



emcdda.europa.eu

National drug-related research in Europe

Margareta Nilson and Maria Moreira

Drug-related research is crucial to Europe's understanding of its drug problems. Research enables Europe to learn lessons from the past, monitor the present and prepare for the future. In 2008, the EMCDDA produced a Selected issue on *National drug-related research in Europe* which describes the state of the art (1).

Methodology

The publication is based on reports compiled by 28 Reitox national focal points in 2007 as well as input from EMCDDA staff and EMCDDA Scientific Committee members. It provides an outline of drug-related research at national level and identifies limitations and gaps, suggesting future developments in the area. Some of the results can be compared with a 1996 overview of drug-related research in 15 EU Member States (2).

Findings

1. Research actors in Europe

Over 70 key research structures were cited by the reporting countries: public and private research centres, universities and bodies hosting Reitox national focal points.

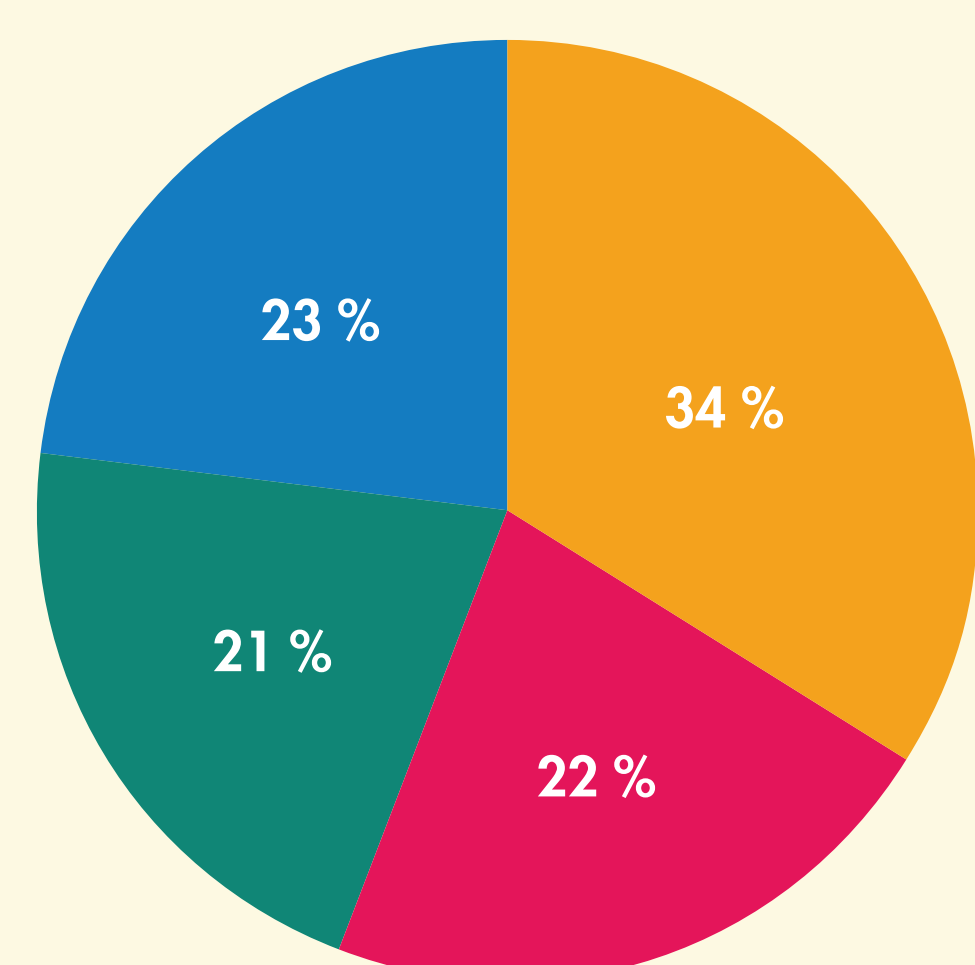
2. Main ongoing research

Studies on prevalence, incidence and patterns of use, the evaluation of interventions (mainly treatment, prevention and drug policies and strategies) as well as economic aspects increased visibly between 1996 and 2006.

3. Dissemination of research results

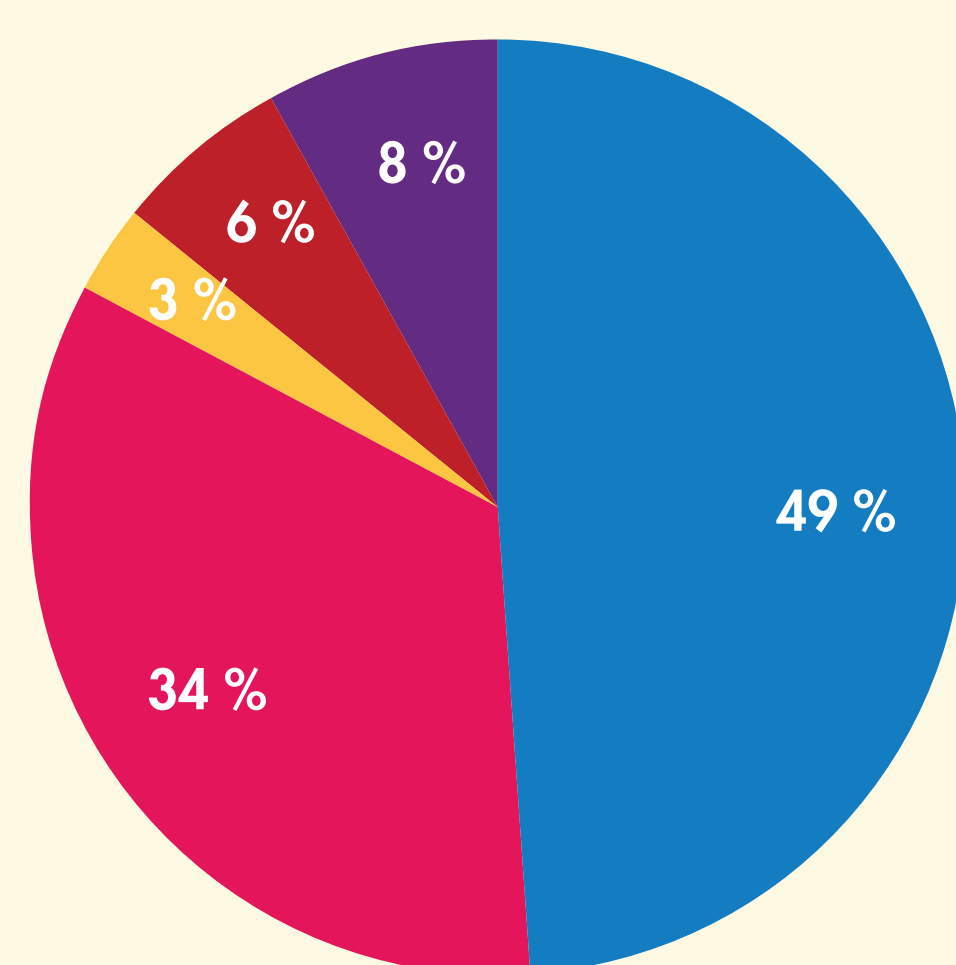
Scientific journals were considered the most important platform for communicating research. Twenty-seven specialised peer-reviewed journals for drug-related research were reported in 2007, over twice as many as in 1996.

Figure 1: Categorisation of 70 main drug-related research structures reported to the EMCDDA



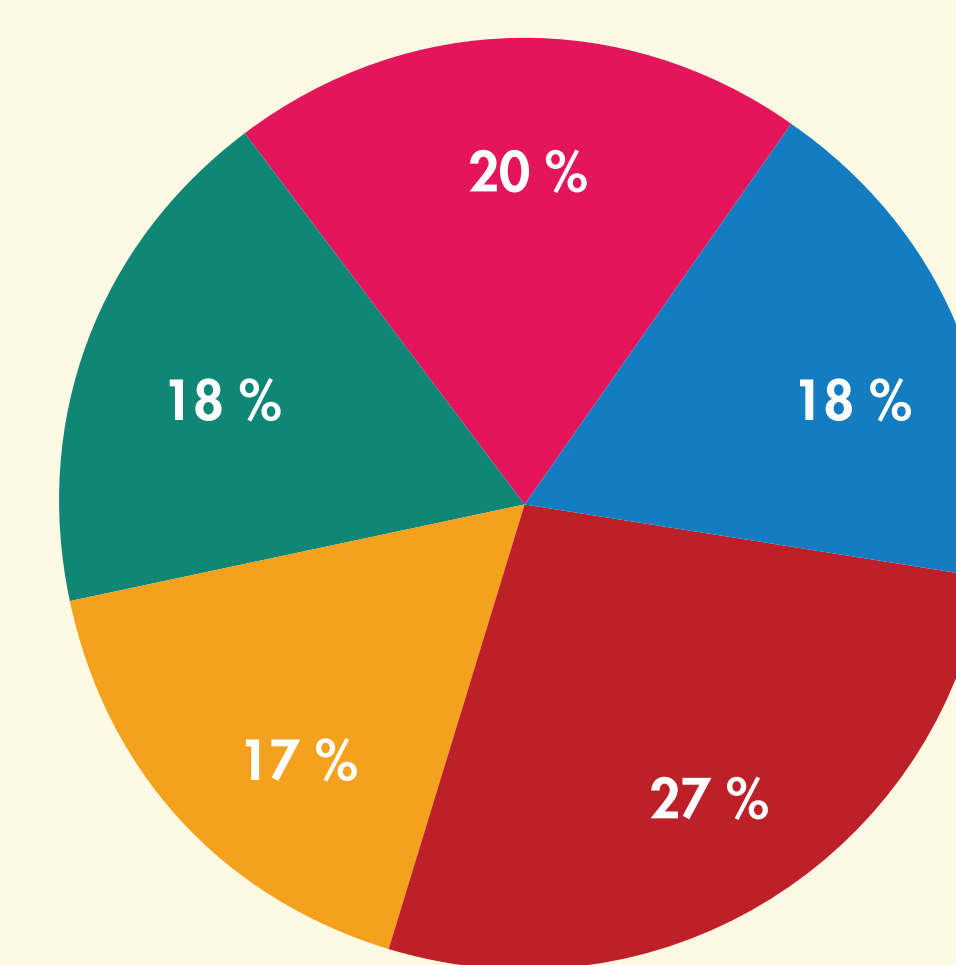
■ Academic
■ Public research centres/institutes
■ Private research centres/institutes
■ National Reitox focal points/host institutions

Figure 2: Main research projects at national level, classified into five categories



■ Research on prevalence, incidence and patterns of drug use
■ Research on responses to the drug situation
■ Research on determinants of drug use and risk/protective factors
■ Research on consequences of drug use
■ Research on drug mechanisms and effects

Figure 3: Reported articles published in international peer-reviewed journals in 2006, by category



■ Research on prevalence, incidence and patterns of drug use
■ Research on responses to the drug situation
■ Research on determinants of drug use and risk/protective factors
■ Research on consequences of drug use
■ Research on drug mechanisms and effects

Conclusions

European drug-related research has seen considerable expansion since 1996. Research is now considered a priority in many EU Member States. Twenty of the 28 reporting countries mention research in their national drug policy documents. Most countries report relatively stable funding at national level, although concerns about funding availability and sustainability are still expressed.

Coordination among researchers, research centres and research areas continues to be a fundamental structural problem in most countries, as was the case in 1996. Although most national drug strategies and action plans now refer to the need for evidence-based policies, the link between research results and policymaking is often difficult to make.

Most countries state that research has an influence on decision-making, at least to a certain degree. Reports suggest that research commissioned by the policymakers themselves is more readily taken into account in decision-making.

(1) Available in English at <http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/publications/selected-issues>

(2) Kenis, P. (1996), *Drugs. Research-related initiatives in the European Union*, Comparative report, European University Institute, Florence.