

# **Executive Summary**

## **Penal transplants :**

### **French problem solving courts *à la Française***

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### I. **Introduction**

**Problem-Solving Courts** (PSC) were created, it is generally considered, in Miami in 1989. The magistrates of the local court, situated in one of the city's most deprived districts — then ravaged by the crack epidemic of the 1980s — had convened out of frustration at their lack of impact on delinquency, crack consumption, and the deterioration of the surrounding neighbourhoods. A meeting bringing together all their institutional partners as well as representatives of the nearby communities led to the creation of the first PSC; a community court.

The principal features of this model — which would subsequently disseminate widely across the United States and, later, throughout the world — included: the participation of the criminal judge in the post-sentence supervision of offenders, thereby bringing due process into the process; integrated inter-agency collaboration; the treatment of all problems underlying delinquency and substance use; the rapid taking of decisions; a single, centralised location; and a strong anchoring within the local community.

If this model spread so widely, it is because science — including quantitative research and, notably, no fewer than ten meta-analyses (e.g., [Latimer, Morton-Bourgon, & Chrétien, 2006](#)) — demonstrated its considerable effectiveness.

The creation of PSCs in France was, in particular, a reaction to the managerial and bureaucratic evolution of society—also known as 'McDonaldisation' (Ritzer, 2019) — which has taken hold across the globe, including in China ([Johnston & Pivaty, 2023](#)). This managerialism translates into an exclusive focus on *efficiency* (counting case files as though they were 'cans of peas': [Berman, 2000](#)) rather than *effectiveness*, that is, the actual achievement of offender reintegration, reduction in recidivism, and public safety. The 'quick-and-dirty' approach now predominates, the criminal justice system having become a factory line whose meaning is increasingly lost to both practitioners and citizens ([Herzog-Evans, 2023](#)).

A question nevertheless arises: to what extent can France transplant — like others before it (Nolan, 2009) — a model conceived elsewhere without losing the essential elements, namely those that account for its effectiveness?

## II. Bid for tenders

The **stakeholders**, namely the MILDECA (Interministerial Strategy for the Fight Against Drugs and Addictive Behaviour) and the Ministry of Justice (Directorate of Criminal Affairs and Pardons, and Directorate of Prison Administration), had launched a public bid for tenders with the aim of commissioning a research team to undertake three objectives:

1. To carry out a complete mapping and description of French programmes inspired by PSCs and, consequently, to determine which of them met the main criteria of said PSCs (*quantitative* method);
2. To conduct an in-depth *qualitative* study of three sites selected by the stakeholders;
3. To describe the state of interinstitutional collaboration across all the programmes (: *quantitative* and *qualitative* method).

The bid for tenders was awarded to the team led by Prof. Evans in October 2022. The latter began the quantitative component of the research at the beginning of 2023 and the qualitative component in July 2023. The GDPR compliance approval was obtained on 25 May 2023 for the qualitative part and on 21 April 2023 for the quantitative part.

## III. The team

The research team was composed as follows, with the specific tasks detailed below:

- Prof. Martine EVANS, University of Reims (URCA): direction/supervision; research protocol; interviews; coding; comparative law and criminology; literature review; writing of the report and of the present summary;
- Shiraz DRIF, URCA, graduate of the Master's in Criminal Law and Criminology and of the University Diploma (DU) in Criminology and Probation, research coordinator and research support officer: administrative follow-up; collection of quantitative and qualitative data; co-supervision of students; coding, and statistical analyses;
- Edwige GAHUNDE, URCA, Master's in Criminal Law and Criminology, research support officer: collection of quantitative and qualitative data; co-supervision of students; coding; and statistical analyses;
- Dr Alice DEJEAN DE LA BATIE, Lecturer (URCA, then Tilburg): legal case studies (student supervision and drafting of the case study devoted to professional secrecy).

Students from the Master's in Criminal Law and Forensic Psycho-Criminology and the DU in Criminology and Probation at URCA: Julien AUTIER; Louis COURBON; Maelys DEFROCOURT; Chloé DENNER; Valentine JOUIN-LEGENTIL; Léa LEGER; Lise-Marie LOLLIA; Léana SANSE; Inès TRONCY-CAILLON — responsible for the collection of quantitative data; participation in

interviews; transcription work; drafting of some of the legal case studies; and exchanges with the research team.

To coordinate their work, the team held dozens of meetings (at least one to three times per week) and exchanged hundreds of emails and thousands of messages throughout the duration of the research.

#### IV. **Methodology**

##### **A) Qualitative and Quantitative aspects**

The stakeholders required of us to carry out, on the one hand, a quantitative study and, on the other, a qualitative study.

The quantitative component was to cover all the programmes, and our task first and foremost — and this, for an extended period — consisted in attempting to identify these programmes. From a temporal standpoint, we set 19 July 2024 as the deadline for the collection and transmission of information by the field sites. We also decided that only those programmes funded before or during the year 2023 and active for at least two months prior to the closing date would be included in the list of programmes studied.

The qualitative component of the study was to focus on three sites proposed by the *stakeholders: Béatrice, Corinne, and Aline.*

Regarding the quantitative part of the study, we had access to:

- the documents and agreements transmitted to the teams;
- the results of a self-reported LimeSurvey questionnaire covering all the theoretical models used for our coding and analysis. This questionnaire aimed to go beyond simple mapping and to approach the question of the potential effectiveness of PSCs.

Regarding the qualitative part of the study, we relied on:

- the documents and agreements transmitted to the teams, which also included assessment reports on the offenders, follow-up reports, and reports intended to inform judicial decision-making;
- interviews with offenders monitored across the three sites (3 at *Corinne*; 8 at *Aline*; 10 at *Béatrice*);
- interviews with practitioners working at the three sites and, where applicable, with practitioners from partner institutions (13 at *Corinne*; 17 at *Aline*; 6 at *Béatrice*);
- observations, in particular, of follow-up interviews with offenders, follow-up hearings, and, where they existed, staff meetings (i.e. morning meetings preceding the afternoon supervision hearings), as well as, where possible, observation of the offenders' on-site activities.

In accordance with GDPR rules, the data were securely stored on the Université de Reims secure data platform.

We encountered difficulties at the *Aline* site, which did not allow us to observe freely all types of situations and selected only those offenders with whom we were authorised to conduct interviews. Our results for this site should therefore be interpreted with great caution. Conversely, the *Béatrice* and *Corinne* sites were largely open to us, and *Corinne* granted us quasi-ethnographic access to the field over a six-month period. A limitation of this study is therefore the unequal volume and depth of data.

The collection of qualitative material ended in June 2024, while the quantitative data collection was completed in July 2024. The coding was carried out during the last six months of 2024.

## **B) A study grounded in theory**

No research should ever be atheoretical. Such an approach:

1. leads to a merely narrative restitution that proves very little;
2. does not explain why a given intervention works or fails to work;
3. does not contribute much to science.

Conversely, a grounded in theory approach allows for the structuring of methodology, coding, and analysis and, ultimately, of the presentation of findings in a manner consistent with scientific standards— in this case, social, addiction-related, psychological, and criminological. It is all the more necessary when it is not possible to answer the question of effectiveness, which underlay the three questions posed by the *stakeholders* (see above). However, given the methodology we were authorised to use, determining whether the programmes were effective was not possible. What we could do, on the other hand, was to verify carefully whether these programmes were consistent with the existing body of scientific knowledge.

For the present study, the theoretical models employed were:

1. The theory of legitimacy of justice–procedural justice–therapeutic jurisprudence (LJ–PJ–TJ) (Herzog-Evans, 2017, 2018), which supports the effectiveness of ‘good courts’ (Berman & Feinblatt, 2002) that are procedurally and humanely ethical (Tyler, 2006, 2012);
2. Theoretical models relating to integrated collaboration (Pycroft & Gough, 2010; Mattessich & Johnson, 2018);
3. Those relating to the Ten Key Principles underpinning the effectiveness of PSCs (National Association of Drug Court Professionals, 1997, 2018), whose theoretical and empirical foundations we examined;
4. Evidence-Based Practices (EBP) concerning social, criminological, psychological, and addiction treatment.

As the work progressed, other approaches, models, or micro-theories were also mobilised, such as, for instance, those relating to self-management and peer support.

### C) Coding

Coding is the stage that consists in reviewing all the data and classifying them thematically so that they acquire meaning. In our case, since the question of effectiveness was underlying and the study was *grounded in theory* for the reasons indicated above, the coding itself was based on the themes and subthemes related to the theoretical frameworks.

As the first question raised concerned the mapping of PSCs, it was necessary to determine how they should be defined. As no programme fully adhered to all the Ten Key Principles, we had to identify which among these principles were not only necessary for the effectiveness of PSCs but also definitional. An obvious cut-off criterion was the existence of a sufficient contribution by a judge to the follow-up of offenders. Indeed, only in such cases can the LJ–PJ–TJ principles be upheld (Herzog-Evans, 2019), as they represent major factors in the effectiveness of PSCs. Above all, in the absence of such judicial involvement, a programme would merely constitute a (para)probation scheme financed differently.

For the sake of flexibility, however, we included under the heading of PSCs those situations in which the judge's follow-up proved, upon analysis, to be anecdotal (occurring only once at entry and/or exit, or only once midway through the probation period...).

The coding process occupied us for six long months, from June to December 2024.

## V. Main study Findings

### A) Mapping French PSCs

Establishing the exact status of French programmes proved particularly complex. Some programmes that had been reported to us by various sources had ceased to operate or had not yet begun. Others claimed to be PSCs but were not; still others claimed not to be PSCs but in fact were. It took us more than a year (from April 2023 to July 2024) to finalise our lists. Part of the programmes had to be excluded because they failed to provide the necessary information, despite multiple reminders.

In total, twenty programmes were included as PSCs; eighteen were retained for our study but were not PSCs, as they did not involve judicial follow-up. We designated these as 'reinforced support' (*accompagnement renforcé* – AR) programmes.

An interesting trend was that most AR programmes were led by the prosecution service rather than by the bench (16 vs. 2), whereas there was a greater balance between prosecution and bench leadership (12 vs. 8) among the PSCs.

Overall, we found that AR programmes were far more minimalist than PSC programmes. They offered fewer interventions, involved far fewer partner institutions, lacked a single central location, and their partnerships were even more frequently of a referral-to-mainstream-services type. To put it plainly, these programmes added very little to what is internationally referred to as treatment as usual (TAU).

### B) Ten principles

The Ten Principles identified in the United States ([National Association of Drug Court Professionals, 1997, 2018](#)) as determinants of PSC effectiveness were revised by Evans ([Herzog-Evans, 2019](#)), as some were redundant, disorganised, or insufficient, while others lacked empirical validation. This revised list was used in the present report, and its variables were grouped—out of concern for scientific parsimony and theoretical structuring — into broader domains. In particular, the following integrations were made: within Principle 1 (judicial supervision), the components of legitimacy of justice—procedural justice (LJ–PJ) were incorporated; within ‘problem-solving’ (Principle 4), the criminological, psychological, health, and social EBP were integrated. These groupings were theoretically and empirically justified in our final report.

A first result of our study consisted in demonstrating that some principles enjoyed stronger empirical and theoretical support than others. We use the following colour code:

- strong validation: **dark green**;
- moderate validation: **light green**;
- uncertainty or debate regarding empirical support: **orange**.

#### List of the Integrated Ten Principles

1. **Judicial supervision and, consequently, fair and possibly public hearings**
2. **Specialisation and thus training in EBP**
3. **A boundary-spanning coordinator (responsible for coordination rather than merely treatment delivery)**
4. **‘Problem-solving’, and thus criminological, psychological, social, and health EBP**
5. **Intermediate and swift sanctions + rewards (accountability) and immediate management of lapses and relapses**
6. **Drug testing used solely as a *vital* health measure and for identifying lapses and relapses**
7. **Integrated inter-agency collaboration**
8. **Justice embedded within the local community**
9. **Single access point (*one-stop shop*)**
10. **Desistance ceremony**

Below, we provide a more detailed discussion of some of these principles.

#### C) Judicial supervision

Judicial supervision is not only one of the Ten Principles; it is also a definitional criterion. Without it, programmes amount merely to (para)probation schemes funded differently, rather than PSCs. The value of judicial follow-up does not lie in any magical effect or intrinsic superiority of these practitioners, but in the following factors:

- Procedural fairness: within the meaning of the LJ–PJ–TJ framework, procedural fairness is neither full nor complete without a process in which one of the actors is a judge;
- Consequently, the judge contributes to a much greater legitimacy of the penal process, which then extends (*spillover effect* – e.g. van Hall, Baker, Nieuwbeerta, & Dirkzwager, 2024) to other actors within the criminal justice chain;
- The judge’s authority, in the sense of *Core Correctional Practices* (Dowden & Andrews, 2004) — that is, as a dignified, respectful, attentive, yet firmly guiding role model — significantly enhances compliance and engagement among offenders, particularly when they are praised or constructively corrected;
- The magistrate can closely monitor the offenders’ progress and adjust the legal conditions of supervision accordingly.

As noted earlier, only twenty programmes included judicial supervision. However, such supervision was generally infrequent — at best, once a month or every two months — and even less frequent in prosecution-led programmes. Prosecutor led programme typically only held a meeting only at the beginning and/or end of the measure.

Most notably, the programmes had uniformly removed the essential component of judicial involvement that underpins its effectiveness — namely, procedural fairness. None of the programmes included the *adversarial principle (contradictoire)*. A technical argument presented to our team was that, since no decisions were made during follow-up hearings, adversarial proceedings were unnecessary. Yet effectiveness is not a matter of legal technicality, but of empirical evidence. Decades of research on LJ–PJ–TJ demonstrate that what matters is not only the optimal behaviour of the magistrate (and other actors), but equally the fairness of the procedure itself.

As for the behavioural aspect, our qualitative data revealed a wide range of judicial attitudes — from ‘educationally controlling’, particularly among prosecutors, to highly skilled motivational interviewing by one reentry and community supervision judge (*juge de l’application des peines*), to moderate and variable benevolence depending on interlocutors, and even, in a few cases, episodes of shockingly relational brutality (in which case, and without procedural fairness, it would be preferable to forgo the magistrate’s involvement altogether).

At the *Aline* site, magistrates were notably aware of trauma-related issues. It would indeed be relevant to develop trauma-informed approaches in France, as has been done elsewhere (McCartan, 2020; Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Probation, 2022).

Regarding programme coordinators, our qualitative study likewise revealed professional attitudes ranging from supportive and empathetic to toxic and inappropriate. As with magistrates, much therefore depends on the individual practitioner involved.

⇒ Procedural fairness is not a superfluous principle that can be dispensed with. Combined with appropriate professional conduct, fairness accounts for half of criminological effectiveness.



## D) Specialisation

The second of the Ten Principles is specialisation. This does not refer to the specialisation of the programme partners, as such expertise is assumed by nature — without it, the principle of *problem-solving* through EBP cannot be upheld. Rather, it concerns the specialisation of the magistrates responsible for supervision. Without specific expertise aligned with the thematic focus of PSCs — whether in mental health, addiction studies, and, of course, since they deal with offenders, in criminology — PSCs cannot be effective.

Our quantitative results indicate that, in most cases, the available training consists at best of introductory sessions on PSC principles or on motivational interviewing (MI), and at worst, of no training at all.

⇒ This raises the broader issue of the initial training of criminal justice practitioners, which, given that they deal with offenders, should not be limited to purely legal dimensions.

## E) Drug/alcohol tests

The literature relating to substance testing has proven particularly complex. In favour of such testing, the literature highlights that:

- It is routinely practised in international PSCs, with high frequency and always on a random basis (Marlowe & Meyer, 2017);
- Tests should be regarded as biological vitals — akin to taking blood pressure or pulse — without which it is impossible to determine an individual's baseline and track their real changes (both regressions and improvements);
- Honesty about one's substance use is a fundamental element of the CBT-based treatment of addiction (Beck, Wright, Newman, & Liese, 1993), without which the person can neither genuinely progress nor accurately gauge their own advances and setbacks.

However, testing is only useful when it is not applied through a 'treat, test, and revoke' approach (Piehowski & Phelps, 2022) — a purely mechanistic and superficial model — but rather, like medical monitoring, when it serves to trigger care and support interventions before a *lapse* (a minor relapse or regression) turns into a *relapse* (a major relapse or collapse, resulting in a sustained return to harmful behaviour; see Hendershot, Witkiewitz, George, & Marlatt, 2011).

In quantitative terms, 70% of PSC programmes and 61% of AR programmes implemented testing, representing a total of 66% across all programme types. It can therefore be concluded that a majority of sites have adopted substance testing.

From a qualitative standpoint, *Aline* and *Béatrice* (both prosecution-led programmes) included testing. At *Corinne*, however, there was an absolute refusal on the treatment side, based on the erroneous assumption — according to the offenders we interviewed — that the team could detect substance use without testing. It was also, more justly, emphasised that the working alliance should be founded on trust.

That said, given the current implementation of testing (infrequent and always predictable), its utility is nil. Worse still, the sites that use such tests mistakenly believe that they provide an accurate biological measure of users' consumption.

Interviews showed that most of the probationers whom we met strongly wished for testing, both to obtain legal proof of their progress and to receive praise from magistrates, which they found deeply moving.

⇒ Substance testing is not, in its current form, a priority. It would be more valuable to ensure that sites have crisis and lapse-management plans in place (to intervene before relapse occurs). With adequate funding and proper use, testing should form part of follow-up conditions in line with international PSC standards.

## **F) EBP social work**

Largely because schools of social work do not exist in France, the country has missed the EBP evolution of social work and, in particular, has not adopted task-centred or direct social work methods (Reid & Epstein, 1972; Hepworth et al., 2022), which are moreover included in modern criminology (Trotter, 2022). French social work is described as *socio-educational*, meaning not only non-EBP, but also not structured by any systematic method (De Robertis, 2018).

In practice, the *socio-educational* approach refers to two dimensions:

1. a social dimension, which in a highly bureaucratic country essentially involves access to welfare or other legal rights and administrative paperwork;
2. an 'educational' dimension, characterised by a stance that consists in 'telling users what to do.'

Yet it has long been known that such methods are ineffective and even harmful (Klein, 1971; Schur, 1973; Lipton, Martinson, & Wilks, 1975; McCord, 1978, 2003).

Unfortunately, this was the dominant posture observed in the field. It does, of course, succeed in re-establishing rights. In this respect, it is more effective than (social) treatment as usual (TAU). However, a fundamental error was observed in the three sites: the assumption that delinquency is caused by (1) social problems and (2) substance use problems, and that by resolving these two issues, delinquency would consequently be treated. In reality, criminological problems also and often mostly stem from other factors — developmental, attitudinal, and socio-environmental (Bonta & Andrews, 2023).

➤ It is time for France to anchor social work in EBP (for example, through the creation of university degrees-masters-doctorates in social work).

## **G) EBP substance abuse treatment**

The sites examined through both quantitative and qualitative methods served populations that markedly differed in the severity and nature of their substance-related problems.

From the perspective EBP, the findings are striking. As to assessment, 90% of PSC programmes and 94% of AR programmes do not assess the severity of substance misuse at all, even without using any formal tool.

Regarding EBP-based treatment, however, 70% of PSC programmes offer substitution treatments, 23% cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT), 6% Alcoholics Anonymous and/or Narcotics Anonymous, and 12% a therapeutic community.

The mere mention of CBT use does not necessarily mean that all of its dimensions are truly implemented. For example, at *Corinne*, one of the two psychologists made particularly interesting use of CBT; however, the structural dimension — essential to genuine offender progress (Beck, 2022) — was markedly lacking.

In prosecution-led programmes, we observed that, despite an awareness of the likelihood of relapse, offenders were often required to strive for abstinence. Conversely, in the more comprehensive programmes — generally those judge (not prosecutor)-led and involving health services — a similar rigidity existed in the opposite direction, as harm reduction was frequently the only real objective, even when participants wished to aim for abstinence. This situation is, of course, linked to the decline in public funding for sober living or therapeutic communities and the preference for cheaper, more industrial approaches.

- ⇒ Initial training in CBT must be expanded to cover all its dimensions, including its structural component.
- ⇒ The authentic and informed choice of offenders between abstinence and harm reduction must be encouraged.

## H) EBP criminological treatment

One of the main findings of our study is the existence of a criminological blind spot. Whenever the field sites interpret offending behaviour as being (almost) exclusively the result of substance misuse and/or social problems, it seems logical to them that addressing these issues alone will suffice to resolve the question of offending. Many practitioners are psychologists or social workers and do not have in-depth training in criminology. That said, even when probation services are involved, criminological treatment may still be absent or insufficient.

74% of PSC programmes use non-EBP criminological assessment tools. The situation is even worse in AR programmes, none of which mentioned the use of a validated structured tool. Our qualitative fieldwork further revealed that, even when a structured tool was used, it was often not scored according to professional standards and, above all, it did not inform either dosage or treatment targets.

Regarding dosage, it is clear that no programme adjusts its level of supervision to the individual's risk of recidivism. This raises questions about the timing of criminological assessment, which occurs far too late in the post-sentence phase when the person is already being supervised by the probation service. Whether programmes are prosecution-or judge-led, criminological assessment should take place at the point of judicial orientation and should guide that decision, since both the duration and the nature of the measures depend entirely on it. This applies not only to PSCs but to the entire criminal justice system.

In practice, programmes — particularly those led by the prosecution — may therefore include individuals at low, medium, and high risk, all receiving essentially the same treatment, sometimes influenced by other considerations (e.g. social work tasks to complete, personal sympathy, etc.).

The *Corinne* site, a semi-residential programme, appeared at first sight to have a dosage well suited to the very high-risk profile of its participants — individuals with dozens of convictions and highly disorganised lives. Yet in reality, treatment accounted for only 9% of their weekly schedule, far below what such users required, and it excluded any criminological component.

Too many sites required that offenders be ‘motivated’. The wish to work only with ‘good clients’ is, however, antithetical to the notion of intensive intervention (which PCSs generally represent) and leaves unresolved the question of who, then, manages the high-risk individuals, who by definition have multiple needs and, therefore, stand to benefit most from PSCs. It also renders any methodological attempt at outcome evaluation illusory.

As for the treatment of criminogenic needs, apart from work and substance use (within the limits already noted), no site engaged in psycho-criminological CBT addressing Cluster B personality traits/disorders, antisocial cognitions, attitudes, or lifestyles, antisocial peers, or systemic work on family structure and functioning. This was reflected in the LimeSurvey responses, in written materials (including professional reports), in the interviews conducted, and in the observed follow-up sessions.

The qualitative study also revealed that, conversely, clear signs of dangerousness often went unremarked, and antisocial reinforcement by practitioners was common — particularly at *Aline* and *Béatrice*, and, more seriously still, in cases involving domestic violence. To the point where, given that meta-analytic evidence already shows the ineffectiveness of even the most sophisticated DV treatment programmes (Smedslund, Dalsbø, Steiro, Winsvold, & Clench-Aas, 2011; Akoensi, Koehler, Lösel, & Humphreys, 2013; Wilson, Feder, & Olaghere, 2021; Arce, Arias, Novo, & Fariña, 2020), we consider that the interventions observed were counterproductive.

Finally, it should be noted that none of the ‘programmes’ had a truly programmatic structure (no clinical manual, theoretical manual, structured framework, or modules).

- ⇒ It is necessary to establish degree-master-doctorate pathways in forensic criminology (covering assessment and treatment) to enable genuine development of EBP throughout the criminal justice chain.
- ⇒ A general EBP principle for penal policies should be proclaimed.
- ⇒ Given the current state of knowledge and practice, it is preferable to prioritise the safety of victims rather than the treatment of domestic violence perpetrators.

## **I) Programme Coordinator**

Internationally, coordinators have a role of... coordination. They act as boundary spanners, that is, as liaison agents between institutions. They ensure the visibility of the programme within the local environment in order to maintain public and political support and, often as a result, continued programme funding.

In France, however, a degree of confusion appears to have arisen. Coordinators sometimes perform such a role, but most often they also act as para-probation officers, in the sense that they are responsible for the supervision of offenders.

This is neither inherently positive nor negative. It is clear that someone must, in fact, supervise offenders. The difficulty lies rather in the background of the coordinators, who are generally social workers, educators, or occasionally legal professionals or project coordinators. Consequently, their expertise does not extend to criminological treatment.

## **J) Integrated interagency collaboration**

Inter-agency collaboration refers to the process whereby institutions and their staff work together on a shared project or programme, exchange all relevant information, and jointly make decisions concerning service users. Such collaboration prevents both blind spots—which can be responsible for serious cases of reoffending (Pearson & Carey, 2025)—and the duplication or triplication of funded interventions.

To assess the quality of partnership relations, we relied on the existing literature on optimal forms of collaboration. In particular, we drew on the classification by Pycroft and Gough (2010). We distinguished between:

- Integrated partnership (the members of which we nicknamed ‘the knights of the round table’), which alone truly embodies the PSC model and contributes to its positive meta-analytic outcomes. This form of collaboration involves partners working together regularly on offenders’ cases and situations. These partners meet frequently and, preferably, work on the same site. They have also co-designed the programme. Integrated partnership is characterised by the absence of vertical hierarchy between institutions and their staff, and by the absence of controlling or territorial postures.
- What we called ‘Salami slicing’, i.e. mere referral-based partnership in which one institution contracts with one or several third sector agency and/or partners, but where few or no meetings take place between the commissioning body and the subcontractor(s). The commissioning body does not consult other institutions, and decisions are not made collectively.

Although some of the sites studied quantitatively reported practising integrated partnership, it was only possible to document it authoritatively within the qualitative component of the research. From this perspective, *Aline* and *Béatrice* were purely referral-based programmes. *Béatrice*, moreover, had very few partners, and the exchange of information among these ‘partners’ was minimal. Conversely, *Corinne* was the only site practising genuine integrated collaboration, with consistent information-sharing essential to the management of offenders, perfect inter-institutional maturity, the absence of counterproductive professional turf wars, and a genuinely collaborative problem-solving dynamic.

⇒ In terms of collaboration, *Corinne* could serve as a model, not only for all PSCs but more broadly for the entire criminal justice chain.

## K) One stop shop

The one-stop shop principle is one of the essential components of PSCs. It is associated with significantly lower attrition rates — attrition itself being linked to recidivism — and, moreover, it contributes substantially to the integrated nature of collaborative work.

Regarding the quantitative data, 75% of PSC programmes and 60% of AR programmes reported not having a single-site location. The apparent difference between the two is not statistically significant, as only ten AR programmes responded to this question.

Of the three sites studied qualitatively, only *Corinne* had a single location, as the others operated on the basis of referral systems. In practice, the single-site structure at *Corinne* contributed greatly to institutional symbiosis, information sharing, and the elimination of duplicate interventions. Furthermore, its impact on reducing attrition was remarkable: offenders — although presenting very high risks of recidivism, poly-substance use, and chaotic lifestyles (i.e., the population most at risk of attrition) — attended the site daily, even when they had to travel considerable distances to do so.

## VI. Other relevant findings

Other useful dimensions were identified in our study, *inter alia* the following.

The programmes were highly unstable, owing to the combined effect of the annual duration of MILDECA funding and the considerable turnover of practitioners.

Most programmes had no plans to ensure an active handover to other institutions when, at the end of the programme, offenders' criminogenic, health-related, psychological and/or social needs had not been fully addressed — and this not merely through the transmission of a file, but through a prepared and supported transition process.

On a positive note, a particularly valuable finding was that reentry and community supervision judge were able to creatively and flexibly use the considerable legal complexity of sentence implementation, allowing them to adjust to offenders' progress or lapse.

Also positive was the observation that practitioners at the site most closely aligned with the PSC model (*Corinne*) tended to have hybrid or atypical professional profiles, which contributed greatly to their flexibility and adaptability, both in inter-agency collaboration and in their work with offenders.

- ⇒ Funding should be sufficiently long (for example, three years), and at least within public services, forms of secondment to programmes should be established to stabilise teams, at least temporarily.
- ⇒ Every programme—whether PSC, AR, or otherwise — should include a transition phase and actions towards mainstream institutions when criminogenic and other needs (social, etc.) have not been fully addressed.

## VII. Bonus : PSC & RA-scores

We created a scoring system for each of the two main categories of programmes (PSCs and ARs), grouping together the items/variables associated with PSC effectiveness. This scoring system makes it possible to situate French programmes in relation to the factors that could enhance their effectiveness. Below we present the overall results for the PSCs and ARs, while the site-specific scores can be obtained upon request from the first author.

It is important to note that, since these data are based mainly on sites studied quantitatively through the documents provided and the LimeSurvey questionnaire, they are partially affected by social desirability bias, even though, whenever possible, we cross-checked and verified the information in the materials supplied.

The PSC-Score yielded an overall mean of 11.9 out of a maximum of 36 points. This is consistent with what we observed in the three sites studied qualitatively.

The AR-Score was formulated identically to the PSC-Score. The highest AR programme score was 9.5/36, the lowest 1.5/36, and the overall mean 6.7/36. This is a very low score, which can be explained, on the one hand, by the absence of judicial involvement — and thus of many of the key elements underpinning PSC effectiveness — and, on the other hand, by the even more minimalist nature of most of these programmes, the vast majority of which (16 out of 18) were prosecution-led, as compared with PSC programmes.

## VIII. General conclusion

The most salient finding of our study is that magistrates, whether from the prosecution (*parquet*) or the bench (*siège*), have developed programmes resembling PSCs with the primary aim of providing a more effective penal response than usual. For prosecutors, this mainly means obtaining more precise information about offenders' trajectories and being able to monitor them more closely. For all magistrates, both prosecution and bench, the goal is to address more authentically the causes of offending and reoffending.

Overall, the PSC sites, and to a lesser extent the AR sites, do indeed provide social support — in terms of access to rights, housing, and employment — that is superior, and often far superior, to treatment as usual (TAU). They also ensure that offenders receive addiction treatment rather than 'McDonaldised' approaches.

However, the sites are generally unable to provide sufficient psychological support, owing to the overall shortage of human and financial resources in this field in France. They also do not provide criminological EBP-based treatment, due to the absence of in-depth initial training programmes such as university degree-master-doctorate pathways in criminology. This results in generally inadequate treatment dosage (risk principle – Bonta & Andrews, 2023), failure to target many criminogenic needs, and sometimes even counterproductive attitudes and responses. Nonetheless, it would be unfair to hold the PSCs or ARs themselves responsible, since the underlying causes are systemic.

Equally systemic is the tendency to favour referral systems over integrated partnership. Here again, PSCs cannot be blamed for what constitutes a national structural flaw extending far beyond the criminal justice system. Hierarchical structures, centralism, and professional turf



issues all contribute to ‘salami slicing.’ At the very least, PSCs and ARs attempt — albeit imperfectly — to overcome this French difficulty in genuine inter-agency collaboration.

In conclusion, France has indeed removed some of the main pillars of PSC effectiveness, but it has retained others. PSCs should therefore be disseminated, but in forms that adhere more closely to the fundamental components identified above.

Since these principles are essential for the effective management of offending behaviour, they should not be confined to PSCs or ARs, but rather disseminated throughout the entire criminal justice system. Beyond this, further reforms are needed, notably:

- ⇒ Reform of professional secrecy, allowing its lifting — with the offender’s *fully informed consent*—solely among PSC partners;
- ⇒ Create an independent accreditation panel, independent from existing institutions, in order to ensure compliance with EBP in all criminological interventions in the criminal justice system, including in state probation services;
- ⇒ Develop EBP-based criminological assessment at the stage of prosecutor penal allocation, to ensure that penal dosage does not contradict criminological dosage.

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