



## EMCDDA PAPERS

# Financing drug policy in Europe in the wake of the economic recession

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**Abstract:** In 2008 and the years that followed, Europe experienced a severe economic crisis, which presented a grave challenge to public finances. This report examines public expenditures on public order and safety, health and social protection, as these are the areas where most drug-related activities and services are provided. It concludes, first, that austerity led to reductions in spending in those categories of government activity that encompass most drug-related initiatives; second, that countries that experienced greater levels of austerity tended to show greater reductions in expenditure; and, third, that bigger cuts in public expenditure were registered in health than in public safety and social protection. The available national estimates of drug-related public expenditure do not reveal the full impact of the 2008–09 economic recession on the public financing of drug policy in Europe. However, it is possible to conclude that the impact of austerity on drug policy was more

severe in the countries that were hardest hit by the economic crisis. Nevertheless, in most European countries, recession has led to a reassessment of public financing of specific drug policies and often to their adjustment. Drug budgets became more likely to be subject to revision, often resulting in cuts. In addition, austerity has raised policymakers' awareness of the need for more cost-effective policy measures. In some countries, reorganisation of drug services has been attempted.

**Keywords** economic recession  
drug-related public expenditure  
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