



European Monitoring Centre  
for Drugs and Drug Addiction

# Drug-related deaths and mortality among drug users

Expert meeting, Oct 13-14 2020

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# The DRD network

## A European Network

- 30 members
- 6 IPA countries
- 5 European Neighbourhood Policy partners (EU4MD)
- External experts



- Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance, IPA: Albania, Bosnia Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia
- European Neighbourhood Policy partners: Armenia, Georgia, Moldova, Tunisia, Ukraine – all active partners of the EU4MD projects



# Objectives and main sources of the EMCDDA epidemiological indicator on drug-related deaths



- Three pillars to build a robust complete useful picture of the situation, problems and needs.
- A base to build on: responses, policies, evaluation of the impact of interventions

# Objectives and main sources



- Monitoring/rapid information on overdose (so called drug-induced deaths)

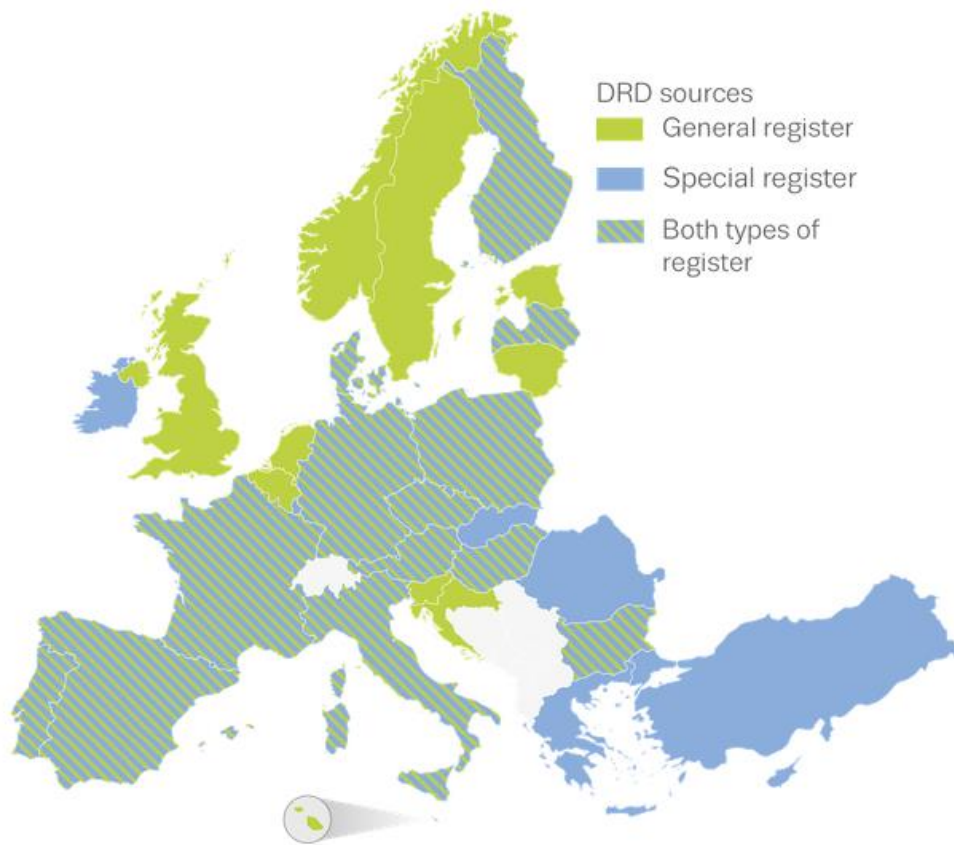
**Pillar 1**            **General mortality registers (national statistics)**  
**Pillar 2**            **Special registers (forensic toxicology, police)**

- Monitoring all causes of deaths among people who use drugs

**Pillar 3**            **Linkage or longitudinal cohorts studies**

→ Informing policies, responses, the implementation of what works, and assessment of the impact of responses

# Sources used by the countries to report drug-related deaths to the EMCDDA.



- Most countries report data from both sources (general and special registers), which allows triangulation and validation of the data
- Countries report data every year
- General mortality register (national statistics on the causes of deaths) is a key source. DRD monitoring requires institutional support and EMCDDA recommends setting up a multidisciplinary national working group
- Work is on-going in several countries to work with special registries

Source Frequently asked questions (FAQ). Drug overdose deaths in Europe, 2019  
[https://www.emcdda.europa.eu/publications/topic-overviews/content/faq-drug-overdose-deaths-in-europe\\_en#question16](https://www.emcdda.europa.eu/publications/topic-overviews/content/faq-drug-overdose-deaths-in-europe_en#question16)

# Objectives and corresponding activities

## 1) Quantify (how many deaths, where, when?)

- Statistical Bulletin, revised template
- 2020 statistical bulletin:  
<https://www.emcdda.europa.eu/data/stats2020/drd>
- Dashboard project continued

## 2) Characterise (substances, circumstances?)

- Forensic toxicologists and special registers promoted, following up on previous projects:  
[https://www.emcdda.europa.eu/publications/technical-reports/analysis-post-mortem-toxicology-practices-drug-related-death-cases-europe\\_en](https://www.emcdda.europa.eu/publications/technical-reports/analysis-post-mortem-toxicology-practices-drug-related-death-cases-europe_en)
- Ad hoc questions explored (MDMA study in 2019-20)

# Objectives and corresponding activities

## 3) Validate (true number? real health burden?)

- Cross indicator-validation of opioid-related deaths

## 4) Link with responses and inform policy making

- EMCDDA initiative, Knowledge questionnaire



The screenshot shows the EMCDDA website interface. At the top, there is a navigation menu with links for 'Data', 'Countries', 'Topics (A-Z)', 'Our activities', 'Best practice', 'Publications', 'Events', 'News', and 'About'. Below the menu, there is a search bar and a breadcrumb trail: 'Home > Publications > Topic overview'. The main heading is 'Take-home naloxone'. Below the heading, there are tabs for 'Introduction', 'Overview', 'Evidence', 'State of play', 'Country profiles', and 'Resources and references'. The 'Introduction' tab is selected. The text under 'Introduction' starts with 'What is naloxone and why is it important?' and discusses the prevalence of drug overdose and the role of naloxone.

### Facts and myths about overdose and take-home naloxone — EMCDDA publishes new resources

Lisbon 31.08.2020



Over the past five years, more than 40 000 people have died of a drug-related overdose in the European Union and the UK; around 80% of these being linked to the use of heroin or other opioids. Yet, with effective intervention, they could have been prevented.

#### Featured links

[Take-home naloxone \(2020\)](#)

# Activities → Updates

- **5) Assess health threats**
- Trendspotter studies on the impact of the COVID19 pandemic on services, drug use and harms
- → two rapid ‘trend spotter’ surveys with indispensable contributions from experts in drug-related harms (many DRD experts, emergency clinicians, drug treatment clinicians, public health specialists)



European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction

June 2020

EMCDDA trendspotter briefing  
June 2020

**Impact of COVID-19 on patterns of drug use and drug-related harms in Europe**

The situation regarding the COVID-19 pandemic and responses to it continues to evolve rapidly. Regular updates are provided by the [European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control](#) and the [World Health Organization](#), and in most countries national public health guidelines are available. The EMCDDA has created a [COVID-19 resource hub](#) that provides access to up-to-date materials on drugs and COVID-19-related issues.

**Summary**

Since the start of 2020, European countries have been experiencing an unprecedented public health threat with the emergence of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19). In order to investigate the effects and implications of this pandemic for people who use drugs in Europe, the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA) instigated a mixed-method trendspotter study to investigate the current situation. This briefing provides a snapshot of the state of play with respect to the impact of COVID-19 on drug consumption patterns and drug-related harms during the early

European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction

EMCDDA trendspotter briefing  
May 2020

**Impact of COVID-19 on drug services and help-seeking in Europe**

The situation regarding public health responses to the COVID-19 pandemic is rapidly evolving. Up-to-date information can be found in the guidelines prepared by national public health sources and the regular updates from the [European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control](#) and the [World Health Organization](#). The EMCDDA has created a [COVID-19 resource hub](#) for people who use drugs and drug service providers.

**Summary**

Since the start of 2020, European countries have been experiencing an unprecedented public health threat with the emergence of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19). In order to investigate the effects and implications of this pandemic for drug services in Europe, the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction instigated a mixed-method trendspotter study to provide a snapshot of the current situation. This exercise provides a rapid assessment of the state of play in respect to the impact of COVID-19 on service provision and help-seeking behaviour among people who use drugs.

Preliminary findings suggest there has been a decline in the availability of European drug services during the first two months of the pandemic, both those providing treatment and those providing harm



# Few words on cohort and linkage studies

- Need to answer key policy questions
- Expertise in many countries
- Many studies on-going and new initiatives but visibility and utility could be increased
- Need to give more to policy makers and to document what works, and who is more vulnerable
- Cohort project kick off in 2020 with experts interested and or involved in cohorts or linkage studies



# New data – reported in October 2019

Provisional data were presented for discussion

(Embargoed until 2021)

In the meantime, most recent publications:

<https://www.emcdda.europa.eu/>

See also updates on drug-related deaths:

<https://www.emcdda.europa.eu/topics/drug-related-deaths>



# Promoting best practices and responses for reducing drug related deaths



## Health and social responses to drug problems

A EUROPEAN GUIDE



## Preventing opioid overdose deaths with take-home naloxone

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The screenshot shows the website's navigation menu with options: Data, Countries, Topics (A-Z), Our activities, Best practice, Publications, Events, News, and About. The breadcrumb trail is Home > Publications > Perspectives on drugs. The main heading is 'Preventing overdose deaths in Europe' with sub-sections: 1. Interactive, 2. Facts and figures, and 3. Take-home naloxone programmes. A search bar is in the top right. The content area features a vertical 'INSIGHTS EN' sidebar and a main text block starting with '10 lives were reported to overdoses in Europe (28...'. Below the text are four image-based links: 1. Analysis: preventing overdose deaths in Europe (with a hand holding a pill), 2. Video showcase: overdose prevention and take-home naloxone (with a person talking), 3. Facts and figures (with a magnifying glass), and 4. Take-home naloxone programmes (with a box of HALOXONE HYDROCHLORIDE).





## #GetTheFactsEDR2020



## European Drug Report 2020

### COVID-19

How is the COVID-19 pandemic affecting drug use, supply and services?

### Drug use and harms

What are the health costs of drug use in Europe today?

### Drug markets

What do the latest data tell us about drug production and trafficking trends?

These and other questions are explored in the 2020 European Drug Report, our annual overview of the drug situation in Europe, launched on 22 September.

## #GetTheFactsEDR2020

[Download the report](#)

[Launch details](#)

[Press material](#)

[Audiovisual](#)

[National launches](#)

### Trends and Developments (English only)



### Key Issues (24 languages)



Key Issues (42 pages)

This report, available in 24 languages, presents a

### Statistical Bulletin 2020



The annual *Statistical Bulletin* contains the most recent available data on the drug situation in Europe provided by the Member States. These datasets underpin the analysis presented in the European Drug Report. All data may be viewed



Thank you

To the participating DRD national experts, invited experts, Reitox National Focal Points, EMCDDA DRD coordination group and colleagues involved in the 2020 online expert meeting.

More information is available on the expert meeting from

[https://www.emcdda.europa.eu/event/2020/10/expert-meeting-drug-related-deaths-drd-2020\\_en](https://www.emcdda.europa.eu/event/2020/10/expert-meeting-drug-related-deaths-drd-2020_en)

Incl. Agenda, participants, presentations, supporting documents, links...

