



Prison overcrowding

What's in a name ?

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overcrowding.
a widespread problem

Belgian situation:

- Capacity: 9736
- Population: 11.016
- Overcrowding: 14 %
 - 60% convicted – 35 % on remand
 - 5% internees – mentally ill
 - 96% male – 4% female



European situation:

Data for 31/01/2021	Prison population rates (inmates per 100.000 inhabitants)	Prison density (inmates per 100 detention places)
Belgium	89,7	108,4
Europe (median)	101,8	85,4



Figure 1. Prison population rates (inmates per 100,000 inhabitants) on 31st January 2021 (N=49)

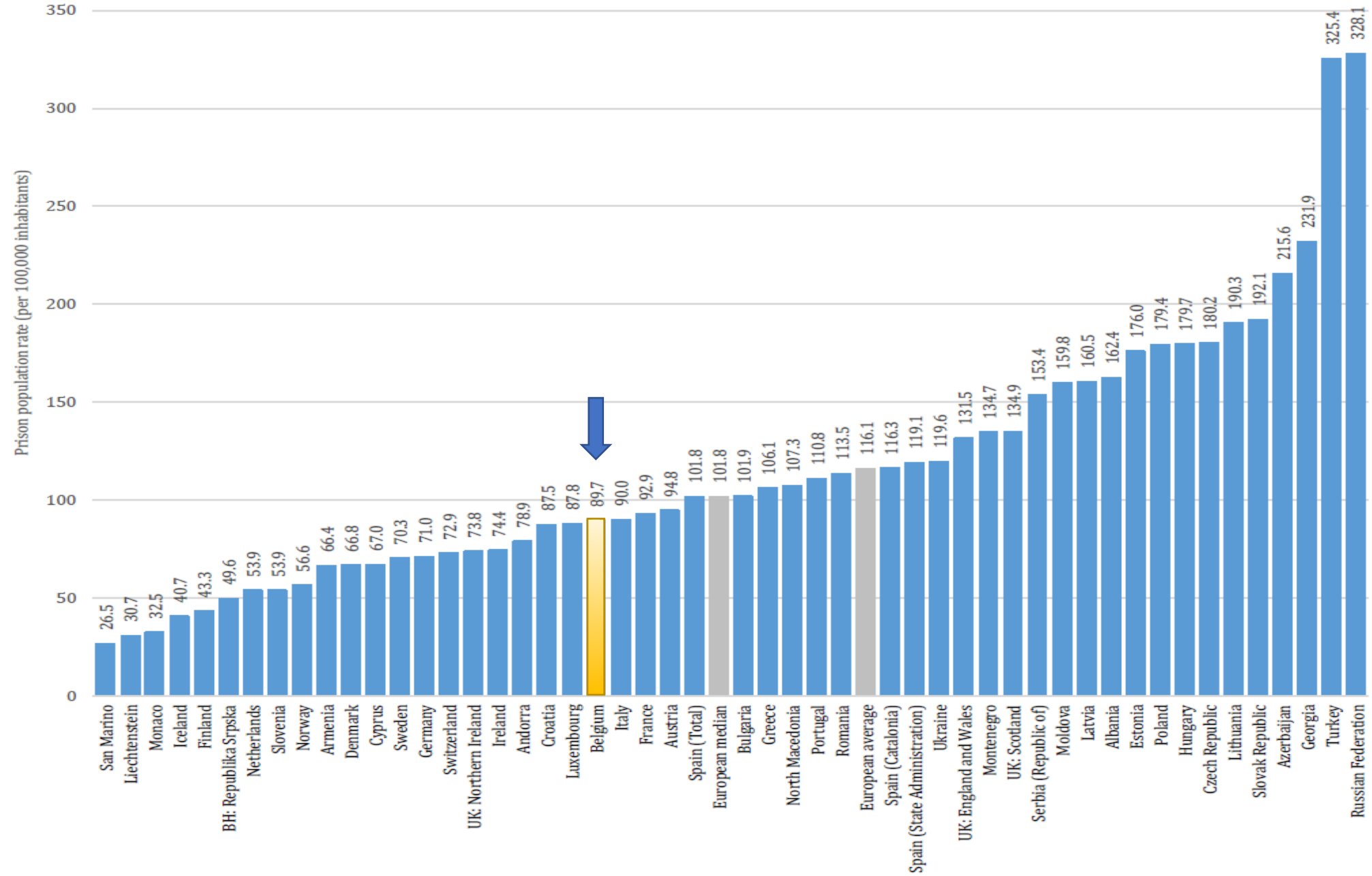
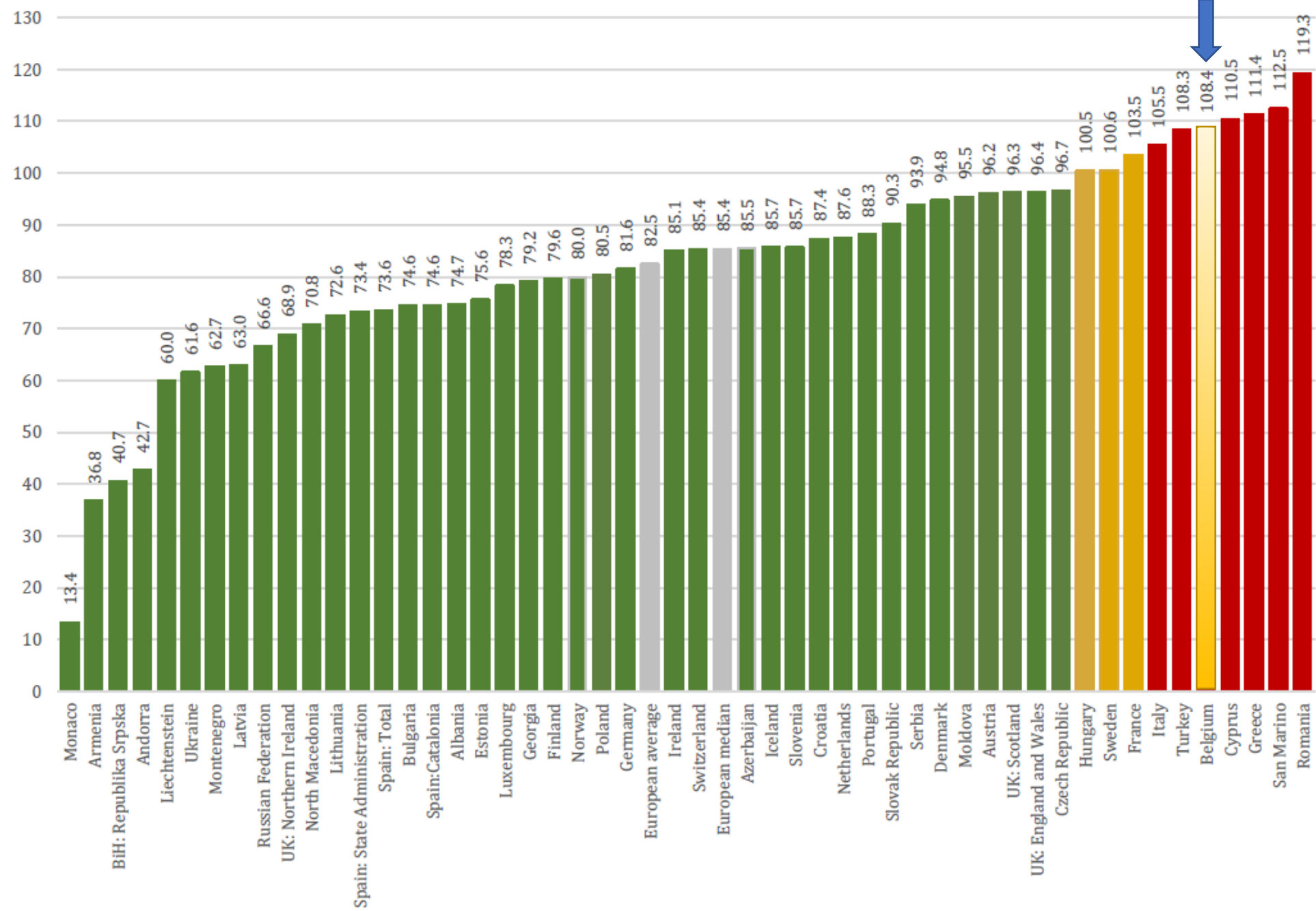


Figure 9. Prison density (number of inmates per 100 detention places) on 31st January 2021 (N=49)



“what’s in a name”

Overcrowding is not a neutral concept.

It insinuates that there are too many detainees compared to a capacity that is believed to be sufficient.

On the other hand, there are those who also believe that we should just create more capacity to accommodate all detainees and even increase it to the point where even more people can be detained.

It is also not value-neutral: some see overcrowding as a form of discomfort that detainees owe to themselves. And that they don't have to complain about it.



- The undecided battle between "reductionists" and "expansionists" led to years of immobilism that allowed the phenomenon to persist and steadily increase.
- To this day, policies consist of measures with opposing effects

Capacity-boosting effects

- ☐ Increasing capacity
- ☐ Strengthening imprisonment within punishment policy
- ☐ Optimising placement policy

Capacity-decreasing effects

- ☐ Temporary depopulation measures
- ☐ Decriminalising/depenalising offences
- ☐ Speeding up the detention process





What's next ?

3 contributions with variations on these theme

