



Portugal decriminalized personal use of all illicit drugs in 2001 and adopted a national strategy based on a strong public health focus. A 2010 quantitative estimate of the criminal justice sector costs for drug control in Portugal showed an expenditure of 73% for detention, 20% for the police sector and 7% for the justice sector. The high costs in the prison sector should be explored in greater depth, to understand whether or not they reflect the country's new legislative framework and governance of addiction, or are due to other factors, such as investment in treatment services for prisoners.

Criminal Justice  
 decriminalization  
**Costs**  
 Portugal

Based on a 2011 estimate, Portugal spent 73% of its criminal justice budget dedicated to drug control on the prison sector, 20% on the police sector and 7% on the justice sector.

- **Prison Sector:** In 2011, Portugal's expenditure on drug offenders, as a percentage of the total prison population expenditure, was around 20.79%, while the percentage GDP for drug-related detention corresponded to 0.026.
- **Police Sector:** In 2011, Portugal spent only 1.1% of its total police salary costs on drug enforcement cost, equivalent to 1.18€ per capita and 0.007% of its GDP.
- **Judiciary Sector:** In 2011, the costs for the justice sector gross salaries dedicated to drug control was estimated to be less than 50¢ per capita, corresponding to 0.003% of the country's GDP. With a population of approx. 10 million inhabitants, Portugal has a fairly high density of judges and prosecutors at 2.2 for every 10,000 inhabitants. However, judiciary drug-related costs are very low, as are the total number of reported drug crimes.

Portugal's low number of reported drug-related offences might be a consequence of the decriminalization of the personal use of all drugs, enacted by law in 2011. In Portugal, the highest costs are in the prison sector. Our estimate in ALICE RAP was based on the cost per prisoner and not on prison staff salaries. The high investment in the Portuguese prison system may be suggestive of the country's efforts to ensure the necessary resources for drug-related treatment and rehabilitation of drug users in prison, in line with the health-focused approach of the legislative framework, based on the diversion of drug users from prison to treatment and the provision of prison based treatment, risk reduction and recovery options. This should be verified with additional research, given that Portugal was hard hit by the 2008 economic crisis and given the evidence of serious overcrowding and inhumane conditions reported in prisons. It should be stressed that our estimates need to be taken with some degree of caution, as they cannot capture the relationship between the laws, their policy implementation, the consequences of these investments in the real world and in the impact on lives of citizens.

Further analysis may provide useful insights into the type of investments and allocation of resources that are made within the three criminal justice sectors, how efficient these investments are in supporting the respective national drug control strategies, as well as how effective they are in contributing to diminishing the negative social and health impact of illicit drugs and enhancing the overall governance of addiction, as outlined in the ALICE RAP WP13.1.

## READ MORE

Segura, L., Albareda, A., Ysa, T., Colom, J., Ramon, A., Carrión, M., Fernández, M.: *Governance view. Addictions and Lifestyles in Contemporary Europe: Reframing Addictions Project (ALICE RAP)*: [Deliverable 13.1](#)

Council of Europe (2010): [Annual Penal Statistics - SPACE I](#)

Council of Europe (2012): [Scheme for Evaluating Judicial Systems](#)

European Prison Observatory: <http://www.prisonobservatory.org/>

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