



European Monitoring Centre
for Drugs and Drug Addiction

European Drug Report

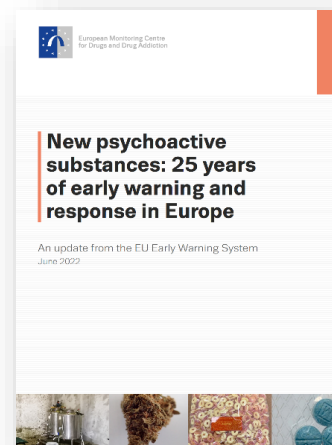
Trends and Developments

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16 April 2022, Citizens' Assembly on Drugs Use
Dublin, Ireland



European Drug Report 2022



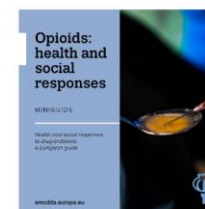
[Cannabis: responses miniguide](#)



[Medicines: responses miniguide](#)



[NPS: responses miniguide](#)



[Opioids: responses miniguide](#)



[Polydrug use: responses miniguide](#)



[Stimulants: responses miniguide](#)



EDR 2022: drug supply and use bounce back after COVID-19 disruption

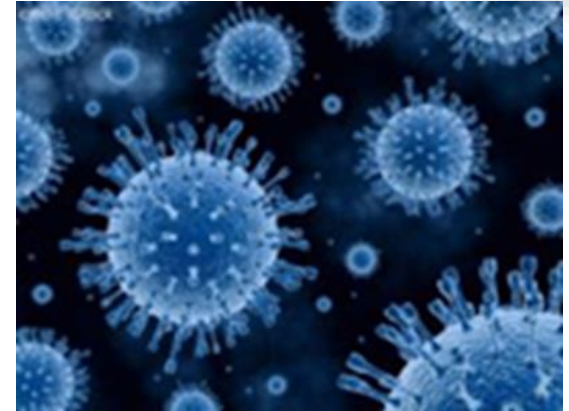
Supply and use indicators returning to pre-pandemic levels

Wastewater analysis - increases in use for stimulants from 2020 to 2021

Drug market innovation - high availability and greater diversity of substances and patterns of drug consumption

Trafficking: large shipments, new trafficking routes, concealment methods and production processes

EU significant producer of some drugs



EDR 2022: Europe's drug problems have become more complex

Today, drug-related issues appear almost **everywhere**



Almost **everything** with psychoactive potential can be a drug



Everyone can be affected, whether directly or indirectly



NPS: potentially harmful substances continue to appear

Seizures

Number

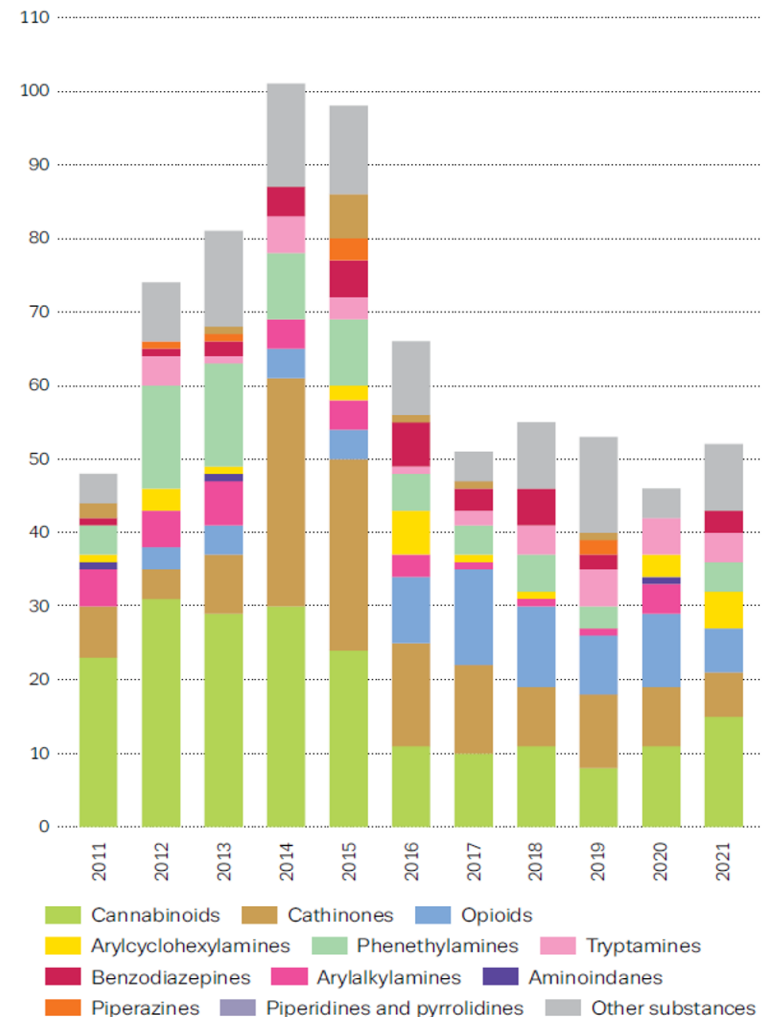


Quantity (tonnes)



- 52 new drugs notified to EWS in 2021
- 880 NPS monitored; 370 of these detected on the market in 2020
- Record 6.9 tonnes of NPS seized in 2020
- 15 new synthetic cannabinoids, 6 new synthetic opioids, 6 synthetic cathinones detected in 2021

Number and categories of new psychoactive substances reported to the EU Early Warning System for the first time, 2011–21



Cathinones: record trafficking to Europe, health harms prompt new controls

Synthetic cathinones: EU EWS monitors 162

Seizures: 3.3 tonnes in 2020 (0.75 tonnes in 2019)

Most bulk quantities originated in India, mainly N-ethylhexedrone, 3-MMC and 3-CMC

Harms: 3-MMC suspected poisonings rose in Netherlands: 10 in 2018 to 64 in 2020. Cathinone injecting linked to high-risk sexual practices and HIV and HCV outbreaks

Risk assessments: 3-MMC and 3-CMC risk assessed in 2021, controlled March 2022



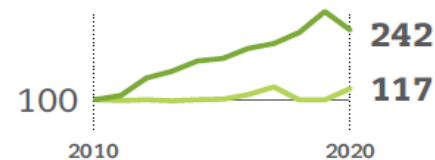
Cannabis: new developments for Europe's most popular illicit drug

- An estimated 15.5 % (15 million) 15-34 year olds used cannabis in the last year
- An estimated 19.1 % (9.0 million) 15-24 year olds used cannabis in the last year
- Seizures: resin 584 tonnes, herb 155 tonnes in 2020
- Resin's average THC content now twice herb's: 21 % vs. 11 %
- Cannabis is responsible for 45 % of all first-time treatment entries
- Cannabis products: extracts and edibles (high THC content), CBD products (low THC content)

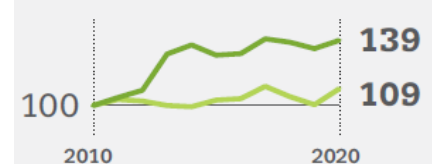
Indexed trends

Retail price
and potency

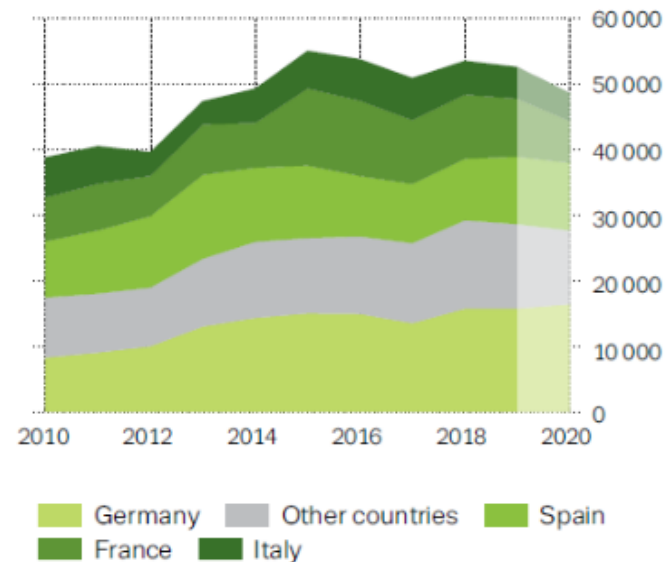
Cannabis resin



Cannabis herb



Trends in first-time entrants



Cannabis policy: increasingly complex in Europe

Cannabis policies now encompass:

- control of illicit cannabis
- regulation of cannabis for medical uses
- other emerging uses and forms, including as ingredients in some commercial products

Regulatory status: some EU MS debating adjustments to the status of cannabis

Medical use of cannabis: allowed by most EU MS

Growing complexity in cannabis-based products traded in the EU: more registrations of cannabis plant varieties, product trademarks, hectares of hemp grown and applications for novel food products, shops selling low-THC cannabis products



Cannabis: concern about adulteration with synthetic cannabinoids

Increase in samples containing ADB-BUTINACA in 2021

11 EU Member States detected them since July 2020

Purchased as illegal cannabis: people unaware what products contained

Health risks: more intense intoxication, mental, physical and behavioural effects than cannabis, some fatal and non-fatal poisoning reported



EDR 2022: drug production continues to increase in Europe

2020: over 350 laboratories dismantled

Heroin Cocaine
Amphetamine Methamphetamine
MDMA Cathinones
Ketamine GHB
DMT



Cocaine: record cocaine seizures highlight threats to health

Seizures

Number

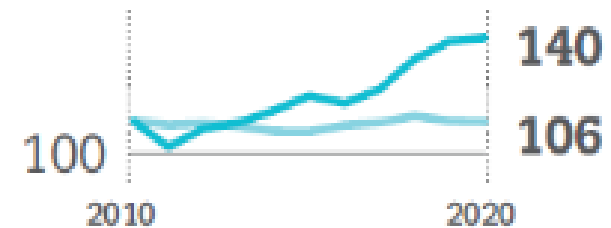


Quantity

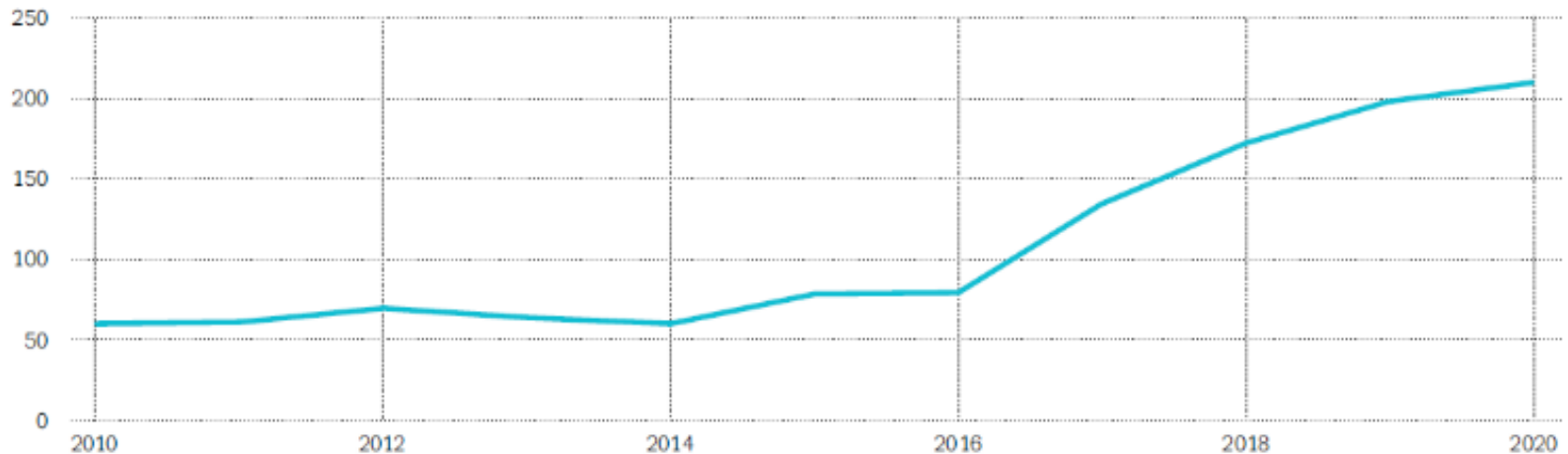


Indexed trends

Retail price and purity



Cocaine seizures (tonnes)



Crack cocaine: signs of use spreading among vulnerable groups

Drivers: high availability of cocaine, economic deprivation and small, cheap crack doses

Crack use: mostly in vulnerable and marginalised groups

Treatment: an estimated 7 000 clients in 2020

Harms: high-frequency use linked to mental and physical health and social problems

Injecting cocaine associated with elevated risk of HIV and HCV infection



Methamphetamine: changed production and supply dynamics raise risk of increased use

Production: large-scale sites now detected; collaboration between European and Mexican criminals

Europe's role: large quantities produced for global export

Consumption in Europe: still low, but potential to grow with diffusion of use to more countries

Harms: acute toxicity, psychotic episodes, polydrug use, blood-borne viruses from injecting and death

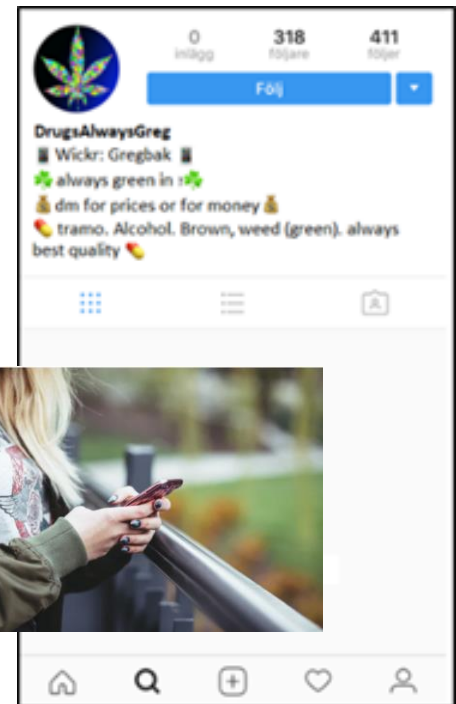


Darknet drug markets: signs of decline

Darknet markets impacted by: COVID-19 pandemic, law-enforcement activity, scams, delivery problems and long periods of downtime

Declining revenues: EUR 30 000 per day in 2021 (down from EUR 1 million per day in 2020)

Drug markets: digitally enabled by sales using social media and instant messaging apps



Injecting drug use: declining, but still a concern

Injecting: 22 % of first-time treatment clients with heroin as their primary drug reported injecting as main route of use in 2020 (35 % in 2013)

Drugs injected appear more diverse: opioids, heroin, also amphetamines, cocaine, synthetic cathinones, prescribed opioid medications and other medicines

Syringe residue analysis: out of 1 392 used syringes collected in 2020-21 in 5 cities, half or more contained stimulants, a third contained two or more drugs



Treatment and harm reduction: services still need to be scaled-up

WHO targets: only four reporting countries in 2020 distributed 200 syringes per person who injects and had 40 % of the population of high-risk opioid users in opioid agonist treatment

Prevalence of high-risk opioid use: estimated at 0.34 % for the EU adult population, equivalent to around 1 million high-risk opioid users in 2020

Opioid agonist treatment: 514 000 clients in 2020

Considerable access differences exist between countries.



Drug-induced deaths: driven by opioids and other drugs

Overdose deaths: an estimated 5 800 in EU in 2020

Mortality rate: 16.7 deaths per million

Polydrug toxicity: illicit opioids, other illicit drugs, medicines and alcohol

Benzodiazepines: common in drug-induced-death toxicological reports in some countries

Opioids: present in around three quarters of all drug-induced deaths



Developments in Afghanistan: implications for European drug markets

Production: world's largest producer of illicit opium and heroin, large-scale ephedra-based methamphetamine production also now detected

Economic and humanitarian crisis: could increase drug cultivation, production and trafficking to Europe

Cultivation bans: hard to enforce

Seizures: record amounts of methamphetamine seized on main heroin trafficking routes towards Europe

Future developments currently unclear but require monitoring



War in Ukraine: increases uncertainty of Europe's drug situation

Russia's invasion: triggered a major humanitarian crisis with ongoing implications

Still difficult to assess impact: drug markets, drug use or the provision of services for those with drug problems

Priority needs remain: continuity of treatment, language services and the provision of accommodation and social welfare support



EDR 2022: concluding remarks

- Drug supply and use bounced back after COVID-19 disruption
- Digitalisation of drug markets may have accelerated
- Innovation driving high availability and greater diversity of substances: increased synthetic drug production, large seizures and new trafficking routes
- Today, drugs are **everywhere**, almost **everything** can be a drug, **everyone** can be affected, whether directly or indirectly
- Humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan and Ukraine also has the potential to impact on Europe's drug problems
- EU Drugs Strategy and Action Plan (2021-25) provides a key framework for coordinated action





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#HealthierEurope #MoreSecureEurope



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