

# Probation and Prisons in Europe, 2025: Key Findings of the SPACE reports

Marcelo F. Aebi, Ignacio Cid-Pozo, Edoardo Cocco\*

## Executive Summary

This report presents the main findings from the 2025 SPACE II survey on probation and compares them with the 2025 SPACE I survey on prisons. The analysis reveals several patterns in European criminal justice systems:

### Main findings:

- **Probation continues to be the dominant form of correctional supervision in Europe:** There are roughly 1.4 million probationers compared to 1.1 million inmates across the continent.
- **Probation population rates vary dramatically:** From 16 per 100,000 inhabitants in Montenegro to 652 in Poland, reflecting diverse criminal justice philosophies and practices across Europe.
- **Gender disparities persist:** Women represent 10.7% of probationers but only 5.4% of prisoners, suggesting differential treatment in sentencing and release decisions.
- **Foreign nationals under supervision:** They constitute 9.9% of probationers compared to 17% of prisoners in participating jurisdictions, likely reflecting residence requirements for probation eligibility.
- **Most European countries use probation more than prison:** In 28 out of 36 jurisdictions analysed, probation population rates exceed prison population rates.
- **Trends:** The use of community sanctions and measures continues to grow overall in Europe, although at a moderate pace. Among the 32 probation services that reported stock data for both January 2024 and January 2025, the total number of probationers increased by 2.7%.
- **Total correctional population exceeds 2.5 million:** Combining both forms of supervision, over 2.5 million persons are under some form of criminal justice control in Europe.
- **Methodological challenges persist:** Different counting methods across countries (persons vs. cases/orders) complicate direct comparisons, highlighting the need for harmonised data collection.

- **Mortality rates are significantly higher in probation:** At 70.8 deaths per 10,000 probationers versus 39.6 per 10,000 inmates, suggesting different health profiles and risk factors between the two populations.

## Policy implications:

These findings suggest that while community sanctions have expanded significantly since the 1990s, they may not always serve as true alternatives to imprisonment. In several jurisdictions, high rates of both probation and incarceration indicate that community measures function as supplements rather than substitutes for prison sentences. The recent increase in probation populations coupled with rising imprisonment rates warrants careful monitoring to ensure that European criminal justice systems maintain their commitment to rehabilitation and social inclusion.

## 1. Introduction

This document summarises the main findings of the *2025 Council of Europe Annual Penal Statistics on Persons under the Supervision of Probation Agencies*<sup>1</sup> better known under the acronym SPACE II, and compares them to those of the *2025 Council of Europe Annual Penal Statistics on Prison Populations*, SPACE I, which was published in May 2026<sup>2</sup>.

The rates and percentages presented here correspond to the *European median values* and *averages* computed on the basis of figures weighted by the population and the number of probationers —or, respectively, of inmates— in each jurisdiction (see *Methodology* for further details). Fifty-one (51) jurisdictions (or equivalent institutions) in the 46 Council of Europe member States answered the 2025 SPACE II questionnaire, reaching for the first time a participation rate of 100%. Their answers are compared to those of the 51 prison services that replied to the 2025 SPACE I questionnaire.

To ensure meaningful comparisons and avoid distortions caused by very small populations, detailed interpretations and trend analyses in this report are limited to countries with populations exceeding 500,000 inhabitants. While data from smaller jurisdictions are included in tables and figures, their extreme values can significantly affect percentages and rates when dealing with small absolute numbers. For instance, a single probationer added or removed in a country with 40,000 inhabitants would change the probation rate by 2.5 per 100,000 inhabitants.

It must also be mentioned that the 48 probation agencies<sup>3</sup> and the 51 prison administrations that filled in the SPACE questionnaires did not necessarily provide data for all the items included in them. Thus, in the title of each Figure and Table included in this document we indicate the number (N) of probation agencies —or, respectively, of prison administrations— that provided the data required for the analysis<sup>4</sup>.

**Important Note on Data Comparability:** Not all European jurisdictions count individuals in the same way. While prison statistics consistently count individual inmates, probation statistics vary considerably. Some agencies count persons (one person = one count regardless of how many measures they are serving), while others count cases, files, or orders (one person with multiple measures = multiple counts). This creates a risk of double

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\*The authors are, respectively, professor and researchers at the Research Unit in Criminology of the School of Criminal Sciences at the University of Lausanne, Switzerland. The opinions expressed in this publication are the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official policy of the Council of Europe.

<sup>1</sup> Aebi, M. F. & Cid-Pozo, I. (2025). *SPACE II – 2025 – Council of Europe Annual Penal Statistics: Persons under the Supervision of Probation Agencies*. Council of Europe. Available at: [www.unil.ch/space](http://www.unil.ch/space)

<sup>2</sup> Aebi, M. F. & Cocco, E. (2025). *SPACE I – 2025 – Council of Europe Annual Penal Statistics: Prison Populations*. Council of Europe. Available at: [www.unil.ch/space](http://www.unil.ch/space).

<sup>3</sup>All 51 reporting jurisdictions participated (100%), but only 48 have a probation agency; Bosnia and Herzegovina at the State Level, the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the Republika Srpska of Bosnia and Herzegovina do not. As some countries have more than one probation agency, hereafter "jurisdiction" refers to each reporting probation agency.

<sup>4</sup> Many Figures include data from the two Spanish probation agencies (Catalonia and the State Administration) as well as the overall total for Spain. In these cases, only two probation agencies are counted in the N indicated in the title of the Figures. That N also excludes the European median values and averages. **Readers counting the bars included in each Figure are kindly asked to keep these exceptions in mind.**

counting<sup>5</sup>. Throughout this report, jurisdictions not using person-based counting are indicated with diagonal stripes (partial use) or crosshatched stripes (no person-counting) in figures. In total, twenty-eight (28) probation agencies use the person as the counting unit for their stock, while ten (10) use it only partially, and eight do not use it or use an alternative unit. Three agencies answer “Not applicable” and two did not answer the question on the counting unit<sup>6</sup>. However, not all of them appear in each figure. Some agencies using the person as a partial counting unit are able to provide their total number of probationers but cannot disaggregate these figures by specific sanctions or measures. Similarly, some agencies provide total number of persons under supervision of a probation agency, but can only disaggregate the total number of measures. Moreover, Malta and Slovenia (see footnote 7), despite not using the person as their standard counting unit, were able to provide their total number of probationers for this report

## 2. Defining probation and community sanctions and measures (CSM)

According to Appendix I to the Council of Europe's Recommendation CM/Rec (2010)1, **probation** “relates to the implementation in the community of sanctions and measures, defined by law and imposed on an offender. It includes a range of activities and interventions, which involve supervision, guidance and assistance aiming at the social inclusion of an offender, as well as at contributing to community safety”. At the same time, according to the Council of Europe's Recommendation CM/Rec(2017)3, “the expression '**community sanctions and measures**' means sanctions and measures which maintain suspects or offenders in the community and involve some restrictions on their liberty through the imposition of conditions and/or obligations. The term designates any sanction imposed by a judicial or administrative authority, and any measure taken before or instead of a decision on a sanction, as well as ways of enforcing a sentence of imprisonment outside a prison establishment”.

These conceptualisations show that the Council of Europe adopts broad definitions of probation and of community sanctions and measures. For example, according to the Council of Europe's Recommendation Rec(2003)22 on **conditional release (parole)**, “[c]onditional release is a community measure” that “means the early release of sentenced prisoners under individualised post-release conditions”. This implies that persons conditionally released and placed under the supervision of probation agencies are considered as *probationers* and not as a separate category (usually called *parolees* in common law jurisdictions).

As the distinction between these two large categories is useful when analyzing the use of probation, Figure 1 presents the percentage of persons conditionally released among the total number of probationers on 31 January 2025<sup>7</sup> in the 34 jurisdictions that provided the necessary data. That percentage varies widely across Europe, from none in several countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Greece, Montenegro, and San Marino) to 13.41% in Georgia, 34.5% in Ireland, and 47.03% in Türkiye. In broad terms, the highest percentages are found in Western, Northern, and some insular European countries, with the exception of Türkiye. Nevertheless, some probation agencies included in Figure 1 do not use the *person* as the counting unit in their probation statistics (those presented with *crosshatched red stripes*) and others do so partially (those presented with *diagonal red stripes*).

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<sup>5</sup> The European median and average values shown in Figure 1 are calculated on the basis of data from the probation agencies that use the *person* as the counting unit of their statistics. It also includes Armenia, France, Serbia, the Slovak Republic, Spain, Sweden, Northern Ireland, and Scotland, which count the *person* for the total *probation stock* but use other counting units (such as cases) for the different forms of probation; consequently, these countries mentioned that they only partially use the person as the counting unit of their statistics (and are presented in diagonal red stripes in the Figure).

<sup>6</sup> The eight probation agencies that do not use the *person* as the counting unit of their statistics are those of Belgium, Denmark, Hungary, Luxembourg, Malta, Portugal, Slovenia, and Ukraine. The ten agencies that only use *partially* the person as their counting unit are those of Armenia, Czechia, France, Romania, Serbia, Slovak Republic, Sweden, Spain, Northern Ireland, and Scotland. The three agencies that answer “Not Applicable” for the counting unit were Andorra, the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the Republic Srpska of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Two agencies did not answer the counting unit question: Bosnia and Herzegovina at the State Level, and Germany. The *total* figures for Spain are also based only *partially* on persons, even if the Catalan probation agency does use the person as the counting unit of its statistics.

<sup>7</sup> Comparisons with previous years should be interpreted with caution, as Section 1.3, “After release from custodial sentence,” was revised in the 2025 SPACE questionnaire. In earlier versions, this section did not include the category “conditional release (parole) with probation supervision,” which was later introduced as item 1.3.5.

### 3. Probation and prison populations on 31 January 2025

For the reasons explained above, among the 51 jurisdictions that completed the SPACE II questionnaire, only 36 answered the item on the total number of persons under their supervision (*stock*). On 31 January 2025, there were **1,433,011 probationers** under the supervision of these probation agencies, which corresponds to a median European probation population rate of **154 probationers per 100,000 inhabitants**.

#### *Probation population rates*

The probation population rates of each jurisdiction are presented in Figure 2. The European median and average rates are calculated on the basis of the data provided by the probation agencies that use the *person* and those that provided data on their stock of probationers. The highest probation population rates are found in Poland (652), Türkiye (495), Georgia (468), Armenia (430) and Albania (387); while the lowest are in Montenegro (16), Greece (21), North Macedonia (31), Switzerland (44), Serbia (47) and Bulgaria (48). However, as noted earlier, comparisons across jurisdictions must be conducted carefully because the way in which data are collected varies across them. As in Figure 1, data provided by the probation agencies that do not use the *person* as the counting unit for the total number of probationers are presented in crosshatched red stripes and those who comply only partially in diagonal red stripes.

#### *Probation measures rates*

SPACE II national correspondents were asked to include both the number of probationers and the number of measures applied. This enhancement aims to offer a more detailed understanding of the data, despite the challenges posed by the varying methodologies of different countries. Twenty-one (21) jurisdictions provided exclusively the number of persons under probation, while nine (9) jurisdictions provided only the number of measures applied. Fifteen (15) jurisdictions provided figures in both items, and six (6) did not provide any figure. However, complexities still remain, especially with countries like Denmark, France, Netherlands, North Macedonia, Norway, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, and the UK (specifically Northern Ireland and Scotland). These countries either count only individuals to a limited extent or face challenges in providing detailed statistics on the measures taken. In that regard, Figure 3 provides an illustration of the probation measures per 100,000 population. The rates vary significantly from country to country. The lowest rates are found in San Marino and North Macedonia, at 5.9 and 31 measures per 100,000 inhabitants respectively, while the highest in Poland, with 726 measures per 100,000 inhabitants.

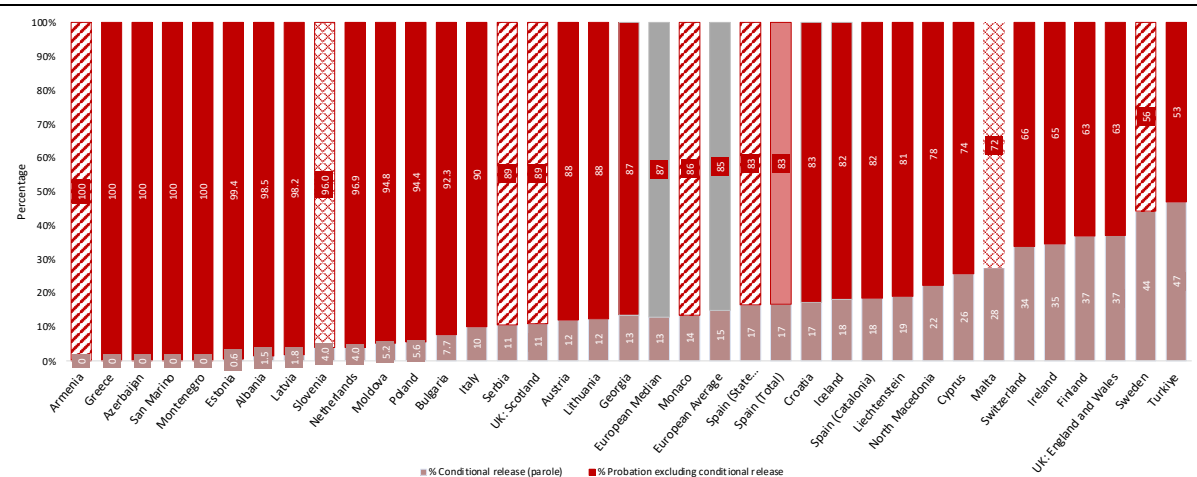
The probation measure rates shown in Figure 3 are not directly comparable to the person-based rates presented in Figure 2 unless the average number of measures per probationer is known. This distinction is essential, as individual probationers may be subject to multiple concurrent mandates. In Belgium, for instance, a study by Jonckheere (2022) found that 92% of mandates referred to only one probationer, suggesting that in that jurisdiction, the number of measures closely approximates the number of individuals under supervision. In this context, reducing Belgium's measure-based rate in Figure 3 (628 per 100,000 inhabitants) by approximately 10% would yield an estimated person-based rate of 565, positioning Belgium as the country with the second highest probation population rate (see Figure 2). However, such ratios may vary substantially across jurisdictions.

Even if all 51 jurisdictions were to apply the same statistical counting rules, the interpretation of the ranking of probation agencies that stems from Figure 2 would not be straightforward. For example, in Greece, the probation service was legally established in 1991 but only became operational in 2007. Similarly, the probation agency of Serbia was created only in 2011, which suggests that in both countries low probation population rate could be due to the fact that probation is still developing. The same interpretation can be made for North Macedonia, where the first probation office was opened in November 2017 and the rest of the offices started operating only in November 2019. It is noteworthy that four of the five agencies that registered the lowest probation rates are located in the Balkan region, where probation systems have only recently been established.

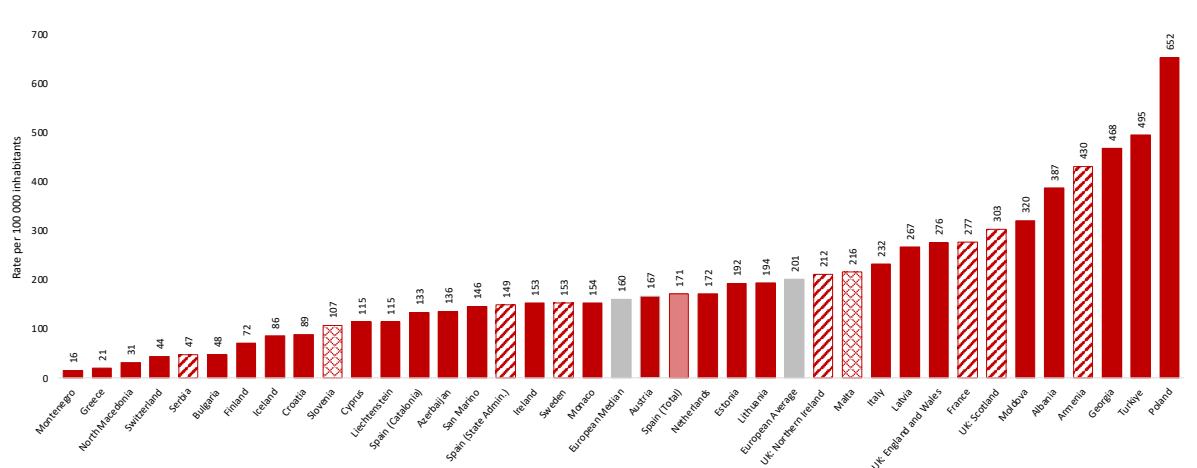
#### *Comparing probation and prison population rates*

It is important to note that there is no "magic formula" to estimate a rate of probationers that would be appropriate for a jurisdiction. The reason is that probationers are serving community sanctions and measures, which are frequently referred to as *alternatives to imprisonment* because they aim at the social inclusion of the offender by keeping them in the community. Consequently, the probation rate cannot be interpreted without

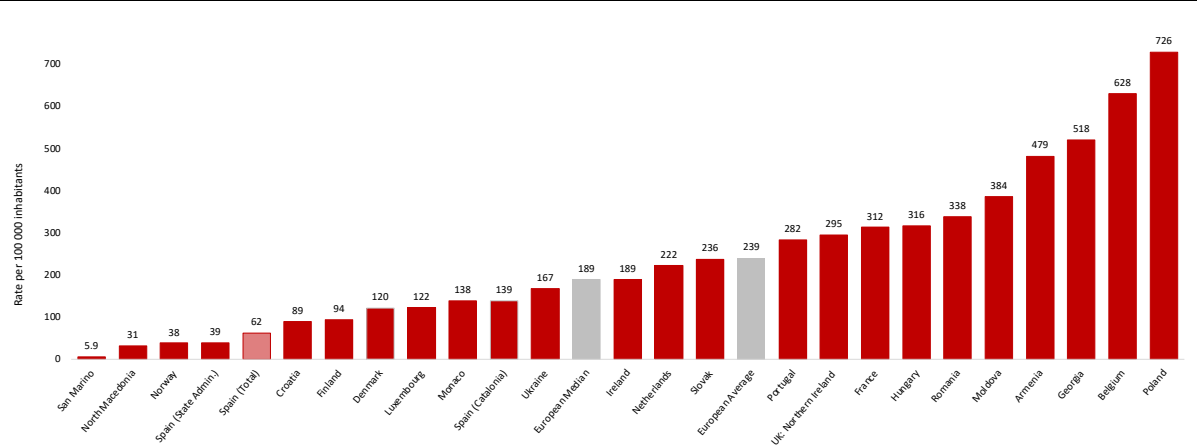
**Figure 1. Percentages of persons on conditional release among probationers on 31 January 2025 (N=34)**



**Figure 2. Probation population rates (probationers per 100 000 inhabitants) on 31 January 2025 (N=36)**



**Figure 3. Probation measures rates (measures per 100 000 inhabitants) on 31 January 2025 (N=24)**



\* Note to Figures 1 to 9: Probation agencies of countries not using the person as the counting unit of their statistics are shown in bars with a grid pattern, while those using it only partially are shown in bars with stripes.

comparing it to the prison population rate. For that reason, Figure 4 shows the probation and prison population rates for the 36 probation agencies and prison services that answered both SPACE questionnaires in 2025.

In Figure 4, jurisdictions are arranged according to their probation population in ascending order. It can easily be seen that this distribution is completely different from the one that would be obtained if they were ranked by their prison population rate. One notable result of this comparison is that, in **28 out of the 36 probation agencies and prison services (roughly 78%)** included in Figure 4, the probation population rate is higher than the prison population rate. The exceptions are Montenegro, Greece, North Macedonia, Switzerland, Serbia, Bulgaria, Croatia, and Azerbaijan where the rates of inmates are higher than the rates of probationers per 100,000 inhabitants.

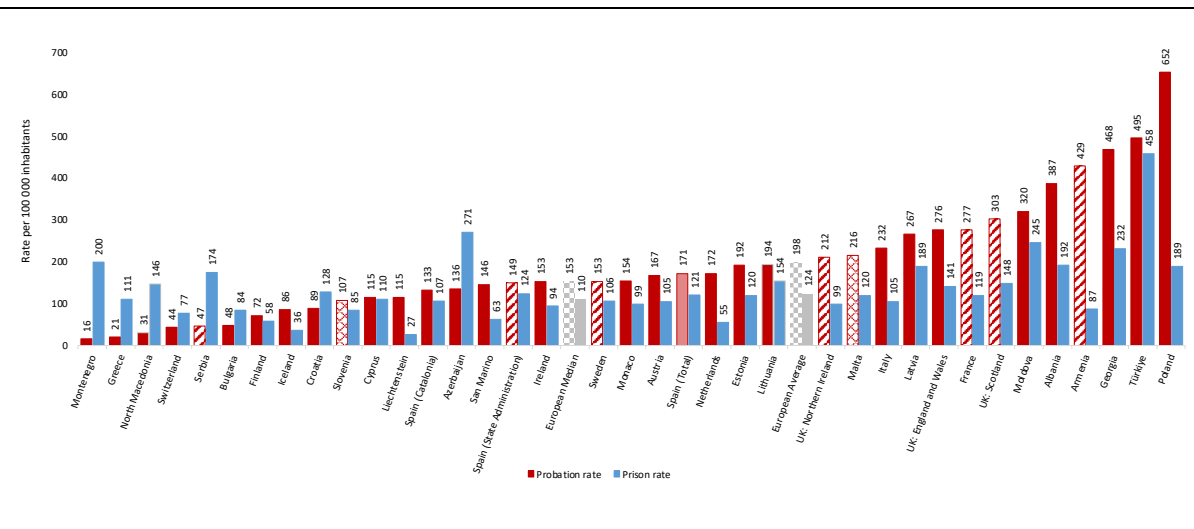
The average and median probation rates are depicted using a checkered grey grid pattern to distinguish them visually from prison rates. Again, it is important to emphasise the fact that not all jurisdictions use the same counting unit. Accordingly, the European median and the European average rates for both the probation population rate and the prison population rate were computed excluding the jurisdictions that do not count persons. Nevertheless, there are still major divergences across probation agencies. In order to better illustrate these divergences, Figure 5 shows the ratio of probationers per 100 inmates.

Figure 5 shows that among jurisdictions with at least half a million inhabitants using the person as the counting unit, the highest ratios of probationers per 100 inmates can be observed in Armenia (492 probationers per 100 inmates), Poland (344), and the Netherlands (313). In contrast, Montenegro, Greece and North Macedonia display the lowest ratios, with only 7.8, 19 and 21 probationers per 100 inmates, respectively. In all cases, this low ratio is likely due to the previously mentioned short history of its probation service.

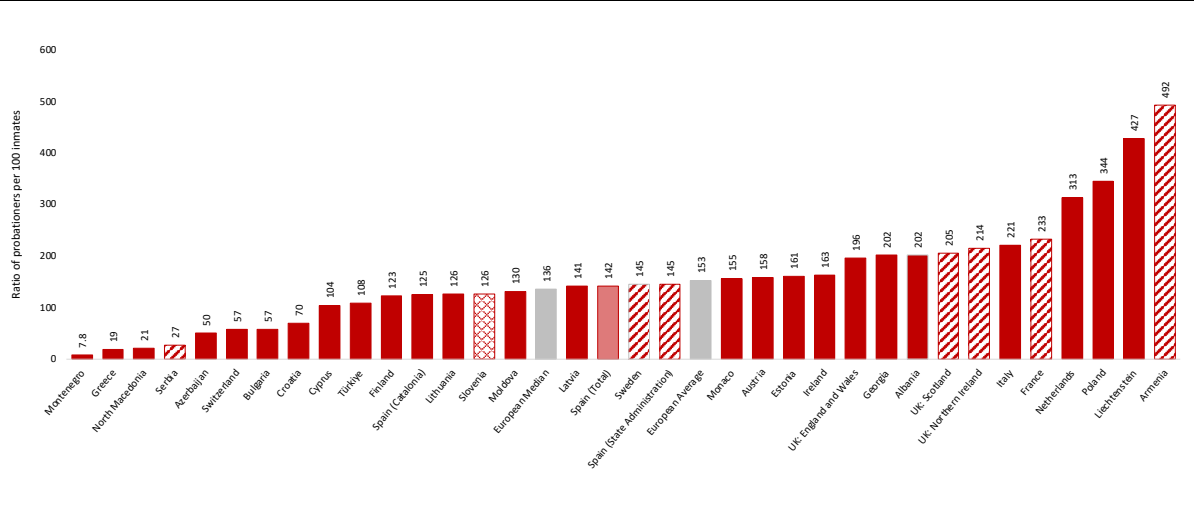
Elevated ratios may have multiple explanations. For instance, England and Wales maintains a comparatively low ratio of 8.1 probationers per probation staff member, while Iceland has 37 probationers per staff member, and Armenia has an even higher ratio of 78 as it can be seen in Figure 6. This indicates that some jurisdictions with large probation populations may face challenges in providing adequate supervision due to limited staffing, whereas others, such as Bulgaria or Sweden, may theoretically be better equipped to ensure effective probation management.

In order to categorise the jurisdictions according to the relationship between their probation and prison population rates, Table 1 presents the different ways in which both rates are combined in practice. The jurisdictions in Table 1 are categorised as follows: a probation or prison population rate up to 100 per 100,000 inhabitants is considered as low, a rate higher than 100 but lower than 200 per 100,000 inhabitants is considered as relatively high, and a rate equal or superior to 200 is considered as high. Entries in *italics* mean that the jurisdiction specified that it does not use the *person* as the counting unit for the stock of probationers.

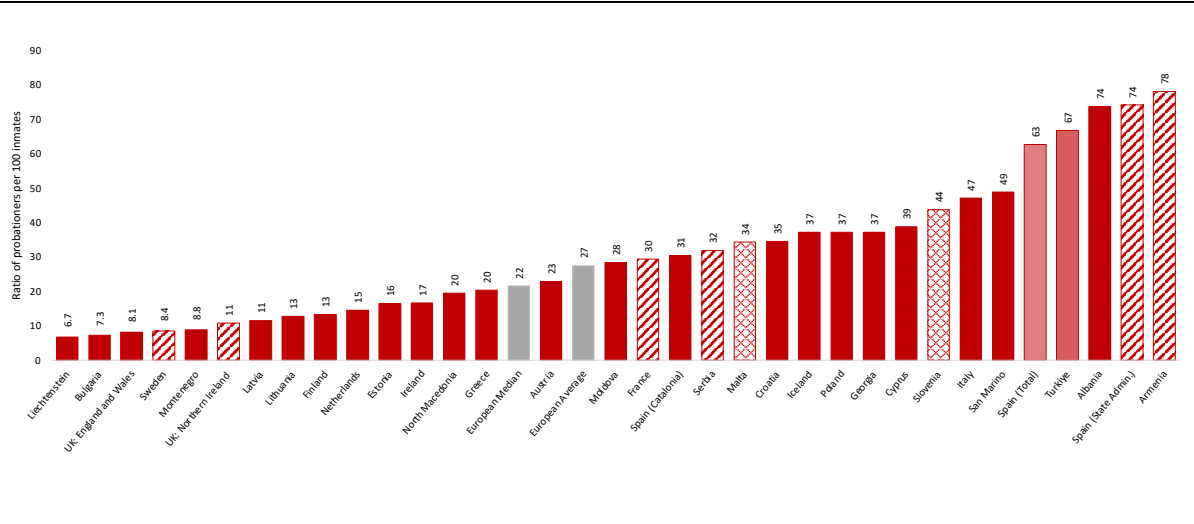
**Figure 4. Probation and Prison population rates (per 100 000 inhabitants) on 31 January 2025 (N=36)**



**Figure 5. Ratio of probationers per 100 inmates on 31 January 2023 (N=33)**



**Figure 6. Ratio of probationers per one staff member on 31 January 2025 (N=32)**



**Table 1.** Relationship between probation and prison population rates on 31 January 2025 (N=36, 8 categories)

Jurisdiction	Probation population rate	Prison population rate
<b>1. Jurisdictions with a low probation population rate (<math>\leq 100</math> per 100 000 inhabitants) and a low prison population rate (<math>\leq 100</math> per 100 000 inhabitants)</b>		
Switzerland	44.2	77.3
Bulgaria	48.2	83.9
Finland	71.5	58.2
Iceland	86.0	35.9
<b>2. Jurisdictions with a low probation population rate (<math>\leq 100</math> per 100 000 inhabitants) and a relatively high prison population rate (<math>&gt;100</math> to <math>&lt;200</math> per 100 000 inhabitants)</b>		
Montenegro	15.6	199.6
Greece	21.3	111.3
North Macedonia	31.1	146.4
Serbia	47.2	174.0
Croatia	89.1	128.2
<b>3. Jurisdictions with a relatively high probation population rate (<math>&gt;100</math> to <math>&lt;200</math> per 100 000 inhabitants) and a low prison population rate (<math>\leq 100</math> per 100 000 inhabitants)</b>		
Slovenia	107.1	84.7
Liechtenstein	115.0	26.9
San Marino	146.0	62.6
Ireland	153.0	94.0
Monaco	153.6	98.9
Netherlands	172.1	55.0
<b>4. Jurisdictions with a relatively high probation population rate (<math>&gt;100</math> to <math>&lt;200</math> per 100 000 inhabitants) and a relatively high prison population rate (<math>&gt;100</math> to <math>&lt;200</math> per 100 000 inhabitants)</b>		
Cyprus	114.8	110.3
Spain (Catalonia)	132.8	106.5
Spain (State Administration)	149.5	123.6
Sweden	153.4	106.1
Austria	166.8	105.4
Spain (Total)	171.5	120.8
Estonia	192.0	119.5
Lithuania	194.1	154.0
<b>5. Jurisdictions with a relatively high probation population rate (<math>&gt;100</math> to <math>&lt;200</math> per 100 000 inhabitants) and a high prison population rate (<math>&gt; 200</math> per 100 000 inhabitants)</b>		
Azerbaijan	136.0	270.6
<b>6. Jurisdictions with a high probation population rate (<math>\geq 200</math> per 100 000 inhabitants) and a low prison population rate (<math>\leq 100</math> per 100 000 inhabitants)</b>		
UK: Northern Ireland	211.6	98.7
Armenia	429.5	87.3
<b>7. Jurisdictions with a high probation population rate (<math>\geq 200</math> per 100 000 inhabitants) and a relatively high prison population rate (<math>&gt;100</math> to <math>&lt;200</math> per 100 000 inhabitants)</b>		
Malta	215.8	120.0
Italy	232.0	105.1
Latvia	266.7	188.8
UK: England and Wales	276.2	140.7
France	276.8	118.9
UK: Scotland	302.6	147.7
Albania	386.9	191.7
Poland	652.4	189.4
<b>8. Jurisdictions with a high probation population rate (<math>\geq 200</math> per 100 000 inhabitants) and a high prison population rate (<math>\geq 200</math> per 100 000 inhabitants)</b>		
Moldova	319.8	245.4
Georgia	467.5	231.9
Türkiye	495.3	458.1

The countries in the first category of Table 1 (Switzerland, Bulgaria, Finland, and Iceland) are those that seem to be using prison and probation most parsimoniously, because they show low rates in both indicators. Countries in the eighth category (Republic of Moldova, Georgia, and Türkiye) are exactly in the opposite situation. These countries appear to be using community sanctions not as alternatives to imprisonment, but rather as supplementary sanctions. The reason is that their probation population rate is remarkably high, but their prison population rate remains above the European median value. This observation also applies to the probation services included in the seventh and most populated category. In between these categories, the situation of the jurisdictions differs considerably.

### *The correctional population*

The correctional population of a jurisdiction is a **stock indicator**, defined as the total number of inmates and probationers in that country on a given date. These are individuals who are, in one way or another, under the supervision of state institutions of formal criminal justice control.

By combining the total number of probationers (**1,433,011**) with the total number of inmates (**1,107,921**) reported by jurisdictions that participated in at least one of the two SPACE surveys conducted in 2025 and provided data at least one stock indicators (probationers and inmates as of 31 January 2025), one obtains a total of **2,540,932 individuals under formal criminal justice supervision in Europe**.

Nevertheless, this number should be considered a conservative estimate of Europe's correctional population. Regarding probationers, this figure includes data from only the 36 probation agencies that provided their total number of probationers (for example, Germany responded partially to the SPACE II questionnaire but did not supply their total number of probationers, while Czechia was unable to provide figures this year due to data availability issues in their system). In contrast, it includes data from all 51 prison administrations regarding inmates deprived of liberty in Europe.

The correctional population can be converted into a **rate** by relating it to the total population of each country. The resulting correctional population rate corresponds to the combined number of probationers and inmates per 100,000 inhabitants.

Figure 7 presents these estimated correctional population rates (number of inmates and probationers per 100,000 inhabitants) for the 34 jurisdictions that reported both figures.

It must again be emphasized that these rates represent estimates rather than precise, fully comparable figures. The main reason is the inconsistent use of the person as the counting unit across probation statistics throughout Europe. As illustrated in previous figures, probation agencies that provided their total number of probationers but do not consistently use the person as the counting unit are represented with diagonal or crosshatched stripes in Figure 7.

Figure 7 clearly illustrates substantial variability in the estimated correctional population rates among European jurisdictions. The lowest correctional population rates are found in Switzerland (122), Iceland (122), Finland (130), Greece (133) and Bulgaria (132), countries reflecting relatively moderate use of correctional measures. In contrast, Türkiye (954), Poland (842), and Georgia (699) and Albania (579) show significantly higher correctional population rates, suggesting more intensive use of criminal justice control mechanisms.

The wide differences observed are consistent with the broader findings of the SPACE II report, emphasizing the diversity in correctional philosophies and practices across Europe. It is important to stress that jurisdictions marked with diagonal or crosshatched stripes indicate potential methodological issues due to the inconsistent use of the person as a counting unit in probation statistics. Consequently, their figures should be interpreted with caution, as these methodological variations may contribute to an inflated estimation of their correctional populations.

## 4. Year-on-year trend of the probation population rates

The high rates of probationers observed in several jurisdictions corroborate the expansion of community sanctions and measures across the European continent since the 1990s. However, this increase has not necessarily been accompanied everywhere by a parallel decrease of imprisonment, which community sanctions and measures are supposed to substitute (see the SPACE I series). In order to continue monitoring that trend — which can be seen as a signal of the development of mass probation in some jurisdictions— Figure 8 shows the

annual variation of the probation population rate in the probation agencies that provided data on their probation population for 2024 and 2025.

As the aim of this analysis is to measure the trend in the use of probation in each jurisdiction, the use of different counting units in different jurisdictions does not affect the comparison, as long as they do not change their counting unit from one year to the other. Hence, Figure 8 includes data on 24 probation agencies that count the number of persons, 7 agencies that partially count the number of persons and on 1 that count the number of cases, (presented in diagonal and crosshatched stripes respectively). Figure 8 shows that, comparing 2025 to 2024, 19 of these jurisdictions registered an increase of their overall rate of probationers, and cases. However, if one considers increases and decreases between -5% and 5% as indicating stability, there were **10 jurisdictions that registered significant increases** (5% or more), **8 that experienced significant decreases** (-5% or more), and **14 where the situation remained stable**<sup>8</sup>.

## 5. Characteristics of the probationers under the responsibility of European probation agencies, and comparison with the inmates held in penal institutions

### 5.1. Gender, probation and imprisonment

In the 30 probation agencies that provided data on both the gender of probationers and the total probation stock, the median percentage of men was **89.3%** and the median percentage of women was **10.7%**. A similar percentage of 10.87% women among probationers is reached when the estimations are restricted to the jurisdictions counting *persons*. The median percentage of women in prison is **5.4%**. The low proportion of women confirms what is widely observed in criminology: offending is an activity disproportionately concentrated among men.

A comparison with the prison population, as shown in Figure 9, reveals a clear difference: the percentage of women is systematically higher on probation than in prison with the exception of four countries (Montenegro, Malta, North Macedonia, and Iceland). On average, **women make up about 9.8% of probationers, and 5.8% of the total prison population.**

This gap may be explained by several interrelated factors. First, probation is usually applied to less serious offences, and women tend to be even more underrepresented in serious (especially violent) crimes than in offending in general. Second, women may be perceived as posing a lower risk of reoffending and therefore be more likely to receive non-custodial sanctions or benefit from early release. Third, social considerations such as caregiving responsibilities can play a role: women are more often the primary caregivers of minor children, which may influence decisions at the sentencing and release stages. The same consideration is rarely applied to men.

Together, these factors may lead to gender-based differences in the application of probation and imprisonment. Whether these differences constitute discrimination or reflect appropriate individualisation based on social and criminological factors remains an open and complex question.

### 5.2. Citizenship, probation and imprisonment

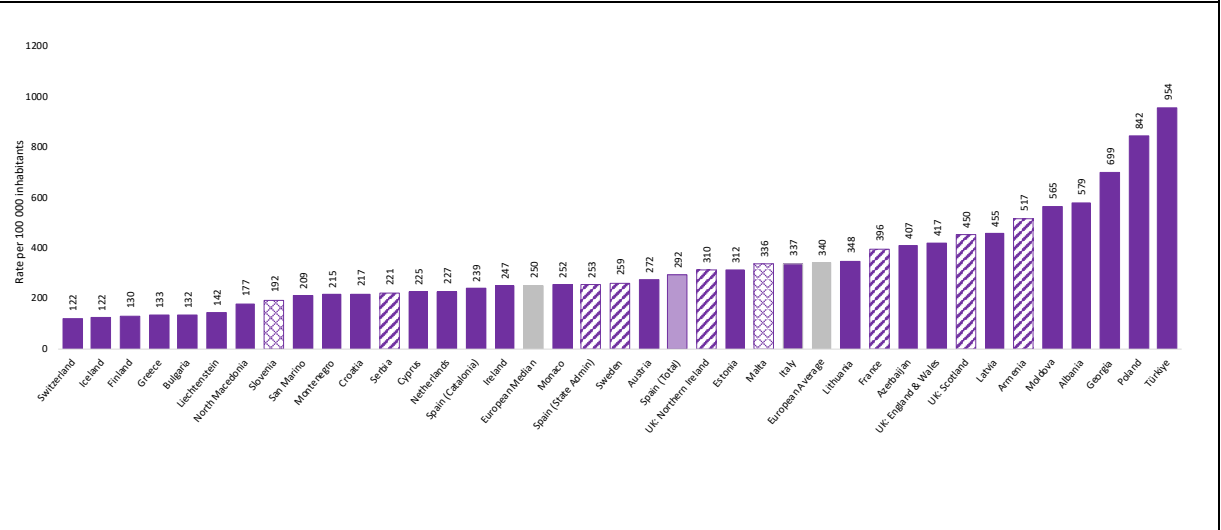
In the 24 jurisdictions that provided data on both the number of foreign probationers and the total probation stock, the median percentage of probationers who were nationals was **90.1%** and the median percentage of probationers who were foreign citizens was **9.9%** (and **10.2%** if the analysis is restricted to jurisdictions counting *persons*). In contrast, the median percentage of foreign inmates reaches **17%** among jurisdictions that provided data for both SPACE surveys.

This distribution reflects significant geographical variation. Among the jurisdictions that participated both in SPACE I and SPACE II, there are several Western European EU countries where the percentages of foreign inmates are among the highest (see the right half of Figure 10). The same pattern holds when estimations are restricted

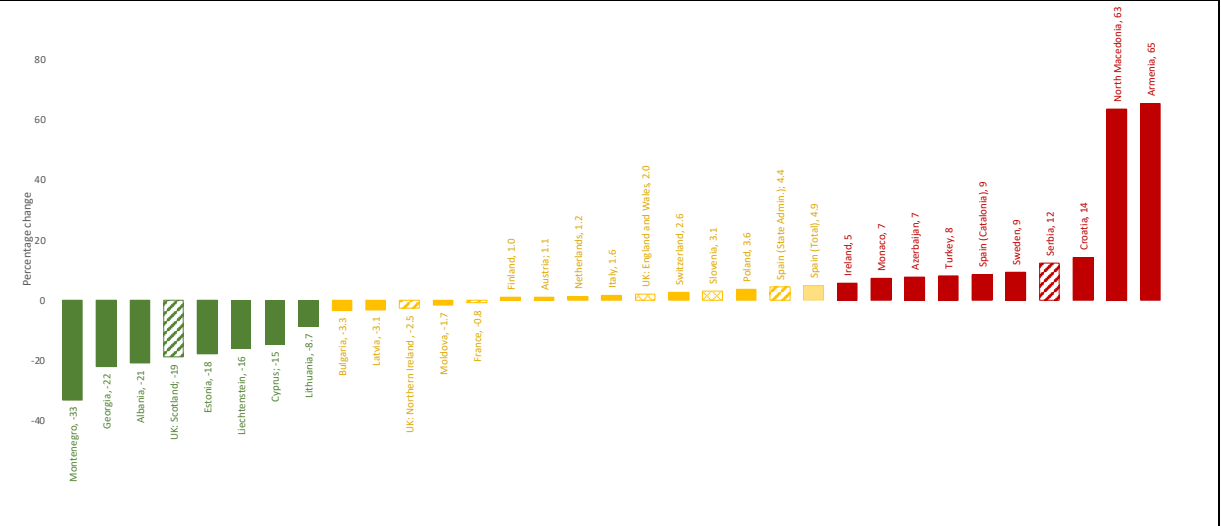
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<sup>8</sup> As indicated in the Methodology Section, in order to avoid double counting, Spain (total) is not counted as a separate jurisdiction because it corresponds to the sum of Spain (State Administration) and Spain (Catalonia).

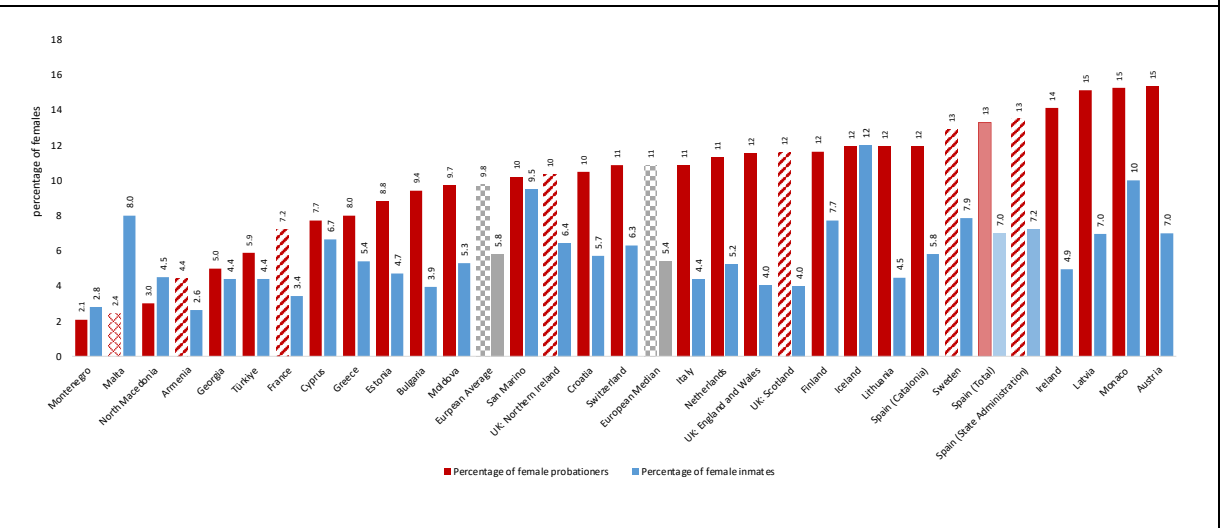
**Figure 7.** Estimated correctional population rate (inmates + probationers) per 100 000 inhabitants on 31 January 2025 (N=34)



**Figure 8.** Annual percentage change in probation population rates from 2024 to 2025 (N=32)



**Figure 9.** Percentage of female probationers in the probation population and percentage of female inmates in the prison population on 31 January 2025 (N=30)



to jurisdictions that provided demographic data for both their probation (SPACE II) and their prison (SPACE I) populations.

Although there is a great diversity in these percentages, most of the foreign probationers are placed under supervision in Western Europe. In fact, information on citizenship is seldom collected in several Eastern European countries, which suggests that the issue has no relevance for policy-makers in that region. This overall distribution of foreign probationers across the continent is similar to the one observed for foreign inmates in the 2025 SPACE I report, although the percentages of the latter are much higher. As a reminder, on 31 January 2025, around **26%** of the inmates placed in European penal institutions were foreigners, but that percentage was usually lower than 5% in Eastern Europe, while in Central and Western Europe it was at least 15% and, in a few countries such as Austria, Greece, Cyprus, Slovenia and Switzerland it was higher than 50%. Sweden is omitted from Figure 10 because it counts foreign inmates only after they receive a final sentence; but among its probationers, 16% are foreign citizens.

Figure 10 shows that the percentage of foreign inmates is higher than that of foreign probationers in nearly every jurisdiction —and often at least double. The sole exception is Estonia, where foreign probationers outnumber foreign inmates. This difference is at least partially due to the fact that it is more difficult for a foreign citizen than for a national to meet the conditions required to be placed on probation. The main obstacle in that context is the requirement of having a stable address in the country where probation is being served. Furthermore, in some cases, it is plausible to assume that some of the foreign inmates have also been the object of a deportation order to be applied after release, which means that they will be expelled from the country after serving their prison term and have no possibility of being placed on probation. The specific situation in Estonia may be linked to the country's demographic structure and citizenship policies, which affect the legal status and integration of certain population groups residing in the country.

## 6. Mortality rates

In the 24 probation agencies that provided data on both the deaths of probationers and the total probation stock<sup>9</sup>, the median mortality rate was **70.8 deaths per 10,000 probationers** (71.37 per 10,000 if we restrict the analysis to counts of *persons*<sup>10</sup>). Figure 11 presents the probation mortality rates for the year 2024 as well as the prison mortality rates (deaths per 10,000 inmates) for the same year for the 24 jurisdictions that provided data for both<sup>11</sup>.

Figure 11 shows that the probation mortality rates are usually higher than the prison mortality rates. In fact, in a number of jurisdictions, the probation mortality rates are several times higher than the prison mortality rates in countries such as Estonia, Georgia, Sweden and Croatia. In only a few countries such as Spain, Malta, England and Wales, and Bulgaria prison mortality is higher than probation mortality. There are at least three plausible explanatory hypotheses for that difference: (a) the constraints of the prison environment reduce the risk of engaging in risky behaviour or suffering a fatal accident; (b) inmates suffering from terminal or serious illnesses are frequently released from prison and placed on probation; and (c) suicide is more common while on probation than while in prison. In order to test the latter hypothesis, the SPACE II questionnaire asks for data on suicides among probationers. However, none of the Council of Europe member states is currently able to provide data on that topic.

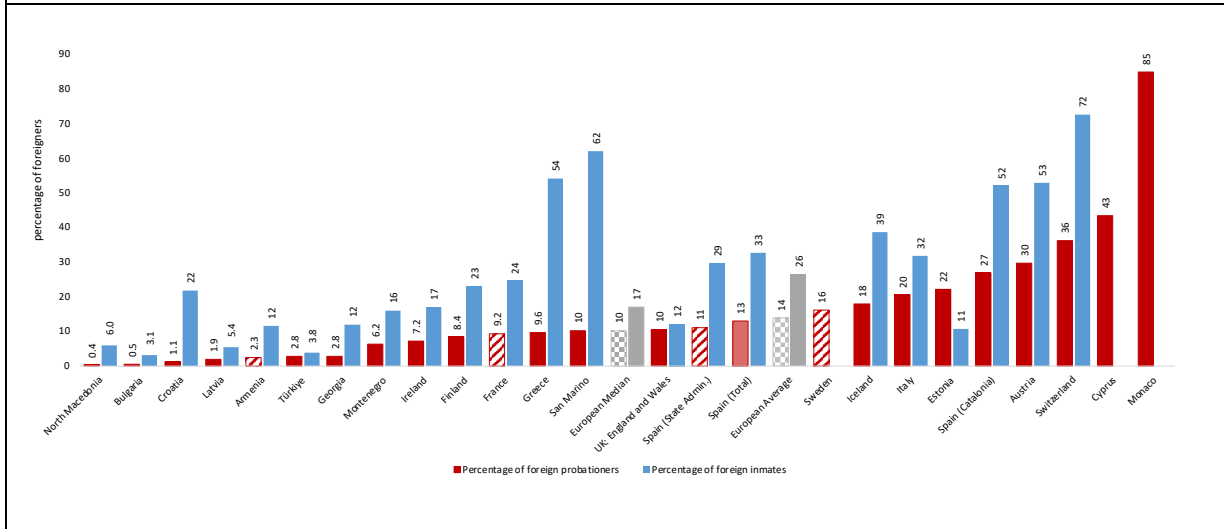
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<sup>9</sup> These jurisdictions also provided data on deaths of inmates in SPACE I.

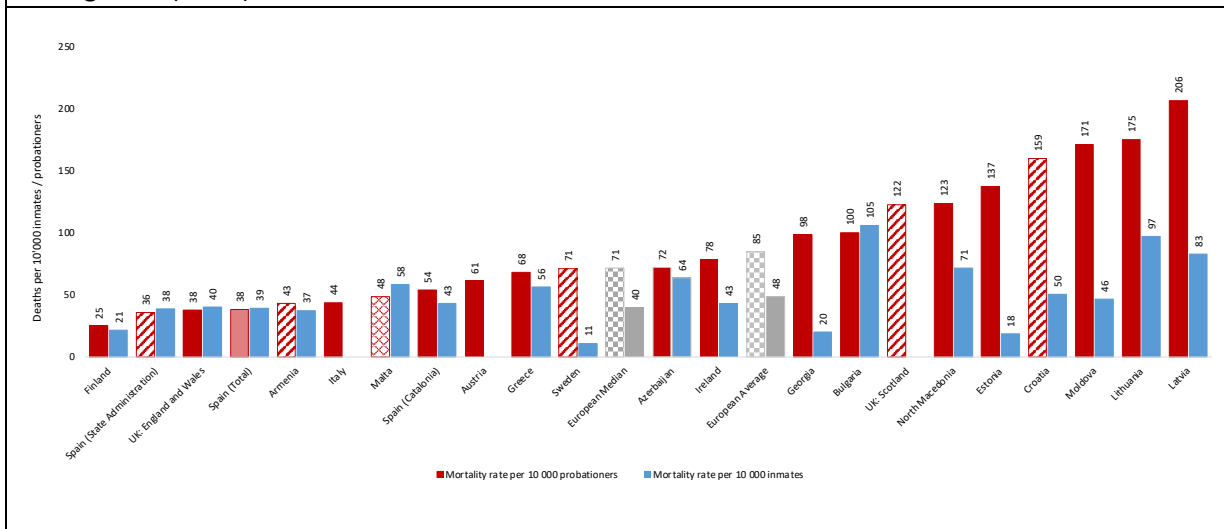
<sup>10</sup> As deaths are a subcategory of the *flow of exits*, the European median and average mortality rates exclude jurisdictions that do not use the *person* as the counting unit to compute their flow.

<sup>11</sup> Jurisdictions such as San Marino, which reported zero deaths in 2024, have been excluded from the figure and from the calculation of the European median and average rates. For detailed data, refer to Table 3.

**Figure 10.** Percentage of foreign probationers in the probation population and percentage of foreign inmates in the prison population on 31 January 2025 (N=24)



**Figure 11.** Deaths of inmates per 10 000 inmates and deaths of probationers per 10 000 probationers during 2024 (N=21)



## 7. Methodology

Throughout this document, the term *jurisdiction* is often preferred to *country* because some countries have more than one probation agency. Hence, in Spain, both the General State Administration and the Administration of the Autonomous Community of Catalonia provide data, while in the United Kingdom data are provided separately by England and Wales, Northern Ireland, and Scotland.

Unless stated otherwise, the remarks made in the body of this document refer, for each indicator, to the *European median value*. The *median* is the value that divides the data in two equal groups so that 50% of the countries are above the median and 50% are below it. The median is preferred to the *arithmetic mean* (commonly referred to as the *average*) because the latter is extremely sensitive to very high or very low values (technically known as *outliers*). Outliers are quite common in the sample of countries included in the SPACE reports because some member states, like Liechtenstein, Monaco or San Marino, have a very small number of inhabitants and, as a consequence, a change in only one person can have a big impact on their percentages and rates. The *average* value is, however, regularly included in the Figures presented throughout the document.

The European median values are weighted according to the population and the number of probationers in each country. This means that they are estimated on the basis of the percentages and rates per 100,000 inhabitants of each country (or jurisdiction of the country) and not on the absolute numbers for the whole continent. Using the latter would produce different values, which could hide the diversity observed across countries. For example, on 31 January 2025, there were 1,433,011 probationers under the supervision of the 36 probation agencies of the Council of Europe member states which provided data on their stock of probationers. At the same time, the total population of the territories in which these probation agencies are located was around 690 million inhabitants, which would lead to a probation population rate of 207 probationers per 100,000 inhabitants. However, when the European median value is estimated on the basis of the population and the number of probationers of each country, it corresponds to 153.6 probationers per 100,000 inhabitants, as stated at the beginning of this document (see Figure 2).

The questionnaire used for the SPACE II series of Council of Europe Annual Penal Statistics asks countries to provide data on stock indicators using the person as the counting unit. For example, the number of probationers on 31st January (stock) should correspond to the number of persons placed under the supervision of probation agencies on that day. However, some probation agencies do not use the person as the counting unit of their statistics. The risk when an agency uses files, cases or orders as their counting unit is that the same person may be counted more than once (e.g., a person placed in home arrest with electronic monitoring could be counted as two persons: one for the home arrest order and another for the electronic monitoring order). This issue is addressed systematically throughout this document, which indicates for each indicator, Figure, and Table the jurisdictions that do not use the person as the counting unit of their probation statistics. These jurisdiction presented in stripes in the Figures, unless they have specified that they use the person as the counting unit for the *specific* indicator presented in the Figure. For example, ten (10) jurisdictions mentioned that they only *partially* use the person as the counting unit in their probation statistics (for details, see note 5), but nine (9) of them specifically count the *person* when computing the total stock of probationers on 31<sup>st</sup> January (for details, see note 6). In order to allow comparisons, the same logic was applied when computing the European median and average values as well as other measures based exclusively on the number of probationers: jurisdictions not using the *person* as the counting unit in their probation statistics are excluded from the computation.

The Tables presented include one decimal but, in the comments, all numbers equal or superior to 10 are in principle presented in round numbers (*i.e.*, without decimals), while those inferior to 10 are presented with one decimal. In order to facilitate the reading, numbers have also been rounded in the Figures except when the majority of them were lower than 10.

The sample size (N) indicated on top of each Figure and Table is computed excluding the bars and lines that present the European average and the European median, as well as the total figures for Spain whenever data for the two probation agencies of the country (Catalonia and the State Administration) are also included. This explains why the N is smaller than the number of columns or lines found in the Figures and Tables. To avoid double counting, the overall total for Spain is also excluded from the computation of the European averages and median whenever data for the two probation agencies of the country are available.

## 8. Tables

**Table 2.** Stock indicators on 31 January 2025

Country	Total number of probationers	Probation population rate	Total number of inmates	Prison population rate	Ratio of probationers per 100 inmates	Total correctional population (probationers + inmates)	Correctional population rate
Figure		2 & 4		4	5		7
Albania	9 144	386.9	4 530	191.7	201.9	13 674	578.6
Andorra			72	86.8			
Armenia	13 212	429.5	2 686	87.3	491.9	15 898	516.8
Austria	15 342	166.8	9 693	105.4	158.3	25 035	272.2
Azerbaijan	13 901	136.0	27 673	270.6	50.2	41 574	406.6
Belgium			12 613	106.0			
BiH: State level			294	12.8			
BiH: Federation BiH	NAP		1 108	48.3			
BiH: Republika Srpska	NAP		580	52.2			
Bulgaria	3 103	48.2	5 404	83.9	57.4	8 507	132.2
Croatia	3 451	89.1	4 965	128.2	69.5	8 416	217.2
Cyprus	1 125	114.8	1 081	110.3	104.1	2 206	225.1
Czechia	...		19 430	178.1			
Denmark	...		4 197	70.0			
Estonia	2 631	192.0	1 637	119.5	160.7	4 268	311.5
Finland	4 030	71.5	3 282	58.2	122.8	7 312	129.7
France	189 983	276.8	81 599	118.9	232.8	271 582	395.7
Georgia	17 319	467.5	8 592	231.9	201.6	25 911	699.4
Germany	NAP		57 812	69.2			
Greece	2 218	21.3	11 586	111.3	19.1	13 804	132.6
Hungary			19 632	205.8			
Iceland	335	86.0	140	35.9	239.3	475	122.0
Ireland	8 323	153.0	5 116	94.0	162.7	13 439	247.0
Italy	136 714	232.0	61 916	105.1	220.8	198 630	337.0
Latvia	4 952	266.7	3 505	188.8	141.3	8 457	455.4
Liechtenstein	47	115.0	11	26.9	427.3	58	141.9
Lithuania	5 611	194.1	4 453	154.0	126.0	10 064	348.2
Luxembourg	...		749	109.8			
Malta	1 239	215.8	689	120.0	179.8	1 928	335.7
Moldova	7 615	319.8	5 844	245.4	130.3	13 459	565.2
Monaco	59	153.6	38	98.9	155.3	97	252.5
Montenegro	97	15.6	1 244	199.6	7.8	1 341	215.1
Netherlands	31 048	172.1	9 930	55.0	312.7	40 978	227.1
North Macedonia	567	31.1	2 668	146.4	21.3	3 235	177.5
Norway			3 020	54.0			
Poland	238 103	652.4	69 137	189.4	344.4	307 240	841.8
Portugal	...		12 360	115.0			
Romania	...		24 543	128.9			
San Marino	49	146.0	21	62.6	233.3	70	208.5
Serbia	3 103	47.2	11 430	174.0	27.1	14 533	221.3
Slovakia	...		8 169	150.7			
Slovenia	2 282	107.1	1 804	84.7	126.5	4 086	191.8
Spain (Total)	84 159	171.5	59 279	120.8	142.0	143 438	292.3
Spain (State Admin)	73 367	149.5	50 627	123.6	144.9	123 994	252.6
Spain (Catalonia)	10 792	132.8	8 652	106.5	124.7	19 444	239.3
Sweden	16 241	153.4	11 232	106.1	144.6	27 473	259.5
Switzerland	4 001	44.2	6 994	77.3	57.2	10 995	121.5
Türkiye	424 317	495.3	392 456	458.1	108.1	816 773	953.5
Ukraine			37 119	95.2			
UK: England & Wales	167 575	276.2	85 372	140.7	196.3	252 947	416.9
UK: Northern Ireland	4 133	211.6	1 929	98.7	214.3	6 062	310.3
UK: Scotland	16 982	302.6	8 287	147.7	204.9	25 269	450.3

Notes: (1) Data refers to 31 January 2025 (for exceptions, see the SPACE reports); (2) Average and median values were calculated from the original database, which contains all the decimals not shown in this Table.

**Table 3.** Composition of the probation and prison populations on 31 January 2025 and mortality during 2024

Country	Percentage of female probationers in the probation population	Percentage of female inmates in the prison population	Percentage of foreign probationers in the probation population	Percentage of foreign inmates in the prison population	Deaths of probationers per 10 000 probationers (2024)	Deaths of inmates per 10 000 inmates (2024)
Figure	9	9	10	10	11	11
Albania		1.6%		3.4%		70.6
Andorra		12.5%		72.2%		138.9
Armenia	4.4%	2.6%	2.3%	11.6%	43.1	37.2
Austria	15.3%	7.0%	29.6%	52.8%	61.3	***
Azerbaijan		3.1%		2.2%	71.9	63.6
Belgium		4.2%		42.8%		42.8
BiH: Fed. BiH		0%		9.2%		102.0
BiH: Republika Srpska		4.6%		2.8%		***
BiH: State level		0.3%		0.9%		17.2
Bulgaria	9.4%	3.9%	0.5%	3.1%	99.9	105.5
Croatia	10.5%	5.7%	1.1%	21.8%	159.4	50.4
Cyprus	7.7%	6.7%	43.4%	54.4%		37.0
Czechia		8.6%		8.2%		***
Denmark		5.9%		25.3%		35.7
Estonia	8.8%	4.7%	22.0%	10.6%	136.8	18.3
Finland	11.6%	7.7%	8.4%	22.9%	24.8	21.3
France	7.2%	3.4%	9.2%	24.4%		33.7
Georgia	5.0%	4.4%	2.8%	11.9%	98.2	19.8
Germany		5.6%		47.4%		***
Greece	8.0%	5.4%	9.6%	51.8%	67.6	56.1
Hungary		8.8%		3.6%		46.9
Iceland	11.9%	12.1%	17.9%	38.6%		214.3
Ireland	14.1%	5.0%	7.2%	17.0%	78.1	43.0
Italy	10.9%	4.4%	20.4%	31.7%	43.7	***
Latvia	15.1%	7.0%	1.9%	5.4%	206.0	82.7
Liechtenstein		9.1%		100%		0.0
Lithuania	11.9%	4.5%		3.8%	174.7	96.6
Luxembourg		5.2%		78.1%		0.0
Malta	2.4%	8.0%		50.9%	48.4	58.1
Moldova	9.7%	5.3%		1.9%	170.7	46.2
Monaco	15.3%	10.5%	84.7%	89.5%		0.0
Montenegro	2.1%	2.8%	6.2%	15.8%		32.2
Netherlands	11.3%	5.2%		22.7%		29.2
North Macedonia	3.0%	4.5%	0.4%	6.0%	123.5	71.2
Norway		4.3%		27.2%		33.1
Poland		5.3%		3.7%		25.5
Portugal		7.3%		17.4%		52.6
Romania		4.6%		1.1%		39.1
San Marino	10.2%	9.5%	10.2%	61.9%	0.0	0.0
Serbia		4.7%		4.5%		89.2
Slovakia		7.3%		4.6%		25.7
Slovenia		5.4%		52.1%		49.9
Spain (Total)	13.3%	7.0%	13.0%	32.7%	38.1	39.0
Spain (State Admin.)	13.5%	7.2%	11.0%	29.4%	35.8	38.3
Spain (Catalonia)	12.0%	5.8%	26.8%	52.0%	53.7	42.8
Sweden	12.9%	7.9%	16.2%	***	70.8	10.7
Switzerland	10.9%	6.3%	36.1%	72.5%		***
Türkiye	5.9%	4.4%	2.8%	3.8%		19.0
Ukraine		6.5%		2.2%		99.1
UK: England and Wales	11.5%	4.0%	10.4%	12.1%	37.7	40.1
UK: Northern Ireland	10.4%	6.4%		6.1%		***
UK: Scotland	11.6%	4.0%		7.7%	122.5	***

Notes: (1) Data on females and foreigners refer to 31 January 2025 (for exceptions, see the SPACE reports); (2) Data on deaths refer to the entire year 2024; (3) Average and median values were calculated from the original database, which contains all the decimals not shown in this Table.

## 9. Definitions

For the purposes of this report, the following definitions apply:

**Community sanctions and measures (CSM):** According to the Council of Europe's Recommendation CM/Rec(2017)3, these are "sanctions and measures which maintain suspects or offenders in the community and involve some restrictions on their liberty through the imposition of conditions and/or obligations. The term designates any sanction imposed by a judicial or administrative authority, and any measure taken before or instead of a decision on a sanction, as well as ways of enforcing a sentence of imprisonment outside a prison establishment." Community sanctions and measures are frequently referred to as *alternatives to imprisonment* and some of them are also referred to as *diversionary measures*.

**Conditional release (parole):** According to the Council of Europe's Recommendation Rec(2003)22, this "means the early release of sentenced prisoners under individualised post-release conditions." It is considered a community measure. In Europe, persons conditionally released (known in common law jurisdictions as *parolees*) and placed under the supervision of probation agencies are considered as probationers.

**Correctional population:** The sum of the prison population and the probation population in a given jurisdiction.

**Correctional population rate:** The number of persons under the supervision of correctional services (both in prison and on probation) per 100,000 inhabitants.

**Electronic monitoring:** A form of supervision that uses electronic devices to monitor the location and/or movements of a person subject to a community sanction or measure.

**Flow indicators:** Data covering a specific period (in this case, one year), such as admissions, releases, or deaths.

**Median:** The middle value when all data are ranked in order. It is less sensitive to extreme values than the average.

**Probation:** According to the Council of Europe's Recommendation CM/Rec(2010)1, this "relates to the implementation in the community of sanctions and measures, defined by law and imposed on an offender. It includes a range of activities and interventions, which involve supervision, guidance and assistance aiming at the social inclusion of an offender, as well as at contributing to community safety."

**Probation agency:** The body designated by law to implement probation sanctions and measures. In some jurisdictions, this may be integrated within other criminal justice services.

**Probationer:** A person subject to probation supervision, including those on conditional release (parole).

**Probation population rate:** The number of probationers per 100,000 inhabitants.

**Prison population rate:** The number of inmates per 100,000 inhabitants.

**Stock indicators:** Data referring to a specific date (in this case, 31 January 2025).

**Turnover ratio:** The percentage of potential releases (stock at beginning of year plus admissions during the year) that actually occurred during that year.

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