



# **Prison staff perspectives**

**An EPSU survey of the impact of the economic crisis on prisons**





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## Executive summary

The report is based primarily on responses to an EPSU questionnaire received from 14 unions representing prison staff in 12 countries, supplemented by material from the Council of Europe's SPACE surveys and national sources. Initial findings were presented to a meeting of the EPSU prison union network in February 2015.

There are substantial variations across Europe in the number of people in prison, relative to the population, ranging 18.9 per 100,000 in Liechtenstein to 314.6 per 100,000 in Lithuania. In general, the proportion of people in prison is highest in the states in Central and Eastern Europe that joined the EU in 2004 or 2007, although the country with the largest number of people in prison is the UK, with almost 94,000.

The number of people in prison in the European Economic Area (EEA) rose slightly between 2008, the start of the crisis and 2014, the latest date for which figures are available for most countries. However, there were major differences between states with prisoner numbers falling in some, including Germany and the Netherlands, but rising in others, including France and Romania.

Despite this slight rise in prisoner numbers, most countries have experienced a fall in the number of staff working inside prisons in the past five years, and in some countries, such as Latvia and the UK, this has been dramatic.

The result has been that in 19 countries the ratio of prisoners to prison staff worsened in the five years from 2008 to 2013.

Those working in prisons also have fewer financial resources than in the past. Unions in seven of the 12 countries that responded to the survey said that the money available for prisons had decreased in the last five years. This is confirmed by the Council of Europe's survey of 2013 that finds that spending per inmate has decreased during the economic crisis.

Only four unions out of 14 thought that prisoners' conditions had improved in the last five years, and none thought that the conditions of those working in prisons had improved in the same period. One (FP CGIL in Italy) referred to "the impoverishment of prison staff and their families".

Health and safety was a concern with eight out of 14 unions saying that the situation had deteriorated. Nine said that the number of violent attacks on staff had increased, often providing details of the extent of the assaults. ACAIP-USO in Spain has collected figures – there are no official ones – which show a violent attack every two days, while, in the UK, the number of serious assaults has doubled in two years to more than 10 a week.

Prison staff also suffer from stress. All but one of the unions reported that stress had increased, with austerity cited as one of the key reasons.

Despite these difficult conditions, only a minority of unions thought that levels of sickness absence had increased.

Most unions indicated that there were structures and/or policies in place intended to maintain and improve the health and safety of those working in prisons, although there is often little health and safety training. In most countries unions are able to have a positive influence on health and safety standards, although there are specific problems in Spain and Italy.

In four countries, pay was set by collective bargaining; in five they were the result of a unilateral government decision, and in the remaining three either by a mixture, or by a process in which the union has a role, but which falls short of collective bargaining. However, in half of the countries surveyed, key prison staff do not have the right to strike.

Employee representation structures in prisons generally reflect those in the country as a whole, and in all countries unions play a crucial role.

The **UK** is the only country among those responding where currently some prisons are privately run. However, the private sector is involved in prisons other ways in other countries and there are plans to extend this further.

Union concerns reflect the problems that prisons currently face. The threat of privatisation, cost savings, pay levels, job security and an ageing workforce were all referred to by unions in more than one country. They demand better terms and conditions but in some cases the first step towards this would be to restore the conditions and rights that they had before but have now lost.

The overall picture is of a prison service under pressure and staff struggling to cope. In this situation the unions have a key role to play in defending and improving the terms and conditions of their members and seeking to provide a decent service to prisoners and the wider society.

## Introduction

This report looks at the situation of those working in Europe's prisoners. Based primarily on a survey of 14 unions representing prison staff in 12 countries, and supplemented by material from the Council of Europe and national sources, it provides a unique perspective on prison developments.

## The survey

The survey was sent to affiliates of the European Federation of Public Service Unions (EPSU) in EPSU's Prison services Network in the first three months of 2015. The initial intention was to cover Belgium, Denmark, Estonia, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Romania, Spain, Ukraine and the UK. In the end, responses were received from 14 unions representing prison staff in 12 countries. They are listed below.

Country	Union
Belgium	ACV-OD/CSC SP
Belgium	CGSP/ACOD
Northern Cyprus	KTAMS
Denmark	Faengselsforbundet
Estonia	ROTAL
Finland	VVL (JHL affiliate)
France	UFAP-UNSA
Italy	FP CGIL
Netherlands	FNV Overheid
Norway	KY-YS
Romania	SNLP
Spain	ACAIP-USO
UK	POA
UK	RCN

In addition, OSSOO (Statorg) in the Czech Republic and LAKRS in Latvia reported that they no longer organised prison staff.

## Big variations in the number of prisoners

According to the Council of Europe, there are more than 630,000 people in prison in the 31 states of the European Economic Area (the 28 EU states plus Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway). This is equivalent to 112.4 prisoners per every 100,000 inhabitants.<sup>1</sup> However, the detailed figures, which are for January 2014 and include pre-trial detainees, as well as those serving prison sentences, indicate that there are big differences between countries in the number of individuals sent to prison. While in Liechtenstein the ratio of prisoners to the general population is only 18.9 per 100,000, in Lithuania it is more than 16 times higher, at 314.6 per 100,000.

<sup>1</sup> These and other figures for prison population in 2014 come from Annual Penal Statistics compiled for the Council of Europe: Prison Stock on 01 Jan. 2014 & 2015 <http://wp.unil.ch/space/space-i/prison-stock-2014-2015/> There are sometimes differences between these figures and published national figures.

The details are set out in Table 1 and Chart 1 and there are some clear geographical groupings. In general, the proportion of people in prison is highest in the states in Central and Eastern Europe that joined the EU in 2004 or 2007. The three Baltic states top the table, all with more than 200 prisoners per 100,000, and they are followed in descending order by Poland, Hungary, the Slovak Republic, Romania and the Czech Republic.

The Nordic states are at the other end of the table, taking five of the eight lowest positions, all with prisoner ratios below 70 per 100,000. The non-Nordic states in the bottom eight are Liechtenstein, the Netherlands, and Slovenia. Cyprus, Germany and Ireland, all have relatively low ratios – well below 100 per 100,000 – and there is another large group of countries, Croatia, Italy, Austria, Greece, Belgium, France and Bulgaria, where the ratios are between 100 per 100,000 and the EEA average of 123.4 per 100,000. The countries outside Central and Eastern Europe, with above-average proportions of their populations in prison are, in ascending order, Luxembourg, Portugal, Spain, Malta and the UK.

The UK has the largest prison population of any EU state, a total of 93,665 including all three prison authorities (England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland).

**Table 1 Prison population (1 January 2014)**

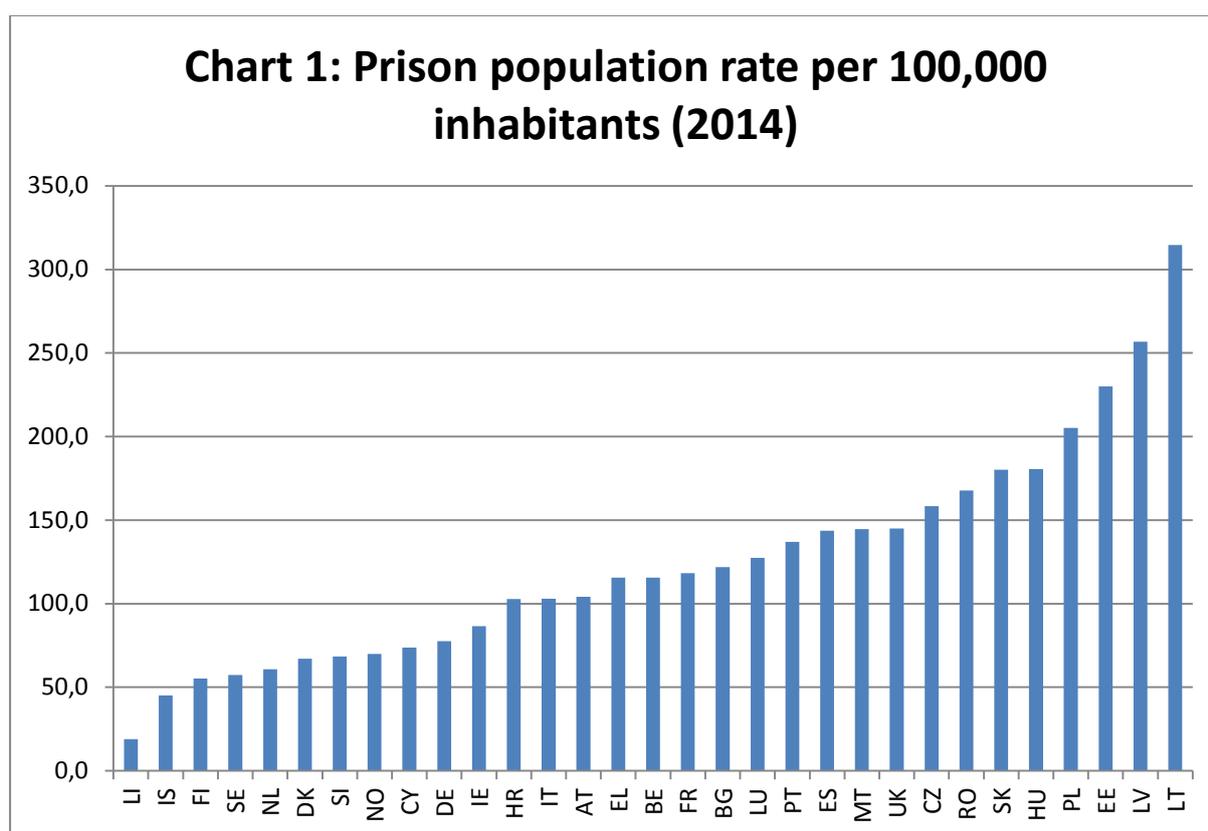
Country	Total number of prisoners	Prison population rate per 100,000 inhabitants (2014)
Austria	8,862	104.2
Belgium	12,945	115.5
Bulgaria	8,834	121.9
Croatia	4,365	102.8
Cyprus	632	73.7
Czech Republic	16,656	158.4
Denmark	3,774	67.1
Estonia	3,026	230.0
Finland	3,011	55.2
France	77,883	118.3
Germany	62,632	77.5
Greece	12,693	115.5
Hungary	17,841	180.6
Iceland	147	45.1
Ireland	3,987	86.6
Italy	62,536	102.9
Latvia	5,139	256.8
Liechtenstein	7	18.9
Lithuania	9,261	314.6
Luxembourg	701	127.5
Malta	615	144.6
Netherlands	10,224	60.8
Norway	3,571	69.9
Poland	78,994	205.2
Portugal	14,284	137.0
Romania	33,434	167.7
Slovak Republic	9,752	180.1

Slovenia	1,409	68.4
Spain: Total	66,786	143.6
Sweden	5,525	57.3
UK: Total	93,665	145.0
<b>EEA</b>	<b>633,191</b>	<b>123.4</b>

Source: Prison Stock on 01 Jan. 2014 & 2015 Annual Penal Statistics Council of Europe

<http://wp.unil.ch/space/space-i/prison-stock-2014-2015/>

The figure for the prison population ratio in the UK has been calculated from mid-year 2014 population estimates produced by the Office for National Statistics on 25 June 2015



### Slightly more prisoners overall

Prison populations are not static and some states have seen significant changes in the number held in prison since the start of the crisis in 2008, as Table 2 and Chart 2 show. While overall prisoner numbers increased only very slightly, just 0.3%, between 2008 and 2014, in some countries there were major rises and in other large decreases.

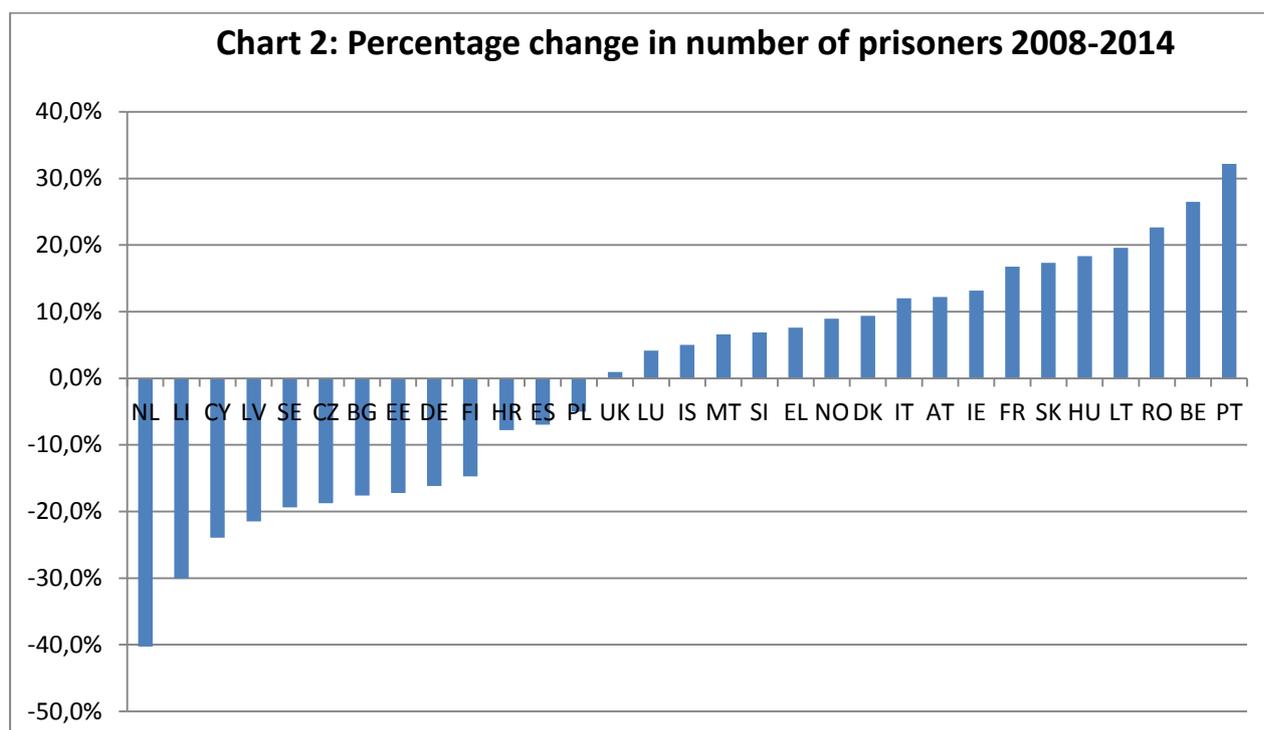
Germany, the Netherlands, Cyprus, Latvia, Sweden, the Czech Republic, Bulgaria, Estonia and Finland were all able to reduce their prison populations by more than one in seven between 2008 and 2014. In Germany, there were 12,000 fewer people held in prison in 2014 than six years earlier, and in the Netherlands, the number of prisoners fell by almost 7,000 over the same period, a 40.3% decline.

At the other end of the scale, prisoner numbers increased by more than one in six in France, the Slovak Republic, Hungary, Lithuania, Romania, Belgium and Portugal. As a result, France had more than 11,000 people held in prison in 2014 than was the case six years earlier, while in Romania, the number of prisoners increased by more than 6,000 over the same period. In proportionate terms, the largest increase of inmates was in Belgium and Portugal.

**Table 2: Change in the number of prisoners 2008 to 2014**

Country	Prisoners 2008	Prisoners 2014	Change 2008-2014	
			Percentage	Numbers
Netherlands	17,113	10,224	-40.3%	-6,889
Czech Republic	20,502	16,656	-18.8%	-3,846
Latvia	6,544	5,139	-21.5%	-1,405
Bulgaria	10,723	8,834	-17.6%	-1,889
Sweden	6,853	5,525	-19.4%	-1,328
Finland	3,531	3,011	-14.7%	-520
Estonia	3,656	3,026	-17.2%	-630
Liechtenstein	10	7	-30.0%	-3
Germany	74,706	62,632	-16.2%	-12,074
Croatia	4,734	4,365	-7.8%	-369
Spain: Total	71,778	66,786	-7.0%	-4,992
Poland	83,152	78,994	-5.0%	-4,158
Cyprus	831	632	-23.9%	-199
Malta	577	615	6.6%	38
UK: Total	92,805	93,665	0.9%	860
Slovenia	1,318	1,409	6.9%	91
Luxembourg	673	701	4.2%	28
Iceland	140	147	5.0%	7
Norway	3,278	3,571	8.9%	293
Austria	7,899	8,862	12.2%	963
Greece	11,798	12,693	7.6%	895
Ireland	3,523	3,987	13.2%	464
Italy	55,831	62,536	12.0%	6,705
France	66,712	77,883	16.7%	11,171
Denmark	3,451	3,774	9.4%	323
Hungary	15,079	17,841	18.3%	2,762
Romania	27,262	33,434	22.6%	6,172
Slovak Republic	8,313	9,752	17.3%	1,439
Belgium	10,234	12,945	26.5%	2,711
Lithuania	7,744	9,261	19.6%	1,517
Portugal	10,807	14,284	32.2%	3,477
<b>EEA</b>	<b>631,577</b>	<b>633,191</b>	<b>0.3%</b>	<b>1,614</b>

Calculated from Prison Stock on 01 Jan. 2014 & 2015 Annual Penal Statistics Council of Europe <http://wp.unil.ch/space/space-i/prison-stock-2014-2015/> and Aebi, M.F. & Delgrande, N. (2015). SPACE I – Council of Europe Annual Penal Statistics: Prison populations. Survey 2013. Strasbourg: Council of Europe <http://wp.unil.ch/space/space-i/annual-reports/>



### But fewer prison staff

Most countries have experienced a fall in the number of staff working inside prisons in the past five years. Figures from the Council of Europe for the period 2008 and 2013 (the latest staff figures available) show that, in 17 of the 29 EEA states for which figures for both years are available, there were fewer staff working in prisons in September 2013 than in September 2008. In total in these states, prison staff numbers fell from 308,647 in 2008 to 293,356 in 2013, a fall of 5.0%, despite the fact that prisoner numbers over this period in these same 29 states rose by 1.5% overall.

Prison staff are defined as persons working in the penitentiary system, either under the authority of the national prison administrations (usually the justice ministry) or of another public authority (e.g. health ministry) involved in the security, treatment, training or other activities of inmates.

The two countries with the largest proportionate falls in the number of prison staff were Latvia, where three out of 10 staff (30.5%) were lost between 2008 and 2013, and the UK, where staff numbers were cut by just over a fifth (21.2%). However, there were four other states where there was a reduction of around a sixth in the number of staff working in prisons. These were Finland (16.5%), Estonia (16.3%), Sweden (16.0%) and Ireland (15.6%). The five other countries where the reduction in prison staff was higher than the EEA average of 5.0% were Bulgaria, Malta, the Netherlands, Lithuania and Austria.

There were another six countries where prison staff numbers were cut, Italy, Portugal, Luxembourg, Germany, Denmark and Romania, while in France and Liechtenstein prison staff numbers were unchanged over the five year period.

This leaves only 10 countries where prison staff numbers increased. In five countries, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Iceland, Poland and Slovenia, the increase was relatively modest – under five per cent – but in five it was greater, 7.2% in Spain, 8.7% in the Croatia, and just over 10% in the Slovak Republic, Cyprus and Norway. (There are no 2008 figures for Greece and no figures on prison staff in Belgium for either 2008 or 2013.)

**Table 3: changes in number of staff inside prisons 2008 to 2013**

Country	Staff inside prisons		Staff change 2008-2013	
	2008	2013	Numbers	Percent
Austria	3,779	3,584	-195	-5.2%
Bulgaria	4,597	4,005	-592	-12.9%
Croatia	2,497	2,714	217	8.7%
Cyprus	385	426	41	10.6%
Czech Republic	10,454	10,548	94	0.9%
Denmark	3,472	3,413	-59	-1.7%
Estonia	1,943	1,627	-316	-16.3%
Finland	2,732	2,280	-452	-16.5%
France	28,801	28,798	-3	0.0%
Germany	37,180	36,459	-721	-1.9%
Hungary	7,597	7,656	59	0.8%
Iceland	89	92	3	3.4%
Ireland	3,877	3,273	-604	-15.6%
Italy	43,054	41,160	-1,894	-4.4%
Latvia	3,431	2,384	-1,047	-30.5%
Liechtenstein	16	16	0	0.0%
Lithuania	3,280	3,093	-187	-5.7%
Luxembourg	417	401	-16	-3.8%
Malta	213	196	-17	-8.0%
Netherlands	10,965	10,222	-743	-6.8%
Norway	3,274	3,627	353	10.8%
Poland	27,214	28,191	977	3.6%
Portugal	5,456	5,221	-235	-4.3%
Romania	12,018	11,911	-107	-0.9%
Slovak Republic	3,881	4,291	410	10.6%
Slovenia	800	834	34	4.3%
Spain	27,797	29,811	2,014	7.2%
Sweden	5,947	4,995	-952	-16.0%
UK	53,481	42,128	-11,353	-21.2%
EEA (excluding Belgium and Greece)	308,647	293,356	-15,291	-5.0%

Calculated from Council of Europe Annual Penal Statistics – Space I 2008 Survey on Prison Populations by Marcelo F. Aebi and Natalia Delgrande and Council of Europe Annual Penal Statistics – Space I 2013 Survey on Prison Populations by Marcelo F. Aebi and Natalia Delgrande

The responses received from the unions representing prison staff generally confirm the figures from the Council of Europe, although variations in the dates and the group of staff to which the information relates produce some differences between the two sets of statistics.

For example, the Finnish union VVL reports a fall from an average of 2,961 employees in 2010 to 2,742 in 2014. However, these numbers relate to all staff working in penal institutions, including those in national and regional prison administrations, not just those inside prisons. Similarly in France, UFAP-UNSA reports a slight increase in prison staff over the last five years. This is the case for all staff working in penal institutions, where there has been an increase in numbers from 31,913 in 2008 to 35,081 in 2013, but the number working inside prisons has remained unchanged over the same period: 28,801 in 2008 and 28,798 in 2013.

In Spain, the response from ACAIP-USO highlights the fact that in some countries the trend in prison staff numbers has changed within the last five years. Between 2008 and 2011 the number of staff inside Spanish prisons (including those in Catalonia) increased from 27,797 to 30,294. However, since 2011 there has been a fall of almost 500, with the number of staff dropping to 29,811 in 2013. As a result, the growth in staff numbers shown in the table relates entirely to the first three years of the five year period.

The responses from the two UK unions, POA, which represents a range of staff across prisons, and the RCN, which primarily represents medical staff including those in management roles, also confirm the fact that the largest loss of prison staff has been in the UK. The Council of Europe figures show that there were 11,300 fewer staff working in prisons in 2013 than in 2008 – a fall of more than one in five.

The Council of Europe statistics do not include prison staff numbers for Belgium. However, the two Belgian unions that responded to the survey, ACV-OD/CSC SP and CGSP/ACOD both report that the number of those working in prisons has fallen in the most recent period, although there had been growth until 2014.

The response from FNV Overheid in the Netherlands indicated not just what had happened, but what was planned, as a result of the government's policy of cutting public spending. In 2013, the government announced that it intended that 26 of the 59 penal and other similar institutions operating in the Netherlands should close with the loss of 3,700 jobs out of around 12,300 employed in the prison service. Pressure from the union, including industrial action in April 2013, forced the government to agree to reduce the number of closures and, as a result, the planned job losses fell to around 2,600. However, 18 months later, the next round of austerity measures pushed the number of planned job losses back up to some 3,600. Some of this has already occurred with FNV Overheid reporting that the number employed in prisons and other similar institutions (a wider area than that covered by the Council of Europe figures in the table) has fallen from 12,284 in December 2012 to 10,866 in December 2014, a fall of almost 1,400 staff or 11.3% over just two years.

Some of these job losses in the Netherlands involved redundancies, and five other unions also reported that they had faced this in their own countries. CGSP/ACOD in Belgium reported that around 2% of staff had been made redundant; ROTAL in Estonia, said that five staff had been made redundant in a single prison; VVL in Finland, said there had been redundancies when 17 staff lost their jobs as a result of a prison closing; and both the POA and the RCN in the UK pointed out that the prison service had used redundancies to cut prison staff. The POA estimated that 6,000 staff had left on a voluntary redundancy programme.

In Spain, the situation is slightly different. Here the union, ACAIP-USO, does not report direct redundancies. Instead it says that staff have not had their contracts renewed as they expire.

## Resulting in worsening prisoner to staff ratios

One striking aspect of the figures is in many cases prison staff numbers fell even though the number of prisoners was stable or rising. Table 4, based on council of Europe figures, sets out the percentage changes in prison staff and prisoner numbers over the period 2008 to 2013 (a different time period to the prisoner number figures in Table 2).

It shows that there were nine countries where prison staff numbers fell, despite the fact that prisoner numbers were rising. These are Austria, Denmark, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Portugal, Romania, and the UK, while in Malta the number employed in prisons fell, although prisoner numbers remained stable. There were another four states where the number of prisoners fell but the number of prison staff fell by more, Estonia, Finland, Latvia, and Sweden, and in five states the number of prison officers failed to keep up with the growth in the number of prisoners, France, Hungary, Iceland, Norway and the Slovak Republic.

This leaves only 10 states where developments were more positive. In five, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Poland and Spain, staff numbers rose, while prisoner numbers fell. In three, Bulgaria, Germany and the Netherlands, the number of prison staff declined, but prisoner numbers fell by more, while in Liechtenstein staff numbers were stable, while the number of prisoners declined, and in Slovenia, the number of prison staff rose by more than the number of prisoners.

These developments are reflected in the ratio of prisoners to staff in prisons, which are also shown in Table 4. Only eight countries, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Germany, the Netherlands, Poland and Spain, show an improvement in the ratios – in other words, staff were looking after fewer prisoners. In two others, Liechtenstein and Slovenia, there were improvements, but they were too small to show in the table.

In the other 19 countries the ratios worsened, and in some countries the change was quite substantial. In Austria, the number of prisoners per staff member in prison went up from 2.1 in 2008 to 2.5 in 2013; in France the ratio increased from 2.3 to 2.7; in Hungary it went up from 2.0 to 2.4; in Lithuania there were 2.4 prisoners per member of staff in 2008 and 3.1 in 2013; in Portugal the increase was from 2.0 to 2.7; in Romania from 2.3 to 2.8; and in the UK the ratio went up from 1.7 to 2.2.

**Table 4: Changes in prisoners and staff numbers 2008 to 2013**

Country	Staff change 2008-2013	Prisoners change 2008- 2013	Ratio of prisoners to staff	
	Percent	Percent	2008	2013
Austria	-5.2%	11.8%	2.1	2.5
Bulgaria	-12.9%	-17.6%	2.3	2.2
Croatia	8.7%	-8.1%	1.9	1.6
Cyprus	10.6%	-2.4%	2.2	1.9
Czech Republic	0.9%	-20.7%	2.0	1.5
Denmark	-1.7%	18.5%	1.0	1.2
Estonia	-16.3%	-10.9%	1.9	2.0
Finland	-16.5%	-11.5%	1.3	1.4
France	0.0%	17.5%	2.3	2.7
Germany	-1.9%	-9.4%	2.0	1.9
Hungary	0.8%	21.4%	2.0	2.4
Iceland	3.4%	8.6%	1.6	1.7

Ireland	-15.6%	15.4%	0.9	1.2
Italy	-4.4%	16.1%	1.3	1.6
Latvia	-30.5%	-20.5%	1.9	2.2
Liechtenstein	0.0%	-10.0%	0.6	0.6
Lithuania	-5.7%	24.2%	2.4	3.1
Luxembourg	-3.8%	6.5%	1.6	1.8
Malta	-8.0%	0.0%	2.7	2.9
Netherlands	-6.8%	-38.4%	1.6	1.0
Norway	10.8%	11.3%	1.0	1.0
Poland	3.6%	-5.0%	3.1	2.8
Portugal	-4.3%	32.2%	2.0	2.7
Romania	-0.9%	21.5%	2.3	2.8
Slovak Republic	10.6%	22.1%	2.1	2.4
Slovenia	4.3%	3.2%	1.6	1.6
Spain	7.2%	-5.1%	2.6	2.3
Sweden	-16.0%	-14.4%	1.2	1.2
UK	-21.2%	0.8%	1.7	2.2
EEA (excluding Belgium and Greece)	-5.0%	1.5%	2.0	2.1

Calculated from Council of Europe Annual Penal Statistics – Space I 2008 Survey on Prison Populations by Marcelo F. Aebi and Natalia Delgrande and Council of Europe Annual Penal Statistics – Space I 2013 Survey on Prison Populations by Marcelo F. Aebi and Natalia Delgrande

The responses from the unions in the survey reflect the Council of Europe figures, although, as with the number of prison staff, they sometimes highlight changes that have happened after the end of the five year period to 2013. In Italy, for example, FP CGIL points out that although the number of prisoners increased from 58,127 on 31 December 2008 to 62,536 on 31 December 2013, since then numbers have fallen sharply as the country has attempted to deal with a crisis of prison overcrowding. Between December 2013 and June 2015, the latest available figures, the number of those held in prison has dropped from 62,536 to 52,754.<sup>2</sup> As the union, points out, this fall of around 10,000 in less than two years has led to an improvement in the ratio of prisoners to staff since the end of the period covered by the table.

Something similar, although with results that point in the opposite direction may be happening in the Netherlands. Here the figures in the table, covering the period 2008 to 2013, show an improvement in the prisoner/staff ratio. However, it has been since 2013 that job cuts in the Netherlands have bitten most deeply. As a result, FNV Overheid, talking about the more recent period, says “officially the ratio [of prisoners to prison staff] stays the same, but from our own internal information we know that facts are to the contrary”.

Two responses shed some light on why the ratios have changed in the way they have. The Spanish union, ACAIP-USO, reports that the fall in the number of prisoners has been a major factor in improving the prisoner/staff ratio, and it gives the reasons for this as being “legal changes and the expulsion of foreign prisoners”. In Romania, in contrast, the number of prisoners has increased sharply, going up by a fifth between 2008 and 2013. Here the union,

<sup>2</sup> Detenuti presenti per posizione giuridica , sesso e nazionalità: Serie storica semestrale degli anni: 1991 – 2015  
[https://www.giustizia.it/giustizia/it/mg\\_1\\_14\\_1.wp?facetNode\\_1=3\\_1\\_6&previousPage=mg\\_1\\_14&contentId=SST165666](https://www.giustizia.it/giustizia/it/mg_1_14_1.wp?facetNode_1=3_1_6&previousPage=mg_1_14&contentId=SST165666)

SNLP, reports that this is because the number of crimes increased “due to the financial crisis” and “some inmates from abroad have been returned”.

In Belgium, for which the Council of Europe does not publish figures, both unions estimate that the prisoner/staff ratio has improved because, as ACV-OD reports, new institutions have been built.

### **Limited financial resources**

The unions were asked about the money available for prisons and here the responses indicated that, in most countries, resources were not expanding. Unions in seven countries, Northern Cyprus, Finland, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain and the UK, said that the money available from prisons had decreased over the last five years and in Romania the union SNLP said that resources had remained unchanged.

There were only four countries, Belgium, Denmark, Estonia and France, where the unions said that the money for prisons had increased.

These responses match the findings of the most recent Council of Europe survey at the time of writing this report (2013). As the press release accompanying the survey noted, “Spending per inmate in European prisons has decreased during the economic crisis”.<sup>3</sup>

It went on to point out:

“In 2012, European prison administrations spent an average of €97 per inmate per day, €2 higher than in 2011, although the amounts spent varied greatly<sup>4</sup> However, taking into account the period from 2007 – when the economic crisis started – to 2012, there was a decrease in expenses per inmate (from an average of €99.1 to €96.7 per person, and a median of €53.4 to €41.6 per person). There were increases in very few countries.”

The Council of Europe’s figures on public expenses seem to indicate that countries with the highest expenses are generally those with a lower prison population.

### **Little progress on prisoners’ conditions and none for those of prison staff**

Asked to assess whether prisoners conditions had improved in the last five years, only four unions said that they had. In Belgium, ACV-OD thought there had been an improvement, although CGSP-ACOD said that they remained unchanged. ROTAL in Estonia considered that prisoners’ conditions had improved, as did FP CGIL in Italy. However, the Italian union emphasised that this was “solely as result of the reduction in overcrowding”. The only other union to see an improvement in prisoners’ condition was SNLP in Romania.

Elsewhere, the unions either thought that prisoners’ condition had remained unchanged (KTAMS in Northern Cyprus, Faengselsforbundet in Denmark, VVL in Finland, KY-YS in Norway and ACAIP-USO in Spain), or got worse (UFAP-UNSA in France, FNV Overheid in the Netherlands and both the POA and the RCN in the UK).

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<sup>3</sup> The economic crisis hampers improvement of conditions in European prisons: Strasbourg, 11.02.2015 [http://wp.unil.ch/space/files/2011/02/Press-Release\\_SPACE-2013-statistics.pdf](http://wp.unil.ch/space/files/2011/02/Press-Release_SPACE-2013-statistics.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> From €2 per day in the Russian federation to €317 per day in Sweden.

Again, this matches the Council of Europe's conclusions which were that reduced spending on prisons "has likely caused a negative impact on the quality of life of persons in custody".

Unions' assessments were even less positive when they were asked about conditions for staff working in prisons. None thought that these had improved over the last five years, and as many unions thought they had deteriorated as stayed the same.

Those seeing a deterioration were CGSP-ACOD in Belgium, UFAP-UNSA in France, FNV Overheid in the Netherlands, SNLP in Romania and both the POA and the RCN in the UK. Those who considered that staff conditions had remained the same were ACV-OD in Belgium, KTAMS in Northern Cyprus, Faengselsforbundet in Denmark, ROTAL in Estonia, VVL in Finland, FP CGIL in Italy and KY-YS in Norway.

The unions were also asked to comment more generally on the situation in prisons in their countries, and the responses point to a worrying situation in many countries.

Union (country)	Issue
ACV-OD/CSC SP (Belgium)	There is still a problem with the large number of prisoners, around 1,500 more than in the recent past.
CGSP-ACOD (Belgium)	There are problems in the light of the budget cuts for personal and running costs.
VVL (Finland)	The government plans to cut spending by €10 million, with closure of three open prisons and two closed prisons being converted into open prisons.
FP CGIL (Italy)	The block on the replacement of staff and the failure to renew the collective agreement for six years, in other words a pay freeze, has resulted in a substantial ageing of the workforce as well a dramatic impoverishment of prison staff and their families. There is also a longer wait for pension rights. The result is that prison staff are depressed and demotivated.
FNV Overheid (Netherlands)	The government's austerity measures, which include big cuts in staff numbers, have resulted in pressure in all the custodial services.
KY-YS (Norway)	The main challenge facing the union at present are the organisational readjustments.
SNLP (Romania)	There has been some investment in prisons in recent years as the number of inmates increased sharply from around 26,000 five years ago to 33,000 in 2013, before falling back to around 30,000 at the end of 2014. However, no additional staff have been recruited and the numbers retiring from the service have not been matched by the number graduating from training establishments for prison staff. The Penal Code was changed in 2014 and this had some impact on the prison system, as it adjusted some prison sentences and provided new alternatives to prison. However, there continues to be a shortage of staff, who have to work long hours with old and inadequate equipment.
ACAIP-USO (Spain)	Because of cuts, adequate maintenance is not carried out which produces a deterioration in the prisons
POA (UK)	The prison population is at record levels (86,000 in England and Wales) while there are fewer staff producing increased levels of violence.
RCN (UK)	The 2014-15 report from Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons reflects our concerns. This stated "More prisoners were murdered, killed themselves, self-harmed and were victims of assaults than five years ago. There were more serious assaults and the number of assaults and serious assaults against staff also rose."

## Health and safety concerns

There was clear concern about health and safety issues among the unions who responded to the survey. Eight unions considered that the health and staff of staff in prison was more of a problem than it had been five years earlier (ACV-OD/CSP SP (Belgium), Faengselsforbundet (Denmark), UFAP-UNSA (France), FP CGIL (Italy), FNV Overheid (Netherlands), ACAIP-USO (Spain) and POA and RCN (both UK). Four unions, CGSP-ACOD (Belgium), KTAMS (Northern Cyprus), VVL (Finland) and KY-YS (Norway) thought that there had been no change and only two, ROTAL (Estonia) and SNLP (Romania), thought that the health and safety of prison staff was now less of a problem.

## Violence

One of the major health and safety problems identified by the unions was violence directed against staff by prisoners. Nine of the 14 unions considered that the number of violent attacks by prisoners on staff had increased over the last five years. These were ACV-OD/CSC SP in Belgium, Faengselsforbundet in Denmark, UFAP-UNSA in France, FNV Overheid in the Netherlands, SNLP in Romania, ACAIP-USO in Spain and both the POA and RCN in the UK. Only four unions, CGSP-ACOD in Belgium, ROTAL in Estonia, VVL in Finland and KY-YS in Norway, thought there had been no change in the level of violence towards staff, and KTAMS in Northern Cyprus was the only union which though there had been an improvement.

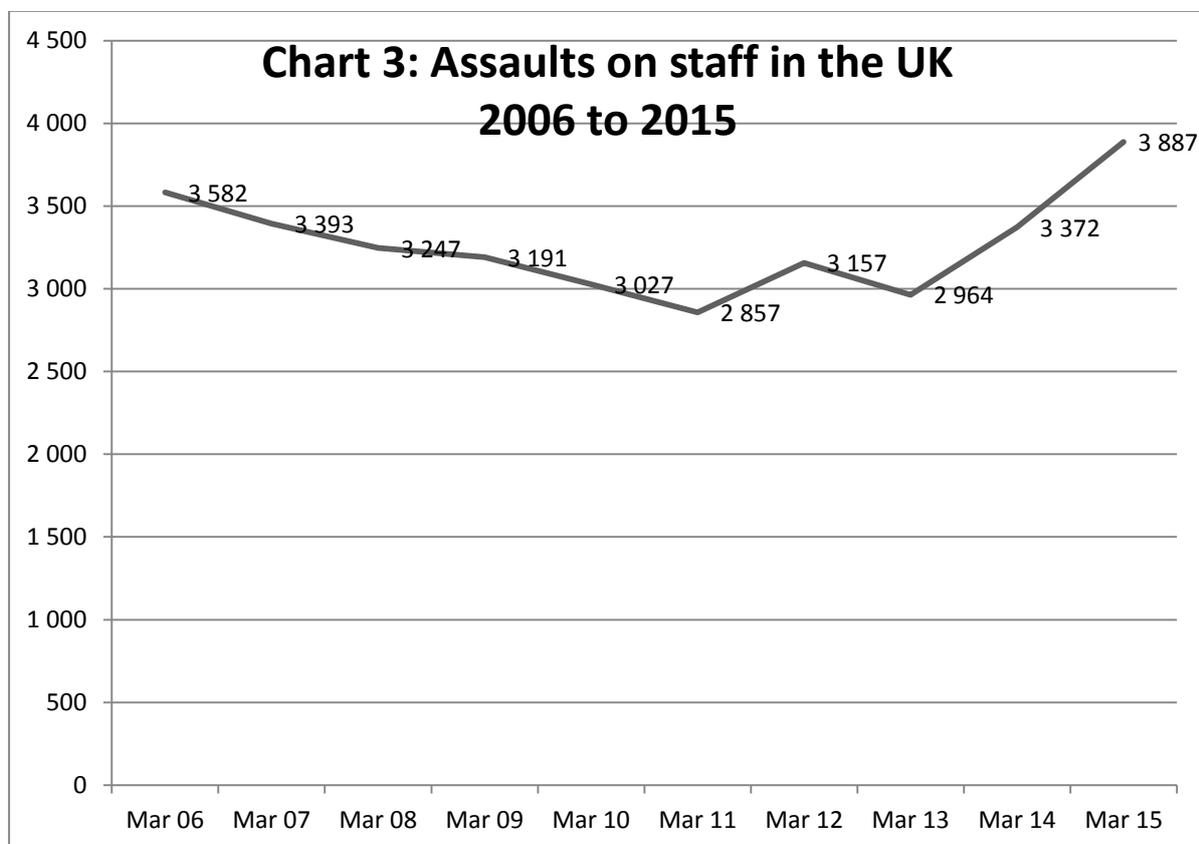
A number of the unions were able to provide more detail on violent attacks on staff:

Union (country)	Extent of and issues around violence
ACV-OD/CSC SP (Belgium)	There are around 1,000 accidents at work a year, of which 700 are a consequence of violent attacks.
FP CGIL (Italy)	There were around 900 violent incidents involving attacks on staff in 2014, with assaults using boiling oil and water being the most common.
FNV Overheid (Netherlands)	It is difficult to provide statistics because the recording of incidents is poorly organised. However, because there are fewer staff, those remaining are under greater pressure and have less time to interact with detainees. Moving staff between prisons also creates problems, as does the fact that new flexible staff receive less training and have fewer opportunities to train.
SNLP (Romania)	Prisoners are more demanding than in the past; conditions still need improvement; and the staff are outnumbered, ageing and more stressed.
ACAIP-USO (Spain)	The reduction in the number of staff has worsened the situation in terms of staff safety.
POA (UK)	The number of violent assaults on staff has increased by 36%.

Statistics, either published officially or collected by the unions, indicate the worsening situation in some cases. In Spain, ACAIP-USO pointed out in a report presented to a group of parliamentarians in 2014 that until 2006 details of attacks on prison staff were included along with other information on escapes and prison disturbances in the annual reports of the prison service. However, since that date this information has no longer been published. The union therefore collected its own data and found that over the 11 years from the start of 2003

until the end of 2013 there had been 2,882 attacks on staff, equivalent to one every two days. Even more seriously, it found that the number of attacks had increased, going from 220 in 2003 to 255 in 2005, 275 in 2008 and 323 in 2010. By 2013, the latest year for which the union had collected figures, there were 329 attacks, 49.5% more than in 2003. (These figures are for the whole of Spain other than Catalonia.) The union also pointed out that the number of prison staff affected by the attacks was higher than the number of attacks themselves, as frequently several staff members are injured at the same time. In 2013, for example, the 329 assaults led to 480 employees being injured.<sup>5</sup>

In the UK, official statistics on injuries are produced and they paint a depressing picture.<sup>6</sup> They show that while the number of assaults on staff fell steadily from 3,582 in the year to March 2006 to 2,857 in the year to March 2011, at a time when staff numbers were generally rising<sup>7</sup>, since then, as the number of staff has fallen, it has increased to 3,887, 8.5% higher than it was 10 years earlier and 36% higher than at the lowest point (see Chart 3)



The situation is even worse if only serious assaults are taken into account. Here, there was no improvement in the early part of the period and since 2013 serious assaults have

<sup>5</sup> Acaip: Agresiones a funcionarios, una agresión cada dos días 15 July 2014

[https://www.acaip.es/images/docs/160714\\_agresiones\\_203\\_2013.pdf](https://www.acaip.es/images/docs/160714_agresiones_203_2013.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> Safety in Custody Statistics England and Wales, Ministry of Justice, July 2015

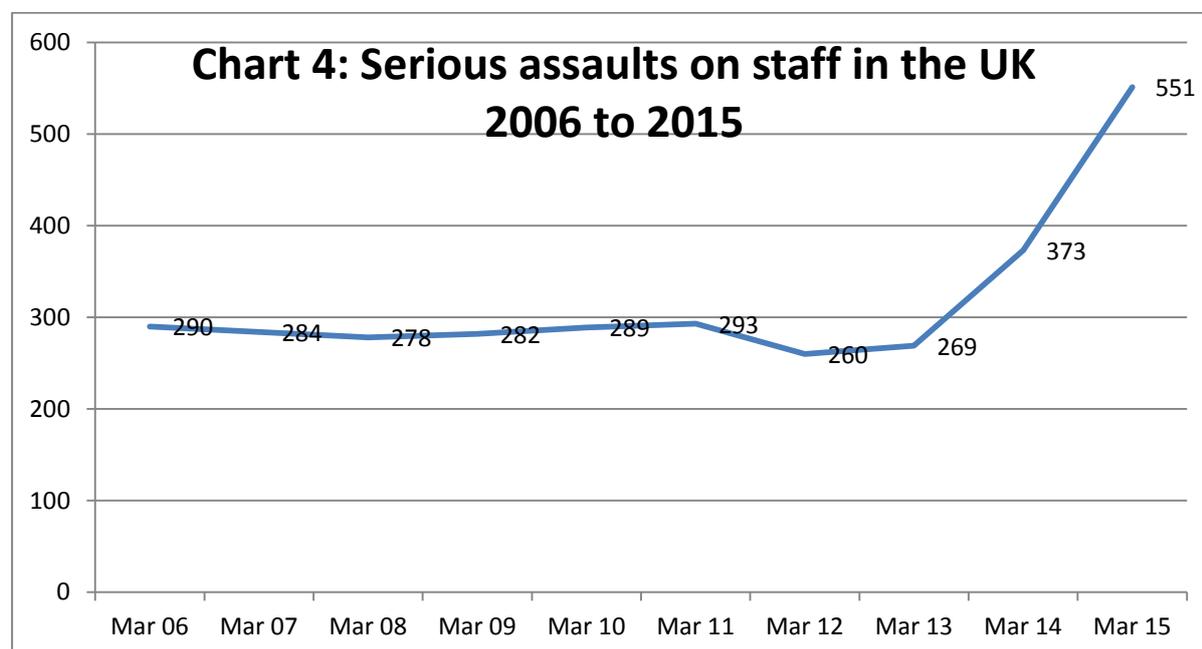
[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/449648/safety-in-custody-2015.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/449648/safety-in-custody-2015.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> Staff numbers in the prison service increased steadily from 2000, when the figures first began to be collected, until 2009. Since then it has fallen, although some of this has been the result of the transfer of staff to private prisons.

National Offender Management Service: Workforce Statistics Bulletin 30th June 2013

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/233100/noms-workforce\\_bulletin-300613.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/233100/noms-workforce_bulletin-300613.pdf)

rocketed, going from 269 in the year to March 2013 to 373 in the year to March 2014 and 551 in the year to March 2015. This means the number of serious assaults more than doubled in just two years.



## Stress

Against this background, it is no surprise to find that almost all unions responding to the survey considered that levels of stress among prison staff had increased over the last five years. Only one, KY-YS in Norway, said that there had been no change. All the others reported that the situation had got worse, and many explained the reasons.

As well as the pressures of the job itself, such as an increased workload or the threat of violence, the responses also indicate the impact of government austerity policies which hold down or cut wages and reduce staff numbers. Five unions specifically mention this.

Union (country)	Reasons for increased stress
CSP-ACOD (Belgium)	Austerity.
ACV-OD/CSC SP (Belgium)	More work and fewer staff means that the pressure of work has increased. Taking holidays is a big problem in Belgian prisons.
VVL (Finland)	There is more stress because people are worried about their jobs.
FP CGIL (Italy)	Research by the University of Padua published in 2015 found that 20% of prison staff in the Veneto Region were depressed and many took alcohol and drugs (see below).
FNV Overheid (Netherlands)	The austerity measures imposed on the system have led to an increase in stress. Workers are concerned about their future and employment within the prison system.
SNLP (Romania)	There is not enough investment in improving working conditions; the same number of staff have to undertake more tasks; and there are more prisoners. In addition, a lot of public figures (politicians, businessmen and

	judges) have recently been sent to prison for corruption. Dealing with this category of inmates is very demanding, especially as the media have a big interest in them. The financial crisis has also put additional pressure on staff, particularly younger employees.
ACAIP-USO	Pay cuts, reductions in the number of employees and the lack of opportunities to gain a permanent position or more from one permanent position to another.
POA (UK)	Research by the University of Bedfordshire found very high levels of stress (see below).

Two unions, FP CGIL in Italy and the POA in the UK were able to point to academic studies which had examined the degree of stress faced by prison staff, and in both cases the situation described by the academics is extremely disturbing.

The Italian study by the University of Padua examined the situation of 400 prison staff in the Veneto region.<sup>8</sup> It found that 20% of the staff were suffering from depression and discomfort caused by the burden of working shifts and mental fatigue. There was bullying and a military hierarchy which meant that the most unpleasant duties were always undertaken by the most junior staff. One consequence had been the suicide of three members of staff in the last three years.

The UK study was carried out by a team lead by Professor Gail Kinman at the University of Bedfordshire.<sup>9</sup> It looked at responses from 1,682 participants and, as reported by the British Psychological Society:

“Analysis found that the level of work-related demands was considerably higher and control and support from managers were lower in the prison service than in other ‘safety critical’ occupations such as the police and the fire and rescue service. Officers frequently reported psychological health problems related to their working conditions, such as depression, anxiety and emotional exhaustion, as well as sleeping difficulties and cognitive deficits. Of particular concern was the finding that disclosing work-related stress is highly stigmatised in the prison service and there is little support and training available. Many felt that the support that was offered was not confidential which further discouraged uptake. Moreover, most respondents expressed reluctance to take sick leave due to feelings of job insecurity and fears for the safety of their colleagues and prisoners.”<sup>10</sup>

## Sickness absence

Despite these very difficult working conditions, most unions – nine of the 14 who responded – did not consider that levels of sickness absence among prison staff were higher than five years earlier, and one KTAMS in Northern Cyprus, thought they had fallen. However, five unions, FP CGIL (Italy), FNV Overheid (Netherlands) and the POA and RCN (both UK) estimated that sickness absence levels had increased. FP CGIL said sickness levels were around 9% to 10% higher and that this was the result of an ageing workforce. FNV Overheid

<sup>8</sup> “La polizia penitenziaria in Veneto, condizioni lavorative e salute organizzativa” by Dipartimento di sociologia dell’Università di Padova <http://www.vvox.it/2015/02/03/carceri-venete-secondini-depressi-e-rischio-suicidio/>

<sup>9</sup> Independent survey of Prison Officers reveals staff totally demoralised, University of Bedfordshire 19.11.14 <http://www.beds.ac.uk/news/2014/november/independent-survey-of-prison-officers-reveals-staff-totally-demoralised>

<sup>10</sup> Concerns over lack of support for prison officers’ mental health, The British Psychological Society 7.1.15 <http://www.bps.org.uk/news/concerns-over-prison-officers%E2%80%99-mental-health>

reported that official figures showed a sickness absence rate of around 7% in 2012 and that the annual report of the prison service indicated that sickness absence had increased in 2013. Although the report had not included new figures, the indication that absence rates were higher corresponded with the union's own information.

### Action to improve health and safety

In most countries, where unions responded to the survey, prisons are subject to the same health and safety provisions as other workplaces, although FNV Overheid said that while in theory the situation was the same, in practice it was not. Only four unions said that health and safety provisions were different in prisons. These were KTAMS in Northern Cyprus, UFAP-UNSA in France, FP CGIL in Italy and ACAIP-USO in Spain. FP CGIL said that recent improvements in health and safety regulations were not being implemented in respect of prison staff, and ACAIP-USO commented that the prison administration always attempted to remain at the margin of general regulations covering health and safety alleging that security reasons made this necessary.

Most unions indicated that there were structures and/or policies in place intended to maintain and improve the health and safety of those working in prisons. Although some unions did not reply to this question, only FP CGIL in Italy said that there were no health and safety structures. Their detailed responses are set out below.

<b>Union (Country)</b>	<b>Structures for health and safety</b>
CGSP/ACOD (Belgium)	There are health and safety committees in many prisons and the majority also have a health and safety expert.
Faengselsforbundet (Denmark)	There is policy for the health of staff in prisons and an agreement on physical and mental support.
ROOTAL (Estonia)	Prisons have health and safety representatives
VVL (Finland)	Good occupational health care. Health and safety committees should be set up in larger workplaces (above 20 employees).
FP CGIL (Italy)	None.
FNV Overheid (Netherlands)	There is a health and safety officer in prisons, although because of austerity measures, this individual is often no longer full time. The works council also has health and safety responsibilities.
KY-YS (Norway)	There are structures for meetings at all organisational levels where health and safety is discussed with the unions.
SNLP (Romania)	In each prison there is a health and safety committee, which meets regularly; the union reps are part of this committee which is usually chaired by the management of the prison. However, most of the decisions are conditioned by the budget and there is not enough power to enforce the measures necessary to provide adequate health and safety standards.
ACAIP-USO (Spain)	There is a preventative service which supervises health and safety standards at a number of prisons, but the number of staff involved is clearly insufficient.
POA (UK)	There is a national committee for health and safety, as well as an advisory committee, and there are health and safety reps (who are union representatives) in every prison.

The position with regard to training is, however, less encouraging. Four unions specifically said that no health and safety training was provided. These were the two Belgian unions,

ACV-OD/CSC SP and CGSP/ACOD, FP CGIL in Italy and the POA in the UK. Only five unions responded in detail to this question, from Denmark, Estonia, Norway, Romania, Spain and the UK (RCN), and for two of ACAIP-USO in Spain and the RCN in the UK, the training provided seems unsatisfactory (see below).

<b>Union (Country)</b>	<b>Training for health and safety</b>
Faengselsforbundet (Denmark)	Health and safety training is included in the initial 30 weeks of theoretical training and the ongoing training of about 1½ days a year.
ROTAL (Estonia)	Staff take first aid and firefighting course.
KY-YS (Norway)	Prison staff have regular training on health and safety issues – normally annual.
SNLP (Romania)	Training is provided to staff by departmental managers, and there is a yearly meeting of those responsible for health and safety at the workplace.
ACAIP-USO (Spain)	A very limited number of employees complete health and safety courses each year.
RCN (UK)	Limited – poorly attended because of staff sickness.

The responses indicate that most unions see themselves playing a role with regard to health and safety, although some answered the question with regard to their general approach, whereas others described their specific position in the health and safety structure or their own health and safety activities.

Not all the responses were positive. While KY-YS in Norway was able to say that, “the unions have a clear health and safety role, which is set out in the basic agreement between the union and employer”, both FP CGIL in Italy and ACAIP-USO in Spain indicated that the reality of union influence on health and safety was not in line with the theoretical position. As a result, in both these countries, it seems that employers do not listen sufficiently to the views of the unions on health and safety issues.

<b>Union (Country)</b>	<b>Role of unions in health and safety</b>
ACV-OD/CSC SP (Belgium)	To monitor that the laws and regulations on employee protection are respected.
CGSP/ACOD (Belgium)	Unions are present in the consultation structures.
ROTAL (Estonia)	As observers.
VVL (Finland)	Unions provide insurance.
UFAP-UNSA (France)	To hear and assess the extent of employees’ health and safety concerns and to report them to senior management, along with proposals for action.
FP CGIL (Italy)	Election of a representative by and from among the union members, whose views are never listened to by the prison administration.
FNV Overheid (Netherlands)	Unions give information, try to enforce the safety rules in prisons and institutions, organise and train their members, maintain contact and provide information to works councils.
KY-YS (Norway)	The unions have a clear health and safety role, which is set out in the basic agreement between the union and employer.
SNLP (Romania)	To negotiate the collective agreement about the amount of resources invested in improving working conditions; to monitor this; and to complain about the lack of action.

ACAIP-USO (Spain)	There is a committee which in theory should meet once a year. However, the union which represents the largest number of prison staff is not invited, allegedly for technical reasons.
POA (UK)	To ensure the health and safety and well-being of our members.
RCN (UK)	There are 24 RCN prisons reps, 14 RCN stewards and two RCN safety reps.

## Collective bargaining and staff representation

In almost all the countries from which responses were received, unions were able to represent all grades of staff in prisons. The only exception was Finland, where VVL reported that prison directors were excluded. In addition, in the UK, the RCN's own rules limit its membership to nurses, student nurses and those providing health or social care under the supervision of a nurse.

Asked how pay was set – by law or by collective bargaining – the responses split more or less evenly. In four countries, Belgium, Finland the Netherlands and Norway, collective bargaining was the method used to set pay. In the Netherlands, for example, FNV Overheid explained that prison staff pay was governed by the collective agreement that covers all civil servants working for central government.

In another five, Northern Cyprus, Estonia, France, Romania and Spain, the unions reported that pay levels were the result of a unilateral government decision. In Romania, SNLP said that prison staff have special status and their pay is therefore set by law, and in Spain ACAIP-USO reported that although, in theory, pay should be subject to collective bargaining, in practice, the government decides.

In the three remaining countries, Denmark, Italy and the UK, the position is less clear cut. Faengselsforbundet in Denmark reported that basic pay is set unilaterally by the government, but that some pay elements are determined through collective bargaining. FP CGIL reported that pay in Italy was set through a combination of collective bargaining and government decision, with the outcome seen as being frequently unsatisfactory for the unions. In the UK, pay for public sector prison staff, like some other parts of the public sector, is set through a pay review body, in this case the Prison Service Pay Review Body. This provides advice on pay taking into account both the need to recruit, retain and motivate suitably able and qualified people, and the financial circumstances of the government. The government is not obliged to accept the pay review body's advice, although it normally does.

In half the countries, there is no variation between pay across the country. The exceptions are Denmark, where 80% to 90% of pay is set centrally, with 10% to 20% determined locally), Estonia, where pay varies by up to 30%, depending on the size and location of the prison, France, Norway, where it varies between districts, Spain, where pay in Catalonia is different, and the UK, where pay rates are uniform across the public sector prison service, but can vary in privately run prisons.

Effective collective bargaining depends on unions being able to exert pressure and in the last resort take industrial action. However, prison staff only have the right to strike in half of the countries surveyed. The six countries where prison staff can strike are Belgium, Northern Cyprus, Finland, the Netherlands, Norway and Spain. However, the Spanish union ACAIP-USO reports that although in theory this right exists, in practice it is negated by the imposition of a duty to provide essential services and that the level of services imposed can sometimes be higher than the level seen under normal conditions.

The six countries where prison staff do not have the right to strike are: Denmark, where prison officers are restricted in the same way as police officers; Estonia, where state employees generally are not permitted to strike, France; Italy, where custodial staff (polizia penitenziaria) have no right to strike; Romania, where the government removed the right to strike in 2011 after one day strikes in 2009 and 2010 (there was no consultation on this decision); and the UK where the government imposed restrictions on strike action in 1994.

## Staff representation

Workplace representation for prison staff largely reflects the systems of representation in place more widely in each country.

In three countries, Belgium, the Netherlands and Spain, representation is primarily through membership of works council-like bodies, although the representation generally comes through the unions. In most of the others – there was no response to this question from Northern Cyprus or France – representation is provided directly through the unions, although sometimes together with other bodies. In all cases the domination of unions is clear. In Spain, ACAIP-USO reported that the extent of workplace representation was now worse than in 2012, as before that date representative councils existed in every prison. Now they are limited to one per province.

Country	Workplace representation in prison
Belgium	CCB (Comité de Concertation de Base) in French or BOC (Basisoverlegcomité) in Flemish, in which each representative union is entitled to have three representatives together with representatives of the employers.
Denmark	Every prison has a union steward representing the employees, and a cooperation committee made up of equal numbers of employee and management representatives.
Estonia	Union representatives chosen by the members – three in the prison of the responding union.
Finland	Union has two representatives (trustees) and one health and safety representative in every prison.
Italy	For custodial staff in prisons (polizia penitenziaria) representation is provided by local union organisations. Other staff are represented through the RSU, which is directly elected by all employees, although the nominations come from the unions.
Netherlands	Works council, Ondernemingsraad, a purely employee body, which is elected by all employees. (Works councils should be set up in all workplaces with more than 50 employees.) The unions can nominate members to the works council and FNV Overheid reports that, as well as this, it has active member groups in some prisons.
Norway	Union representatives chosen by the members in all prisons
Romania	Representation is through the union. The union representative is invited to participate in meetings of the advisory board which exists in each prison, although the final decision is taken by the manager. The union also nominates individuals to take part in various committees, covering health and safety, discipline and other issues.
Spain	Provincial councils of representatives of all central government employees. Each union depending on the level of support it has received is able to send representatives to these councils.
UK	Representation is through the unions. In the case of the POA, each prison has

	a branch committee. The RCN, which has many fewer members working in prisons, has 24 prison reps.
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## Privatisation and other changes

The UK is the only country among those responding where currently some prisons are privately run. There are currently 14 privately managed prisons in the UK, operated by G4S, Serco and Sodexo.

However, the private sector is involved in the sector other ways in other countries and there are plans to extend this further. In Belgium, the government is using a “public-private partnership” to build new prisons, including a major facility at Haren, north of Brussels. Under this arrangement, the private sector finances, builds and maintains new prisons, with the state paying over a long period. In Denmark, there is growing pressure to put some ancillary services, such as the transportation of prisoners, out to tender. In France, the government has discussed plans for private prisons in the past and public-private partnerships have been used to build a number of new prisons. In the Netherlands, although all prisons are still managed by the state, some youth custody institutions have been privatised. Finally, in Spain, an increasing number of services are now provided by private companies. This started with maintenance, moved on to cleaning and has now been extended to the external security of prisons. ACAIP-USO fears that, in the future, elements of internal security may be handed over to private companies.

## Union demands and concerns

Against this background, unions were asked to identify their main demands and concerns.

There were common concerns across countries, with the threat of privatisation, cost savings, pay levels, job security and an ageing workforce all being referred to by unions in more than one country.

Union (Country)	Main concerns
CGSP/ACOD (Belgium)	Increasing threat of privatisation.
Faengselsforbundet (Denmark)	Cost savings and privatisation.
ROTAL (Estonia)	A reduction in workers’ rights.
VVL (Finland)	Threats to jobs.
FP CGIL (Italy)	Not being able to carry out the tasks entrusted to us because of a large number of negative factors. These include: an ageing workforce, reduced rights; lack of appropriate equipment; excessive workload and insufficient staff leading to stress. All of this often makes it difficult to act as the norms require.
FNV Overheid (Netherlands)	Job security, pay, health and safety, training and education.
KY-YS (Norway)	The export of prisoners and the government’s initiative relating to a treaty with the Netherlands covering Norwegian prisoners abroad.
SNLP (Romania)	The low priority given to prisons, leading to reduced budgets, fewer staff and worse working conditions.

ACAIP-USO (Spain)	The ageing workforce and more so-called “radicalised” inmates
POA (UK)	Violence against staff, the increase in the pension age, overcrowding with fewer staff and pay restraint.
RCN (UK)	Reduction in the number of nursing leadership roles; safe staffing levels; working longer than contractual hours; ageing workforce; and a general reduction of nursing numbers in the National Health Service.

There was also consistency in union demands, particularly in the area of collective bargaining. Unsurprisingly most unions called for improved pay and conditions. However, four unions, in Italy, Romania, Spain and the UK, indicated how the situation had deteriorated by calling for their previous conditions or rights to be restored.

<b>Union (Country)</b>	<b>Main collective bargaining demands</b>
ACV-OD/CSC SP (Belgium)	Maintain staffing levels and have own pension scheme
CGSP/ACOD (Belgium)	Action on working conditions
Faengselsforbundet (Denmark)	More pay and better working conditions
ROTAL (Estonia)	Better working time arrangements, improved working conditions and reduced workload
FP CGIL (Italy)	Renewal of the collective bargaining agreement in 2016. This has been blocked for six years resulted in a major loss of purchasing power among prison staff. End on the block on recruitment
FNV Overheid (Netherlands)	Employability for all workers, especially older ones and better future prospects for prison staff
KY-YS (Norway)	Improved basic wages and conditions
SNLP (Romania)	Reintroduction of the right to strike so as to regain the ability to negotiate
ACAIP-USO (Spain)	Recovery of economic rights that have been lost; annual opportunities to put in for permanent jobs or transfers; improved health and safety conditions.
POA (UK)	Return to collective bargaining instead of a Pay Review Body. This has been partially achieved through the agreement on bonuses reached with the prison management, which includes a commitment that the two sides will submit joint evidence to the Pay Review Body in areas where they have reached agreement
RCN (UK)	Safe staffing levels, investment in new nursing posts and a halt to the downgrading of existing posts.

Asked about their main legislative and policy demands, the responses from the unions covered a range of issues, from recruitment policies for new staff to better arrangements for older staff.

<b>Union (Country)</b>	<b>Main legislative and policy demands</b>
CGSP/ACOD (Belgium)	Halt the obligation to provide minimum services during industrial action
Faengselsforbundet (Denmark)	Safety at work, sufficient staff, better education and special schemes for older workers
ROTAL (Estonia)	Equal pay for equal work in all Estonian prisons (some prisons pay up to 30% more)
VVL (Finland)	More money for the prison service
FP CGIL (Italy)	Repealing legislation which seeks to recruit prison staff from the armed forces rather than open competition and have the right to strike
FNV Overheid (Netherlands)	No privatisation, more money for health and safety, better training and education
KY-YS (Norway)	Maintaining the policy of reintegrating prisoners into society and the standardisation of prisons across Norway
SNLP (Romania)	A modernised statute for prison workers, changes in the labour code and bringing the statute for prison workers in line with labour code
ACAIP-USO (Spain)	Creation of a sector with a specific regulations for prison staff

## Conclusion

The overall picture which emerges from this report is of a prison service under pressure across Europe, with staff struggling to cope and often facing an alarming number of violent assaults and suffering disturbing levels of stress. In this situation the unions have a key role to play in defending and improving the terms and conditions of their members and seeking to provide a decent service to prisoners and the wider society.

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an EPSU survey of the impact of the economic crisis on prisons  
*Lionel Fulton, Labour Research Department, June 2016*



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