



European Monitoring Centre  
for Drugs and Drug Addiction

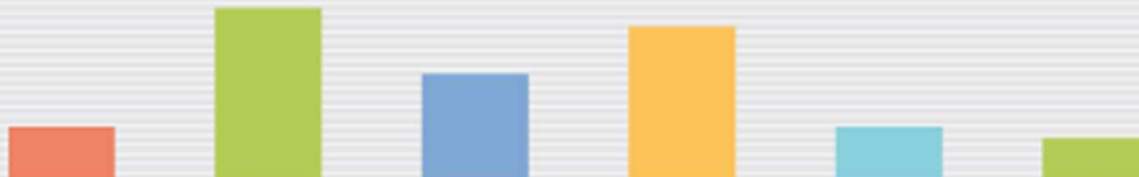
# Impact of COVID-19 on drug use and drug related interventions in European prisons

Linda Montanari and Liesbeth Vandam

*European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction*

*Workshop - 7.K. - The impact of COVID-19 response measures on health and healthcare for people in detention in Europe - 17:30 - 18:30*

EUPHA 2021, 10 – 12 November 2021



# Rapid assessments on impact of COVID19 on drug problem

## AIM:

to investigate the impact of the COVID19 pandemic on drug issue and the associated national response measures implemented in Europe in the community **and in prison**

## THREE RAPID ASSESSMENTS:

- ❑ Drug service provision and help-seeking – May 2020
- ❑ Patterns of drug use, risks and harms – June 2020
- ❑ Drug markets, use, harms and drug services – April 2021



<https://www.emcdda.europa.eu/topics/covid-19>



# Containment measures as drivers for changes in the drug issue

- **From March 2020 (first lock down):** containment and hygienic measures, including reduction of internal and external people movements, (external visits, movements of people in and out of prison, interruption of collective activities and in reach services), early release, quarantine for newcomers
- **From July 2020,** some countries relaxed restrictions in prisons, other countries kept strict restrictions
- **By May 2021,** most countries back to strict restrictions in prisons, albeit with some exceptions
- **Recent situation:** release of restrictive measures in most countries

Source: EMCDDA (2020), Trendspotter briefing. Impact of COVID-19 on drug services and help-seeking in Europe; EMCDDA (2021), Impact of COVID-19 on drug markets, use, harms and drug services in the community and prisons



# Impact on prison drug market

- Disruption of drug trafficking routes into prison
- Reduced drugs availability inside prison
- Riots and violence



Source: Stewart (Sam) MacLeod.



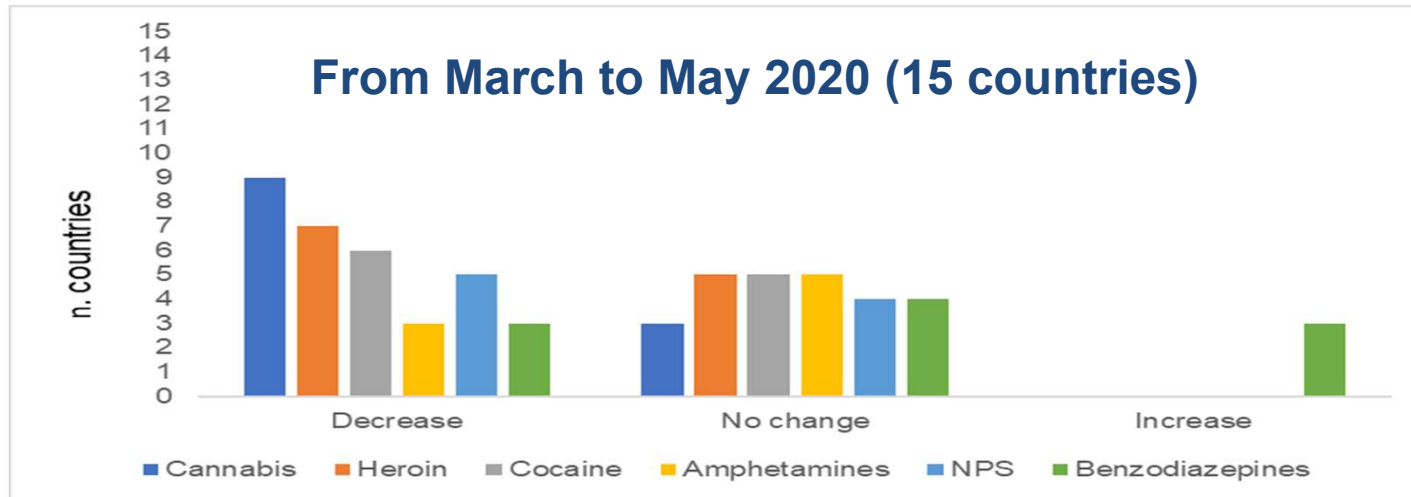
- Over the prison wall
- Use of new technologies: drones

- From June 2020 some routes restored



Source: EMCDDA (2020), Trendspotter briefing. Impact of COVID-19 on drug services and help-seeking in Europe; EMCDDA (2021), Impact of COVID-19 on drug markets, use, harms and drug services in the community and prisons

# Impact on drug use in prison



## From June 2020 (22 countries)

- Continue reduced use in 6 countries - back to normal in 2 countries
- Up misuse of BZD and of substitution medication
- Up alcohol produced in prison
- Up severity of drug use
- Overdoses, self-harms, suicide attempts in PUD



# Impact on prison drug services

## DISCONTINUATION(2020)- REDUCTION (2021)

*interventions involving people gathering services provided by external services*

## REDUCTION

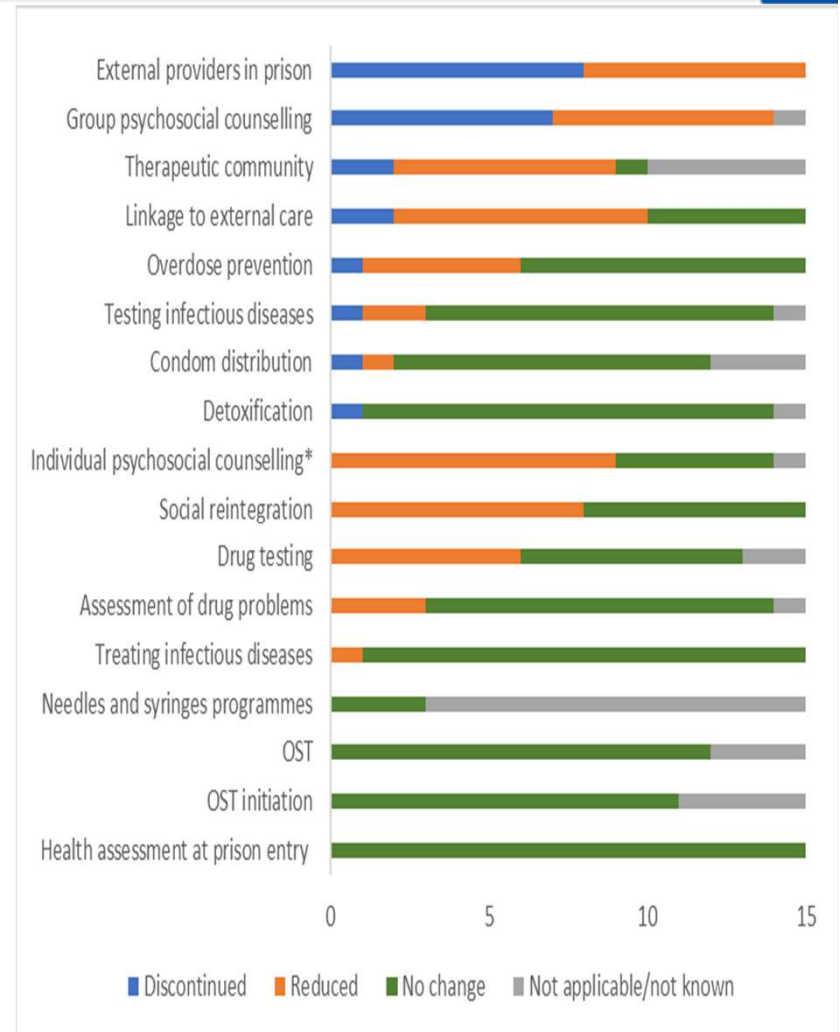
*psycho-social individual counselling  
therapeutic communities  
linkage to external care  
social reintegration*

## NO (or almost no) CHANGES

*health assessment  
detoxification  
OST  
testing/treatment infectious diseases  
condom distribution  
NSP*

*overdose prevention*

*drug testing*



Source: EMCDDA (2020), Trendspotter briefing. Impact of COVID-19 on drug services and help-seeking in Europe; EMCDDA (2021), Impact of COVID-19 on drug markets, use, harms and drug services in the community and prisons

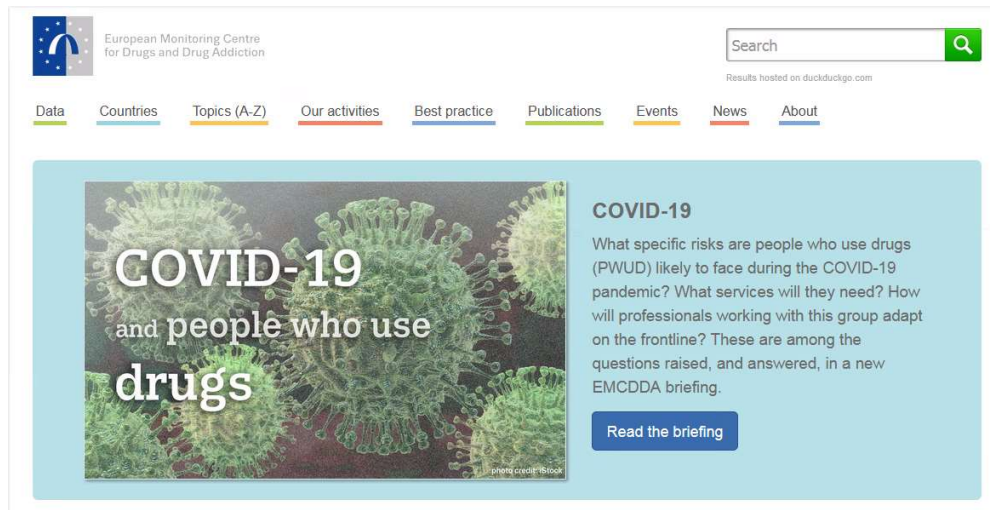
# Challenges, questions and opportunities

- ✓ **Drug market and drug use** more visible inside prison
  - ❑ structural difficulties exacerbated (e.g. isolation, internet connection, etc.)
- ✓ **Drug related interventions:** maintaining provision /COVID19 preventive measures
  - ❑ lack of health and prison staff: accentuated due to COVID\_19
  - ❑ concerns on quality of therapeutic relation
  - ❑ linkage to care as essential part of drug treatment
- ✓ **Innovation:**
  - ❑ telemedicine
  - ❑ online personal contacts
  - ❑ reinforced cooperation security and health staff
  - ❑ overdose prevention
  - ❑ in-reach re-established
- ✓ **Large country disparities**, increasing with economic recession
- ✓ **Humanisation** of prison conditions (overcrowding)
- ✓ Impact of **early release** on drug issue: preparedness
- ✓ **Monitoring and research**



# More information at: <https://www.emcdda.europa.eu>

[https://www.emcdda.europa.eu/system/files/publications/13745/TD0321143ENN\\_002.pdf](https://www.emcdda.europa.eu/system/files/publications/13745/TD0321143ENN_002.pdf)



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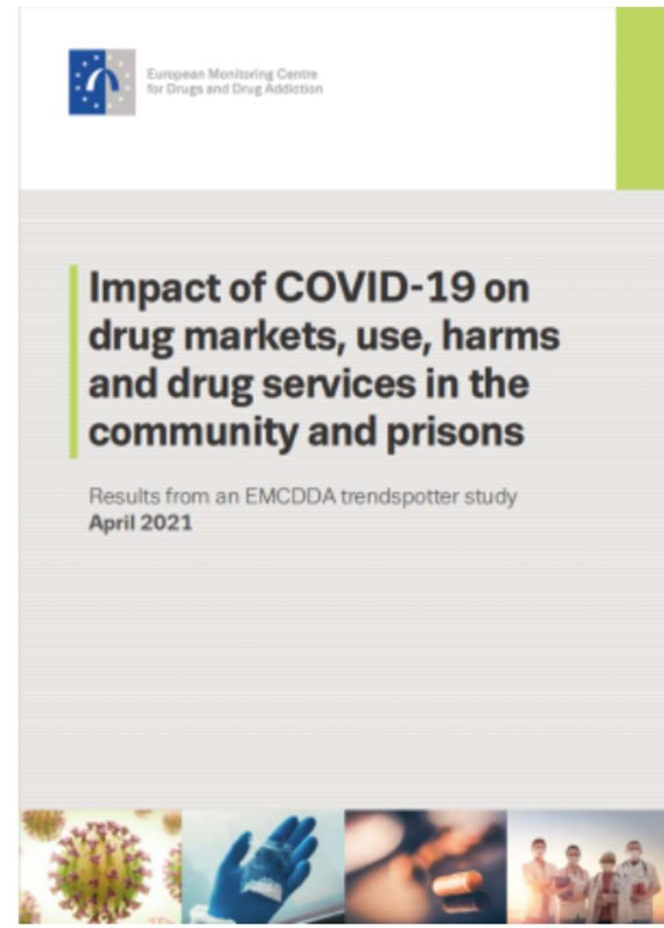
## COVID-19 and people who use drugs

### COVID-19

What specific risks are people who use drugs (PWUD) likely to face during the COVID-19 pandemic? What services will they need? How will professionals working with this group adapt on the frontline? These are among the questions raised, and answered, in a new EMCDDA briefing.

[Read the briefing](#)


<https://www.emcdda.europa.eu/topics/covid-19>



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## Impact of COVID-19 on drug markets, use, harms and drug services in the community and prisons

Results from an EMCDDA trendspotter study  
April 2021



Thank you!

[Linda.Montanari@emcdda.europa.eu](mailto:Linda.Montanari@emcdda.europa.eu)

