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INTRODUCTION

Sexual crime generates great concern and social alarm due to the significant impact it has on both victims and society. Despite their media relevance, offenders convicted of crimes against sexual freedom and indemnity constitute a relatively low percentage of the total prison population. According to data from the Ministry of the Interior (2020), they represent less than 7% of people sentenced to prison in Spain. This figure is greater in other countries, such as the United States or the United Kingdom, where the population sentenced for sexual crimes represent 9%-15% of the total number of people in prison, respectively (Allen & Watson, 2017; Bronson & Carson, 2017). In addition, it is estimated, according to international research data, that only one in four sexual crimes that are committed are reported, that is, between 20% and 25% of the sexual crimes committed, which indicates a high black figure.

Given the complexity of this problem, it is necessary to address it from multiple areas, including police, legal, and social lenses. This severity has prompted various Public Administrations to get involved in its prevention and treatment at different levels. In the prison context, the Sexual Behavior Control Treatment (PCAS) program has been developing for some time both in closed and open settings. The ultimate objective of this intervention is to prevent people convicted of sexual crimes from reoffending and assaulting a new victim. Although the various international meta-analyses carried out to date confirm that recidivism by sexual offenders is usually not high (around 20% will reoffend with a new sexual offense) and that specific programs, based on empirical evidence, manage to further reduce such sexual recidivism, there is a small percentage of sex offenders who are at high risk of recidivism, even after having participated in treatment in a penitentiary.

For these high-risk cases, it is essential to offer interventions that address their needs from a comprehensive and community perspective, aimed at reducing the probability of recidivism and accompanying the person upon their return to the community in a supervised

manner. This type of program should encompass all of the areas in which the person interacts, at an interpersonal, social, and community level. It is not enough to work only on some of these aspects, but it is necessary to have a coordinated intervention that is carried out in the social context of the offender, beginning when his release date is approaching, with the aim of expanding the learning acquired in treatment and improving his social capital with a view to his community reintegration. It is at this point that the Circles project begins to be an active part of the process.

Origins of the Circles of Support and Accountability Program (CoSA)

The Circles of Support and Accountability (CoSA) program arose as a response to the need to manage the return to the community and the subsequent risk of recidivism in sexual offenders. It is aimed at sex offenders who have completed a prison treatment program (PCAS) or alternative penal measures but still present a moderate to high risk of recidivism. This innovative model, based on the principles of restorative justice, has fundamental pillars of "no more victims" and "there are no secrets". It is a community intervention based on restorative justice that, through social support, prioritizes and facilitates the reintegration into society of these aggressors at higher risk.

The CoSA model originated in Canada when, in 1994, a group of volunteers, through a religious congregation accompanied a sexual offender with a high risk of recidivism who had not undergone measures and/or treatment during his time in prison, and lacked social support (Wilson et al., 2008). This group of volunteers provided him with support and helped him in his post-prison reintegration. The success of this initiative prompted the creation of new groups of volunteers for similar cases, accompanying other released prisoners upon their release from prison. Subsequently, it allowed the dissemination of the Circles model in other parts of the world, progressively expanding to the United States and Europe.

In 2002, the UK implemented the first Pilot Circles, becoming the first European country to implement the CoSA program. Currently, their system has around 120 active Circles under the supervision of Circles UK, an organization partially funded by the British Ministry of Justice.

Based on international evidence regarding the effectiveness and efficiency of the CoSA model in promoting reintegration and reducing recidivism (Hanvey & Höing, 2012; McCartan et al., 2014), a European network whose objective is to coordinate the development of the model, its application standards, as well as the research and dissemination of its results was constructed. Other countries then began to implement Circles thanks to funding from the European Daphne IIY program. Countries such as Bulgaria, Latvia, Ireland, France and Hungary and, in Spain, the Autonomous Community of Catalonia, joined this project, known as Circle4EU.

CoSA model implementation in Spain

After the success of the CoSA model in other countries, there was an adaptation of the European project to the Spanish context. The Department of Justice of the Generalitat of Catalonia was the organization initially interested in the implementation of this model in its prison system. Thus, García and Soler (2013) carried out a preliminary study in 2012 with the aim of evaluating the viability of the proposed program and adapting the CoSA model to the Catalan context, ensuring the implementation of the quality standards previously established by Circles4EU (Ho`ing , 2011; Ho`ing et al., 2015). As a result of this research and pertinent adaptations, three pilot Circles were launched in the province of Barcelona, under the name of CerclesCat.

Subsequently, in 2021, the Spanish government adapted the Circles of Support and Accountability model to the rest of the Spanish territory. The General Secretariat of Penitentiary Institutions launched the adaptation of the CoSA program with the development of Support and Accountability Circles, based on the initiatives and previous experience of Catalonia and the Circles4EU standards. This adaptation included the preparation of the Circles Spain Manual, which establishes all the necessary processes for the implementation of the program.

EVALUATION OF THE CIRCLES PROJECT

To meet the quality standards stipulated by the European Circles4EU network, the implementation of any Circles project in a region or country must be accompanied by the continuous evaluation of that process. This evaluation consists of different phases, depending on the current stage of the project: 1) implementation of the project; 2) evaluation of results; 3) effectiveness analysis; and 4) efficiency estimation.

Since its construction, the Circles program has incorporated an external evaluation of its implementation and continuous progress, in collaboration with the FIADYS Foundation, to analyze its effectiveness and efficiency. This report brings together documents related to the first phase: the implementation of the program. One of the key aspects of this evaluation is the selection of Core Members (CMs), who participate voluntarily in the Circles. In addition, the process of profile identification as well as selection and training of volunteers and first coordinators in terms of their interest and commitment to participate in a circle will be evaluated.

Implementation Study

As mentioned previously, the first study to be carried out is the implementation of the Circles project in a new territory. In this phase, all the processes associated with the configuration of the first circles are analyzed, considering the people who make up the Circle: core members, volunteers, and professionals (coordinators). Every Circle begins with the selection and training of volunteers, as well as with the identification and assignment of the core members. At the same time, professionals who will support and supervise the Inner and Outer Circles as well as coordinators are appointed and configured.

The main objective of this report is to analyze the implementation of the Circles program in Spain, assessing whether its development and execution are adequately in line with the provisions of the corresponding manual (Manual de Circles Spain). To this end, an exhaustive analysis of the selection processes of the different actors

involved in the program will be carried out, ensuring that both the profiles of the participants and the associated procedures are aligned with the planned guidelines. This analysis is structured in three main parts:

Part One. Selection process and profile of volunteers: This section will evaluate the process of identification, selection and training of volunteers who participate in the Circles. Special attention will be paid to their motivation, interest, and commitment to be part of this project. Additionally, their sociodemographic characteristics will be analyzed to verify whether they meet the requirements established in the manual.

Part Two. Selection Process and Profile of Core Members (CMs): The analysis of the profile of the CMs will focus on their sociodemographic characteristics, their personal background before entering prison, their criminal history, and the nature of the sexual offense committed. In addition, the selection process of the CMs will be evaluated, verifying whether the criteria used comply with the guidelines of the Circles Manual, with special attention to the level of risk, social support and other individual characteristics required for their integration into the program.

Third part. Selection process and profile of the coordinators: In this part, the characteristics of the profile of the first coordinators of the program will be analyzed, evaluating their selection, motivation, and training process to determine if they meet the requirements established in the manual and if their profile is adequate to carry out the implementation of the project effectively.

As mentioned above, this report collects all the information related to the first phase of the implementation of the program, focusing on evaluating whether the selection process of the different actors of the program (volunteers, CM, and coordinators) has been carried out according to the criteria and guidelines described in the manual, and if the objectives of the intervention are being met.

1. FIRST PART:

VOLUNTEER SELECTION AND TRAINING PROCESS

The processes analyzed in this part of the study refer to all steps taken to contact, train, and assign volunteers to the first circles launched in Circles Spain between 2021 and 2022.

First, it is necessary to mention that the process of attracting and selecting volunteers to set up circles is carried out through a dissemination campaign across different institutions and volunteer entities. Once the volunteers have been selected for the first circles, contact is maintained with associations that have a base of volunteer profiles like that necessary for this project to start new circles in the future.

The volunteering carried out in the field of penal enforcement is aimed at supporting and accompanying people or groups with significant needs for social integration. For this reason, volunteers are required to have a series of specific skills (active listening, empathy, commitment, tolerance to frustration, etc.) and to be institutionally linked to a public/private volunteering entity or association, in addition to adapting to the rules of the Penitentiary Institution where the project is developed. Both the organization's volunteer coordinator and the prison volunteer referent are the professionals responsible for accompanying and supporting the volunteers.

The profile sought responds to the following characteristics that are described in the Manual of Circles Spain on the process of selection and training of volunteers:

- Motivated to participate in the project as a volunteer;
- Participate with the main objective of preventing new crimes;
- Share the principle of "No more victims";
- Willing to work in a team under professional supervision;
- Able to convey acceptance to the CM, as well as remain critical or disagree with their behavior;
- Lead a balanced lifestyle;
- Have adequate communication, problem-solving and emotional management skills.

1.1. OBJECTIVES

In this first part of the report, the main objective is to analyze the implementation of Circles Spain in the processes of identification, selection and training of volunteers in terms of their interest and commitment to participate in a circle.

To analyze whether European standards are met and the characteristics of volunteers, this report assesses the information relating to the first two years of implementation (2021-22) of the Circles Spain project in relation to the volunteer selection and training process.

1.2. RESULTS

The steps followed from the recruitment and selection of people interested in volunteering to the final assignment of volunteering to a specific circle are detailed below. The characteristics of the trained volunteers and their satisfaction with the training are analyzed.

1.2.1. Information session and application form

The selection process began with the organization of an information session to recruit potential volunteers. Through the dissemination of an information brochure by email, those interested were informed of the information session to disseminate the project and promote participation in Circles Spain. Specifically, two information sessions were held in 2021 and two more sessions in 2022 (see table 1). With respect to 2021, the first session took place telematically on June 9, and was attended by 13 interested people; the second was held telematically on October 7 and 12 people attended. As for 2022, the first session took place on May 25, in person, and was attended by 3 interested people. The second was held online June 29 of the same year and was attended by 16 people.

In addition to these information sessions, people interested in the Circles project can access as volunteers through the general volunteer pool of the Community of Madrid. When someone contacts them showing their interest in the project, they are sent an informative email, as well as the application form (P01-D04) to be completed in order to start the selection process.

Table 1. Number of interested and interviewed individuals

		Attendance	Application forms	Initial interviews
Year 2021	Briefing 09/06/2021	13	4	2
	Briefing 07/10/2021	12	6	4
	Other avenues of information [1]	--	14	22
	Total	25	24 [2]	28
Year 2022	Briefing 25/05/2022	3	3	3
	Briefing 29/06/2022	16	12	12
	Other avenues of information [3]	--	13	14
	Total	19	28 [4]	29 [5]

During the information sessions, or through other initiatives such as the general volunteering of the Community of Madrid, people interested in being part of the project fill out the volunteer application form that also includes a document authorizing the processing of the personal data provided. Table 1 shows the total number of application forms completed (24 in 2021 and 28 in 2022). Of these, 28 people were referred for initial interviews in 2021 and 29 in 2022.

The discrepancy in 2021 between the lower number of forms received and the interviews carried out is because of the pressure of time and the initial difficulty of finding interested people. Therefore, a new search was carried out directly through volunteer organizations. The contact with the people interested in this case was more direct, done without them sending the registration form. These contacts began on or about November 7, 2021. There are people who went directly to the interview, without previously sending the application form. These people carried out the information session and training online or on a deferred basis.

1.This information is not aviable.
2. We have their respective registration forms for all of them, except for four that have not been sent.
3.This information is not aviable.
4.There are application forms that were sent in 2021 and the initial interview was conducted in 2022, so the number of these is lower than the number of interviews.
5.Some interested people have already sent the registration form in 2021, others already have a previous interview in 2021 and others do the whole process in 2022. The table only counts those forms and interviews carried out in the period of 2022.

1.2.2. Personal interview

After completing the application form or initial contact, a personal interview was conducted with the interested people. A summary of the information collected in these interviews is presented below (see Table 2). As can be seen in table 2, with respect to the sociodemographic data, there is a higher percentage of women interviewed (74.1 % - 77.3%) than men (25.9 % - 18.2%) in both years. Likewise, the average age is around 40 years, being higher in men (41.2 - 52) than in women (34.2 - 36). In relation to educational level, some differences are found with respect to both years, since in 2021 100% of the men and 95% of the women interviewed have university studies. Only one person had a basic education. However, in 2022, 66.7% of men and 55% of women have university studies, with another 20% of women even having master's or doctoral studies. However, 33.3 % of the men and 25 % of the women interviewed had basic education. Despite this, considering both years, more than 85% of volunteers have university or postgraduate studies.

Table 2. Sociodemographic data from the 2021-2022 interviewa

	2021		2022		
Variables	Men (25,9%)	Women (74,1%)	Men (18,2%)	Women (77,3%)	Total (100%)
Age (years)	41,2	34,2	52	36	
Education level (%)					
Master's and PhD	--	--	--	20%	10,2%
University studies	100%	95%	66,7%	55%	75,5%
Basic studies	--	5%	33,3%	25%	14,3%

Regarding the motivation to participate in Circles, table 3 presents the main motivations mentioned in the interviews by the people interested. These motivations can be grouped into four main blocks (see table 3), with belief in second chances being the main motivation for both men and women in 2021 and 2022. However, the second most mentioned motivation, providing support to reduce recidivism, is equally prevalent in men and women in 2021, but only holds true for women in 2022. For men, in 2022, both the personal challenge and the opportunity to contact the prison environment appears as the main motivations.

Table 3. Principales motivaciones en los años 2021-22

Main motivations	2021		2022	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Beliefs in second chances	66,7%	50,0%	40,0%	60,0%
Providing support to reduce recidivism	50,0%	45,0%	3,3%	66,6%
Opportunity to make contact with the prison environment	16,7%	25,0%	62,5%	37,5%
Personal challenge	--	--	75,0%	25,0%

Note: Column totals do not add up 100% because more than one motivation can be mentioned in the interview

Likewise, within the personal interviews, a series of criteria are established to assess the profile of the volunteers (Table 4) with a view to their selection to or not to participate in Circles Spain. These criteria are divided into five blocks:

1. The expectations that the person has, measuring whether these are in line with the reality of what participation as a volunteer in a Circle will be.
- 2.The discourse, assessing whether it is artificial or genuine.
- 3.Communication, analyzing how it is in each of the interviewees, paying special attention to the ability to communicate their needs and limits, and to raise and deal with confrontations.
- 4.The motivation to participate in this volunteer experience.
- 5.The lifestyle of the person concerned, establishing whether or not it is balanced, considering the capacity to serve as a role as a model for the core member, valuing balance/stability and healthy habits in the different areas of life (social relationships, family, lifestyle and self-care habits, leisure and free time, interest, etc.).

All these criteria are assessed by the interviewer on a scale from 0 (minimum score) to 3 (maximum score). Following the above criteria, Table 4 presents the average scores of the people who were officially selected to volunteer in 2021 and 2022. As seen, there are no differences in the means of the selected people, with the scores being practically identical in both years and the averages being very close to the maximum score (3).

Table 4. Average scores in the evaluation criteria of the selected people

Criteria	Selected people 2021	Selected people 2022
Expectations	2,7	2,7
Discourse	2,9	2,8
Communication	3,0	3,0
Motivation	3,0	2,7
Lifestyle	2,9	3,0

1.2.3. Training and Assignment Process

As a result of the previous process, a total of 19 people were selected and began training in 2021, of which 3 people were selected from the first information session, 8 from the second and another 8 people contacted the association through other channels. Of the 19 selected people who started the training, only 9 finished it.

Likewise, a total of 28 selected people carried out the training in 2022, of which 2 were selected from the first information session and 9 from the second, and, finally, 4 people had sent both their form and carried out their interview the previous year, but completed the training in 2022. table 5 presents a summary of the evolution of the number of people, both in 2021 and 2022, from when they contacted and received information about Circles, to those who were finally interviewed to be assigned to the initial circles.

Table 5. Summary of the selection and training process for volunteers in 2021 and 2022

	Year 2021	Year 2022
Number of people contacting	45	54
Number of people registered	24	29
Number of initial interviews	28	30
Number of volunteers selected	19	28
Number of volunteers trained	9	26
Number of final interviews	9	23
Number of volunteers on the waiting list	2	2

When the training ended, the volunteers were invited to a final interview to confirm their interest in the project. In this phase, their motivation and compliance with the requirements (especially time availability) are assessed once more. The final interview has the potential to produce the following results: 1) eligible volunteers who will start a circle or 2) eligible volunteers who will be put on the waiting list (because they have to postpone their start for some reason,) and 3) volunteers who are not suitable after the training.

Thus, after the selection and training process, in 2021, of the 45 who initially contacted, 28 initial interviews were carried out and 6 people were officially selected to participate as volunteers in Pilot Circle 1, covering the period of 2021-22 (see Table 6). However, one person was unfit after receiving the training and the rest of the eligible candidates are on the waiting list (2) for future circles.

Regarding 2022, of the 54 who initially contacted, 30 initial interviews were conducted and 6 people were finally selected to participate as volunteers in Pilot Circle 2 (see Table 6). On the other hand, two people were not suitable after receiving the training and the rest of the eligible candidates are on the waiting list (2) for the next circles.

Table 6. Volunteers assigned to each Circle

Number of volunteers assigned to Pilot Circle 1	6
Number of volunteers assigned to Pilot Circle 2	6

1.2.4. Characteristics of trained volunteering

Before starting the training, volunteers are given a survey to discover their previous experiences, attitudes towards sexual violence, and general level of knowledge. In addition, the survey includes sociodemographic information and motivations to participate in the Circles Spain Project. To analyze the potential for change this training can produce in such knowledge and attitudes, the survey is given at the beginning and at the end of the training. In addition, at the end of the training, a questionnaire is administered to find out the satisfaction of the volunteers with the training received.

In 2021, a total of 12 people responded before starting the training, while only 9 responses were obtained after the training. In 2022, a total of 25 people responded before starting the training, and 19 responses were obtained after the training. The results of these surveys obtained from the trained volunteers are presented below.

Sociodemographic data

As for the sociodemographic data of the volunteers trained, the average age is 47 years, with the minimum being 20 and the maximum being 74 years. With regard to gender, 67.6% of volunteers are women, compared to 27.0% who are men. Likewise, 2.7% of volunteers are non-binary and the other 2.7% prefer not to say. If we consider the average age according to gender, the age of women is 45 years, with the highest age of men (52 years).

Both the average age and the distribution by sex of the people trained is like that included in the recruitment phase on the registration forms. In this sense, it is of interest to note that there is a slight difference with respect to the percentage between men (35.7%) and women (64.3%) who applied to be part of the project (by filling out the application form) compared to those who received the training in the end, with men accounting for 27% and women for 67.6%, thus slightly decreasing the final percentage of men.

In addition, in relation to the number of children, the average number of children of trained volunteers is 0.9 in total, and taking into account that for women it is 0.8 and men, the average is slightly higher (1.0). Regarding the level of education achieved (Table 7), the highest percentage of trained volunteers is those who have a university degree (50% in 2021 and 41.7% in 2022) or higher master's or doctoral studies (16.7% in 2021 and 29.2% in 2022). The rest have completed baccalaureate/BUP or vocational training (33.3% in 2021 and 29.2% in 2022).

Table 7. Level of education achieved

Level of education	Year 2021 (%)	Year 2022 (%)
Baccalaureate/BUP or vocational training	33,3	29,2
University studies	50,0	41,7
Postgraduate or doctoral studies	16,7	29,2

Another aspect that stands out is the percentage of trained volunteers who know someone who has been a victim of a sexual crime. In 2021, a higher percentage is found among those who know a victim of sexual assault (50.0%) than people who do not know a victim (41.7%). 8.3% of the respondents preferred not to answer that year. In 2022, the data is similar with a slightly higher percentage of people who know someone who has been a victim of a sexual crime (52.2%), compared to trained volunteers who do not know a victim (47.8%).

On the other hand, regarding whether they know someone who has committed a crime of this nature, only 16.7% of the trained volunteers knew someone with a criminal record in 2021. However, in 2022, 50% of the people who completed the training for Circles Spain had an acquaintance who had committed a crime. The reason for this increase in the percentage lies in the previous link of these people with the prison environment, since some of them had previously volunteered in prison and could have met sex offenders in that context.

Knowledge of Circles and previous experiences

Next, the results are presented about the knowledge of the volunteers trained about the Circles Spain project, their motivation to participate in it and previous experience in the field (at a professional level, in general, and in the treatment of offenders and sexual aggressors).

As can be seen in Table 8, in reference to motivation and previous experience, most volunteers consider the Circles program very interesting and a great opportunity to put their prior skills into practice. In addition, they place great importance on having the opportunity to help Core Members get a second chance at life, and for some volunteers, this project is a personal challenge in their lives. On the other hand, many volunteers have done some type of previous volunteering, many related to people with disabilities or Penitentiary Centers through various foundations and NGOs.

Table 8. Motivation and previous experience of volunteers

Motivation to participate	Previous experience
Good oportunity for help	Volunteering
Second chances	NGO
Personal challenge	

Previous Attitudes Toward Sex Offenders

Prior attitudes toward sex offenders were measured using the Community Attitudes Toward Sex Offenders (CATSO) scale. This instrument assesses beliefs and attitudes about sexual crime with respect to stereotypes and prejudices about sex offenders. The ultimate objective of administering this questionnaire was to know the prejudices and attitudes of the volunteers with respect to sex offenders and whether these remained even after the course was completed. To obtain this information, the questionnaire was administered both before and after receiving the training.

The CATSO scale was included in a larger survey completed by volunteers, divided into three sections, in which their knowledge of sexual crime, prejudices and previous knowledge about sexual offenders and, finally, their attitudes were specifically assessed (see Tables 9, 10 and 11).

Table 9 shows the variables of the first section on general knowledge of sexual crime. As seen, after the training ends, there is a decrease in erroneous knowledge on the percentage of sex offenders who reoffend after their time in prison (with or without treatment). In both 2021 and 2022, volunteers before the training believed that more than 60% of sex offenders committed a crime again (when it is estimated, by multiple international studies, that sexual recidivism is 20% without intervention). The percentage, however, decreased after the training, a perception more in line with reality, although still higher than the reality of figures of criminal recidivism. The same happens with the percentage of recidivist sexual offenders that have received treatment, with volunteers estimating that it was more than 20% before training when scientific data point to a 5-10% recidivism rate after treatment).

After training, volunteers expressed more informed knowledge.

In contrast, the perception on the number of crimes reported for sexual assault and the percentage of people convicted of sexual crimes do not improve after training. Volunteers do not have a realistic knowledge of these data before training, placing more than 20% of complaints of sexual assaults (when, in reality, they do not reach 1%) and over 15% of those sentenced to prison for these acts (when, in reality, they do not reach 7% of the prison population), but their knowledge does not improve after training either. They even increase the percentages given, contrary to what should be expected.

Table 9. Variables Sctrion I on general knowledge of sexual crime

	Year 2021		Year 2022	
	PRE M (%)	POST M (%)	PRE M (%)	POST M (%)
Out of every 100 crimes reported, how many are sexual crimes?	28,6	21,9	23,8	25,6
Out of every 100 people incarcerated, how many are sex offenders?	19,5	20,7	18,3	16,9
Out of every 100 sex offenders who are in prison who do NOT receive treatment, how many reoffend?	66,1	33,4	63,2	32,2
Out of every 100 sex offenders who are in prison who DO receive treatment, how many reoffend?	26,1	14,0	23,1	10,6

With respect to the second section on misconceptions and stereotypes regarding sexual offenders (Table 10), differences are observed in some responses after receiving the training. Firstly, the belief that the psychological treatment they receive does not work has been totally rejected (100%) once the training has ended, both in 2021 and 2022. Secondly, in 2021, the belief that drugs and alcohol are the main cause of the commission of sexual crimes, which was previously quite accepted (40.0%), at the end of the training greatly diminished (11.1%), a pattern that is repeated in 2022. The same is observed, although to a lesser extent, with the belief that most people who sexually abuse children find their victims in schools and parks, being mostly accepted at the beginning (30.0% - 36.1) in relation to the end of the training (22.2% - 22.7%). taking into account both years, respectively.

However, it should be noted that the belief that repeat offenders normally commit a new crime of a sexual nature has increased at the end of training (88.9% - 81.8%) compared to the beginning (70%-69.4%), in 2021-22, though this perspective is not supported by scientific evidence.

Table 10. Variables Section II on myths and prejudices related to sexual offenders

	Year 2021				Year 2022			
	FALE		TRUE		FALSE		TRUE	
	PRE	POST	PRE	POST	PRE	POST	PRE	POST
Most sexual assaults are committed by strangers	85%	100%	15%	0%	86,1%	90,9%	13,9%	9,1%
Sexual gratification is not the sexual motivation for a rapist	10%	11,1%	90%	88,9%	11,1%	18,2%	88,9%	81,8%
Drugs and alcohol are the leading cause of sexual offenses	60%	88,9%	40%	11,1%	69,4%	90,9%	30,6%	9,1%
Psychological treatment with sexual aggressors does not work	95%	100%	5%	0%	97,2%	100%	2,8%	0%
Most people who sexually abuse children find their Victims in schools and parks	70%	77,8%	30%	22,2%	63,9%	77,3%	36,1%	22,7%
In respect to sex offenders who reoffend, usually the new crime is another sex crime	30%	11,1%	70%	88,9%	30,6%	18,2%	69,4%	81,8%

Finally, Table 11 presents the pre- and post-mean in the different items of the CATSO attitude instrument (ranging from 1, strongly disagree, to 6, strongly agree), as well as the total score on the scale, for both 2021 and 2022. In general, there is little pre-post change in different items of the scale, perhaps because they are people generally aware of the prison population and sex offenders. For example, before the training, volunteers already disagreed that "sex offenders who are in prison should never be released", with an average of 1.8 in 2021 and 1.7 in 2022 (with 1 being totally disagree with the item) or that "trying to rehabilitate a sex offender is a waste of time", with an average of 1.3 in 2021 and 1.5 in 2022. In addition, before the training, volunteers were in agreement that "With support and therapy, a person who has committed a sexual crime can learn to change their behavior", with an

average of 5.2 in 2021 and 4.8 in 2022 (a ranking of 5 signifying agreement with the statement) and even increased this agreement following the training. Therefore, the favorable attitudes towards sex offenders observed before training remain unchanged, or even further improve, after training. For example, opinions in relation to the fact that "sex offenders should wear tracking devices to be able to locate them at any time" (Item I), increased in disagreement and, therefore, rejection after training.

However, there are some items that do not improve or even worsen. For example, volunteers disagree both before and after training that "Only some sex offenders are dangerous." In other words, their perception is that many sex offenders are dangerous, and this negative attitude doesn't improve even after the knowledge received in training. In addition, the idea that "most sex offenders are very secretive" increased after training in 2022, this myth not according with reality.

However, it can be said that negative attitudes and prejudices of volunteers towards sex offenders have generally decreased. Despite this, it is necessary to consider the previous relationship of the trained volunteers with the prison environment. In this subgroup, a smaller change in previous attitudes is demonstrated, as they already have adjusted knowledge about sex offenders, more so than the general population.

Table 11. Items from the Attitudes Toward Sex Offenders Questionnaire (CATSO)

CATSO Item	Year 2021		Year 2022	
	PRE	POST	PRE	POST
1.Sex offenders should wear tracking devices so they can be located at any time	2,9 (1,6)	1,7(0,3)	3,5(1,5)	2,8(1,2)
2. Most sex offenders are single men	2,5(1,2)	2,1(0,9)	2,4(1,2)	2,3(1,4)
3. Sex offenders prefer to stay home alone rather than be with a lot of people	3,6(1,3)	3,0(1,0)	3,2(1,4)	3,3(1,6)
4. Exerting psychic or emotional control is not as serious as exercising physical control in order to commit a sexual crime	1,8(1,3)	1,7(0,6)	2,0(1,1)	1,8(1,4)
5. Sex offenders have a hard time making friends even if they try	2,9(1,2)	1,7(0,6)	3,0(1,4)	3,3(1,5)
6. Most sex offenders are very secretive	2,8(1,2)	2,3(0,6)	3,9(1,0)	3,4(1,4)
7. The prison sentences that sex offenders receive are too long compared to the length of prison sentences for other crimes	2,8(1,0)	3,3(1,2)	2,8(1,3)	2,8(0,9)
8. A sex crime in which the victim is an acquaintance of the aggressor is less serious than when the victim and the aggressor do not know each other	1,3(0,5)	1,0(0,0)	1,6(1,1)	1,2(0,5)
9. Sex offenders who are in prison should never be released	1,8(1,3)	1,3(0,7)	1,7(1,2)	1,5(0,8)
10. Sex offenders have very high rates of sexual activity	2,6(0,8)	1,7(1,2)	2,5(0,8)	2,1(0,9)
11. Attempting to rehabilitate a sex offender is a waste of time	1,3(0,5)	1,3(0,6)	1,5(1,1)	1,1(0,3)
12. With support and therapy, a person who has committed a sex crime can learn to change their behavior	5,2(0,8)	5,3(0,6)	4,8(1,5)	1,1(0,3)
13. A person who commits sexual crimes wants to have sex more often than average.	2,5(0,9)	2,0(1,0)	2,8(1,1)	2,5(1,2)
14. Only some sex offenders are dangerous	2,5(1,3)	2,3(1,5)	3,3(1,3)	3,1(1,6)
15. Men who commit sexual offenses should be punished more harshly than women who commit sexual offenses	1,6(1,0)	1,3(0,6)	1,8(1,3)	1,5(0,9)
16. Most sex offenders don't have close friends	2,8(0,9)	1,7(0,6)	2,8(1,3)	3,7(1,4)
17. A person who commits sexual offenses should lose their civil rights (e.g. right to privacy)	1,4(0,9)	1,7(0,5)	1,6(0,9)	1,8(1,0)
18. Sexual touching (inappropriate and unwanted touching) is not as serious as rape	2,6(1,4)	2,7(1,5)	2,2(1,7)	1,9(1,3)
Total CATSO score	48,3(7,5)	40,7(3,1)	48,1(6,6)	47,4(5,9)

Finally, the total score of the instrument has an average of 48,3 in 2021 before training (SD = 7,5) while this score is reduced to an average of 40,7 (SD = 3,1) after training. In 2022, the average is 48.1 (SD = 6,6) prior to training, decreasing to 47,4 (SD = 5,9) afterwards.

Satisfaction with training

Next, satisfaction with volunteer training is analyzed, highlighting the most relevant points. Table 12 presents the results (mean) for 2021 and 2022 in relation to aspects analyzed. The volunteers answered questions for each item in a range from 1: Not at all satisfied or Not at all trained, to 5: Completely satisfied and Completely trained.

As can be seen in Table 12, both satisfaction with the training received and the perception of the professionals who carried it out is very positive, with mean above 4 (very satisfied) or even close to 5 (completely satisfied). However, even though the scores were generally positive, there is a lower assessment regarding the duration of the training. Additionally, in 2022, an increased satisfaction with practical examples and materials is noted, as well as a decrease in specific doubts amongst volunteers. Those trained in 2022 also feel more empowered to accompany and confront the CM compared to 2021.

Table 12. Comparison with training satisfaction. Year 2021-2022

Variables	2021	2022
	Mean	Mean
With the duration of the training	4,4	4,2
With the topics and contents addressed	4,7	4,5
With the practical examples raised	4,2	4,7
With the resolution of specific doubts	4,3	4,8
With the teaching materials delivered	4,2	4,4
With the professionals who have carried out the training	4,9	4,9
I feel empowered to be part of a Circle alongside other volunteers	4,1	4,6
I feel qualified to accompany the Central Member in a daily activity	4,1	4,3
I feel empowered to confront the Central Member about inappropriate comments	4,0	4,4
I feel qualified to distinguish in which situations the CM must be confronted	4,1	4,4
I feel qualified to turn to the coordinator if I encounter a situation that I do not know how to handle	4,8	4,8

In addition, in relation to volunteer satisfaction at the end of the Circle training, the following recommendations were obtained according to volunteer experience.

Table 13. Ultimate satisfaction with training

Experience during training
Most of the volunteer experiences fulfilled the expectations they had before starting the project. In some circles, the training met their expectations and in others it was not what they had expected. In general, however, great satisfaction on the part of the volunteers is observed with respect to the willingness of the professionals involved in this training.
Aspects of training improvement
Although general opinions on the training have been very positive, some changes were suggested with respect to its duration and the possibility of new schedule options, as well as the use of a less legal and psychological context.

To summarize, the implementation of volunteer selection and training processes in the Circles Spain project faced some difficulties due to its incipient nature and the subsequent lack of coordination in the first few years. Despite these challenges, improved efficiency in the management of information and the registration of volunteers, as well as their training, was obtained through the learning process. A more detailed conclusion covering all aspects covered will be presented at the end of this report.

2. SECOND PART:

CORE MEMBERS SELECTION PROCESS

A circle is composed of a moderate- or high-risk sex offender, called a core member or CM, who is accompanied by a group of three to six volunteers who belong to the same community as the core member. These volunteers have previously received specific training to acquire the necessary knowledge to carry out tasks with the CM. Both the volunteers and the core member make up the inner circle.

The CM and their Inner Circle meet in person with a specific periodicity that decreases as the circle progresses (weekly at the beginning). Volunteers accompany the CM, promoting prosocial behaviors, offering emotional support, and aiding with practical needs. In addition, they help the core member practice responsibility by questioning their antisocial attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors.

The group of volunteers is assisted by an External Circle made up of professionals, to whom they transfer their concerns in relation to risk of the CM, so that they can take necessary measures to prevent potential incidents. Communication between the Inner Circle and the Outer Circle is made possible by a coordinator, who is also responsible for supporting and supervising the entire Circle process.

In general, each Circle lasts approximately 18 months, during which it executes different phases (weekly/biweekly meetings, monthly meetings and mentoring).

The people involved in a Circle are described with more detail below:

- The Core Member (CM): A person convicted of a sexual offense who presents a moderate or high risk of recidivism, as well as significant deficits regarding social support. Their participation is voluntary and conditional on willingness to share information about the crime and their perception of it with the volunteers, in addition to the acceptance of the fundamental principles of Circles previously mentioned: "no more victims" and "no secrets".

- The Inner Circle: Group of three to six volunteers from the CM's community, that have no prior specific training. The selection is based on their personal and social skills. To some extent, volunteers represent the community in which the CM will reintegrate, so it's important that the group is heterogeneous in age, sex, education, and personal skills. This manner allows the core members to begin to adapt, and eventually feel open to receiving emotional support, questions about their maladaptive attitudes, and aid with practical needs from the volunteers.
- The Outer Circle: Composed of professionals from the penitentiary, judicial, police and social fields, who supervise the process and coordinate necessary actions to manage risk. They oversee the entire process of reintegration of sexual aggressors into the community. Generally, this includes professionals from the penitentiary, judicial, police, welfare, and other institutions or organizations. Thus, the coordinator oversees supporting and supervising the process of each Circle, as well as promoting communication between the Inner and Outer Circles.
- The Coordinator: Professional who facilitates communication between the Inner and Outer Circle, supervises the process, and ensures compliance with standards. In other words, the coordinator is in charge of supporting and supervising each Circle, as well as promoting communication between them. This figure is generally assumed by a professional with experience in leadership and supervision, as well as risk management in sex offenders.

The program lasts approximately 18 months, during which the frequency of meetings decreases progressively (weekly/biweekly, monthly meetings, and mentoring). The ultimate goal is to ensure the effective social reintegration of the CM, reducing the likelihood of recidivism, and promoting involvement in the community.

2.1. OBJECTIVES

In this second part of this report, another essential step in the implementation of Circles is analyzed, which is the selection of the Core Member (CM) candidates to be part of the project between 2021 and 2022.

The main objective of this part is to analyze the implementation of the selection process of the first Core Members (CM) of the Circles Spain program. To accomplish this, the following specific objectives have been established:

1. Gather data on the profile of people selected to participate in this program. More specifically, their sociodemographic characteristics, personal history before entering prison, criminal history, criminal record, and the nature of the sexual crime committed are analyzed.
2. Evaluate the CM selection process. First, the criteria previously gathered will be analyzed to determine whether they comply with the guidelines of the Circles Manual. To do this, the level of risk, social support, and other individual characteristics required for their selection will be taken into account. Secondly, the process implementation schedule in each Circle and the associated documentation will be examined.

2.2. METHODOLOGY

2.2.1. Sample

The sample of this study is made up of the first four CMs of the Circles implemented in Spain during 2021-2022 (two of them being Pilot Circles). Table 14 shows the number of candidates who were initially evaluated to potentially compose the first four Circles as well as the results of the selection process.

As can be seen in Table 14, in reference to the two Pilot Circles, five candidates were interviewed, two of which were assigned to a Circle. One did not pass the selection process, and the remaining two candidates were placed on a waiting list.

For Circles 3 and 4, interviews were conducted with 5 candidates, two of which were assigned to a Circle. Two were not approved and the remaining one candidate was rejected due to his prison situation that did not allow grade progression and, therefore, future completion of the program.

Table 14. Number of CM candidates assessed

Number of CM candidates assessed and results of the selection process	
Candidates for the two Pilot Circles	5
Assigned to Circle	2
Not approved	1
Waiting list	2
Rejected for processing	0
Candidates for Circles 3 and 4	6
Assigned to Circle	2
Not approved	3
Waiting list	0
Rejected for processing	1

Lastly, the first four CMs were required to meet the inclusion criteria provided in the CM Selection and Monitoring Process (P03), as well as not present any exclusion criteria. As seen in Table 15, each of the selected candidates met the inclusion criteria and did not present any exclusion criteria with the exception of the first Pilot Circle. The reason for this exception lies in the need to begin the implementation of the Circles Spain project with a low-risk case to facilitate future, more extensive implementation for the team of the General Secretariat of Penitentiary Institutions and other leading entities. Therefore, the CM for Pilot 1 is the only one that does not meet the criteria of a medium-high risk.

Table 15. Inclusion and exclusion criteria for the first Core Members

Inclusion criteria	Pilot 1	Pilot 2	CM3	CM4
Convicted of a crime against sexual freedom	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Have completed the PCAS and exceeded its objectives	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Accept a PPR developed under the PCAS	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Recognition of the crime	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Poor family and/or social support	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Volunteering to participate in the program	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Obtain a medium-high risk assessment of recidivism	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Be classified as third degree delinquency or present a short or medium-term forecast for progression to said level	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Intellectual level that does not interfere with participation in the circle	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Exclusion criteria				
Medium or high level of psychopathy	No	No	No	No
Cognitive deficits that prevent the assumption of commitments in the program	No	No	No	No
Total denial of the crime	No	No	No	No
Having a substance dependence disorder in active use	No	No	No	No

Note. PCAS = Sexual Assault Control Program; PPR= Relapse prevention plan

2.2.2. Information sources and variables

In the preparation of this report, documents reviewed for the selection process of each of the four CMs have been analyzed (see Annex I for a more detailed description of the documents). From this documentation, the following variables as presented in Table 16 have been extracted.

Table 16. Documents used and variables extracted for the study

Documents	Selected variables
List of candidates for CM (document P03-D08)	Socio-demographic characteristics (country of origin, age, marital status and level of education).
Sample Interview (document P03-D09)	Personal history prior to imprisonment (victim of physical, psychological, and/or sexual abuse, witness to family violence, parental divorce, substance abuse, and drug abuse).
Referral form: Legal report and testimony of judgment	Criminal history (number of previous arrests and convictions, number of admissions to prison or juvenile facilities, age of first offense, and age of first incarceration). Current crime (main and secondary crime, continuing crime, serial aggressor, group aggressor, number of victims, age and sex of the victims, relationship with the victims, number of crimes, sexual behaviors, reason for completion of the commission of the crime, type of day and time of the commission of the crime, encounter with the victim, alcohol consumption by the victim, use of weapons during the commission of the crime).

2.2.3. Instruments

In addition to the sources of information mentioned above, the following instruments were administered:

- Static 99-R: This scale has been designed to assess the presence of various risk factors related to sexual delinquency in adult males. It is composed of 10 items, each specific with a static risk factor. Each factor is scored with a 0 (absence) or 1 (presence), with the exception of items 1 and 3. Item 1 is scored with -3, 0 or 1, based on age of release, and item 3 is scored with 0, 1, 2 or 3, based on the individual's history of number of charges and/or convictions. The scores obtained in each risk factor are added together to obtain a total score ranging from 0 to 12, that of which also provides five levels of relative risk: Level I (from -3 to -2 points), Level II, (from -1 to 0 points), Level III (1 point), Level IVa (from 4 to 5 points) and Level IVb (from 6 to 12 points). These levels correspond to the following recidivism risk assessments: Level I corresponds to a low risk, Level II to a medium-low risk, Level III to a medium risk, Level IVa to a medium-high risk, and Level IVb to a high risk.

- SVR-20: is an instrument for assessing the risk of sexual recidivism composed of 20 static and dynamic risk factors. These factors are coded based on the following categories: absence (N), partial presence (?) or presence (S); those that have been coded as "present" (S) are evaluated in terms of improvement or worsening (+, 0, -). This instrument provides three levels of risk: low, moderate, and high.
- SAPROF: is an instrument for the structured assessment of protective factors for the risk of violence, which should be used in complement to other tools such as the SVR-20. It is composed of 17 items that are scored with 0 (absence), 1 (partially present) or 2 (present). The instrument's scoring range extends from a minimum of 0 to a maximum of 34.
- SPPI-2 (Revised Screening Scale for Pedophilic Interest): is a scale that assesses pedophile interests. It is composed of 4 items that are valued as "present" or "absent". This instrument is only administered to child abusers whose victims are prepubescent.
- MOS Questionnaire (Medical Outcomes Study): is an instrument that assesses a person's social support. It consists of 19 items, which are scored on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (Never) to 5 (Always) and groupings of the following subscales: emotional, instrumental, positive interaction, and affective support. Emotional support assesses availability for guidance and advice and has a total score ranging from 8 to 40. Instrumental support is characterized by behavior or support material and has a total score ranging from 4 to 20. Positive interaction values your social access to individuals with whom you can partake in entertainment and has an overall score between 4 and 20. Lastly, affective support assesses expressions of love and affection and has a total score of 3 to 15. The sum of the scores in the four subscales yields the total score in the instrument, with a range between 19 and 95, which reflects the overall index of social support.

2.2.4. Procedure

To understand the profile, selection process, and implementation of the first CMs, process-related information contained in reports from the Penitentiary/CIS (psychological report, legal report, social report, etc), sentencing testimony, and interviews conducted with candidates were requested from entities associated with the Circles program and the General Secretariat of Penitentiary Institutions.

To achieve the first objective, the variable information extracted from process documents was inserted into a database to execute the planned analyses. Any personal data that could identify the CMs was anonymized. All participants in the Circles project signed an informed consent prior to their inclusion in the program. To achieve the second objective of the report, documentation regarding the selection of CMs was monitored to ensure its completion and subsequent implementation. More specifically, information was collected from the candidates interviewed, as well as their resulting acceptance in the Circles Spain project, or lack thereof.

2.2.5. Statistical analysis

Based on the information entered in the database, descriptive analyses were carried out to evaluate the profile of the CMs. This report presents the percentages of the categorized variables analyzed for the nominal and ordinal variables, as well as the mean and standard deviation for the numerical variables. All analyses have been carried out using the statistical program SPSS version 29.

2.3. RESULTS

This section presents the main results of this study. The first block presents the results related to the first objective to evaluate the profiles of the first CMs in the Circles Spain project. In reference to the second objective, the second block analyzes the CM selection process.

2.3.1. Core Member's Profile

Below are the profile results of the four CMs who participated in the Circles program in 2021-2022. This section includes sociodemographic information, personal history before entering prison, criminal history, and nature of the sexual offense committed.

Sociodemographic variables

Table 17 presents the sociodemographic characteristics of the analyzed CMs. It's observed that all the CMs are of Spanish nationality (100%) and that the mean age is 39 years, with a standard deviation of 9.9 years. The most frequent marital status is single (75%), followed by divorced (25%).

In relation to level of education, 50% of the sample had secondary education or training cycles, 25% completed higher education, and the remaining 25% didn't complete compulsory studies.

Table 17. Sociodemographic characteristics

	Mean (σ)
Average age	39,0 (9,9)
	Frequency (%)
County of origin	
Spain	4 (100,0)
Other	0 (0,0)
Civil status	
Single	3 (75,0)
Married or in a domestic partnership	0 (0,0)
Separated or divorced	1 (25,0)
Widower	0 (0,0)
Level of education	
Compulsory studies not completed	1 (25,0)
Compulsory studies completed	0 (0,0)
Secondary studies or training cycles	2 (50,0)
Higher education (university, master's or postgraduate)	1 (25,0)

Personal history before imprisonment

Below are the results of the most frequent personal risk factors noted in CMs before admission. As can be seen in Table 18, most of the CMs did not suffer any type of abuse during their childhood and/or adolescence in their family environment; in fact, only one of them was a victim of physical and psychological abuse (25%). None of the CMs were a victim of sexual abuse during their childhood and/or adolescence or witnessed family violence. However, half of the CMs (50%) experienced the divorce of their parents.

In relation to substance use, most of the CMs (75%) have used drugs, with the frequency of this consumption being occasional. The drugs of choice are alcohol (66.7%) and cocaine (33.3%).

Table 18. Personal risk factors before entering prison

	Frequency (%)
Victim of... (during childhood/adolescence)	
Physical abuse	
Yes	1 (25,0)
No	3 (75,0)
Psychological abuse	
Yes	1 (25,0)
No	3 (75,0)
Sexual	
Yes	0 (0,0)
No	4 (100,0)
Witness to family violence	
Yes	0 (0,0)
No	4 (100,0)
Divorce of their parents	
Yes	2 (50,0)
No	2 (50,0)
Drug abuse	
No	1 (25,0)
Yes	3 (75,0)
Daily	0 (0,0)
Weekends	0 (0,0)
Ocassional	3 (75,0)
Drug of choice	
Alcohol	2 (66,7)
Cocaine	1 (33,3)

Criminal History and Criminal Record

Table 19 displays the analytic results of the four CM's criminal histories. The first subjects selected to be part of the Circles project do not have a criminal record nor prior admission to juvenile centers. For each CM, their first entry into prison was due to their conviction of a sexual crime. The average age at which they committed their first crime was 28.8 years, and the average age at which they entered prison was 30.8 years.

Table 19. Criminal History

	Mean (σ)
Number of prior arrests/convictions	
For sexual crimes	0,0
For violent (non-sexual) crimes	0,0
For non-violent crimes	0,0
Number of admissions to prison or juvenile facilities	
Prison	1,0
Juvenile Center	0,0
Age at which you committed your first crime	28,8 (8,1)
Age at which he entered prison for the first time	30,8 (8,8)

Current Offense

Table 20 displays the nature and characteristics of the crimes committed by the CMs. As for the principal crime, 50% of the CMs were convicted of a crime of sexual abuse with penetration, 25% for a crime of sexual abuse without penetration, and the remaining 25% for a crime of sexual assault without penetration. In addition, two of these CMs (Pilot 2 and CM3) were also convicted of crimes secondary to the main offense that drives their inclusion in Circles. Pilot 2 one was convicted of a principal offense of penetrative sexual abuse and a secondary offense of non-penetrative sexual abuse, while CM3 received a conviction for non-penetrative sexual abuse and a secondary offense of corruption of minors and possession of child pornography. In relation to characteristics of the main crime, 50% of the CMs committed a crime of continuous sexual abuse on a minor victim with whom they had a family relationship or within their close circle of acquaintances. However, none of the four cases presented as serial or group sexual assault. In fact, 50% of the cases constituted a single crime and 75% of these affected a sole victim. Only Pilot 2 committed a crime that affected a total of three female victims, two of them minors and one adult, all unknown to the aggressor. Almost all the victims (83.3%) were female and minors. The average sentence time for Core Members was 7 years, 11 months, and 5 days.

Table 20. Current Offense

	Frequency (%)
Main crime	
Non-penetrative sexual assault	1 (25,0)
Penetrative Sexual Assault	0 (0,0)
Non-penetrative sexual abuse	1 (25,0)
Penetrative Sexual Abuse	2 (50,0)
Exhibitionism	0 (0,0)
Child pornography	0 (0,0)
Corruption of minors	0 (0,0)
Secondary offense	
Non-penetrative sexual assault	0 (0,0)
Penetrative Sexual Assault	0 (0,0)
Non-penetrative sexual abuse	1 (25,0)
Penetrative Sexual Abuse	0 (0,0)
Exhibitionism	0 (0,0)
Child pornography	0 (0,0)
Corruption of minors	1 (25,0)
There is no secondary offense	2 (50,0)
Continuing crime	
Yes	2 (50,0)
No	2 (50,0)
Serial Sex Offender	
Yes	0 (0,0)
No	4 (0,0)
Group aggression	
Yes	0 (0,0)
No	4 (100,0)
Number of crimes	
A crime	2 (50,0)
Two or more crimes	2 (50,0)
Number of victims	
A single victim	3 (75,0)
Two or more victims	1 (25,0)
Relationship with the victim	
Familiar	1 (25,0)
Acquaintance	1 (25,0)
Stranger	2 (50,0)
Sex of the victim (N=6)	
Male	1 (16,7)
Female	5 (83,3)
Age of the victim (N=6)	
Minor	5 (83,3)
Adult	1 (16,7)
Sexual behaviors (N=6)	
Kissing, touching, or caressing the victim	3 (50,0)
Oral sex of the victim	0 (0,0)
Oral sex of the aggressor	1 (16,7)
Vaginal sex	0 (0,0)
Anal sex	0 (0,0)
Multiple behaviors	2 (33,3)
Photographs or video recordings	0 (0,0)
Reason for the end of the aggression (N=6)	
The victim escaped	2 (33,3)
Screams of the victim	1 (16,7)
Presence of witnesses	0 (0,0)
By consummation	3 (50,0)
Type of day of the commission of the crime	
Work Day	1 (25,0)
Weekend/holiday	0 (0,0)
Multiple days	2 (50,0)
Undetermined	1 (25,0)
Time of commission of the crime	
Tomorrow	0 (0,0)
Late	2 (50,0)
Night	0 (0,0)
All of the above	2 (50,0)
Meeting with the victim	
He took advantage of the opportunity	2 (50,0)
He searched for the victim	2 (50,0)
Alcohol consumption by the victim	
Yes	0 (0,0)
No	4 (100,0)
Use of weapons during the commission of the crime	
Yes	1 (25,0)
No	3 (75,0)

As for the sexual behaviors the aggressors perpetrated on the victim, 50% consisted of kissing, touching or caressing the victim, 33.3% in multiple behaviors, and the remaining 16.7% in forced performance of oral sex on the aggressor. Most of the aggressions (50%) ended due to the consummation of the crime, 33.3% because the victim escaped, and the remaining 16.7% because the victim screamed.

In relation to the day and time of the crime committed, it is observed that one of the CMs (25%) committed the crime on a working day, two of them (50%) committed the aggressions continuously on multiple days, and, in relation to the last case (25%), the day is unknown due to the absence of information. In reference to the time frame of commission of the crime, 50% of the CMs committed the crime in the afternoon and the other 50% at different times of the day, considering the continuity of their crimes.

In terms of approach and interaction with the victim, 50% of the CMs impulsively took advantage of the opportunity to commit the crime, and the other 50% deliberately sought out the victim to perpetuate the aggression. None of the victims had consumed alcohol at the time of the commission of the crime and only one of the CMs (25%) used a weapon during the attack.

2.3.2. Implementation of the CM selection process

In relation to the second objective of this report, analysis of the CM selection process, documents required in various phases of this selection process have been reviewed: a) referral phase of potential CM candidates, b) screening and evaluation of these candidates and, c) final selection of the CMs according to the program inclusion and exclusion criteria.

Phases of the selection process

Referral of CM candidates

In this phase, on their own initiative or at the request of the Management Team, the Technical Teams of the Penitentiary Centers and CIS internally search for sexual offense candidates who may meet the requirements to be part of the program. In the case of these first four Cs, the said search was carried out at the request of the Management Team. Once the candidates most likely to participate in Circles have been identified, transfer of candidate information to the Steering Team of the National Committee begins. Table 21 shows a summary of the information collected in the CM referral phase.

As seen in Table 21, each of the CMs was convicted of a crime against the sexual freedom of a minor victim and thus participated in the PCAS program in 2021. At the time of their referral for participation in the first Pilot Circle from the technical team of the center, they were all convicted of third-degree crimes.

Table 21. CM Referral Information

	Pilot 1	Pilot 2	CM3	CM4
Sexual offense	Child Sexual Abuse/Assault 16	Child Sexual Abuse/Assault 13	Child Sexual Abuse/Assault 13	Abuse and sexual assault of a minor 13 and exhibitionism
Year of completion PCAS	2021	2021	2021	2019[6]
Degree	Open Regime	Open Regime	Ordinary Regime 100.2	Open Regime
Origin of the referral [7]	Technical Team's proposal and Pilot Circle	Technical Team's proposal and Pilot Circle	Technical Team's proposal	Technical Team's proposal

6. In 2021 he carried out a complementary program
7. The proposals of the Task Force followed the request for a search for candidates by the Circles Management Team

Screening and evaluation

The screening and evaluation phase of potential candidates takes place only after all case information has been referred to the National Committee Steering Team. This screening begins with a study of the candidate's informational documents (reports, testimony of sentence, etc.) and, subsequently, a personal interview to establish their level of risk. It's essential to acknowledge that one of the requirements to be part of the Circles program is to have a moderate or high level of risk of recidivism. Table 22 presents the CM's scores of risk assessment and protection instruments administered, as well as the presence of pedophilia and the final risk level assigned.

In STATIC 99-R, level III (with a total score of 1) corresponds to a medium risk of recidivism and level IV (with scores between 4 and 5) to a medium-high or high risk (see Table 22). In SVR-20, the number of risk factors present is assessed--a greater amount signifying a greater risk of sexual violence. However, there is no final numerical score that suggests the conclusion of a certain level of risk, which can be low, medium, or high. For this reason, the professional carrying out the assessment analyzes each factor in the studied candidates to decide their level of risk. In the cases assessed, the CM of Pilot 1 had 6 risk factors, thus obtaining a low risk, while the rest of the CMs had 10 or 11 risk factors, resulting in a medium or high final risk.

The results of SAPROF, an assessment of protective factors that reduce the risk of recidivism, are shown in Table 22. Most CMs score above the mean or close to the maximum of the instrument (34), which indicates a higher level of protective factors. The only exception is the CM3, which, with a score of 12, scores closer to the low values of the instrument, signifying the presence of fewer protective factors.

To make a final decision on recidivism risk, interviews, results obtained from instruments, and perspectives of professionals of the Penitentiary Institution who are knowledgeable of the case and have had contact with the CM during his time in prison are considered. Based on this analysis, it is then decided whether to also administer a screening instrument for pedophile interests (SSPI-2). In the case of CM3 and CM4, as they have minor victims at very young ages, they did, in fact, administer the screening, in which they obtained scores of 4 and 2,

respectively (see Table 21). CM3, who presented 4 items of the instrument, obtained a probable diagnosis of pedophilia. The analysis of Pilot 1 resulted in low risk, and, in the rest of the CMs, medium or high risk.

The final risk assessment is obtained by the consideration of probability of recidivism scores in STATIC-99 R and SVR-20, as well as the protective factors found in SAPRFOD, and the presence or absence of pedophilia analyzed in SSPI-2.

Table 21. CM Referral Information

	Pilot 1	Pilot 2	CM3	CM4
Total score STATIC-99 R	-1	4	5	1
Risk Level STATIC-99 R	Level II	Level IV	Level IV	Level III
SVR-20	6	10	10	11
SAPROF	26	21	12	20
SSPI-2			4	2
Final level of risk	Low	Medium	High	High

Final Selection Social Support Assessment

The Steering Team of the National Committee executed an analysis of both the previous risk assessment and the social support of the candidates to select the final CMs. The information in the social report provided by the prison institution and the scores of the MOS questionnaire of perceived social support were utilized. Table 23 displays the questionnaire scores obtained by the CMs in the first four Circles (subscales: emotional, material, relational and affective support; global index of social support).

As seen in Table 23, almost all of the CMs scored high in the global index of perceived social support, including three CMs that obtained around the maximum score on the scale (95). A lower score (57), however, is observed in CM4 which signifies almost a complete lack of social support. On the other hand, in relation to the emotional support subscale, most of the CMs achieved the maximum score (40), except for CM4 whose score of 24 reflects a lack of emotional support. In relation to material support, all CMs obtained around the maximum score of the subscale (20). Regarding the availability of people with whom the CMs can carry out activities, two of the CMs (Pilot 2 and CM3) obtained the maximum score on the subscale (20) while the rest presented average scores, a number that reflects lower relational

support. Finally, in relation to the affective support subscale, the evaluated CMs received around the maximum score (15), which would imply they have a moderate or high level of support from people with whom they can express love and affection.

The scores of perceived social supports, however, contrast with the results of the Social Workers' assessment of the candidates' social support. These professionals assess the CM's perception of the attitude that members of their support system have towards sexual crimes committed. Candidates are considered to have no social support if their supporters are not willing to talk about the crime, minimize it, deny it, etc. It's possible they have support in other aspects of their lives, but none as a voice of alarm or help in the face of recidivism. The contrast between scores demonstrates that the MOS questionnaire does not reflect the reality of the candidates' social support; therefore, this instrument is not of much use in the evaluation of the CMs.

Table 23. Scores on the Global Social Support Index and MOS Questionnaire Subscales

	Pilot 1	Pilot 2	CM3	CM4
Global Index	80	94	95	61
Emotional support	38	39	40	24
Material support	16	20	20	17
Relational	13	20	20	10
Emotional support	13	15	15	10

Once the candidate's perceived social support has been assessed, as well as the previous information collected on the level of risk, prison documentation, and personal interview, it's then possible to decide the status of the candidate's inclusion in Circles. If this assessment is positive and accompanied by the approval of the Treatment Board, the approved inclusion will be communicated to the CM, in which he will sign a document of registration acceptance in regards to the onset of the Circle.

Timeline of the CM selection process

Lastly, Table 24 displays the dates of the various screening and selection phases for the first Circles as described above. This is relevant to the analysis of the time needed to execute this project, and whether it increases or decreases with the establishment of new Circles.

Table 24. Dates of the screening and selection process fro CM candidates

Process	Pilot 1	Pilot 2	CM3	CM4
Derivation	14/10/2021	21/10/2021	04/08/2022	28/10/2022
Screening candidates	27/09/2021	21/01/2022	23/09/2022	31/10/2022
Technical session with professionals	N/A	N/A	22/08/2022	08/11/2022
Interview of CM candidates	16/11/2021	18/02/2022	14/09/2022	15/11/2022
CM Listing Notification	10/12/2022	03/03/2022	24/10/2022	24/11/2022
Registration and Acceptance CM	15/12/2021	14/03/2022	24/10/2022	24/11/2022

As seen in Table 24, considering the creation of new Circles, the time elapsed between the end of the screening phase and the beginning of the selection phase has decreased. In the first Circle, it took a month and a half after the end of the screening phase to interview the CM. However, in the fourth Circle, the interview occurred only fifteen days after the end of the screening phase. In other words, the time elapsed between the beginning and end of the selection phase in terms of the registration and acceptance of the CM is one month in the first two Circles, and approximately 15 days from then on.

Evaluation of the documentation related to the CM selection process

Lastly, to assess the implementation, an analysis was conducted on the procedures for collecting and recording information, as well as the related documentation. The completion of said documentation was a necessary part of the actualization and monitoring of the process. In addition, it provides information that aids the verification of operability and quality of the circles. For this reason, it's essential to maintain documentation of each CM, and transmit it to the external evaluation entity of the Circles program for relevant investigation purposes.

Table 25 displays the documentation of the CM selection process, reviewed by the entity carrying out the external evaluation. The documents that had previously not been accessible for various reasons have since been fulfilled and possessed by the entities that implement Circles as well as the Steering Team of the National Committee of the project to complete the selection process.

Table 25. Evaluation of information collection and completion of process documents

CM Selection Process	Documantion	Pilot 1	Pilot 2	CM3	CM4
Referral of candidates for central member	P03- D02. Informed consent	Yes	No	No	No
	P03- D03. Referral form	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
	P03- D04. PCAS Progress Report	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Updated psychological report	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Updated Legal Report	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Updated Social Report	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Sentencing Testimony	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Screening and evaluation	P03- D05. STATIC 99- R	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	P03- D06. SVR-20	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	P03- D07. SAPROF	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Selection	P03- D09. Central Member Interview Model	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	P03-D10. MOS (Social Support) Questionnaire	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	P03- D11 Notification of Inclusion/Exclusion	No	No	Yes	No
	P03-D12. Registration in the program and Commitment to participation	No	No	Yes	Yes
	P04-D02 Needs Detection Instrument	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

In summary, the analysis of the selection process of the Core Members (CM) in the first two years of Circles Spain shows that, despite the initial difficulties, the process could be adjusted to the established criteria, allowing for improvement in later phases. The profile of the CMs selected for this project coincides with trends observed in similar international studies, in that they're middle-aged, drug-using men without a criminal record. More comprehensive conclusions on the findings will be presented at the end of this report.

3. THIRD PART.

PROCESS OF SELECTION AND TRAINING OF COORDINATORS

The coordinator is the person responsible for supporting and supervising their assigned Circle process, as well as facilitating communication between the Inner Circle (volunteers and CMs) and Outer Circle (professionals), acting as a liaison between the two (General Secretariat of Penitentiary Institutions, n.d.). In addition to facilitating communication between the Inner and Outer Circles, the main functions of the coordination figure are as follows: monitor management between volunteers and CM, resolve queries or doubts, manage incidents, carry out dynamic risk assessments of the CM, manage cancelations of the program, and other help as needed.

The coordinator needs to be able to offer ongoing support as needed (Wilson et al., 2010). Therefore, they must be trained and have previous experience handling sexual crimes, risk management and reintegration processes, as well as in the needs of volunteers.

The CoSA European Manual compiles these characteristics to define the coordinator as a trained professional with experience in working with sex offenders as well as mentoring volunteers (Höing et al., 2018). The role of the coordinator is fundamental throughout the duration of the process, especially in reference to communication between the Inner and Outer Circles. Additionally, this professional is responsible for the recruitment, selection, training, and supervision of volunteers. The study by Derryhouse et al. (2020) in the United Kingdom highlights the responsibility for coordination in the training and preparation of volunteers.

In the United States, coordinators are responsible in working closely with the professionals involved in the release process (McWhinnie & Wilson, 2022). Therefore, one of the initial phases in a Circle's implementation is the integration of the coordinator into the network of professionals who work with those who have committed crimes, namely, in areas such as law enforcement, the prison system, release and reintegration processes, and community-based treatment programs. Coordinators should encourage the active participation of these professionals in the CoSA program, organizing meetings to

consolidate their support.

In the Spain Circles Program, the process of recruiting and selecting coordinators begins only when the need to open a new Circle is detected. From this point, collaborating entities are asked to propose professionals they consider most suitable for such work. These professionals must then provide their Curriculum Vitae (CV) and Circles coordinator profile, as well as sign the coordinator application form. An individual interview is then carried out with each professional to ensure they meet the requirements. These requirements are included in the Coordinator Management Process (P02) and consist of 17 items assessed on a Likert-type scale of 1-5, from lowest to highest level of compliance. These requirements primarily include a strong belief in Restorative Justice, knowledge of the treatment of sexual offenders and risk assessment, and the ability to work collaboratively and manage a team, among other competencies.

Once the interview verifies the candidates meet the necessary requirements to serve as project coordinators, the selection process continues with a training phase. The training sessions are carried out over three days and are both dynamic and participatory, with the aim of training and observing the skills and management capacity of potential candidates. The main objectives of this training are dual-faceted: to formally present the project and definitively select the project coordinators. Following this training, the participants fill out an evaluation document (P02-D02), in which they score 14 items according to a Likert-type scale of 1-5, from lowest to highest level of satisfaction. Optionally, they can write down aspects that they found particularly positive as well as those which they would improve or miss.

To select the coordinators, a joint effort by the approvals of the entity and management team, training results and information obtained in the personal interview are considered. After selection, candidates are invited to a final personal interview, following the model of document P02-D04. After selection and completion of the process, it is then the coordinator signs the commitment of participation and confidentiality (P01-D11).

The European Manual establishes that the coordinator position can be assumed by various professionals in each country (Höing et al., 2018). In the Netherlands, the coordinators of a Circle are typically professionals with experience in Alternative Measures to Prison (probation, probation, etc.) while, in other countries, organizations with experience in reintegration programs conduct this role. Furthermore, the Netherlands utilizes at least two Circle coordinators and one regional project coordinator. This is due to their 24-hour telephone support system available to the Inner Circle in case of emergencies. A 2013 study in the Netherlands reported that there were only four female coordinators in the program, all of whom were working for the Dutch Probation Organization (Höing et al., 2013).

In the United Kingdom, the Circles program is known as YHCOSA and is applied in the towns of Yorkshire and Humberside. The coordinators are Alternative Measures officers under the shared supervision of both YHCOSA and the Manager of MAPPA (Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements) within the Alternative Measures Services (Banks et al., 2015). In addition, the YHCOSA program requires that all high-risk individuals accused of sex crimes are evaluated for possible inclusion in a Circle. Therefore, Alternative Measures officers are highly relevant to this role due to their professional skill experience in managing high-risk offenders (Banks et al., 2015).

A Guide from the U.S. Department of Justice outlines the ideal profile of a coordinator, highlighting essential characteristics to ensure the success of the CoSA program (McWhinnie & Wilson, 2022). According to this source, the following qualities make the coordinator a centerpiece in the implementation and subsequent success of the CoSA program, especially in community settings where collaboration, trust, and cohesion are essential. First, they need to be a strong advocate for restorative justice and be comfortable with its practices. In addition, it's important they have experience in managing projects involving both paid staff and unpaid volunteers, including their selection, training, management and supervision. They must also possess leadership and team-building skills, able to motivate, resolve conflicts, maintain group cohesion, lead with vision, and earn the respect of others.

Additionally, this Guide (McWhinnie & Wilson, 2022) states the ideal coordinator "knows the community in which the CoSA project will be established; that is, you live or have recently lived in or near the community and are familiar with the resources and services that returning offenders will need to access in order to successfully reintegrate into the community." Furthermore, their integration into local, community activities is essential, since they must have an established reputation as a known and trusted person due to previous jobs--paid or voluntary. Finally, the coordinator must inspire confidence, demonstrating the maturity and experience necessary to address conflicts and problems in a constructive way. They must be autonomous and proactive, able to work with minimal supervision, take initiative, and build collaborative networks to ensure the success of the program.

Finally, the selection process and profile of the coordination team of the CerclesCat project in Catalonia was analyzed (Nguyen Vo et al., 2020). The sample was composed of nine people, four men and five women, with a mean age of 38.4 years. As for the coordinator profiles, each had a university degree or higher. At the professional level, they are classified into the following fields: psychology (26.7%), social education (20.0%), social work (6.7%), and/or resource management in criminal measures (6.7%). All coordinators had previous professional experience with offenders, 55.6% specifically with sex offenders. In relation to their experience in the field of volunteering, 33.3% had previously participated as volunteers in projects aimed at the social reintegration of people who had committed some type of crime. The initial motivation for participating in the project was prevention ("No more victims"), project innovation, reintegration, and professional interest. Each of these coordinators oversaw between 1 and 2 Circles on average.

A subsequent CerclesCat study analyzed coordinators' satisfaction with the training and its corresponding level of utility. It was found that all attendees considered it very useful in preparing to serve as coordinators (Nguyen Vo et al., 2021). They highlight the practical case simulation that aids in the management of various dimensions of a Circle.

3.1. OBJECTIVES

The main objective of this third and final part is to analyze the implementation of the selection process for the first coordinators of the Circles Spain program between 2021 and 2025. To do so, the following specific objectives have been established:

1. Evaluate the process of coordinator selection. Firstly, coordinator compliance with the requirements established in the Spanish Circles Manual will be established. To do so, verification of the coordination profile will be considered.
2. Examine the satisfaction of professionals with the training received in order to be able to effectively apply and carry out the program.
3. Understand the profile of people selected for Circle coordinator positions in this program. To do so, two sub-objectives have been established: a) analysis of their sociodemographic characteristics and b) analysis of their motivation to participate in the program.

3.2. METHODOLOGY

3.2.1. Sample

The sample of this study is made up of the first twelve coordinators of the Circles implemented in Spain between January 2021 and January 2025 (two of these being Pilot Circles). Of these coordinators, six belong to the H-Amikeco association and the remaining to the Salud y Comunidad Foundation. Table 26 displays the number of coordinators per entity and the number of Circles they have carried out, respectively.

Table 26. Entities that implement Circles, coordinators and number of Circles

Entity that implements the Circle and coordinators	Number of Circles
H-Amikeco	
Coordinator 1	2
Coordinator 2	2
Coordinator 3	1
Coordinator 4	1
Coordinator 5	1
Coordinator 6	1
Total Circles implemented by H-Amikeco	8
Salud y Comunidad	
Coordinator 1	1
Coordinator 2	3
Coordinator 3	2
Coordinator 4	3
Coordinator 5	1
Coordinator 6	1
Total Circles implemented by Salud y Comunidad	11
Mode of Circles by coordinator	1
Mean Circles per coordinator (standard deviation)	1,6 (0,8)

To date, a total of 19 Circles have been implemented in Spain, eight of them by the H-Amikeco Association and eleven by Salud y Comunidad Foundation. The mode of Circles conducted by the same coordinator is 1.0 and the mean is 1.6 with a standard deviation of 0.8.

3.2.2. Sources of information

In preparation of this report, the documents used for the Coordinator Management Process of the twelve coordinators under study were analyzed (see Annex 1I for a more detailed description of the documents). From this documentation, the extracted variables are presented in Table 27.

Table 27. Documents used and variables extracted for the study

Documents	Parameters
Coordinator Application Form (document P02-D01)	Gender, age, usual profession, employment status, studies completed, previous experience in areas of reintegration and verification of compliance with requirements for coordination
Coordinator Training Satisfaction Survey (document P02-D02)	Satisfaction with training, level of safety after the training, and positive aspects or improvements of the training
Coordinator selection interview (document P02-D04)	Motivation to participate in and opinion on recidivism in general and on Circles
Relationship of Coordinators and Central Members (document P02-D05)	Entity to which the coordinator belongs and number of Circles that have been coordinated

3.2.3. Procedure

In order to analyze the implementation of the coordinator selection process and understand their profiles, both the General Secretariat of Penitentiary Institutions and entities responsible for the implementation of the Circles program were asked for information relating to the process contained in the application form, coordination selection interview, and satisfaction with the training received.

In order to fulfil the first objective of the report, information from the coordinators selected to be part of the Circles Spain program, who have been performing functions in recent years, was collected. Firstly, an analysis of the coordination profile to check the verification of the requirements was executed, as well as the professional's degree of satisfaction with the training received to be able to apply and carry out the program.

To achieve the second and third objectives, the information of the variables extracted from the process documents has been recorded in a database, allowing planned analyses.

3.2.4. Statistical analysis

Based on the information entered in the database, descriptive analyses of the coordinator profiles and their level of satisfaction with the training received was performed. All analyses have been conducted in the statistical program SPSS version 29.

3.3. RESULTS

This section presents the main results of this study. In the first block, the results related to the first objective are presented, in which the selection process and satisfaction of the coordination training were analyzed. The second block refers to the third objective, comprehension of the profile of the Circles Spain project coordinators and their motivation to participate in the program.

3.3.1. Evaluation of the selection process and coordinator training

Pre-selection and personal interview

According to the Circle Manual, the first step of the selection process is the reception of the CV. We observed differences between the two entities through the analysis of the succeeding steps. The H-Amikeco Association has several existing professionals with training in sexual offenses and, therefore, makes the selection of CVs among its own experts. Even so, all of them are required to execute the same initial procedures. However, selection of candidates amongst their own workers with specific training in sexual crime signifies that 100% of the candidates have been selected to be part of the Circles Spain program.

In contrast, Salud y Comunidad selected professionals existing outside of their own entity, since they didn't possess such expert professionals. This resulted in a more open and expensive coordinator selection process. For example, seen in Table 28, in the selection of 3 coordinators in Madrid, they received and analyzed 29 CVs. The complete results for both entities can be seen in Table 28.

Table 28. Candidates selection process coordinators

	H-Amikeco	Salud y Comunidad
Madrid		
CVs received	6	29
Rejected candidacies	0	26
Interviewed candidates	6	3
Selected candidates	6	3
Valencia		
CVs received		9
Rejected candidacies		5
Interviewed candidates		4
Selected candidates		3
Alicante		
CVs received		2
Rejected candidacies		1
Interviewed candidates		1
Selected candidates		1

Secondly, the level of compliance with the previously mentioned requirements included in the Coordinator Management Process (P02) was analyzed. These requirements are assessed following a Likert-type scale of 1-5, from lowest to highest level of compliance. Table 29 displays the mean scores for these requirements.

Table 29.Verification of the coordination profile (level of compliance with requirements)

Coordinator profile requirements	H-Amikeco Mean (DT)	Salud y Comunidad Mean (DT)	Total mean (DT)
Training and/or experience	4,3 (0,5)	3,3 (0,5)	3,8 (0,7)
Knowledge of recidivism, restorative and re-educational measures, and/or assessment of the risk of recidivism	4,3 (0,8)	4,3 (1,0)	4,3 (0,9)
Proactive attitude	4,5 (0,8)	5,0 (0,0)	4,8 (0,6)
Ability to manage and resolve conflicts	3,8 (0,4)	5,0 (0,0)	4,4 (0,7)
Organizational and communicative skills	4,0 (0,9)	5,0 (0,0)	4,5 (0,8)
Ability to coordinate groups	3,7 (0,5)	5,0 (0,0)	4,5 (0,8)
Belief in Restorative Justice	4,7 (0,5)	5,0 (0,0)	4,8 (0,4)
Commitment to the project	4,5 (0,8)	5,0 (0,0)	4,5 (0,5)
Communication skills	4,0 (0,0)	5,0 (0,0)	4,5 (0,7)
Coordination of teamwork	4,0 (0,6)	5,0 (0,0)	4,5 (0,7)
Proactive	4,0 (0,6)	5,0 (0,0)	4,5 (0,7)
Tolerant	4,5 (0,8)	5,0 (0,0)	4,8 (0,6)
Emotion management skills	4,3 (0,5)	5,0 (0,0)	4,7 (0,5)
Analytical thinking	4,3 (0,5)	5,0 (0,0)	4,8 (0,4)
Analyze and address issues	4,0 (0,6)	5,0 (0,0)	4,5 (0,7)
Knowledge of criminal dynamics and risk assessment	4,5 (0,6)	4,2 (0,8)	4,3 (0,7)
Skill management difficulties	3,8 (0,7)	4,8 (0,4)	4,3 (0,8)

The average scores of professionals in H-Amikeco are higher than 4 in most requirements, out of a maximum of 5, with the exception of group coordination skills (3.7) and difficulty management skills (3.8). Lower average scores are also observed in the ability to manage and resolve conflicts, a variable in which an average of 3.8 was obtained. However, these are still relatively high scores. The requirements in which they present a higher average are in the variables of proactive attitude (4.5), tolerance (4.5), commitment to the project (4.5), and knowledge of criminal dynamics and risk assessment (4.5).

The standard deviations obtained are generally low, reflecting the homogeneous level of training by the coordinators; additionally, average scores above the midpoint (3.0) signifies an adequate and uniform level of training. These scores reflect the expected consistency and quality in the selection of H-Amikeco coordinators, which would indicate a satisfactory fulfillment of the profile requirements, despite the differences between the professionals qualified to perform the coordination tasks for Circles.

The average scores of professionals in Salud y Comunidad are higher than 4.0 in all requirements, with the exception of training and/or experience (3.3). They have the highest possible score (5.0) in most of the requirements, except in knowledge of recidivism, restorative and re-educational measures, and/or assessment of the risk of recidivism (4.3), in knowledge of criminal dynamics and risk assessment (4.2), and in difficulty management skills (4.8). Such high scores indicate the coordinators meet the characteristics and requirements necessary for proper implementation of the program. The standard deviations obtained are equal to 0 in most of the variables, which reflects the level of coordinator training is considerably homogeneous; average scores well above the midpoint (3.0) indicate a very adequate and uniform level of training. These scores reflect the anticipated coherence and quality in selecting Salud y Comunidad Coordinators, indicating strong compliance with the required profiles. Despite minimal differences among the candidates, all are highly qualified to effectively carry out coordination tasks for the Circles.

However, differences are found between scores of the entities that implement Circles Spain, in that Salud y Comunidad coordinators generated slightly higher scores in most of the requirements. These differences stem from potentially various factors, such as more qualified professionals in Salud y Comunidad or differences in evaluator criteria of each entity. However, with the exception of one H-Amikeco professional who obtained a slightly lower score, all coordinators have obtained fairly high total scores. This reflects a high level of ability and preparation to carry out the Circles program. The total average of both entities is higher than 4.0 in all requirements, except for the variable Training and/or experience (3.8), which, nevertheless, indicates a high level of qualification in both entities.

Training Undertaken

Next, professionals' satisfaction with training is analyzed, highlighting the most relevant points. Table 30 presents the results of the analyzed training aspects. Professionals evaluated each item according to a Likert-type scale, 1 being "Not at all satisfied or Not at all trained", and 5 being "Completely satisfied or Completely trained".

Table 30. Satisfaction with training for coordination

Variables	Mean (DT)	Minimum	Maximum
Satisfaction with duration of the training	4,8 (0,5)	4	5
Satisfaction with topics and content addressed during training	4,6 (0,5)	4	5
Satisfaction with practical examples made	4,3 (0,8)	3	5
Satisfaction with resolution of specific doubts	4,7 (0,5)	4	5
Satisfaction with teaching materials delivered	4,3 (0,9)	2	5
Satisfaction with professionals who carried out the training	4,8 (0,5)	4	5
I feel qualified to carry out the work of coordinating a Circle	4,4 (0,5)	4	5
I feel qualified to identify risk and protective factors for the Central Member and propose strategies to address them	4,6 (0,5)	4	5
I feel qualified to advise and supervise the work of volunteers during the Circle	4,8 (0,5)	4	5
I feel empowered to react and strategize in the event of a Central Member relapse	4,3 (0,9)	3	5
I feel empowered to overcome difficult situations in terms of communication and teamwork in the Inner Circle	4,4 (0,5)	4	5
I feel empowered to overcome difficult situations in terms of communication and teamwork in the Outer Circle	4,5 (0,5)	4	5
I feel qualified to turn to a supervisor in the event of a situation that I do not know how to handle	4,8 (0,4)	4	5
I know the schedule of evaluations and reports throughout the cycle of a Circle	4,7 (0,7)	3	5

As seen, both satisfaction and the level of confidence of professionals following the training received are very positive, with averages considerably higher than 4 (very satisfied or very trained) and even close to 5 (completely satisfied or fully trained).

The greatest discrepancies lie in the aspects of satisfaction with practical examples, with a minimum score of 3 and a maximum of 5, and in satisfaction with teaching materials, with a minimum score of 2 and a maximum of 5. Despite this, the average of these variables is still higher than 4 (very satisfied). We also found discrepancies in the professionals' opinion of their ability to react and develop a strategy in the event of a CM's relapse as well as their perception of knowledge of the calendar of evaluations and reports within the Circle.

In addition, the coordinators reflected on the aspects of training they consider to be enriching or remarkable, as well as those that they would like to improve. Based on their comments, various recommendations have been compiled.

Most professionals value the practical cases presented and practiced during the training, placing special emphasis on their utility during the Circle. They also occasionally highlight the opportunity to train alongside volunteer candidates and emphasize the collaborative efforts among various professionals, sustaining diverse methodologies and perspectives throughout the training process.

Although satisfaction with the training was very positive overall, half of the professionals did indicate areas that could be improved, especially with regard to the expansion of content. They believe the following factors should be discussed in the expansion of the training: relapse plan, information on management of risk situations, work of the therapeutic bond, and work with the difficulties of volunteering and their motivation. This would allow coordinators to feel more secure throughout the program's implementation.

3.3.3. Coordinator Profile

Sociodemographic characteristics

Below are the profile results of the twelve coordinators who have participated or are participating in the Circles program, from its inception in 2021 until October 2024. This section includes sociodemographic information, motivation for participating in the program, and opinion regarding recidivism after Circles. Table 31 presents sociodemographic information for professionals.

Table 31. Sociodemographic variable of the coordinators

	Average (DT)
Age	31,0 (6,4)
	Frequency (%)
Sex	
Man	2,0 (17,0)
Woman	10,0 (83,0)
Undergraduate studies	
Bachelor's Degree in Psychology	7,0 (58,3)
Bachelor's Degree in Pedagogy	1,0 (8,3)
Bachelor's degree in psychology and bachelor's degree in criminology	4,0 (33,3)
Postgraduate studies	
Master's Degree(s) of specialization	9,0 (75,0)
Doctorate	1,0 (8,3)
No master's degree	2,0 (16,7)
Related Previous Experience*	
Prison reintegration	11,0 (91,7)
Social work	0,0 (0,0)
Psychology	6,0 (50,0)
Research	2,0 (16,7)
Judicial/Forensic	1,0 (8,3)
Community education	

*Note: Column totals do not add up to 100% because several of the professionals have previous experience in several areas.

Most coordinators are women (83.0%), and the remainder are men (17.0%). The mean age of these coordinators is 31 years, with a standard deviation of 6.4. Each of these coordinators have completed undergraduate studies; 58.3% of them have degrees in psychology, 8.3% in pedagogy, and 33.3% in psychology and criminology. In addition, most of the professionals (83.0%) have completed postgraduate studies, 75.0% of them specializing in master's degrees, and 8.3% in doctoral studies.

All of them have completed training in areas related to reintegration, or even have previous experience in prison reintegration structures, or psychology with various associations and/or programs. 91.7% of the coordinators have had contact with the prison population. Half of the professionals (50.0%) have had previous experience in psychology (severe mental disorders, rare diseases, etc.). 16.7% have had related experience in research areas. 41.7% of the professionals have had previous experience related to judicial or forensic fields. However, none of the coordinators have had previous experience in the field of social work.

In the workplace, 100% of the coordinators accompany their work as coordinators of Circles with another work occupation. However, at the time of the inception of the selection process, they had sufficient

availability to participate in Circles. The availability of professionals varies between 10 and 25 hours per week.

Motivation of professionals to participate in the program

Finally, the intrinsic motivation of professionals to participate in Circles is analyzed. Table 32 presents the primary motivations mentioned in the interviews.

Table 32. Main motivations for participating in Circles Spain

Main motivations	Number of professionals (%)
Professional growth and development	4,0 (33,3)
Participation in the reintegration process	6,0 (50,0)
Belief in restorative justice	3,0 (25,0)
Belief in people's change	4,0 (33,3)

Note. Column totals do not add up to 100% because more than one motivation could be mentioned in the interview

These motivations are grouped into four main blocks. The most frequent motivation mentioned by professionals is to participate and take part in the reintegration process (50.0%). The professionals emphasize the importance of being an active part in the reintegration process, including involvement and accompaniment. The next most frequent motivations are professional growth and development (33.3%), in which professionals express their continued involvement desire in prison reintegration processes. They aim to develop personally as well as professionally, as well as their belief in people's capacity for change (33.3%). The least cited motivation is the belief in restorative justice (25.0%).

In summary, the selection process for Circle coordinators has generally met the requirements outlined in the European Manual, with candidates demonstrating suitable profiles and reporting high levels of satisfaction with the training received. Although the evaluations are subjective, the selected individuals possess solid experience and academic backgrounds, particularly in psychology and prison reintegration. The majority of participants are young women with university and postgraduate education. Compared to other countries, the role of coordinators in Spain is more limited; however, their experience could be more broadly utilized, especially in the selection and training of volunteers. The main motivation expressed by these professionals is their desire to actively contribute to the social reintegration process.

4. CONCLUSION

This report analyzes the Circles Spain's first few years of implementation, focusing on the selection, training, and profile of volunteers, as well as Core Members (CM) and coordinators.

Volunteering

The first part of this report reflects on the process implementation related to the selection and training of volunteers, two key steps in the inception of Circles Spain. However, like all new projects, various complications were encountered. At the time, it was a relatively new project, with only two years of experience, and involved the participation of several entities. Therefore, the coordination of volunteer collection was quite complicated.

As mentioned, we faced an incipient project that resulted in implementation difficulties. This translates to imbalances in the systematization of the information collected throughout the process, especially in regard to the volunteer selection phase. For instance, at the beginning of this project, process acceleration caused a lack of registration forms (jumping directly to the initial interview with some volunteers), due to the difficulties of locating volunteers interested in participating in Circles Spain. As a result, in the first year, 2021, some documents later included in the Circles Spain Manual were not available to all volunteers, as some of the processes were not carried out as planned.

In 2022, many aspects were improved in comparison to the previous year. A more efficient manner was established to collect and order documentary information (relating to registration forms, surveys, etc.). However, it's still necessary to emphasize the registration of volunteers who access the project through other channels. In these cases, such information was not obtained, but it may be useful to learn alternative ways to contact those interested in the project to improve the process of attracting volunteers.

It's observed that in order to reach six volunteers to assign to a circle, it is necessary to locate and contact four times as many people (45 in 2021 and 54 in 2022). There are interested people who do not complete the selection or training processes, or who are not deemed suitable even after the final interview. Looking ahead to future circles, it would be interesting to analyze this loss of stakeholders (in briefings, initial interviews, or before training) with the aim of improving processes in terms of efficiency. Also, these findings resulted in the incorporation of a professional, for the first time, in charge of systematically collecting all documentation required in this process according to the Circles Manual.

As mentioned in the first part, the selection of volunteers, although initially difficult due to the novelty of the project, has improved over time. Now, a predominance of women between 30-40 years old with university studies is observed. This profile is very similar to the volunteers of CerclesCat, the initiative of the CoSA model carried out in Catalonia; 70% are women with an average age around 35 years, and almost 80% have university studies (VVAA, 2020).

In this study, half of the volunteers knew a victim of sexual assault. This may have influenced their motivation to participate in the project, with the aim of preventing new victims. Additionally, participation in Circles was driven by the offer of a second chance to core members. In addition, many of these participants had previous experience in other volunteer work (including prisons). Such facilitation of prior knowledge of sexual crime generates favorable attitudes towards the reintegration of sexual offenders. Finally, in terms of training, it is worth highlighting the high level of satisfaction with aspects such as content, professionals who provided it, training, etc. The duration of the exam was the least valued aspect, although with a noted improvement in satisfaction in 2022 compared to 2021.

Core Members

In the second part of the study, the selection process of the Core Members in the first two years of the Circles Spain Project (2021 and 2022) is evaluated. Furthermore, the profile of the selected CMs and their inclusion process in the program have been analyzed.

Following this comprehensive analysis, a profile of CM like that of other countries is observed. Offenders are Spanish men with an average age of 40 years, single or divorced, medium or basic education, and no previous criminal record. The sexual offense that led to the referral to Circles, in most cases, was committed against underage women. In the four cases analyzed, no serial or group aggressor is found. Only one of the cases was committed with a weapon. Half of the cases involved unknown victims.

These results, although preliminary given the low number of cases analyzed, are consistent with other studies in that they show most sexual offenders who participate in Circles in other countries are white, middle-aged men, around 40 years of age (Clarke et al., 2017; McCartan et al., 2014). When the data obtained in this study are compared with the published reports of the experience in Catalonia, similar results are found. The majority profile of the CMs of the Circles carried out in Catalonia corresponds, in the same way, to Spanish men, middle-aged, between 40-50 years old, with compulsory studies completed or not completed. (Nguyen, et al., 2019).

In the sample analyzed, no risk factors were observed during childhood or adolescence, although most CMs have consumed drugs abusively, with alcohol and cocaine being the preferred substances. As mentioned, none of the CMs analyzed had a criminal record, with the current sexual offense being the first recorded offense. This data is not surprising since more than 80% of CMs in Catalonia had no previous criminal record (Nguyen, et al., 2019).

However, similar to issues encountered with volunteers, difficulties in the collection of documentation from the Central Members (CM) and coordination between entities involved were observed, which affected the efficiency of the first processes. The collection of documentation

from CMs, specifically, presented additional difficulties due to the large volume of existing documents for a very low number of cases. Despite these obstacles, lessons learned have allowed for improvement in later phases, which eventually made it possible to collect all information related to the CM selection process (document P03) and archive it for further analysis.

The creation of the Spain Circles required the initiation of two pilot circles to implement the designed processes. These Circles were developed with CMs who did not present a very high risk nor lack of social support, which are normally essential requirements in the CMs. Due to the novelty of the process, flexibility in these requirements was allowed and applied solely to Pilot Circles. After implementation and verification of the first phase processes, the Central Members of the subsequent Circles (the CM3 and CM4) met the mandatory criteria to be part of the Circles.

Despite the difficulties encountered during the implementation phase, the analysis shows that the CM selection process has since been applied faithfully to the required criteria, complying with the stipulated phases and information required to carry out this process. The difficulties encountered are typical of novel implementation. The decision to hold two Pilot Circles, with slightly different aggressor profiles from those originally established to be part of the program, facilitated the implementation of the process and allowed substantive improvement in Circles 3 and 4. These improvements are due to lessons learned during the selection processes of Pilot CMs.

However, special caution should be taken when drawing conclusions from assessments of CM profiles due to the low number of cases studied. It is important to note that most cases initially involve a single victim, usually a minor. This is altering since child aggressors, especially those with a single victim within their family circle, present a low risk of recidivism according to the usual risk assessment scales (STATIC-99). However, this study observes that, in addition to the static risk of recidivism assessed with STATIC-99, there are other issues to be considered in order to obtain an overall risk of recidivism in these cases. In this sense, for cases of child abusers it is essential to evaluate presence of pedophilia or lack of social support, as elements such as

these can increase risk. However, the questionnaire used to measure perceived social support does not always align with the opinion of prison professionals about the case, suggesting that it would be necessary to use a different tool to allow a more in-depth analysis of the cases referred to Circles, beyond the application of current risk and social support instruments.

On the other hand, the conduct of this research has highlighted the need for further coordination between the entities involved in the CM selection process. Such coordination could expedite the collection and analysis of the required information. To optimize this process, it would be beneficial for entities to share data in a common data management system, which would contribute to improved efficiency in project decision-making.

Coordinators

Finally, the third part of the report presents the evaluation of the coordinator selection process in the first four years of the Circles Spain Project (from 2021 to 2025), as well as the analysis of their profile. To do so, the selected coordinators have been evaluated in respect to the requirements established by the Circles Manual to participate in the project, as well as their motivation and satisfaction with the previous training received.

An analysis of the selection process for the first twelve coordinators conducted by the two implementing entities of Circles indicates that the profiles and qualifications of the selected coordinators align with the requirements outlined in the Manual. In other words, each of those selected meet the required skills to perform this role, obtaining very high compliance scores, especially notable in one of the entities (Salud y Comunidad). However, the subjectivity of these scores suggest caution, as they depend on the perception and flexibility of the evaluator or entity itself when scoring during the interview.

After selection, those trained display a high level of satisfaction with both entities, especially in regard to aspects such as the duration and practical cases presented. However, most suggest improving the depth of the content through more case studies, specifically relating to the management of difficult or risky situations.

Such observed characteristics of coordinator profiles coincide with project results elsewhere (Nguyen Vo et al., 2020), as well as with the provisions of the European Handbook, that of which suggests that the role of coordinator can be assumed by different professionals (Höing et al., 2018). In countries such as the Netherlands, and in regions such as Yorkshire and Humberside, the role is played by Alternative Measures professionals (Banks et al., 2015; Höing et al., 2013; Höing et al., 2018). The skills and knowledge related to the assessment and management of risk in sex offenders, typically held by probation officers in other countries, is considered equivalent to the experience gained by reintegration coordinators in Spain. Finally, it is observed that the main motivation of the coordinators to be part of the project is their active participation in the reintegration process. Growth, professional development, and belief in people's ability to change are also frequently highlighted.

Despite initial difficulties, the implementation of Circles has since improved. Areas for improvement were identified, such as optimization of volunteer recruitment and coordination between entities, which could allow for a more efficient future structure for the project.

In general, the selection process and training of Volunteers, Central Members (CM) and Coordinators largely conforms to the guidelines of the Circles Manual, although there are some operational difficulties, typical of implementation in the early phases of the project. Volunteering has since improved in terms of systematization of information and incorporation of a professional dedicated to the collection of documentation. Despite this, there is still a lack of an adequate registry of volunteers who access alternative routes.

While the selected CM profile aligns with those described in previous studies, the implementation of Pilot Circles allowed for adaptations that included CMs with slightly different profiles than those originally established.

The coordinators meet the requirements of the manual in relation to their professional profile, namely studies and previous experience, though subjectivity in selection evaluations must be taken into account. Key areas for improvement are the lack of a shared data management system between entities and the need to go deeper into training content. In short, implementation is largely aligned with the manual, but some adjustments are necessary to optimize the coordination and selection and training process.

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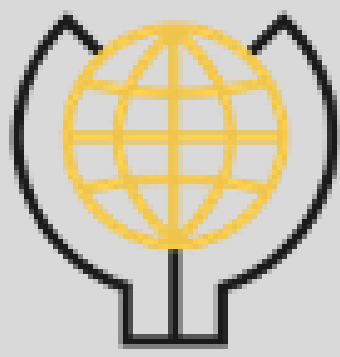
6. ANNEX

6.1. Annex I. Glossary of documents used in the CM selection process

- Informed consent: document P03-D02. It must be signed by the CM candidate to give consent to the management of their personal data.
- Referral form: document P03-D03. This document is transferred when a prisoner is detected who may be a potential candidate to be part of the Circles program. It includes general information on the person's prison situation and the motivation for referral and will also attach the following prison documents of the candidate:
 - PCAS Progress Report (document P03-D04)
 - Updated psychological report
 - Updated Legal Report
 - Updated Social Report
 - Sentencing Testimony
- CM interview model: document P03-D09, a guide of questions that professionals who interview candidates must follow.
- MOS Questionnaire: document P03-D10, an instrument that assesses the social support perceived by candidates.
- Notification of inclusion/exclusion: document P03-D11, where the National Committee of Circles Spain notifies its decision to include/exclude the candidate in the program to the center on which the interested party depends.
- Registration in the program and commitment to participation: document P03-D12. The CM must sign this document if it is decided to include him in the program. In it, they undertake to comply with a series of rules to participate in the program.

6.2. Annex II. Glossary of documents used in the coordinator selection process

- Coordinator application form: P02-D01. Documents to be filled in by candidates who wish to apply for the coordination selection process.
- Coordinator selection interview model: document P02-D04, a guide of questions that must be followed by the professionals who carry out the interview with the candidates.
- Evaluation of the initial training of coordinators: document P02-D02. It is an evaluation carried out by the candidates on the training received to be a Circle coordinator.
- Commitment to participation and confidentiality: document P01-D11. It must be signed by the selected coordinator to commit to participate in the program and to save and preserve the information of Circles.
- List of coordinators and Central Members: document P02-D05, it relates each coordinator to the Circles he or she coordinates.



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