

The Risk Assessment Process in the Belgian Prison Service

Europis

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I. WHO ARE WE AND WHAT DO WE DO?

Service Psychosocial Expertise

3 levels

- Central level (Headquarter) = Central Psychosocial Service
- Regional level: supervision and intervision
- Local (prison) level = Psychosocial Service
 - Psychiatrists
 - Psychologists
 - Social workers

mission of the PSS

- Guide prisoners through their detention in view of their psychosocial reintegration
- Cooperate on a safe and humane detention
- From a scientific point of view, giving advice with respect to conditional release (& other modes of the execution of sanctions)

conditional release in Belgium

- Long history
- Significant changes after the 'Dutroux case'
- Main aspects of current legislation:
 - Possible from 1/3 of the sentence
 - Decision by a court (sentence + 3 years) on advice of local prison director & PSS
 - 'yes' except if there are contra-indications

conditional release in Belgium

- Conditional release: contra-indications:
 - Absence of reintegration perspectives
 - **Risk of committing new serious offences**
 - Risk of harassment of his/her victims
 - Attitude towards his/her victims
 - Efforts undertaken to pay compensation to his/her victims



II. WHY RISK ASSESSMENT

■ Assessment of:

■ **Internal** risks (escape, severe incidents, ...)

Bottom-up process (prison -> regional direction and director general: decisions about individual measures or regimes)

■ **External** risks (recidivism)

- Risk assessment = assessing the likelihood of committing (serious) new offences in the future

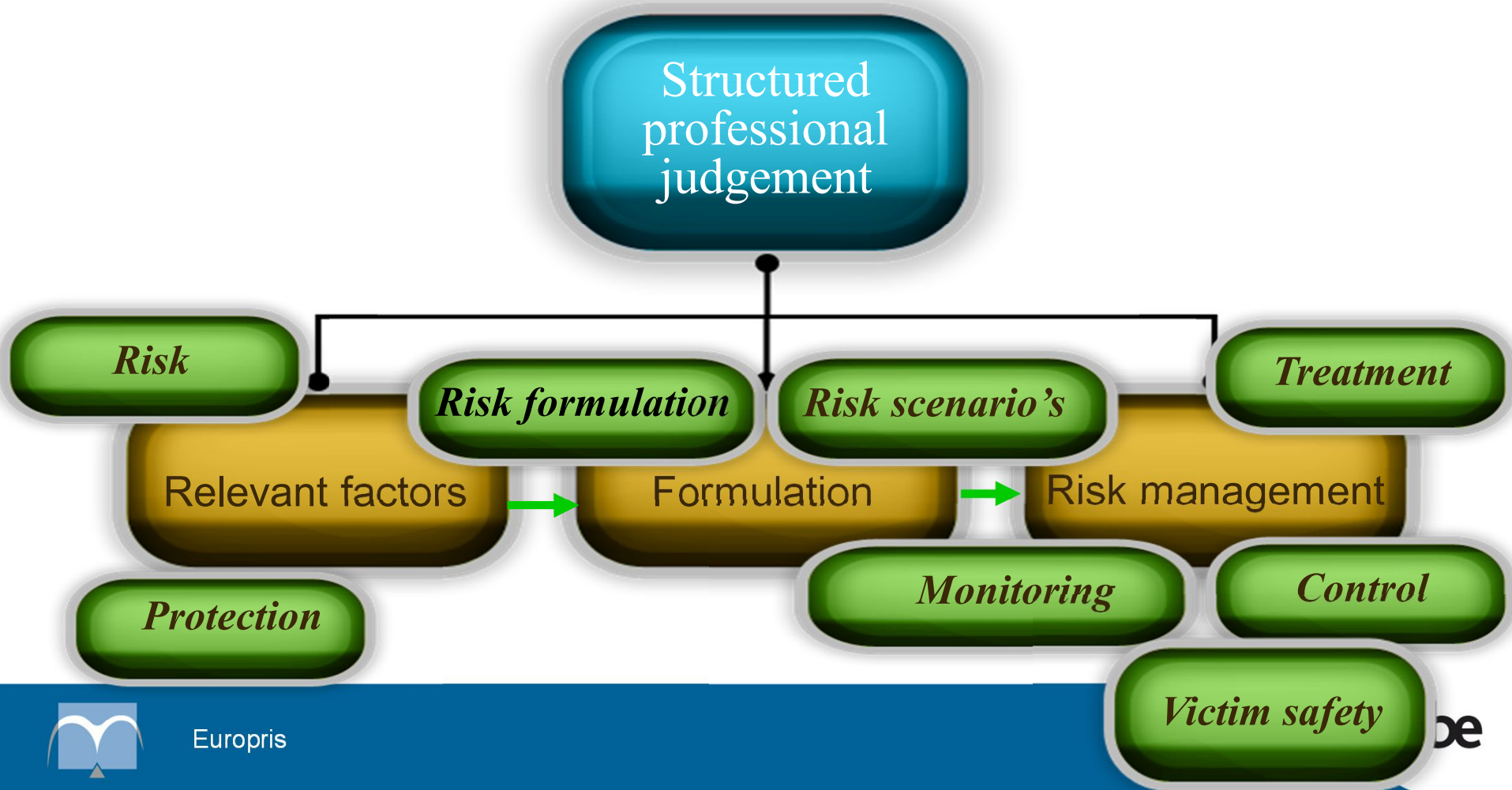
Risk: likelihood + severity + ...

- Risk assessment = process

-> final goal in our context is to **suggest** a reintegration plan that reduces the risk factors and maximizes the protective factors in order to maximize the chances for a successful reintegration into society

Risk Assessment Process

Doyle & Logan (2011)

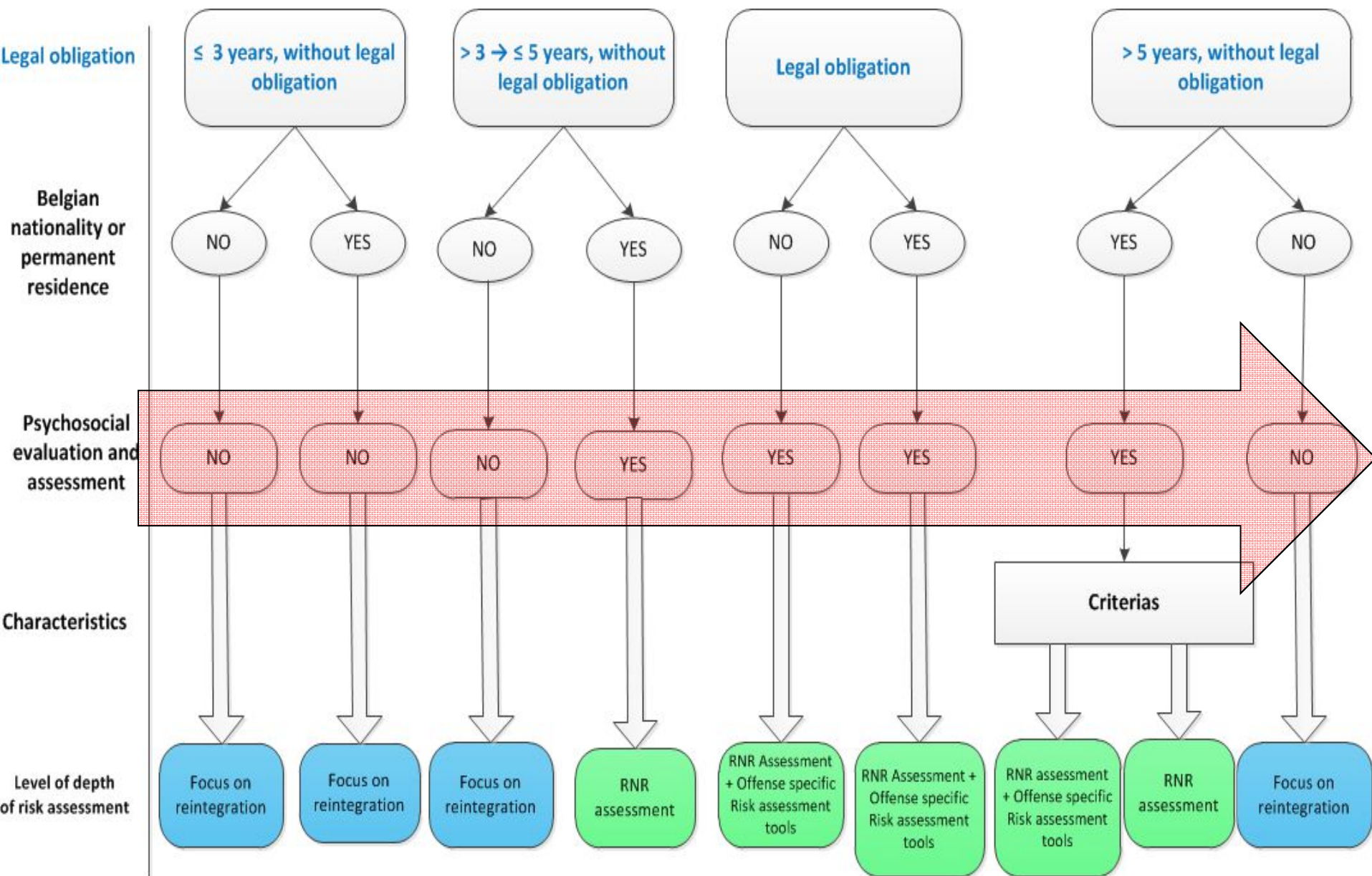




III. WHO TO ASSESS?

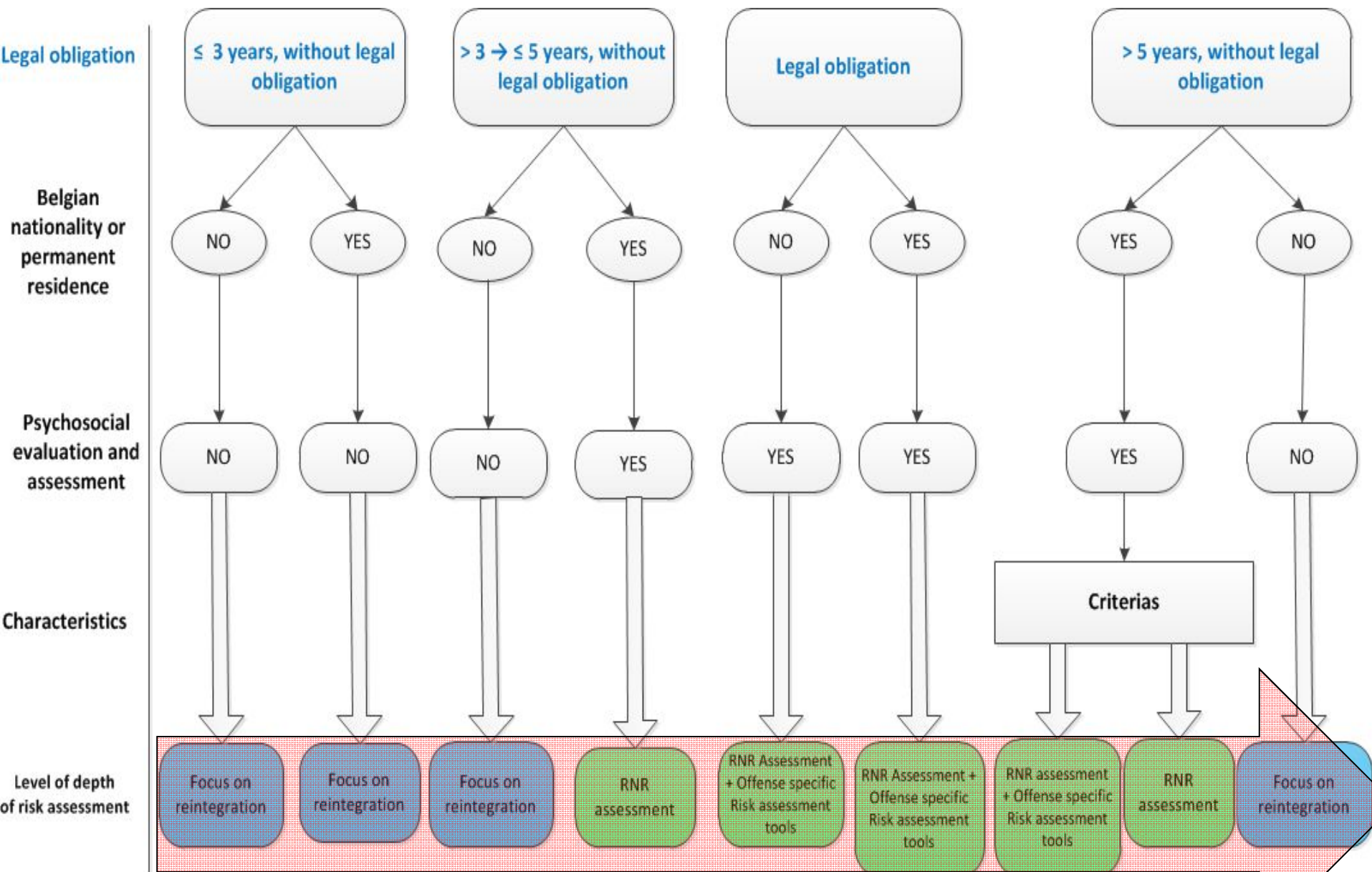
3 main criteria for psychosocial evaluation and risk assessment:

- Legal obligation (i.e. sex offenders)
- Length of sentence
- Belgian nationality or permanent residence





IV. HOW TO DO RISK ASSESSMENT AND DIFFERENT METHODS?



- **Standard risk assessment:** 8 criminogenic domains of Andrews & Bonta (Risk-Need-Responsivity Model)

- **4 major risk domains**

- History of Antisocial Behavior

- Antisocial Personality Pattern

- Antisocial Cognition

- Antisocial Associates

- **4 minor risk domains**

- Family / Marital Circumstances

- School / Work

- Leisure / Recreation

- Substance abuse

- Interviews/contact with prisoner
- Limited judicial information
- Observations (staff)
- Other available information

- **In depth risk assessment with instruments that include offence-specific risk factors**
 - Legal obligation (sex offenders)
 - Terrorism
 - Sentence length >5 years and specific criteria (e.g. nature of the offence, criminal history, current detention behaviour, ...)
- Convergent use of of actuarial (baseline estimation of risk) and structured professional judgement instruments like:
 - Static-99 and SVR-20 for sexual violence
 - VRAG and HCR-20 V3 for general violence
 - DVRAG and SARA for spousal assault

ACTUARIAL METHOD

- VRAG (Violence Risk Appraisal Guide)
- Static-99 (Sexual violence)
- DVRAG (domestic violence risk appraisal guide)

SPJ METHOD

- HCR-20V3 (historical clinical risk)
- SVR-20 (sexual violence risk)
- SARA (spousal assault risk assessment)
- B-SAFER (brief spousal assault form for the evaluation of risk)
- CARE-NL (child abuse risk evaluation)
- SRP (stalking risk profile)
- FAM (female additional manual)
- VERA-2R (violent extremism risk assessment)
- SAPROF (structured assessment of protective factors)
- PATRIARCH (risk for honour based violence)

- Interviews/contact with prisoner
- Heteroanamnestical information (spouse, parents, ...)
- Psychological/psychiatric assessment
- Observations (staff)
- Judicial files/dossier
 - Pre-sentence reports
 - Police reports
 - Judges sentencing comments

- Psychosocial staff is formally trained in:
 - Risk assessment methods
 - RNR-model
 - Risk assessment tools
 - Actuarial methods
 - Structured Professional Judgment tools
- Psychosocial staff:
 - Supervision
 - Intervision
- Importance of repeated assessments and consensus judgments!

Thank you for your attention
Further questions?

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