



**UNIVERSITY OF BUCHAREST  
FACULTY OF SOCIOLOGY AND SOCIAL WORK**

**Habilitation thesis**

**PROBATION: From theory to practice and back**

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## Summary

This paper introduces my scientific and other professional achievements. In terms of the scientific activity, my career has developed around four main research inter-related themes: comparative studies on probation, 'pains of probation' and user's view, staff skills and characteristics and resettlement work. The comparative studies on probation were mainly published in United Kingdom, Slovenia and the Netherlands. Most of them are papers that focus on different aspects of probation policy or practice. For instance, one of the first studies refers to how different probation services in Europe could be evaluated depending on their mission statement. Another study looks into how community sanctions and measures are produced and operate in different European jurisdictions. Directly linked to this subject, the latest article focuses on how penal strategies and policies travel around the world and how the concept of penal policy transfer should be adapted to the late modernity world we are living in. In this respect, the notions of interaction and partnership seem to be essential. The main achievement in this line of research is the study conducted together with prof. van Kalmthout – Probation in Europe – that describes in many details probation services in 32 European jurisdictions. All these studies contributed to a better understanding of how probation services are created and with what functions. Most of my studies are mostly descriptive and exploratory. The intention for the next years is to promote a more interpretative model of research in the comparative probation area.

The second line of research is 'pains of probation' and the user's view. In this respect, my research explored in what way the punishment recipients (the offenders) experience subjectively the supervision process. Eight different 'pains of probation' were identified and discussed as they affect the legitimacy and the effectiveness of rehabilitation interventions. The prisoner's perspective on the rehabilitation programs was also scrutinized as part of a development project aiming at designing a new reintegration model for ex-prisoners. Both studies focused on the negative side of supervision and only on the way the direct targets of punishment felt and understood the experience of penal control. In the framework of a COST program I will develop this perspective towards indirect recipients of the punishment (e.g. family) and would also incorporate the benefits of supervision and not only the frustrations.

The third main theme that I have developed is the probation staff skills and characteristics. In the papers published so far I have presented the current state of affairs in this area at the international level. I also identified and discussed the limits of the current research and developed a more comprehensive model of research that looks 360 degrees: what are the skills that are employed by probation staff, how are they developed or explained and how they influence the outcomes of supervision. By the end of this year the first results of this research are expected to be produced.

Resettlement work or how to reintegrate ex-prisoners is another important topic in my research career. In this respect I have elaborated a comprehensive literature review that shed a light on the main difficulties of

resettlement research and practice. In the same time I have elaborated together with other colleagues from UK a new pre post-release program that is currently in use in the Romanian prison and probation system. The model is based on two complementary theoretical paradigms and has a modular structure.

In the near future I plan to contribute to the development of a new trans-theoretical model of resettlement that would be based on what is known as effective so far and adapt it specifically for ex-prisoners.

In terms of professional development, I am the coordinator of the Master of Probation a master that was transformed radically in order to fit into the occupational standard of probation counselors in Romania. I am also involved in a ERASMUS project that aims at designing an European program for probation qualification. In the near future I plan to develop further the Master curricula in order to accommodate mediation and also to facilitate a better cross fertilization among different disciplines.