmas encountered. The typical methods of observation and participant observation would in this case interfere with the processes being studied.

Documentary analysis
One option is to analyse project documentation used for internal selection, monitoring and evaluation purposes, and to conduct a documentary analysis (see chapter 6.4 for some examples).

For example, in the Dutch Circle project a short questionnaire to evaluate the balance between the three Circle functions (support, monitoring, holding accountable) has been developed (Circle functions evaluation form). This is administered by the volunteers and Circle coordinator together with the Dynamic Risk Review (DRR).

Interviews
For a better understanding of 'what is happening', additional in-depths interviews with core members, volunteers, professionals and project staff can help to interpret the outcome of the documentary analysis.

Quantitative Research
When investigating the particular outcomes of a COSA programme or the impact it is has had, quantitative research is most often recommended. Particularly when demonstrating the effectiveness of COSA projects to different stakeholders, quantitative research is frequently viewed as both more reliable and generalisable to different contexts and populations.

6.3.5 Outcome evaluation

Features
Outcome evaluations are descriptive rather than explanatory, and involve measuring and often quantifying results of an activity, rather than providing information about processes, causes and consequences. This informs project managers, policy makers and funding agencies about the productivity and success of the project.

Outcome evaluations typically use quantitative data to provide managers and funding organisations with 'objective' arguments to underpin their decisions. Examples include:
- The time a Circle needs to help the core member to achieve specified goals
- The number of Circles a project is providing;
- The rate of recidivism of core members; or
- The number of volunteers from a local community involved in a COSA project.

Qualitative data, however, are extremely useful to give colour and meaning to numbers and rates and are helpful in understanding the results. Also, the combination of both types of data through triangulation can support the validity of the results (Ritchie & Lewis, 2010).

Specification of goals
Outcome goals must be clearly specified in observable indicators, be stable over time and identically described by the people involved in the activities to achieve them (Van Yperen & Veerman, 2008). The level of evaluation should also be specified, as goals can be defined at an individual level (the core members' goals), at an intervention level (the goals of Circles) or at an institutional level (the goals of Circle projects as a whole).

Generally speaking, the overarching goals of COSA can be derived from the COSA mission statement and seem to be quite clear: prevention of recidivism by core members, offender rehabilitation and a safer community. Choosing measurable indicators of these goals remains difficult however; recidivism, for example, might be defined as either sex crimes or all types of crime and measured as either new arrests or new convictions. Clear, explicit definition and operationalization of concepts such as recidivism, rehabilitation and 'safer communities' are essential for construct validity.

Specific goals on the different levels should be shared and defined by those who are involved. Goals on an individual case level relate to the process of the core member and are defined and shared by the core member and his Circle. Examples of goals on an individual case level are: "the core member has a better relationship with his brother", or "the core member develops adequate leisure activities".

Goals on an intervention level relate to the specific functions of the COSA model. Examples of shared goals on the Circles level are: "the Circles provide support, monitoring capacity and support treatment goals", or "members of the outer Circle exchange information about the core member on a structural basis".

Examples of shared goals on an institutional level relate to the function of COSA projects in the field of sex offender management in the community. Examples of goals on an institutional level are: "The COSA project is structurally embedded in the local professional network of sex offender management", or "the COSA project is appreciated and supported by the local community through volunteers to operate Circles".

Research strategies

Goal achievement
Goals can be measured as achieved change (after a specified time period) compared to starting conditions (baseline measurement) to inform further improvement of the approach (formative evaluation). Alternatively, at a single time point the status quo can be compared to norms, for instance to inform program funders (summative measurement) (Ritchie & Lewis, 2010). Also, a combination of both is possible.

When measuring Circles over time a decision must be made on whether to adhere to the '90-day rule' whereby only those CMs who have been in a Circle for at least 90 days are deemed to have participated for long enough to benefit from the scheme (cf. Wilson et al., 2007; 2009) and are thus included. Scientifically, however, this approach is problematic as it will likely overestimate intervention effects. The agreed approach in RCTs is therefore an 'intention to treat' analysis whereby all individuals who have been randomised will be included in the further analysis. It is important to investigate dropout rates, though, as non-completers will often influence the final results.

Given the complex nature of Circle projects and the different goals at different levels, multiple case studies are a good choice as a research strategy. Case studies can provide detailed and in-depth information, as they can integrate different perspectives and levels of analysis. Especially when numbers of Circles are still small, they can generate a wealth of information about outcome indicators. Another strength of case studies is their ability to connect the outcome to the context in which activities take place (Flyvbjerg, 2011). On the other hand, a multiple case study design can become very complex and time consuming.

Quantitative outcome data can be collected by administering standardized instruments that are tailored for specific goals or are measuring specific goal related concepts (like social support, self-esteem or dynamic risk). Documentary analysis of monitoring and evaluation tools that are used by COSA projects (like the Dynamic Risk Review, monthly reports to the program bureau, quarterly project reports to the program bureau) provide both quantitative and qualitative data, while interviews and focus groups can provide qualitative information about the context.

Recidivism
The concept of recidivism is multi-faceted and must be clearly defined along with the source of information and follow-up period.

> *From the Hanson & Bussiere meta-analysis of recidivism studies (1998):*
>
> "The most common measures of recidivism were reconviction (84%), arrests (54%), self-reports (25%), and parole violations (16%). Multiple indexes of recidivism were used in 27 of 61 studies (44%). The most common sources of recidivism information were national criminal justice records (41%), state or provincial records (41%), records from treatment programs (29%), and self-reports (25%). Other sources (e.g., child protection records) were used in 25% of the studies. In 43% of the studies, the source of the recidivism information was not reported. The reported follow-up periods ranged from 6 months to 23 years (median = 48 months; mean = 66 months)."

Usually, recidivism studies generate only quantitative data (number of offenders who re-offend with specified types of offences). Given the low rate of reconviction compared to other offenders (Hanson & Bussière, 1998) and a relatively slow rate of reconviction (Cann, Falshaw & Friendship, 2004), the follow-up time may not be of sufficient length to measure recidivism exclusively in this manner. Other measures such as re-arrest or recall may also be used. One benefit of the monitoring role played by Circles is that recidivism can also take into account all kinds of problem behaviour and rule violations that lead to specific preventive interventions, either by the inner Circle or by professionals in the outer Circle. Also, the qualitative information available through Circle minutes and monthly reports give insight into the context in which problem behaviour occurs and the contribution of Circles to the prevention of recidivism. The Bates et al. studies on recidivism of core members in the UK (2008, 2011) are examples of this kind of recidivism study.

6.3.6 Effectiveness evaluation

Features
The main goal of an effect evaluation is to assess if:
- An intervention is achieving what it intended to;
- If the problems that were targeted are reduced to an acceptable level;

- If these effects can (at least to a significant degree) be attributed to the intervention and are not (only or primarily) caused by other factors than the intervention itself.

In some cases, effectiveness studies compare different interventions to find out which one is more effective, or to what degree a new intervention is able to achieve better results. This is a strategy that can be applied when a comparison between an intervention and no intervention is unethical (because of the immediate needs of the client).

Usually effects are measured numerically, allowing statistical procedures to calculate the degree of change, while accounting for other factors (occurring systematically and non-systematically) and to produce figures that can be compared to other research of program effectiveness. This assumes programme fidelity, with all projects being delivered in the same manner as indicated by the intervention model. This assumption is not always being met, but is rarely measured in effectiveness studies. Also the quality of the therapeutic alliance is seldom measured as an independent factor. Therefore, an effect evaluation in our opinion should always be accompanied by an evaluation of the model integrity and the program integrity, to inform the interpretation of results of effectiveness studies.

Quantitative effectiveness studies provide information about the amount of change that has taken place and the legitimacy of claims for effectiveness, but they do not explain why change happens. This needs to be specified in a theoretical model of change which is linking causes of problems, problem phenomena, and effective activities to reduce causes of problems to a desired outcome. The COSA intervention model, although designed on theoretical grounds as well as based on empirical data (Höing, Bogaerts & Vogelvang, 2013), needs further empirical validation - which is something an effectiveness study can contribute to.

In gathering data, existing sources of information such as the quarterly reports of regional coordinators to the program bureau, or the quarterly reports of Circle Coordinators on recidivism outcomes should be sought, in the first instance, to reduce the research burden.

Research strategies

Effects of Circles can be measured in terms of short term or intermediate effects *or outputs* (changes on dynamic risk and protective factors that indicate a lower risk of re-offending) and long term or ultimate effects *or outcomes* (lower rates of re-offending). A comprehensive discussion of the available research strategies is beyond the scope of this handbook, therefore only the essential features of different strategies are outlined.

Randomized Controlled Trials (RCT's)

The golden standard to measure program effectiveness is a randomized controlled trial (RCT), or, at least researchers have believed so for a long time. They offer the strongest level of evidence and as such are highly regarded by policy-makers and funding bodies. In a typical RCT design, appropriate candidates are randomly and in equal numbers assigned to two groups: one who does receive the treatment and one who does not. Target variables are measured pre- and post-test, and often the sustainability of effects is measured through follow-up measurement.

In sex offender programs, level of risk is a typical target variable, implying that level of risk is a reliable predictor of recidivism. Through random assignment, it is assured that groups do not differ from each other on relevant characteristics that could influence the possible outcome (like level of problems at the start). It is believed that by random assignment all other

characteristics are levelled out. Both groups ideally stem from the same context and are assessed at the same time, to make sure that time-elapsed and other contextual events do not influence the outcome.

Lately, the appropriateness of RCTs for measuring effects in a realistic context has been questioned (Marshall & Marshall, 2007) and alternatives have been suggested. The feasibility of RCTs in COSA needs to be further evaluated.

One of the benefits of RCT studies is that extraneous factors are controlled for. In the case of Circles this would be achieved via a strict adherence to established protocols. However, as mentioned before, the practice of Circles requires some flexibility in different contexts and in order to successfully meet the needs of individual core members. A balance would therefore need to be made and acknowledged in the research.

For valid analysis, measurement instruments need to be sufficiently 'powered', which means they have to be able to detect an effect if such an effect exists. Aside from phenomena with large effect sizes, which is unlikely in Circles research (particularly for the low rates of reconviction), adequate power can only be achieved through large sample sizes. The only RCT on Circles to date was acknowledged to be under-powered (Duwe, 2012). On the basis of the results of this RCT for total convictions (not only sex offences), it has been calculated by UK statistician Boliang Guo that an initial sample size of 190 cases would be necessary. Based on previous studies for sexual recidivism (Wilson et al., 2009) and sexual reconviction (Bates et al., 2014), he has also calculated that sample sizes for these outcomes would need to be as high as 486 and 2102 respectively (M. Clarke, personal communication, December 8, 2014).

Case-control studies
Although less robust than RCTs, another strategy to measure effect is to compare available scores on relevant outcome measures (like recidivism) with the scores of matched controls. Pairs of participants should be matched on relevant characteristics (like level of risk post–release, type of offence, age, living area etc.), with the intervention as testing variable. This strategy is applied by Wilson c.s. in the Canadian effectiveness studies (chapter 6.2).

Recidivism studies with expectancy rates
When matched controls are not available for a recidivism study, an alternative strategy may be actuarial evaluation, comparing rates of re-offending with expected rates, based on actuarial risk, assessed through reliable risk assessment (Marshall, 2006).

Repeated case studies (N = 1 studies)
Another option is to conduct a number of case studies (repeated n = 1 studies) in which scores of participants are not compared to a more or less identical control group, but to their own scores before the treatment condition. The key assumption is that changes in scores that coincide with the start of a treatment may be attributed to the treatment. If these co- incidents can be repeated (e.g. by lowering the level of treatment or inserting no-treatment- periods) the evidence is even stronger (Kazdin, 1981). The higher the number of cases that show the same pattern of scores, the stronger the evidence. More than eight case studies in a row,- IN the absence of conflicting data,- form an acceptable alternative to an RCT, according to the American Psychological Association (Task force, 1995 in: Van Yperen & Veerman, 2008).

A repeated case studies design requires continuous measurement with instruments that have good psychometric qualities and provide norms for clinical cut-off scores (indicating the score

that fall into the 'normal' range: Harkins & Beech, 2006; Van Yperen & Veerman, 2008). Furthermore, change should be measured by several indicators for success (Van Yperen & Veerman, 2008). In the case of Circles, dynamic risk and protective factors are typically the variables of interest. To obtain a reliable baseline, pre-test scores must be measured at least twice before the start of a Circle. This approach offers the opportunity to follow the core member in his process and gather qualitative material about the context of change as well (like critical incidents in the core member's life, quality of his social network, group processes in the Circle).

Remarks

Some cautious remarks have to be made regarding the interpretation of results of effectiveness studies.

Definition of recidivism

As stated earlier, the definition of recidivism needs to be clear: since COSA aims to support the core member in achieving a more balance life style, free from offending, not only sexual recidivism should be measured, but all (violent and other) recidivism, and positive effects should be demonstrated on all types of offences.

Dropout

In order to benefit from a Circle, a core member needs to stay in it for a certain amount of time. Some authors' recommend a '90-day rule' (e.g. Wilson et al., 2009) as sufficient, but the time needed to achieve sustained change is not clear: Circles last as long as needed. Early drop out (against the advice of Circle coordinators) needs to be identified and analysed for a number of different reasons. First, sex offenders who drop out of Circles early may represent a subgroup of the sample with specific characteristics (like higher scores on anti-social behaviour or autism), indicating that Circles are less appropriate for this group. Second, drop out can camouflage low efficacy. Finally, there is some evidence showing that those who drop out of forensic interventions have higher rates of recidivism than controls who did not participate in the intervention (McMurran & Theodosi, 2007).

Dark numbers

A major problem with recidivism studies is the fact that recidivism is almost by definition underreported in official records, thus not reflecting actual recidivism (and thus overestimating program effectiveness). Estimates from the US show that only 40% of sexual crimes are reported, of which only 42% lead to arrest, of which 62% lead to conviction (Laws & Ward, 2011). Also, recidivism can be counted differently: by self-report, by arrests, by reconvictions or re-incarcerations. It is possible that core members are under greater scrutiny from prosecutors, thus having a higher probability of getting arrested. The extra monitoring capacity a Circle provides, may lead to a higher probability of detection of recidivism which could wrongly be interpreted as a failure of the programme.

Age crime curve

A well-established fact in general criminology and specific sex offender research is the age crime curve (Laws & Ward, 2011), indicating that aging has a positive effect in itself on crime rates. The older offenders are, the less they are inclined to commit offences, and if they do, the seriousness of offences declines with age. Therefore, long term follow-up studies represent not only the effect of Circles, but also the effect of aging, and comparison groups should therefore always be matched on age.

Ceiling effect
The (extra) effects that can be expected from Circles depend partly on the alternatives that are available for sex offenders. The impressive effects Wilson c.s have demonstrated in Canada may be partly due to the fact that core members in Canada typically belong to a very specific group of offenders (Warrant Expiry Date prisoners), who have the highest risk of re-offending, but are released into the community without formal community supervision or aftercare (Wilson, 2009). In such conditions, COSA is able to achieve a very significant improvement. In many countries, sex offender management in the community includes mandated treatment and court ordered supervision for several years, often including support by probation organisations. Under such conditions, the 'extra' contribution of Circles to the re-integration process and reduction of recidivism may probably be less.

6.3.7 Cost-benefit evaluation

Features
A cost-benefit evaluation estimates the financial benefits of an intervention by linking efficacy to efficiency. A cost evaluation answers questions like:
- Is the money spent on the intervention paying off?
- How much does each unit of currency spent on offender therapy (or any other intervention) return in savings (e.g. due to crime reduction, which means less tax money spent on the criminal justice processes and victim costs).

It should be noted that the value of an intervention cannot only be measured in economic terms as positive benefits can arise across different dimensions that cannot be easily monetised Subjective public safety is an effect that is difficult to value for instance. Effects on different dimensions can be calculated through a cost-effect analysis, comparing costs of different alternatives with predicted outcome, without monetizing the effects (Ecorys & Verwey-Jonker, 2008).

Research strategies
Positive cost-benefit evaluations are a persuasive argument to inform decision makers in their allocation of tax payer's money. A cost-benefit analysis of Circles is complex and rests upon a number of assumptions. This includes: a reliable estimate of the number of crimes that are prevented through Circles within a fixed time frame (e.g. per year), a reliable estimate of the costs of reconvictions, and a reliable estimate of the costs of Circles per core member. Also, the value of the money spent and saved needs to be comparable. Cost estimations must account for inflation and costs must be rated in the same currency in a particular year.

A cost benefit analysis is carried out by reviewing effectiveness studies to calculate possible crime reduction (sometimes secondary data analysis is needed), a review of literature on national crime-cost calculations, and detailed information (gathered through documentary analysis or interviews) from the project management about Circle costs.

An extensive description of strategies for cost–benefit analyses is beyond the scope of this handbook. Boardman, Greenberg, Vining & Weimer (2005) and Ecorys & Verwey-Jonker, (2008; in Dutch) provide an overview.

6.4 Strategies for research management

Doing research is not a core business for volunteers, professionals and project staff involved in COSA projects. Nevertheless, these individuals possess a wealth of information and knowledge about Circle projects, Circle proceedings and Circle outcome. According to the second principle of applied research; – embeddedness -, procedures to obtain this implicit knowledge should interfere as little as possible with the day to day routine of projects. Research instruments and procedures should therefore be part of the routine project logistics as much as possible.

Cooperation between research and project staff
Good practices to support the cooperation between researchers and workers in COSA projects are (Van Yperen & Veerman, 2008; Ritchie & Lewis, 2010):

- Provide a clear research protocol that outlines the research objectives and requirements for data collection;
- Seek cooperation from project managers;
- Anticipate the concerns of project staff – most commonly additional time demands / agreement of partner agencies as to confidentiality, preserving anonymity of data;
- Assign a single contact per regional project (e.g. the regional project coordinator) to monitor data collection Provide (interim) feed-back of (preliminary) findings and discuss them with project members, on an individual case level, as well as on an intervention and organisation level;
- Provide information about the research regularly through newsletters or information bulletins.

Shared data collection tools
Routine data collection is practiced by Circles projects across Europe. In order to improve both research and practice, there should be an agreed common dataset for this routine data collection. National projects could then collect data on all their CMs in a fully anonymised form. For shared research projects, these data could then be merged.

Collecting standardised data across different contexts provides a valuable tool for model development and facilitates the sharing of best practice, as outcomes between countries can be directly compared. There are also benefits for research projects, with the potential to access much larger samples from different populations, thereby enhancing external validity.

To participate in this collaboration, national Circles must undertake a number of steps. First, it must be determined that sharing information about core members is permitted within each country's legal context. This includes confirming that legal documents such as consent forms and data sharing agreements with criminal justice agencies permit this. Consent forms should explicitly include the condition of data sharing. What is and isn't permitted will depend to some extent on the anonymity of data.

There are a number of security issues to be addressed as well. This includes establishing procedures for ensuring that data transfer and storage is secure, as well as determining that data is shared only with those authorized to use it. Any personally identifiable information contained in the national dataset should be removed before the data is shared.

A formal data sharing agreement between partners and state agencies must be signed, to govern, define and control the sharing of data (and the research uses to which it is put).

To generate comparable data, each participating country is required to adopt a number of standard classifications and measurement instruments and incorporate these into their existing national datasets. In addition, data on core members is to be recorded at two points in time:

1. At the start of the Circle. This is defined as the date on which the volunteers and core member have their first meeting.
2. At the end of Phase 1 of the Circle. This is the date at which formal supervision by the Circle coordinator comes to an end.

Ethical considerations

In any research involving individuals who provide detailed and personal information, there are some ethical aspects that need to be accounted for in the research protocol (Ritchie & Lewis, 2010). In research involving sex offenders, these considerations may be even more important because of the high sensitivity of the information. Informed consent, anonymity, confidentiality, harm of participants and storage of data are issues to be managed with great caution. National and local guidance, including ethical approval processes, needs to be followed.

Informed consent needs to be obtained from core members and volunteers who participate in research activities that gather specifically generated data (like questionnaires, interviews, etc.). The informed consent process should provide the participant with information about the objectives and purpose of the study, the funding, the research team, use of data (including sharing across countries), requirements of participation, use of comments and ensures voluntary participation through written consent.

Anonymity means that the identity of those who are taking part in the research should not be known outside the research team. If this is not possible, because of small numbers or specific research conditions, respondents should be made aware of this before they decide to participate.

Confidentiality means that people outside the research team, should not be able to attribute information or comments used in the report, to individual participants in the study. Attribution may occur both direct (through names and roles mentioned in the report) or indirect through a combination of characteristics that may identify individual participants or a small group. Indirect attribution requires specific attention, since comments often need to be placed into their context, while too much detail about the context may identify the source of the information. In such cases, specific consent from the participant is needed to use these comments (Ritchie & Lewis, 2010).

Harm to participants through the research process may occur when interviews or questionnaires tap into sensitive areas of personal function, or may trigger emotions or memories related to traumatic events in the past. Researchers should anticipate possible harm and be able to detect signs of emotional impact and should be able to intervene adequately e.g. provide information about where to get support or professional help. Sensitive topics are best dealt with in straightforward and direct questioning, to give the respondent the opportunity to refrain from answering. Indirect or manipulative questioning should be avoided. Building a respectful and confidential relationship during the interview, yet maintaining a neutral position are key qualities of competent interviewers. Interviewing core members may reveal specific information about risk for themselves or risk for others. This may lead to a confusion of roles for the researcher. In such cases, core members should be encouraged to take appropriate measures, like discussing these issues with their Circle or talking to their therapist, in order to prevent harm for themselves or others. Revealing sensitive information during an interview

may be a way to ask for help in an indirect manner. Information should only be passed through by the interviewer after consent of the participant. Circumstances where consent is not required include when core members disclose information indicating that they may be at risk of harming themselves or pose a risk to others.

Data storage needs specific attention in research involving sex offenders and volunteers. The labelling of raw data should not interfere with the confidentiality that is promised, therefore identifying information like sampling documentation should be stored apart from raw data like questionnaires and interview recordings (Ritchie & Lewis, 2010). Archiving research material, beyond research project termination, needs written consent from participants.

Service User Involvement

Service user or public participation refers to the involvement of anyone affected by the phenomenon under investigation. For COSA programmes, public involvement in research could involve Circle volunteers and Coordinators, other stakeholders and Core Members themselves. Increasingly, studies are being conducted 'with' or 'by' the population of interest and not simply 'about' them by independent researchers. In many research projects, service users now participate in each stage of the research process, from standing as co-applicants for the project, to undertaking interviews with participants.

Service user involvement offers a number of benefits that serves to enhance the quality of the research being conducted. Those who use services have a unique perspective upon the issues that arise in service delivery and thus can help inform the priorities and focus on the research (Boote et al., 2012). They can also help ensure that the methods being proposed are suitable and sensitive to the situations and needs of the research participants (Hanley et al., 2001). Service users can also help in the recruitment of hard-to-reach populations (Elliott et al., 2002). The ethical standing of the research is also strengthened as the process becomes more democratic. Service user involvement often improves the information given on the project, making it more accessible and improving informed decision-making by participants (Faulkner, 2007).

When members of the public are to be part of the research process there are a number of issues to consider:

- *Funding*. When developing a research bid proposal make sure to include estimates of the additional resources required for service user involvement (e.g. travel expenses, training and support).
- *Timing*. Ideally service users should be included in the process as early as possible. This not only gives them a sense of ownership over the research but can be of benefit in identifying appropriate research questions for study.
- *Roles and responsibilities*. Be clear about what is expected of the service users in terms of contributions and time commitments, also what they can expect in return in terms of support, training and finances. A formal job description can be helpful in this.
- *Training and support*. Consider what types of training you might be able to offer (e.g. educational courses or on the job training), also identify what kind of support you are able offer (e.g. working alongside a researcher or one-to-one meetings with line management).
- *Human resources*. As a member of the team, service users may be subject to the usual processes of contractual agreements, confidentiality agreements, insurance and indemnity and so forth. In the case of sex offenders, it will need to be established how criminal record checks may affect their involvement in research.

- *Documentation*. It will be important to maintain a record of service user involvement in order to reflect upon the impact it has had, and possibly in reporting to funding bodies as well.
- *Recruitment*. To locate suitable individuals, it is useful to first specify the parameters of the role to identify the skills, experience and personal attributes required. With the offending population, developing contacts within state agencies may be necessary.

6.5 Strategies for dissemination of results

The third feature of applied research is usefulness (Van Yperen & Veerman, 2008). Research data are useful on several levels, from the workers who are delivering the service, to the managers of institutions involved, to national stakeholders and policy makers. The concept of 'usefulness' implies conceptual as well as instrumental utilization.

Conceptual utilization refers to improvement and accumulation of knowledge about the intervention. More knowledge about Circles and their effectiveness can contribute to a better understanding of the possible impact and how this affects core members in their endeavours to become responsible members of society. Also, a better understanding and knowledge of Circles can influence public opinion on sex offender management in the community and can lead to a more realistic view, hopefully resulting in more support for restorative justice practices and more subjective public safety. Taking the problem of sex offender management and the conflicts of views and emotions that go along with it back to where it emerges in the first place (the community), also requires that valid information is taken back into the same community.

Instrumental utilization refers to knowledge that is being used to improve action: the feed-back leads to reflection on research results and their causes and to discussions about possible strategies to improve service deliverance. COSA projects, for instance, can use the results of an implementation evaluation to discuss bottlenecks in the volunteer selection and to design an action plan to improve the recruitment and selection process.

Research results can also be used to generate media attention to COSA projects – both to recruit volunteers and to advocate a more inclusive approach to sex offender management.

Service user or public involvement in the research process can help facilitate in the dissemination of findings. It has been found that service user involvement generates more accessible output (Barber et al., 2011), provides another means of dissemination as service users utilise their own networks to tell others of their findings (Barnard et al., 2005), and helps to tailor the findings more towards the particular needs of the service users under study (Ross et al., 2005).

The strategies for dissemination of research results need to be tailored to the different levels and functions of utilization. Research results on COSA can be disseminated on four levels: the individual Circle level; the regional project management level, the national program level and the level of national stakeholders (e.g. experts, policy makers). The different types of utilization also require different approaches (table 2).

Conceptual utilization

To improve conceptual utilization, the dissemination of research results must fit the cognitive skills and skills regarding the interpretation of research results of people on different levels. Time constraints (workload) should be taken into account. The amount of information delivered and the style and medium of dissemination should be carefully thought through. A variety of options can be used:

- Brief research accounts, providing essential information in common language (fact sheets, newsletters, executive summaries, website information);
- Papers and poster presentations for experts, providing essential information in scientific language (for congresses);
- Oral presentations for research lays, providing essential information in common language and eliciting discussion points and questions (in project teams, steering committees, national program bureau, COSA symposium);
- Oral presentations for experts, providing detailed information in scientific language (congresses, expert meetings);
- Research reports, providing detailed information on research methods and outcome (for research funders, national program bureau, research participants);
- Articles in professional magazines, providing summarized information about research results;
- Articles in peer reviewed scientific magazines, providing detailed & scientific information about the research method & results;
- Press releases, providing basic information on key results of research, that cannot easily be misinterpreted;
- Interviews in newspapers or radio/tv shows, to provide basic information about research findings in common language and to address frequently asked questions raised by the research findings.

Instrumental utilization

To improve the instrumental utilization of research results on different levels, those who need to take action should be actively involved in the discussion of results and in formulating action plans. This requires the organisation of face to face meetings on several levels and with different groups in which research results can be presented and discussed in small groups.

Van Yperen & Veerman (2008) advise to use the following discussion protocol:

1. Are the results recognizable? (Are they in line with our observations?)
2. Are the results understandable? (Do we understand the causes?)
3. Are the results acceptable?
4. Are the results reason to take action?

To improve utilization of research results by others than those involved in COSA projects, or to generate input from experts, workshops at conferences and congresses may be a useful dissemination strategy. Professionals in the field can contribute to project development through discussion of research results and raising new research questions. Table 2 provides an overview of different dissemination strategies on different levels and for different purposes.

Table 2: Dissemination strategies

	Individual case level	***Regional project level***	***National program level***	***National stakeholders***
Conceptual utilization	• DRR-score & evaluation figures • Accumulated data showing process of core member	• Brief research accounts for project team • Brief research accounts in regional newsletters for regional stakeholders • Presentation in project team • Presentation in regional network of professional organisations • Presentation in local steering committee	• Research reports • Presentation in team • Presentation on COSA symposium • Presentation in national steering committee	• Brief research accounts via newsletter to national stakeholders • Brief research accounts via website • Articles in professional magazines • Articles in peer-reviewed scientific magazines • Oral presentation on congress or expert meeting • Paper presentation on congress
Instrumental utilization	• Inner Circle discussion (without and with core member) • Outer Circle discussion	Discussion of research results, followed by action plan in: - Project team - Regional network of professional organisations - Steering committee	• Discussion and action plan within program bureau • Workshops on COSA symposium	• Workshops on congress or expert meeting • Bilateral meetings with policy makers (politicians, fund providing organisation)
Utilization for media attention	none	Press releases of basic, anonymous information about number of Circles & volunteers, project development, effectiveness	Brief research accounts in newsletters to COSA projects	• Press release of essential research results • Interviews in national newspapers and radio/TV shows

Individual case level
Individual Circles should be able to use the results of the information they provide. Feed-back on the outcome of the quarterly evaluation of Circle functions as well as feed-back of results of a process evaluation (model integrity and program integrity) can be very useful for Circles. Changes in scores on the DRR and evaluation of Circles function may generate new directions or approaches for the Circle. Information about model integrity can inform actions to improve both. Circles can be informed about these types of results through their Circle coordinator in face to face discussion
Outer Circles can use the same research results, but probably will also be best informed in face to face contact through Circle coordinators. Research results on an individual case level are not useful to generate or satisfy media attention; in fact this should be avoided at all costs, to safeguard the privacy or core members and volunteers.

Regional and local project level
Information generated in the course of an implementation study is useful for project developers and project management at various stages of project preparation and pilot. Immediate feed-back of successful strategies (e.g. in volunteer recruitment) can be of great help for local project staff. Feed-back is best provided through face to face contact in combination with brief research accounts (e.g. summary of essential research findings), as workers not always take or find the time to read lengthy documents. Especially problems with program integrity and other bottlenecks that are identified by project staff on location should be brought under the attention of the project management, to ensure proper deliverance and to be able to assist with improvement. Since local steering committees have an advisory role to the project management, they should be informed separately and be able to discuss improvement plans separately before advising the regional project.

On a regional and/or local level, the professional workers and the management of institutions in the network of sex offender aftercare should also be informed about final results, to keep COSA on the agenda and to support the structural implementation.

National program level
Project managers on a national level (like the program bureau's Circles UK or Circle NL) are best informed through official (interim) reports, since they often have to be transparent to funders and steering committees, about rationales for decisions they have made. They can use research reports for their 'underpinning'. Also, they need to be able to make judgements about program integrity and the need to change implementation protocols or training and evaluation materials.

National stakeholder level
The results of an implementation study provide national stakeholders (expert professionals, funders, policy makers) with information about the possibility of a successful proliferation, and can generate national support and more attention from national media.

In the longer run, national stakeholders will probably be more interested in the results of outcome and effect evaluations.

General public
The general public should be aware of Circle projects and their outcomes to be able to contribute to the political discussion about Circles. They can be informed through informative media coverage and easy accessible website publications.

6.6 Future research questions

The shortage of research into COSA leaves many research questions still unanswered. In the future more detailed studies into effects and effective processes of COSA are needed, to gather evidence of the impact of Circles in different national settings.

Especially prolonged effects of COSA need to be studied with national recidivism studies with matched controls and a follow-up of at least 5 years, preferably 10 years. More qualitative analyses of the process of desistance of core members who do not re-offend compared to those who did not participate in a Circle and apparently also did not re-offend, can shed light into the specific contribution of Circles and the effect of inclusive community involvement versus having to contend with rejection and barriers on your own. Do core members really succeed in building and maintaining a pro-social network of their own? The impact of Circles on perceived community safety and community attitudes toward sex offender rehabilitation is also a question yet to be answered. First quantitative evaluations show promising results, but more extensive and qualitative field research can probably provide more insight into the community effects of Circles. Likewise, the impact of COSA on local professional networks in the field of sex offender management should further be investigated. Circles projects aim to build strategic alliances with professional agencies in the field and promote better information sharing and cooperation between professionals, but is this really achieved; if so, how? Finally, more research is necessary to assess the effects of being a COSA volunteers. First evaluations and reviews show that participating in a Circle has mainly positive effects, but can have some negative effects as well (Wilson et al., 2007a; Höing, Bogaerts & Vogelvang, 2014; Höing, Bogaerts & Vogelvang, in review), but methodologically sound effectiveness studies have not yet been undertaken. Also, the richness of volunteer experiences and evaluations should be assessed in a qualitative way, to provide the general public with an in-depth view into the resources to deal with highly complex situations that lie within the community itself.

Beyond researching the impact of the current model, more work needs to be done to assess whether the generic COSA programme can be successfully tailored for sub-populations of sex offenders. In particular, core members who have learning difficulties, mental health problems or are of a young age (when their risk of recidivism is particularly high) will have additional needs that may not be fully met by the standard COSA model. Individuals with mental health problems, for example, often face additional forms of stigma and prejudice and thus core members presenting with such problems may need extra levels of support. These core members might require a higher degree of contact with their Circle in order to counteract avoidance coping strategies, for instance. Or the presence of a specialised mental health professional in the Outer Circle might be a valuable source of guidance on how to deal with unexpected, erratic behaviours e.g. with Borderline Personality Disorder. These are questions that can only be answered with further research.

Some of these future research questions have been prioritized in a shared research agenda, which was developed by the Circles4EU research group. Three topics have been further developed into a research design and research proposals:

1. The feasibility of RCTs on a supra national level;
2. Processes of change and desistance in core members;
3. The impact of Circles on victims in the community, and victims as volunteers in a circle.

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Annex 1 COSA related websites

European websites:

www.circles4.eu

http://www.circles-uk.org.uk

http://www.sccjr.ac.uk/projects/Circles-of-Support-and-Accountability/82

www.cosanederland.nl

http://www.cawantwerpen.be/project-COSA

http://justicia.gencat.cat/ca/ambits/reinsercio_i_serveis_penitenciaris/cercles/

http://www.probacija.lv/page.php?id=755

Canadian websites:

http://www.csc-scc.gc.ca/002/008/002008-3000-eng.shtml

www.cosabc.ca

http://cosa-ottawa.ca

http://alberta.mcc.org/programs/rjm/cosa

US websites:

http://cosa-fresno.org/

http://www.doc.state.mn.us/PAGES/index.php/employment-opportunities/volunteer-opportunities/

http://interchurchministries.org/circlesofaccountability.html

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