

## **PRISON AND DRUGS IN EUROPE: DRUG USE, DRUG RELATED PROBLEMS AND AVAILABLE INTERVENTIONS**

Montanari L.<sup>1</sup>, Royuela L.<sup>1</sup>, Hasselberg I.<sup>1</sup>, Vandam L.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction, Public Health Unit, Portugal

### **Background**

In 2021 the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA) has published a report on prison and drugs, that provides an overview of the most recent European data on: drug use before, during and after incarceration, health related problems among prisoners, drug supply, drug related interventions in European prisons.

### **Method**

The report is based on a mix of data sources from the EMCDDA National Focal Points, literature, technical meetings. Data refer to the year 2019 (or most recent year available) in 27 European Member States, Norway, Turkey, UK.

### **Conclusions**

Over 856 000 people were in prison in the European reporting countries in 2019 (142 people per 100 000 inhabitants).

Prisoners are more likely to have used drugs than their peers in the community, reporting high prevalence levels before imprisonment for all drugs (see Figure 1). Drug use inside prison is reported in the 11 countries reporting data.

Prisoners report high rates of infections (HIV up to 13%; HBV to 24%, HCV to 42%). The mortality in prison is high in prison (suicide being main cause) and the risk of overdose death increases markedly in the first period after release.

Many drug demand reduction interventions are implemented in European prisons, albeit with delay compared to community and insufficient coverage.

Those include (see Figure 2): drug use assessment; drug prevention; pharmacological treatment, including opioid substitution treatment (OST); psychosocial and drug-related infections interventions; preparation for release.

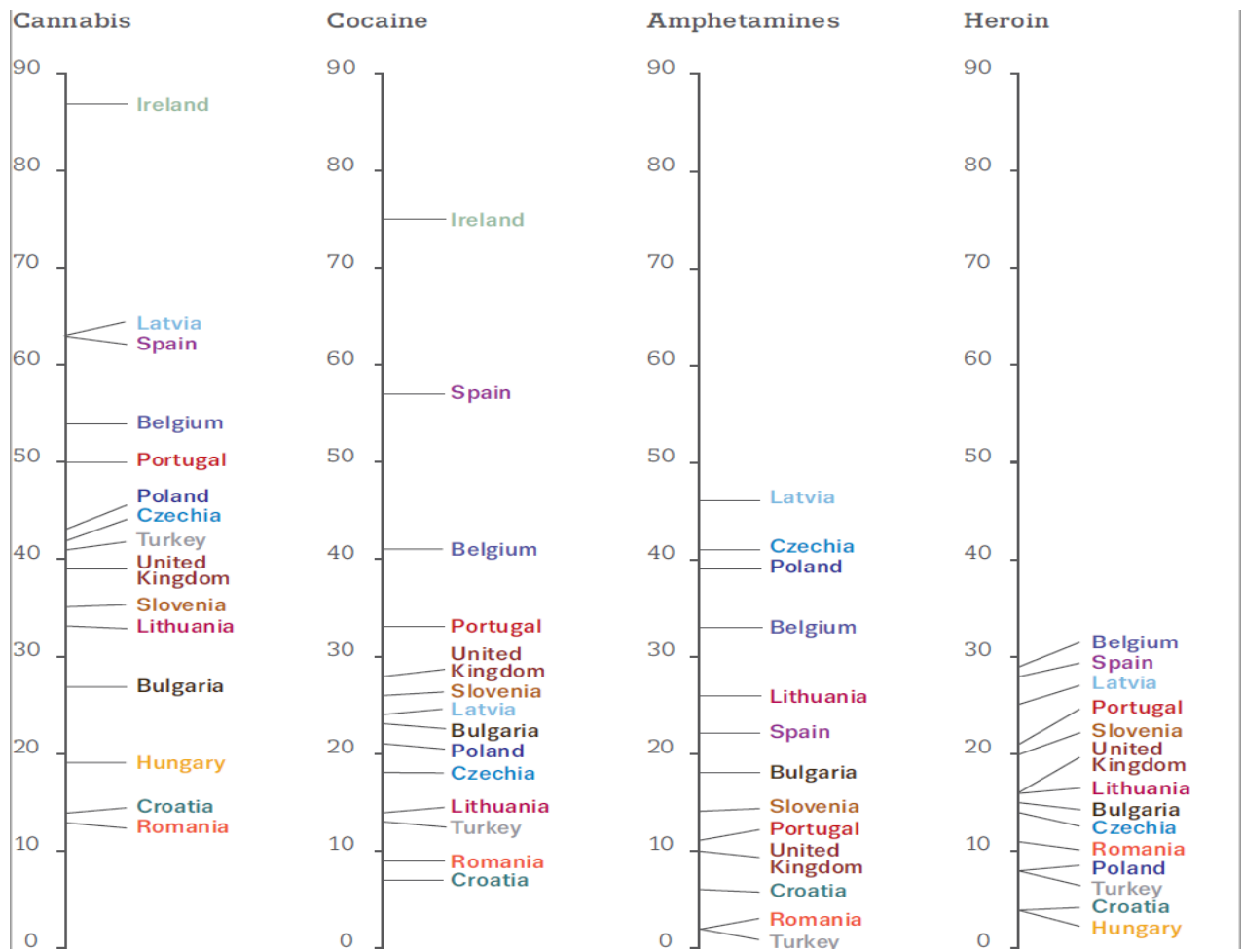
OST is available in all countries except Slovakia, yet only in 22 it is possible to start inside prison. Harm reduction interventions include needle and syringe programmes (3 countries), condom distribution (9 countries), take-home naloxone (5).

Health and social responses in prison have a significant public health impact on morbidity and mortality, for prisoners and the community as a whole.

*(Source: European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (2022), Prison and drugs in Europe: current and future challenges, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg <https://www.emcdda.europa.eu/system/files/publications/13904/TDXD21001ENN.pdf>*

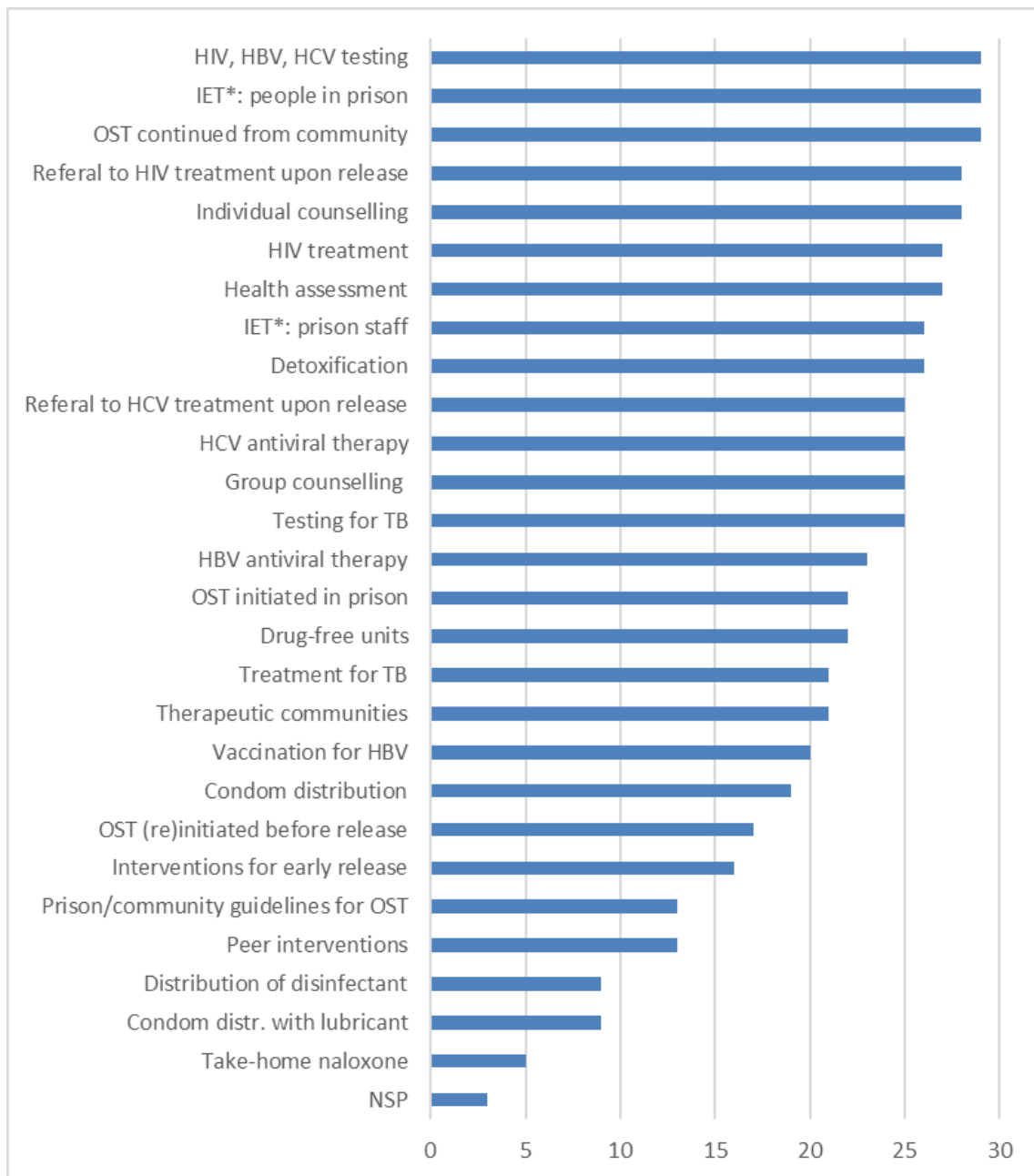
The authors have no interests to disclose

**Figure 1 – Lifetime prevalence of illicit drug use among people who are in prison in Europe, before their imprisonment**



Source: European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (2022), Prison and drugs in Europe: current and future challenges, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg

**Figure 2 – Drug-related and other health and social care interventions targeting people who use drugs in prison in Europe, 2019 (number of countries given where available)**



Source: European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (2022), Prison and drugs in Europe: current and future challenges, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg