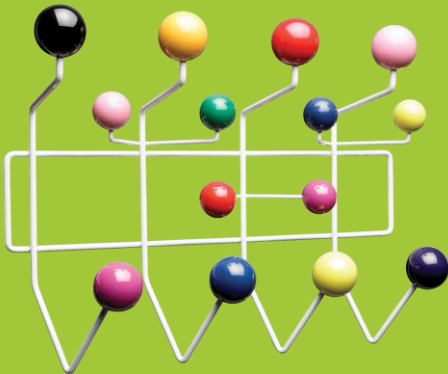


# Quality employment and quality public services

## Prison Services



# Anchors of employment quality: a framework

## Goal:

- Understanding employment quality of prison staff in different European countries.

## Focus:

- Detection of differences in employment quality of prison staff between the countries.
- Explaining these differences by the interplay between political choices and a growing societal complexity.
- Recommendations

# Employment quality of prison staff at risk

*Staff-turnover is high to humongous – Sweden, Italy, Greece, UK*

*Prison staff risk emotional exhaustion, and depersonalization – Italy, Greece, UK*

*20% staff shortage – Italy*

*Having a second job is normal – Italy*

*7000 full time prison staff fired in period 2010-2016, the cost of riots since then was £9,363,964 – UK*

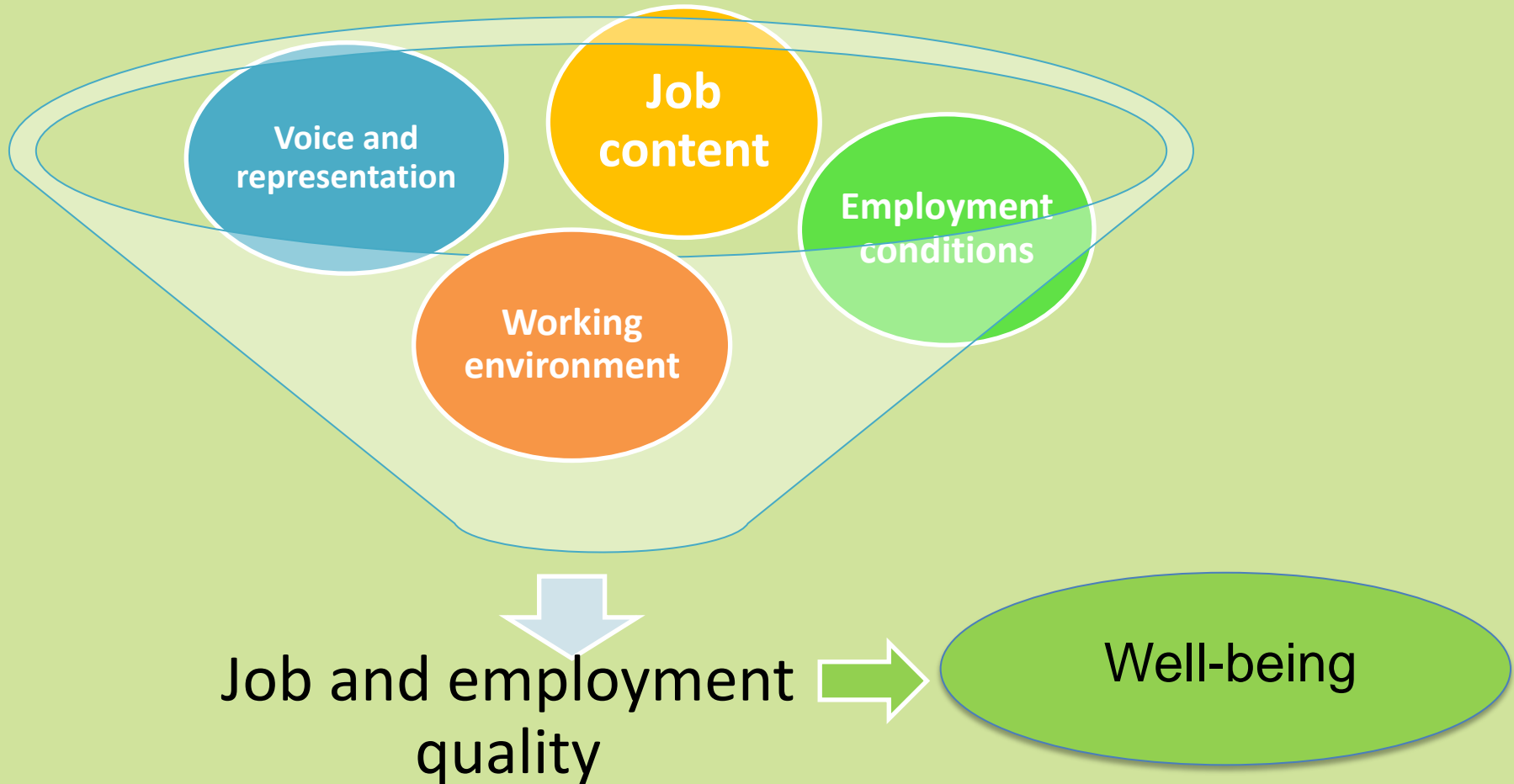
*In 2017, 67% of prison establishments were overcrowded – UK*

*3 in 10 officers victim of physical assault – UK*

*Wage cuts up to 50% of net income – Greece*

*No structural training programs – Greece*

# But different causes in QWL



# Sweden: can their model survive?

## Clear focus on **rehabilitation**:

- *Highly trained prison staff*
- *With broad, varied tasks and a lot of autonomy*
- *And good employment conditions*
- *Established social dialogue*
- *In modern infrastructure*
- *Without overcrowding or understaffing*

## But shifting towards focus on **surveillance**:

- *More specialization in prison staff functions (staff has to choose)*
- *More safety-procedures and larger prisons*
- *Less autonomy and shortened training for recruits*
- *Less individual counseling*

→ **Austerity and harsher societal climate against crime**

With clear consequences for quality of employment

# Sweden: can their model survive?

## **Job content** became more **complex**:

- Punitive turn and harder societal climate against crime
  - *More security rules/procedures to follow*
  - *More specialisation in staff functions surveillance vs rehabilitation*
- New public management
  - *More administration / centralisation*
  - *Less direct contact with inmates*
- More diverse inmates

Combined with **limited budget** and no additional staff

= employment quality (and quality of service) at risk!

# Italy: discourse versus practice

Official policy focuses on social re-inclusion and re-education

<-> Prison practice is organized for surveillance

- *Only 6% of the resources are destined for rehabilitation (80% goes to surveillance staff)*
- *Overrepresentation of surveillance staff*
- *No criteria for assessing quality of prison services*
- *Italian prisons are known as 'hard'.*

A focus on **surveillance**, a **harder societal climate** and **austerity** lead to *overcrowding* and *understaffing*, both to the detriment of the employment quality of prison staff

# Italy: discourse versus practice

## **Employment conditions** under increasing pressure:

- Low wages – leading to secondary jobs
- Irregular working hours and frequent overtime due to overcrowding and understaffing
- Limited career opportunities
- Training gap between theory (hard skills) and practice, which requires soft skills
- Narrow jobs, high work pressure and limited autonomy
- More hierarchy (role of management decisive), limiting good support

Combined with **limited budget**

= lower employment quality (and lower quality of service)



# UK: at the rock bottom...

**Hybrid of goals:** surveillance & rehabilitation in a context of austerity and harsh societal climate

- Little education and low level training
- Poor employment conditions & little voice
- But requiring professional services to vulnerable inmates

No decision-making power:

- Especially in private prisons
- Often highly hierarchical mega-prisons

***We're at the rock bottom and it's going to take a lot to get that back"***

# UK: at the rock bottom...

## **Job content** became more **complex**:

- “Jack of all trades, master of none”
  - *Multiple tasks, no time to do anything in detail*
  - *No time to build a relationship with the inmates*
- Limited social contact due to severe understaffing
- Increase in workload due to overcrowding and understaffing

Combined with **very unsafe working environment**

= generates work related stress

# UK: at the rock bottom...

## Employment conditions further decreasing:

- Insufficient training
  - *Private prisons offer no on-the-job training*
  - *Almost no time of shadowing/tutoring for new recruits*
  - *Limited offer in training despite educational needs*
- Low pay
  - *No relation between training and wage level*
  - *Wage stagnation*
  - *Difficult wage negotiations*
- Limited career opportunities

Combined with **no right to strike**

= low employment quality and low quality of services

# Greece: austerity overrules intentions

Growing awareness of the importance of rehabilitation, but **focus on surveillance** in practice:

- *4000 custodian officers vs. 120 'reintegration' officers*
- *No structural training for custodian staff*

**Austerity** and harsher societal climate:

- *Understaffing + overcrowding (although improving) make work in prisons hard and unsafe*
- *Employment conditions went down, especially **wage & training***

→ *A informal rules, 'privilege system' to cope with complexity and uncertainty of prison work*

Strong trade union but limited impact

# Greece: austerity overrules intentions

## **Employment conditions** deteriorated heavily:

- *To up to 50 net wage decrease*
- *Initial training reduced from 6 months to 1 month (and for some no training at all)*
- *Training offered only ad hoc, depending on budget*
- *44% of prison officers experiences lack of knowledge on how to deal with conflicts*
- *Working times of sometimes 2 weeks without a day-off*

## **Job content:**

- *A lot of repetitive tasks and little decision making power*
- *Foreign inmates make work more complex*
- *Clear relation with organization of prisons*
  - *More job satisfaction if less hierarchy*

## **Unsafe working conditions**

- *A lot of incidents (even lethal) in last years*

# Country-specific points of attention

- Sweden
  - *Keep autonomy high*
  - *Keep rehabilitative and surveillance related tasks together*
  - *Limit administration*
- Italy
  - *More training on-the-job*
  - *More staff*
  - *Better employment conditions*
  - *Inclusion of rehabilitative tasks*
  - *More autonomy*

# Country-specific points of attention

- UK
  - *Safety first!*
  - *More training on-the-job*
  - *More staff*
  - *Better employment conditions*
  - *More autonomy*
- Greece
  - *Safety first as well!*
  - *Structural training programs*
  - *More staff*
  - *Better employment conditions in general*
  - *Less hierarchical organizations*

# Conclusion

