



MINISTRY OF HEALTH  
OF THE REPUBLIC OF  
MOLDOVA

NATIONAL AGENCY  
FOR PUBLIC HEALTH

ILLICIT DRUG USE AND TRAFFICKING  
ANNUAL REPORT 2021

REPUBLIC OF  
MOLDOVA

2022

## Abbreviations and terms

RM	Republic of Moldova
GD	Government Decision
MH	Ministry of Health of the Republic of Moldova <a href="http://www.ms.gov.md/">http://www.ms.gov.md/</a>
MJ	Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Moldova, <a href="http://www.justice.gov.md">www.justice.gov.md</a>
MIA	Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Moldova, <a href="http://www.mai.gov.md">www.mai.gov.md</a>
GIBP	General Inspectorate of Border Police
GPI	General Police Inspectorate
AD	Anti-drug directorate
NPI	National Probation Inspectorate, <a href="http://www.probativne.gov.md">www.probativne.gov.md</a>
NAPH	National Agency for Public Health, <a href="http://www.ansp.md">www.ansp.md</a>
RDN	Municipal Public Health Institution, Republican Dispensary of Narcology of the Ministry of Health, <a href="http://www.imsprn.md">www.imsprn.md</a>
NAP	National Administration of Penitentiaries of the Ministry of Justice, <a href="http://www.anp.gov.md">www.anp.gov.md</a>
CFM	Centre of Forensic Medicine of the Ministry of Health, <a href="http://www.medicina-legala.md">www.medicina-legala.md</a>
DCDH	Public Medical Sanitary Institution, Dermatology and Communicable Diseases Hospital, <a href="http://www.sdmc.md">www.sdmc.md</a>
NHIC	National Health Insurance Company, <a href="http://www.cnam.md">www.cnam.md</a>
NBS	National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova, <a href="http://www.statistica.md">www.statistica.md</a>
EMCDDA	European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction, <a href="http://www.emcdda.europa.eu">www.emcdda.europa.eu</a>
WHO	World Health Organization
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
SFM	Soros Foundation Moldova
IDU	Injecting drug users
RRP	Risk Reduction Program
ESPAD	European School Survey Project on Alcohol and Other Drugs
IBBS	Integrated Bio-Behavioural Surveillance Study among groups at high risk of infection
KAP	Studies "Knowledge, attitudes and practices on HIV / AIDS"
VCT	Voluntary Counselling and Testing
SARP	Substance Abuse Reduction Program
GFTAM	Global Fund to Fight HIV, Tuberculosis and Malaria
OST	Opioid substitution therapy
DRD	Drug-related Death
NCO	Non-commercial organization
RDS	Respondent Driven Sampling
SNPP	New Psychoactive Substances

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The National Report on Illicit Drug Use and Trafficking outlines an image of the drug phenomenon in our country, at the same time, it reflects the efforts made by central public authorities, national governmental and non-governmental organizations, institutions empowered to combat illicit drug use and trafficking in the Republic of Moldova and the results of population studies. The document contains annual data and information related to drug use and trafficking in the Republic of Moldova, highlighting the evolution and trends registered by our country, both in terms of reducing the demand for drugs, as well as, the supply of drugs, and the interventions and measures adopted by institutions empowered to combat drug-related problems. The content reflects a number of relevant aspects regarding the activities carried out in the political, institutional and legal framework (adoption of specific normative acts in the field of prevention and control of drug use and trafficking, inception of new normative acts or modifications of existing ones, application of law regulations) as well as, those developed in the drug prevention plan (prevention in schools, family prevention, community prevention). At the same time, there are highlighted the best practices in the field of drug supply and demand reduction.

### Retrospective for 2021:

In the normative framework, special attention is paid to the approval of the new national anti-drug strategy for 2020-2027, prioritizing the interdisciplinary and balanced approach to drug-related issues, based on collaboration and integrated evidence, focusing on decreasing drug demand, reducing drug supply and conducting risk assessment.

The drug market in 2021 records the following trends: **Seized quantities:** marijuana (104kg 336gr), cannabis plants (7984 plants), PVP (24kg 275gr), LSD (1479 stamps), ethnobotanical substances (1kg 98gr) etc... Cannabis remains the most seized drug nationally. **Increasing trend** for LSD (from 238 stamps in 2020 to 1479 stamps in 2021), cocaine (from 374gr in 2020 to 553,8gr in 2021), PVP (from 15kg 365gr in 2020 to 24kg 275gr in 2021), medicines (from 1037 pills in 2020 to 5573 pills in 2021), poppy plants (from 4397 plants in 2020 to 7984 in 2021), amphetamines (from 295gr in 2020 to 1kg 282gr in 2021), the NSP also show an increase in criminal cases from 170 in 2020 to 554 in 2021. **Decreases** have also been recorded for catches of straw (23886 plants in 2020 to 9351 plants in 2021), methamphetamines (from 1kg 49gr in 2020 to 306 gr in 2021). Drug trafficking and consumption as a phenomenon remains concentrated in urban areas in the central and northern parts of the country.

In terms of reducing the supply of drugs, a decrease in drug-related offences is confirmed in 2021 (818 cases) compared to 2020 (895 cases). Analysis of the data on drug-related offences in relation to the seriousness of the offences shows that most of them fall into the less serious and light category. The analysis of the area distribution of trafficked drugs shows that in the districts of the central part of the country there is documented increased trafficking of marijuana, ethnobotanicals, amphetamines. The northern part of the country also ranks first in terms of trafficking in marijuana and ethnobotanicals, while the southern part of the country is dominated by amphetamines, marijuana and cannabis plants. According to statistics in 2021, cannabis use is the object of crimes, followed by amphetamine use in urban areas.

Regarding the demand for treatment, for the reporting year, the number of new cases taken under surveillance decreases. According to the type of used drug reported in the new cases, the increase in use of the NPS group is observed. In the comparison between years, the increase in consumption of marijuana is observed both in those with and without addiction and in opiates and amphetamines the consumption decreases. There is a considerable increase in the use of NPS among non-dependent users. At the same time, in newly registered cases, the route of drug injection decreases both in non-addicted and addicted users. Compared to the previous reporting year, the number of female persons who started rehabilitation treatment increased. Increase in the number of people who have successfully completed rehabilitation treatment.

The number of DRD cases, the number of positive results and the number of toxicological investigations carried out is higher than the previous year and the number of deaths investigated is lower. The number detected by toxicological investigation of poly-drug use of psychotropic substances increases.

## COUNTRY OVERVIEW

The Republic of Moldova is located in the South-East of Europe. It is bordered with Ukraine to the North, South and East, and to the West, it is bordered with Romania. The Republic of Moldova gained its independency on August 27, 1991. It is a parliamentary republic and the president of the country is elected by the Parliament, for a 4-year term.

The overall length of the borders is 1.389 km, 450 km with Romania and 939 km with Ukraine. The country covers an area of 33.843 km<sup>2</sup>, of which 472 km<sup>2</sup> are waters - mainly the Danube and Dniester rivers, the Prut and Raut rivers and the Beleu, Bic and Dracele lakes. Although the Republic of Moldova has no access to the sea, the port on the Danube in Giurgiulesti ensures the service of maritime transport.

Following the political conflict of the 1990s, currently frozen, the territory on the left bank of the Dniester River is not fully controlled by the Government of the Republic of Moldova.

For 2021, the stable population indicator is not available on the official website statistica.md, in this context the calculations for some indicators were performed based on the number of the population with habitual residence, which is 2,603,813 people.

The largest cities in the country on the right bank of the Dniester River are the country's capital, Chisinau and Balti municipalities. From an administrative point of view, the Republic of Moldova is divided into 35 districts, 3 municipalities (Chisinau, Balti and Comrat), and the Transnistrian region (with 2 municipalities: Tiraspol and Bender).

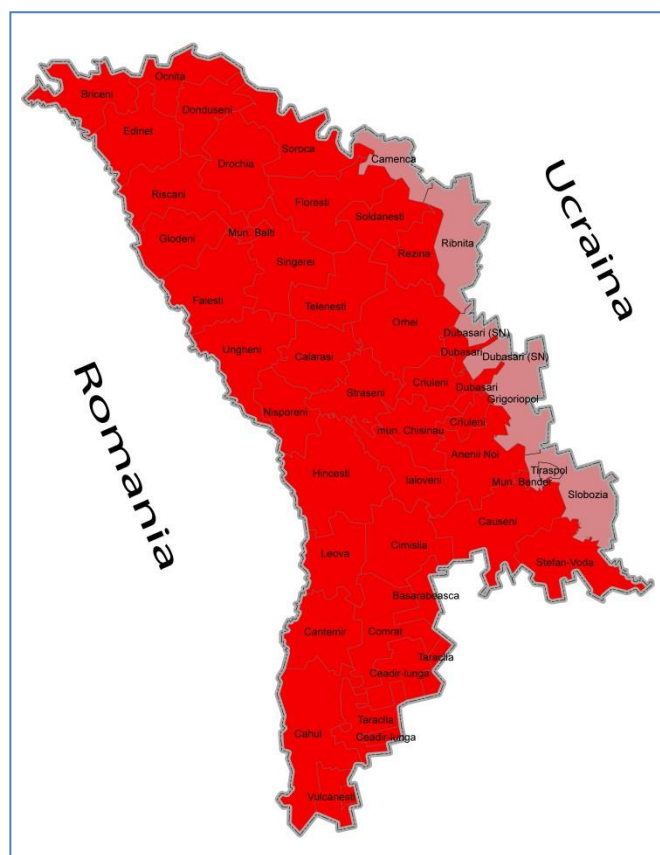


Table 1. Socio-economic situation, Republic of Moldova (right bank of the Dniester River), 2021

	Year	Media	Source
<u>Population, thousands of inhabitants</u>			National Bureau of Statistics
<i>Data are recalculated by applying the international definition of habitual residence. Habitual residence is defined as the place where the person lived predominantly in the last 12 months</i>	2021	2 603 813	
<u>Unemployment rate, percentage of labour force</u>			National Bureau of Statistics
<i>In estimating the results of the research, the number of the habitual residence population was used. The information is presented without the district data from left side of the Dniester and Bender municipality.</i>	2021	3.2	
<u>Minimum of existence</u>			National Bureau of Statistics
<i>In estimating the results of the research, the number of the habitual residence population was used. The information is presented without the district data from left side of the Dniester and Bender municipality.</i>	2021	2154	
<u>Drug-related offences in territorial profile</u>			National Bureau of Statistics
<i>The information is presented without the data of the districts on the left side of the Dniester. The number of crimes registered by the Directorate of Operational Services, the Centre for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, the National Anti-Corruption Centre, the Customs Service cannot be distributed by territorial profile.</i>	2021	818	

### INTRODUCTION

Illicit drug use and trafficking remains a problem that negatively influences the sustainable and safe development of the Republic of Moldova. The problem of globalization of illicit drug use and trafficking in various countries, including the Republic of Moldova, requires a process of development and improvement of the regulatory base that determines the national policy in the field of preventing drug use and combating illicit drug trafficking, reducing the risks and supply of drugs and providing treatment and rehabilitation services for drug users. Illicit drug use and trafficking continues to be a problem that has a negative impact on the sustainable and safe development of our society through the criminal and social implications they produce, while at the same time it has new forms of manifestation, the development of new information and communication technologies. The vulnerability of the state to the illicit drug circuit is influenced by several factors and depends on the effectiveness of the measures taken to reduce the demand and supply of drugs on the Moldovan market. In addressing the problem of drug use, the Republic of Moldova is based on the World Health Organization's concept of "Health for All in the 21st Century", according to which drug use is a problem that endangers public health and could hinder the healthy development of citizens and society in the wider context. In response to the increase in illicit drug trafficking and consumption, the Republic of Moldova has developed and continues to improve its legislative and institutional framework. Legislation has been drafted to regulate the circulation of narcotic and psychotropic substances in Moldova and to sanction possible violations of the established rules. In this respect, the Law on the Circulation of Narcotic Drugs, Psychotropic Substances and Precursors sets out the general rules and restrictions on the circulation of drugs on the territory of the Republic of Moldova. At the same time, the Contravention Code of the Republic of Moldova and the Criminal Code of the Republic of Moldova define the legal scope for sanctioning natural and legal persons who have violated the legal provisions on the circulation of narcotic and psychotropic substances. The codes lay down the grounds and conditions for sanctions, as well as the types of penalties applied. An emerging danger is the appearance on the market of new narcotic and psychotropic substances, as well as a new generation of synthetic preparations, the consumption of which also has serious health consequences. Thus, the commitments undertaken by the Republic of Moldova to reduce the demand and supply of drugs, reduce the risks of drug use and provide treatment and rehabilitation services to drug users, were included in the National Anti-Drug Strategy for 2020-2027 and the National Anti-Drug Plan for 2020-2021 approved by Government Decision No. 233/2020. The National Anti-Drug Strategy and the Anti-Drug Action Plan define the objectives and actions required of institutions to reduce the scale of the drug phenomenon at national level, study the needs, identify the problems of society and combat this phenomenon.

### POLITICAL FRAMEWORK

#### *ASSOCIATION AGREEMENT REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA-EUROPEAN UNION*

The EU-Moldova Association Agreement is the main milestone in promoting reform processes and strengthening the rule of law, democracy and market economy. Given the complexity of the Agreement, its provisions are translated into concrete actions that have been included in the National Action Plans for the Implementation of the Association Agreement (NAPAA). The National Action Plan for the Implementation of the EU-Moldova Association Agreement is the basic tool for monitoring the European integration process. The establishment of clear roles and competences between the competent institutions in the prevention and investigation of drug trafficking has facilitated inter-institutional cooperation in the fight against illicit drugs. Operational measures to establish and document criminal groups involved in illicit trafficking of narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and precursors have continued. In the context of the fight against illicit drugs, the Republic of Moldova continued to work effectively with the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA), sending it a report on illicit drug use and trafficking in Moldova.

**Art. 17<sup>1</sup>**, "Fight against illicit drugs" of the Action Plan for the implementation of the EU-Moldova Association Agreement, has as measure "Implementation of the National Anti-Drug Strategy 2020-2027", approved by Government Decision No 233 of 10.04.2020 and ensuring the implementation of the actions provided for in the National Anti-Drug Action Plan 2020-2021.

<sup>1</sup> Article 17 Combating illegal drugs

## NATIONAL ANTI-DRUG STRATEGY 2020-2027

Pursuant to Law no. 382/1999 on the circulation of narcotic and psychotropic substances and precursors (the Official Gazette of the Republic of Moldova, 1999, no. 73-77, art. 339), with subsequent amendments, and fulfilment of commitments undertaken by the Republic of Moldova on reducing the demand for drugs, reducing the conditional risks of drug use, reducing drug supply, coordinating activities, monitoring and reporting, international cooperation, implementing alternative measures to pre-trial detention, and custodial sentences in cases associated with drug use, observance of the fundamental rights and freedoms of persons, as well as the assessment of activities in the field was approved by Government Decision no. 233 of 10.04.2020 “National Anti-Drug Strategy for 2020-2027” and the “National Action Plan for 2020-2021”. The Strategy is a key document of the Government, which describes the situation at that time in the field and defines the objectives, actions and measures needed, with clear responsibilities for all actors involved in the prevention and repression of drug use and/or illicit trafficking. The document defines the starting points and ways forward in addressing the problem of drug use and the recommended basic framework for the creation and implementation of drug policy. This Strategy aims at a multidisciplinary and balanced approach to drug use problems, based on interdepartmental, interdisciplinary and intersectoral cooperation at all levels, building on the lessons learned from the implementation of previous strategies and action plans and based on three overarching strategic areas of modern drug policy which complement each other. **The strategy sets out the priorities of the state's drug policy and describes the current situation, objectives, actions and measures needed, establishing clear responsibilities for the actors involved in preventing and combating drug use and/or illicit trafficking.** In the context of the balanced implementation of these components, the following general objectives of the National Anti-Drug Strategy are distinguished:

1. Reducing drug demand (primary drug prevention, treatment, rehabilitation and re-socialisation of drug users);
2. Reducing conditional drug use risks (projects and programs to reduce risks through health education, information about the risks of drug use, syringe exchange, substitution treatment, HIV testing, screening for sexually transmitted infections, psychological counselling);
3. Reducing the drug supply (controlling the legal movement of drugs and combating illicit drug trafficking and distribution).

Specific objectives of the National Anti-Drug Strategy:

1. Developing an effective system of initial and continuous training of specialists in the field of the illegal drugs circuit;
2. Developing the proactive role of families in children's lives in order to build or strengthen skills to increase the influence of protective factors;
3. Organisation of national/local public awareness campaigns;
4. Information on the negative effects of drug use and trafficking, carrying out prevention measures in places of detention;
5. Ensuring continuity and quality of pharmacological treatment of opioid dependence;
6. Increasing medical and pharmaceutical care in the treatment of opioid addicts and keeping them in treatment;

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1. The Parties will cooperate, within their respective powers and competences, to ensure a balanced and integrated approach to drug-related issues. Drug policies and actions will focus on strengthening structures to combat illicit drugs, reducing the supply, trafficking and demand for illicit drugs, overcoming the health and social consequences of drug abuse, and more effectively preventing the diversion of chemical precursors for the illicit manufacture of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances.

2. The Parties will agree on the methods of cooperation necessary to achieve these objectives. Actions will be based on commonly agreed principles in accordance with relevant international conventions, the EU Drugs Strategy (2013-2020), the Political Declaration and the Special Declaration on the Guiding Principles of Drug Demand Reduction adopted at the twentieth session of the United Nations General Assembly on drugs in June 1998.

7. Developing rehabilitation and support services for drug users released from detention in order to prevent their criminal recidivism;
8. Increase information, education and awareness of drug users and develop appropriate interventions to prevent drug-related deaths or infectious diseases;
9. Development of alternative rehabilitation services, through non-commercial organisations, and specialised services, taking into account the particular needs of women and men;
10. Treatment of drug addicts in places of detention.

The Republic of Moldova is a state where international standards are respected, people's rights and freedoms are respected and protected, drug users have the right and benefit from treatment, the phenomenon of illicit drug trafficking is punished, and the proceeds of criminal activity are confiscated using legal means. Drug use and trafficking in the Republic of Moldova is taking on new forms, whether taken over from other countries or newly created, due to a number of factors, including the free movement of persons, the development of new information and communication technologies and the continuing development of cross-border organised crime. In view of these findings, more complex and varied approaches are needed from all the players involved in the fight against drugs. The implementation of this Strategy will be carried out in four stages:

1. stage I – period 2020-2021;
2. stage II – period 2022-2023;
3. stage III – period 2024-2025;
4. stage IV – period 2026-2027

Monitoring and control over the implementation of the National Anti-Drug Strategy and Action Plan is entrusted to the National Anti-Drug Commission, an interdepartmental body created in 2011 to promote state policy in the field of the circulation of narcotic and psychotropic substances. Drug control activity at the central public administration level is carried out by the National Anti-Drug Commission. Committee of executive representatives of the National Anti-Drug Commission - is composed of civil servants of ministries responsible for drug policy issues, representatives of state institutions (health, social, law enforcement, etc.), international institutions active in the field of drugs and involved in the process of policy development, granting of funding, as well as NGOs.

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#### *NATIONAL ACTION PLAN 2020-2021*

The National Anti-Drug Action Plan for 2020-2021 is an integral part of the National Anti-Drug Strategy for 2020-2027 and contains seven areas, which represent priority directions of intervention:

1. *Drug demand reduction* (primary drug prevention, treatment, rehabilitation and re-socialisation of drug users);
2. *Reducing conditional drug use risks* (risk reduction projects and programmes through health education, drug risk information, syringe exchange, substitution treatment, HIV testing, sexually transmitted infection screening, psychological counselling);
3. *Reducing the drug supply* (controlling the legal movement of drugs and combating illicit drug trafficking and distribution);
4. *Coordination of activities* (creating an effective system for coordinating the implementation of drug policy measures and interventions, clearly defining and delineating the responsibilities and competencies of all key institutions, including non-commercial organisations, involved in the development and implementation of drug policy at all levels);
5. *Monitoring and reporting* (ensuring the functionality of the National Agency for Public Health within the national anti-drug policy system and using its annual reports on the drug situation in the Republic of Moldova as a basis for the promotion of anti-drug policies).
6. *International cooperation* (active participation in joint initiatives launched at international level, effective implementation of own activities in conjunction with those of external partners, in the planning, evaluation and implementation of actions);
7. *Evaluation of activities* (Ensuring consistent application of evidence-based procedures in the process of evaluating the effectiveness of measures implemented in drug policy areas and applying the conclusions formed on the basis of these evaluations).

Taking into account the characteristics of illicit drug use and circulation, this phenomenon is presented as the most complex of the category of crimes committed on the territory of the Republic of Moldova. Thus, in order to ensure a response, it is necessary to coordinate the efforts of the institutions responsible at national level.

In the National Anti-Drug Action Plan for 2020-2021, the responsible institutions present the current and priority problem of society in the field of drug demand reduction (primary prevention of drug use, treatment, rehabilitation and re-socialization of drug users), risk reduction conditional to drug use (projects and programmes of harm reduction through health education, information on the risks of drug use, syringe exchange, substitution treatment, HIV testing, screening for sexually transmitted infections, psychological counselling), reduction of drug supply (control of legal drug circulation and combating illicit drug trafficking and distribution as well as the coordination and practical implementation mechanism of the plan. The analysis and activities carried out in this field throughout the Republic of Moldova for the period 2021 are included in "*Report on the implementation of the National Anti-Drug Action Plan for the year 2021*" prepared annually on the basis of data from the previous year and presents the evolution (*of achieving the proposed objectives*) of the drug phenomenon in our country.

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#### CONTRAVENTION CODE

During 2020, the Contravention Code was not amended or supplemented in art. 85 para. (1), (2), art.86, art.87. The Contravention Code of the Republic of Moldova provides for the introduction of the liability of the legal person and the application of community service, as a sanction for some administrative offenses related to drugs. According to the provisions of the Code, in:

**Article 85:** Illicit procurement or storage of drugs, precursors, ethnobotanicals and their analogues in small quantities or drug use doctor's prescription

Paragraph (1) The illegal procurement or storage, without the purpose of alienation, of drugs, precursors, ethnobotanicals and their analogues in small quantities, as well as the consumption of drugs without a doctor's prescription shall be sanctioned with a fine from 30 to 60 conventional units or community service for up to 72 hours.

Paragraph (2) In the case of a person who has voluntarily handed over drugs, precursors, ethnobotanicals and their analogues, illegally held, or who has addressed or agrees to voluntarily apply to a medical institution for the necessary assistance in connection with their illegal consumption, the contravention liability for the deeds provided by this article is removed.

**Article 86.** Failure to take measures to ensure the protection of plant sowings containing drugs, precursors and their analogues. Failure to take the measures provided by law to ensure the established regime for the protection of poppy seed, hemp, coca bush, storage and processing of harvest of these crops, failure to take measures to destroy the residues left after harvest and waste production containing drugs, precursors and their analogues is sanctioned with a fine from 90 to 210 conventional units applied to the person in charge, with a fine from 300 to 600 conventional units applied to the legal person.

**Article 87.** Illegal cultivation of plants containing drugs, precursors and their analogues and manufacture of ethnobotanicals. Illegal cultivation of plants containing drugs, precursors and their analogues and manufacture of ethnobotanicals without the purpose of alienation, if the acts do not constitute a crime is sanctioned with a fine from 42 to 60 conventional units applied to the individual, with a fine from 180 to 300 conventional units applied to the person in charge, with a fine from 300 to 600 conventional units applied to the legal person, in all cases with / or without deprivation of the right to carry out a certain activity for a period from 1 year to 3 years.

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#### CRIMINAL CODE

In 2008/2009, there were elaborated essential amendments and completions within the norms that regulate the punishments for drug-related crimes, being reduced the prison sentence, or increased as the case may be by applying the administrative contravention as punishment, the new provisions correspond to international norms according to the expertise performed by the Council of Europe and other independent expertise by humanizing criminal punishments, promoting alternative punishments to deprivation of liberty, adjusting national criminal law. The main features of the amendment process are the reduction of the minimum and maximum level of punishments (especially the prison sentence) and the general review of all punishments provided by law for crimes, the exclusion of the concept of crime committed repeatedly, the logical arrangement of the content of the Criminal Code.

During 2020, the Criminal Code of the Republic of Moldova concerning the chapter on illicit drug use and trafficking has not been amended or supplemented and the provisions governing the punishments for drug-related offenses remain current. These provisions are specified in the following articles:

Art. 134<sup>1</sup> Drugs, precursors, ethnobotanicals and their analogues

Art.209 Attracting minors to the illicit use of drugs, medicine and other substances with a narcotic effect.

At the same time, the offenses established in article 217 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Moldova no. 985/2002 are part of the category of "crimes against public health and social coexistence" and require a medical approach, not criminal in the case of drug users.

Art.217. Illicit circulation of drugs, ethnobotanicals or their analogues without purpose of appropriation

Art.217<sup>1</sup> Illicit circulation of drugs, ethnobotanicals or their analogues for the purpose of appropriation

Art.217<sup>2</sup> Illicit movement of precursors for the manufacture or processing of ethnobotanical, drugs or their analogues

Art.217<sup>3</sup> Illicit circulation of materials and equipment intended for the production or processing of drugs, ethnobotanicals or their analogues.

Art.217<sup>4</sup> Theft or extortion of drugs or ethnobotanicals

Art.217<sup>5</sup> Illicit public consumption or organization of illicit consumption of drugs, ethnobotanicals or their analogues

(1) Illicit use of drugs, ethnobotanicals or their analogues, committed in public or on the territory of educational institutions, social rehabilitation institutions, penitentiaries, military units, in places of leisure, in places of education, training of minors or youth, of other cultural or sports actions or in their immediate vicinity, shall be punished with a fine in the amount of 400 to 700 conventional units or by community service from 180 to 240 hours.

Art.217<sup>6</sup> The unlawful intentional introduction into the body of another person, against his/her will, of drugs, ethnobotanics or their analogues

Art.218 Illicit prescribing or violation of the rules of drug circulation

Art.219 Organization or maintenance of joints for the use of drugs or ethnobotanicals

Art. 248 Smuggling

Art.322 (3) The concealed transmission by any means to persons detained in penitentiary institutions of alcoholic beverages, drugs, ethnobotanicals or their analogues.

## INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

### *NATIONAL ANTI-DRUG COMMISSION*

According to the Government Decision no. 481 of 2011, the institutional framework is established by setting up the National Anti-Drug Commission and establishes its tasks. In order to implement the National Anti-Drug Strategy for 2020-2027 and the National Anti-Drug Action Plans, as well as to fulfil the commitments undertaken by the Republic of Moldova to combat illicit drug trafficking and consumption, the National Anti-Drug Commission, as a consultative, coordinating and initiative body of the Government, creates a platform for continuous communication with ministries, other representatives of central and local public administration, public associations, other entities contributing to the implementation of drug policy (including non-commercial organisations). The National Anti-Drug Commission submits draft anti-drug strategies and action plans to the Government, coordinates and evaluates their implementation and supervises at all stages the fulfilment of the tasks set out in this Strategy and in the national action plans. Drug control work at the central government level is carried out by the National Anti-Drug Commission. Committee of executive representatives of the National Anti-Drug Commission - is composed of civil servants of ministries responsible for drug policy issues, representatives of state institutions (health, social, law

enforcement, etc.), international institutions active in the field of drugs and involved in the process of policy development, granting of funding, as well as NGOs. Local authorities play a key role in the transfer of tasks and knowledge from central to local level and vice versa. Thus, the involvement of these bodies in the drafting of action plans for the implementation of the national drugs policy and negotiations with them are of major importance. The Executive Committee of the National Anti-Drug Commission, set up within the National Anti-Drug Commission, is a permanent coordination structure aimed at ensuring effective collaboration between the central public administration authorities that are members of the National Anti-Drug Commission. The organization and management of the work of the Executive Committee of the National Anti-Drug Commission is ensured by the Ministry of the Interior. In accordance with the priorities of the Strategy, the Executive Committee of the National Anti-Drug Commission will address issues requiring urgent decisions in the field of combating illicit drug use and trafficking, will manage the organizational activities for the achievement of the objectives and tasks of the National Anti-Drug Commission, will carry out the coordination of activities for preventing and combating illicit drug use and trafficking, as well as cooperation in this field with the members of the National Anti-Drug Commission, public authorities and representatives of civil society, will ensure the creation and activity of working groups for the elaboration of national anti-drug action plans, in order to implement the provisions of the National Anti-Drug Strategy for 2020-2027, will monitor the implementation of the actions foreseen in the national anti-drug action plans, will exchange data and information with the members of the National Anti-Drug Commission, as well as identify and elaborate proposals for the improvement of drug legislation. At the same time, in order to increase the effectiveness of measures to combat illicit drug trafficking, both at national and regional level, and to ensure an effective response to the increase in drug abuse in Moldova, there is a need to strengthen the institutional mechanisms for drug control and the legislative framework. At the moment the Secretariat of the Commission is provided by the Anti-Drug Directorate of the National Investigation Inspectorate of the General Police Inspectorate. Tasks of the secretariat:

- coordinates the process of developing policy documents in the field of drugs;
- monitors and evaluates the implementation of drug policies by the institutions in the field;
- sets up inter-institutional working groups to develop proposals for the improvement of drug policies;
- organises the interaction between central public administration authorities and non-commercial organisations involved in drug demand and supply reduction activities;
- cooperates with public authorities, international and intergovernmental organisations, other agencies and representatives of civil society;
- with the consent of the President of the National Anti-Drug Commission, convenes meetings with the participation of non-commercial organisations, foreign partners, other institutions aimed at monitoring the work and providing assistance in the field of drugs;
- if necessary, it attracts experts from various fields to the work of the National Anti-Drug Commission;
- identify resources for carrying out studies/research in the anti-drug field in order to assess the trend of the phenomenon in the Republic of Moldova;
- promotes the public image of the National Commission at home and abroad;
- ensures correspondence with the National Anti-Drug Commission through its President;
- organises meetings of the National Anti-Drug Commission;
- prepares national and international reports on the anti-drug field;

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#### AMENDMENTS AND COMPLETIONS OF LAW NO. 382-XIV OF MAY 6, 1999 ON THE CIRCULATION OF NARCOTIC AND PSYCHOTROPIC SUBSTANCES AND PRECURSORS

Law No 382-XIV of 6 May 1999 "On the circulation of narcotic and psychotropic substances and precursors" is the main legislative act that promotes the state policy in the field of drugs and aims to promote state policy on the issue of circulation of narcotic and psychotropic substances and precursors, protection of human health, ensuring social and state security. It was amended and supplemented by Law 246 of 27.11.2008. According to the amendments and additions the law establishes additional conditions for granting, suspending or withdrawing the authorisation/licence for persons, institutions, pharmaceutical companies carrying out activities related to the circulation of narcotic substances. In Article 1 the notion "narcotic substance (narcotic drug), psychotropic substance", the words ", as well as preparation containing such substance,"

are excluded. At the same time, it supplements and amends the conditions for the circulation of substances This law together with the amendments and additions remain in force until today.

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#### AMENDMENTS AND COMPLETIONS OF LAW NO. 713 OF DECEMBER 6, 2001 ON THE CONTROL AND PREVENTION OF ALCOHOL ABUSE, ILLICIT DRUG USE AND OTHER PSYCHOTROPIC SUBSTANCES

The law establishes the state's policy on controlling and preventing alcohol abuse, illicit drug use and other psychotropic substances, reducing and excluding such consumption, educating the population in the spirit of abstinence and a healthy lifestyle, and eliminating the consequences of physical and / or mental dependence towards them. Objectives and scope of the law:

(1) This law expresses the priority of public health in state policy, is aimed at creating conditions for the implementation in society of ethical principles, goals and action strategies to reduce alcohol consumption, eradicate illicit drug use and other psychotropic substances.

(2) The state guarantees to persons with narcological problems medical and social assistance, which is granted on the principles of legality, humanism and respect for human rights.

In order to improve the legal framework of prevention, this Law was subject to amendments and additions, adopted in December 2008, Law No. 260 of 05.12.2008, published in the Official Gazette of 10.02.2009. The amendments improve the terminology used in the law to avoid loopholes and eliminate misinterpretations with some amendments:

"narcological assistance" - comprehensive medical examination on the basis and in the manner established by this law and other legislative acts, diagnosis of narcological diseases, treatment, care, medico-social rehabilitation and medical supervision through dispensation, and in case of necessity, drawing sick persons with the continuous course of the disease into informational, educational, prophylactic and treatment programmes.

"intoxication" - a state of intoxication resulting from the consumption of alcohol, drugs, psychotropic substances and/or other substances causing intoxication, resulting in psycho-functional dysregulation of the body;

"medical examination" - to determine the state of intoxication and its nature - a complex of medical actions and procedures aimed at determining and ascertaining the state of intoxication and the substance consumed;

"control of sobriety" - medical actions and procedures carried out for the purpose of preventing and avoiding the driving of means of transport by drivers who are intoxicated or whose health has deteriorated;

"inspector on control of sobriety" - a person trained in and empowered to carry out a sobriety control;

"breath alcohol test" - actions by the police officer or another duly trained and authorised person aimed at determining the breath alcohol concentration of the person tested, carried out using approved and metrologically verified technical means."

Drug use without medical prescription will be determined based on the results of medical examinations and examination of biological fluids. Other amendments concern the procedure for the provision of medical services (responsible specialists, rules to be observed, procedure for appeals, dispute resolution, etc.) and narcological medical assistance (types of narcological medical assistance, responsible specialists, cases in which it occurs, termination of assistance, etc.). In accordance with the provisions of Law No 713- XV of December 6, 2001 on the control and prevention of alcohol abuse, illicit use of drugs and other psychotropic substances and Law No 131-XVI of June 7, 2007 on road traffic safety, in order to establish the order of collection and analysis of biological samples for the determination of alcohol, drugs and other psychotropic substances, drugs with similar effects, the Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection has developed and approved Order No 30 of 11.01.2019 "On the collection and analysis of biological samples for the determination of alcohol, drugs and other psychotropic substances, drugs with similar effects".



LIST OF NARCOTIC, PSYCHOTROPIC SUBSTANCES AND PLANTS CONTAINING SUCH SUBSTANCES DETECTED IN ILLICIT TRAFFICKING, AS WELL AS THEIR QUANTITIES

For the purpose of regulating some issues related to the countering of illicit trafficking in narcotic, psychotropic substances and plants containing narcotic or psychotropic substances, pursuant to paragraphs (4) and (5) of article 134<sup>1</sup> of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Moldova no. 985 of April 18, 2002, the "List of narcotic, psychotropic substances and plants containing such substances, detected in illicit trafficking, as well as their quantities" was approved by Government Decision no.79 of January 23, 2006".

The list is used by law enforcement authorities in the process of qualifying a drug-related action/inaction as an administrative offence or contravention, depending on the identified quantity to be adjusted to the realities of drug use but also to European recommendations and the substance under control. The list defines small, large and particularly large quantities for each narcotic substance, psychotropic substance or plants containing such substances.

According to the provisions of the Contravention Code of the Republic of Moldova, illegal actions/actions with small quantities of narcotic substances, psychotropic substances or plants containing such substances are punishable. The same actions/inactions with large and particularly large quantities are punishable under the Criminal Code of the Republic of Moldova. Quantities include mixtures of narcotic and/or psychotropic substances with precursors, additives (medicinal preparations, acids, glucose, starch, flour, etc.) in any state of aggregation. Small, large or particularly large quantities of analogues of narcotic or psychotropic substances correspond to the calculated quantities of the narcotic or psychotropic substances listed.

The small quantity of narcotic substances, psychotropic substances or plants containing such substances is less than the large quantity defined in the List. Large quantities of narcotic substances, psychotropic substances and precursors, which have been detected in illegal circulation, are considered to be quantities exceeding the small quantities up to the maximum quantities indicated in the table of large quantities. Particularly large quantities of narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and precursors found in illegal circulation shall be regarded as quantities exceeding the large quantities.

It has been found that lately in the Republic of Moldova there are serious abuses of consumption with a category of new substances that are used as narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and precursors. Thus, in order to undertake measures to combat the supply of drugs, specialists in the field have examined the problem of the appearance of these new preparations and have found that new substances used for narcotic and psychotropic sensations have been identified in the illicit circuit. These new substances are not under state control in accordance with the legislation in force, and their circulation among the population of the Republic of Moldova presents a serious danger to health and an increase in crime in this area. The latest addition to the List of narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and plants containing such substances, detected in illicit trafficking, as well as their quantities was amended by 9 positions by Government Decision No 620 of 02.08.2017.

In order to identify and amend the regulatory framework, the General Prosecutor's Office formulated and sent to the Ministry of Justice relevant proposals to amend Government Decision no. 1088 of 05.10.2004 on the approval of tables and lists of narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and their precursors, subject to control, as well as Government Decision no. 79/2006, which approved the list of psychotropic substances and plants containing such substances detected in illicit trafficking, as well as their quantities.

Table 2. Quantities of drugs stipulated in the schedules and lists of narcotic and psychotropic substances and precursors subject to control, year 2021, Republic of Moldova

Position	Small quantities (up to the indicated quantity)	Large quantities (from - to)
Heroin	0,01-1 gr	0,01-2,5 gr
Opium (raw opium)	0,1-1 gr	0,1-25 gr
Cocaine	0,15 gr	0,15-5 gr
LSD	1 stamp (dose)	2-10 stamps (doze)
Dry poppy straw	10 gr	10,0-500 gr
Green poppy straw	70,0 gr	70,0-1000 gr
Poppy extract	0,5 gr	0,5 gr-5 gr
Hemp plants etc...	5 plants	6-50 plants

Source: <https://www.legis.md>

## PROBATION SERVICE

The Law on Probation was adopted by the Parliament in 2008 (Law No. 8 of 14.02.2008) and entered into force on September 13, 2008. The application of the law facilitates the individualisation of sentences, helping to prevent recidivism and ensure the re-socialisation of offenders. Probation appears as an important step in the context of bringing national legislation into line with international standards, with the aim of creating an intermediate zone in the punishment system, re-evaluating the repressive concept and redirecting it towards a curative one. Probation is a complex of assessment, assistance, psychosocial counselling and supervision activities in the community for persons in conflict with the law (accused, defendants, convicts) with the aim of reintegrating them into society and protecting the community from the risk of recidivism. The probation service plays an important role in the social reintegration of ex-prisoners facing complex drug problems.

In order to ensure adherence to treatment in the community, the National Probation Inspectorate collaborated with several public institutions and non-governmental organizations, based on partnerships and collaboration with institutions available in the community, 166 subjects who are users of psychoactive substances were involved in medical, psychological, psychiatric services. Thus, medical and psychological assistance was provided to drug users.

Within the National Probation Inspectorate, the following programmes are implemented:

- Probationary Substance Abuse Reduction Programme (PSARP), involving 112 people
- with the support of the PA "Positive Initiative", a new program was developed, namely "Probation program to facilitate the resocialization process of persons in conflict with the law with a criminogenic factor: the use of psychoactive substances". Thus, the subjects involved in this program received social, legal and psychological assistance as well as undergoing the chemical dependency detoxification program and free rehabilitation in the therapeutic community. During the reporting period, 25 subjects benefited from assistance and rehabilitation services within the program.

During 2021, psychosocial assistance was provided to 112 persons released from places of detention: medical assistance, employment, vocational training, psychological counselling, involvement in probation programmes. The organisations with which it collaborated were: Republican Dispensary of Narcology, National Employment Agency, population documentation departments, temporary placement centres, PA "Positive Initiative", Union for HIV Prevention and Harm Reduction, mental health centres, PA Life with Hope, PA "Youth for the Right to Life". The National Probation Inspectorate together with the PA Union for HIV Prevention and Risk Reduction organized a workshop on the development of the Psychoactive Substance Abuse Reduction Programme (PSARP), a resource programme applied in the assistance of probation subjects marked by drug use and addiction. The National Probation Inspectorate continues the training and professional development of probation specialists, by attracting external assistance and project support in the development of probation programmes, as well as organising activities to prevent recidivism.

The National Probation Inspectorate with the support of the PA "Union for HIV Prevention and Harm Reduction" and the Soros Foundation has developed a concept on the application of alternative sanctions to imprisonment in drug-related cases. A guide for practitioners has also been developed in order to provide for the drafting of the initial report at the presentence stage, to be promoted among practitioners (judges, prosecutors, prosecution officers). In 2021 the National Probation Inspectorate concluded an outsourcing services contract with the P.A. "Positive Initiative". Thus, specialized assistance services in rehabilitation of drug users on the probation authorities' register were purchased. Thus, 16 persons were assisted with the following types of services: psychological assistance, group therapy, detoxification course, rehabilitation, etc.

## NATIONAL ADMINISTRATION OF PENITENTIARIES

In order to develop cooperation with civil society in the context of the implementation of drug supply reduction programs, various activities are carried out in penitentiary institutions aimed at familiarizing convicts with the negative effects of drug use. During 2021 in penitentiary institutions was carried out "Psycho-social rehabilitation program for drug addicts" in two stages. The first stage - informative, contains 10 lessons psycho-pedagogical, the purpose of which is to inform convicts about the negative influence of drugs on personality development. The second stage - rehabilitation - involves psychological support

and offers training to prevent recidivism, with 316 sessions involving 220 prisoners. Various activities were carried out in penitentiary institutions aimed at familiarizing convicts with the negative effects of drug use, one of them being the "Health Education Program in the Prisoners' Environment". The aim of the program is to promote health and hygiene culture by preventing diseases and risks that can affect physical, mental, emotional and social health. Thus, during 2021, 500 sessions were held, involving 749 inmates. The National Administration of Penitentiaries has taken over from the state budget the provision of drug treatment for addicts in penitentiary institutions with the exception of Methadone solution, which is provided from the sources of the "National Program of HIV/AIDS Prevention for 2021-2025". During 2021, 13 drug-dependent prisoners were treated with buprenorphine and 162 people used Methadone substitution therapy. The National Administration of Penitentiaries carried out various activities aimed at familiarizing convicts with the negative effects of drug use.

On this subject, we would like to mention the "Health Education Program for Prisoners", with the aim of promoting health and hygiene culture by preventing diseases and risks that can affect their physical, mental, emotional and social health.

During 2021 a team of local researchers conducted a study of the effectiveness of the Therapeutic Community in Penitentiary No.9-Pruncul.

In addition, in 2021, the development of an e-learning module on substitution treatment to be used for the training of medical staff working in the National Administration of Penitentiaries started.

This customised product is in the finalisation phase and will soon be ready for use.

Also in 2021, the Pompidou Group launched a joint study with Yale University on addressing the influence of criminal subcultures on the effectiveness of drug treatment programs in prisons in Moldova.

The Therapeutic Community of Penitentiary No.9-Pruncul, has been active since 30.07.2018. In its activity, the Therapeutic Community is guided by the provisions of the Regulation on the conditions of organization and conduct of the activity of the Therapeutic Community, approved by DPI (Department of Penitentiary Institutions) Order No.125/2018 with subsequent amendments. The general purpose of the Therapeutic Community is to support the participation of residents in the process of recovery and the acquisition of a correct way of life, behavioural change, development and formation of new skills and social responsibilities. A total of 50 residents have passed through the Therapeutic Community since its opening. At the end of 2021 there were 10 residents in the community. All convicted persons in the initial assessment process are provided with the Individual Rehabilitation Plan in accordance with the provisions of the Methodology on the Individual Rehabilitation Plan for the mature/minor convict, approved by DPI Order No. 34/2018. This involves the set of activities and/or programs, established by a multidisciplinary team, according to the needs and risks identified in the assessment process and which are mandatory for each adult/minor convict. During 2021, 1357 plans were drawn up and 448 plans reviewed.

It also works with probation bodies, the Employment Agency, LPAs, etc., in order to train people released from detention and encourage their employment, as well as granting one-off allowances on release from detention. In order to ensure the access of consumers to psychosocial rehabilitation services, the National Administration of Penitentiaries has concluded a cooperation agreement with the PMSI Community Mental Health Centre Botanica. During 2021, the National Administration of Penitentiaries issued orders, provisions, indications which were handed over for execution to penitentiary institutions for taking the necessary measures to counteract the penetration of prohibited objects into the territory of prisons, including the involvement of joint detachments, SDD (Special Destination Detachment) "Pantera" and colleagues from the MIA structures for joint patrolling and ambush organization. In this context, in some penitentiaries (No. 4-Cricova and No. 9-Pruncul) joint actions were carried out by SDD "Pantera" with representatives of the MIA structures, ambushes were organized and civilians involved in the transmission of illicit objects and substances in prisons were detained in flagrante delicto. The electronic system for collecting and exchanging data on illicit drug use and trafficking is not implemented within the prison administration system.

In the field of "*supply reduction*" of drugs, intelligence analysis, for the reference period 2021, SIS, in accordance with the provisions of Law No. 753/1999, carries out a complex of measures aimed at detecting, preventing and counteracting actions which, according to the legislation in force, endanger state security. Among the listed tasks, the aspect of counteracting international drug trafficking is exhaustively highlighted. The overall picture of the specified criminal phenomenon derived from operational practice reveals that specialised transnational criminal networks continue to use the territory of the Republic of Moldova for the illicit transit of drugs to the East (usually hashish and/or cocaine) or West (heroin). For domestic consumption, quantities of the transited volumes are used, but also certain types of drugs intended strictly for local consumption are "imported", namely Ecstasy (from the EU area - Netherlands, France) and precursors (from Ukraine). Factual analysis of the situation reveals that traffickers continue to use practically the same methods of transporting narcotics: commercial transport (containers, aircraft, postal services), couriers - involving individuals, shipment of drugs via unaccompanied parcels (chemical cleaning solution cylinders/car oil cylinders, etc.), international passenger routes or indirect routes (to disguise final destinations). Baseline information for 2021, shows that, despite the difficulties caused by the epidemiological situation, organised criminal groups specialised in illicit drug production and trafficking have rapidly adapted to the new changes in the situation and have modified their methods of operation regarding the production/distribution/trading of prohibited substances.

- ✓ the use of the "Dark Web" (part of the website, run on private server networks, which allow communication only by specific means. This allows a high degree of anonymity and makes it difficult for authorities to investigate);
- ✓ specialised IT applications or anonymous social networking groups (Telegram) (which make it difficult to identify the seller/buyer). By communicating within these applications, the buyer pays (through pre-defined channels) and then receives information on where to pick up the purchased "goods";
- ✓ establishing relationships with drug suppliers in third countries (where law enforcement and partner control is reduced);
- ✓ making payments with cryptocurrencies.

Virtually every grouping formed in the Internet space uses an individual list of software (VPN technology, proxy server system providing anonymous network connections; messaging systems; photo hosting service allowing uploading of photos; online service for exchanging digital currencies and bitcoin mixer; software for determining geographic coordinates; online car rental services, etc.). Drug traffickers have already abandoned the services of financial intelligence agencies of cryptocurrency exchanges and have divested themselves of bitcoin in favour of cryptocurrencies such as Ethereum, monero, initiated the use of new anonymous messengers (such as LukeChat etc.) and geo-coordinate transfer software (timeNote, privNote, etc.). The following are used to ensure the security of individual drug sales, laboratory equipment and chemical reagents: thermal imaging systems, UAVs, video and photo surveillance identification detectors, etc.

During 2021, SIS carried out a complex of documentation actions, special investigative measures and support to prosecution bodies in the field of drug trafficking on a number of cases:

- Investigating the activity of a cross-border organised criminal group specialized in the manufacture, transportation and sale of high-risk narcotics (amphetamine and synthetic drugs).
- During the reporting period, the Service has been targeting the criminal activity of a cross-border criminal group specialising in the illicit trafficking of narcotic substances.
- In addition, a set of measures was initiated aimed at documenting a cross-border criminal group specialising in several specific categories of organized crime (including trafficking in drugs, cocaine and ecstasy in particularly large quantities) on the Latin America (Costa Rica) - Spain route, with the drugs being disseminated within the EU. The criminal group concerned is said to consist mainly of citizens of the Republic of Moldova and Romania.

ANTI DRUG DIRECTORATE (AD)

In 2021, the Anti-Drug Directorate of the General Police Inspectorate (GPI) participated in activities organized jointly with development partners, namely:

- Online training course on "Emerging Trends in Drug Trafficking" an event organized by the International Law Enforcement Academy (ILEA) in Budapest, Hungary.
- The Head of the Drug Crimes Investigation Directorate and the Head of the Northern Directorate of the National Investigation Inspectorate (NII) participated in the recording of the show "Dialogue".
- Employees of the Directorate participated as trainers to provide methodical-practical assistance in the field of combating illicit drug trafficking for employees of the subdivisions of the General Inspectorate of Carabinieri of the Ministry of Interior.
- Training course on "Investigative methods used in the investigation of human trafficking, drug trafficking, smuggling of tobacco products and money laundering offences".
- Training course on "Strengthening Police Capacities in Combating All Forms of Organized Crime", training organized within the Project „Increasing Knowledge of Moldovan Police Officers in Combating All Forms of Organized Crime".
- Training course entitled "Training session on investigative methods used in the investigation of crimes of human trafficking, drug trafficking, smuggling of tobacco products and money laundering", event organized in the framework of the project "Regional Cooperation for Preventing and Combating Transborder Criminality Romania - Moldova" (THOR)".
- Crime fighting training on "Risk analysis and search techniques" organised by the Turkish Police Department.
- Participation in the 3rd INTERPOL Global Conference on Drugs and Illicit Substances, an event organized under the auspices of ICPO INTERPOL.
- In an online format, the "Conference on Combating Drug Trafficking", an event organised by the South East European Law Enforcement Centre (SELEC).
- In an online format, the annual plenary session of the Europol Suspicious Transaction Analysis Project, organised by EUROPOL
- A report on the need to amend and complete the legislation on the implementation of alternative measures to pre-trial detention and custodial sentences in cases related to drug use - following an analysis of Moldovan legislation and international models - was prepared. The draft report was sent to the Ministry of Justice by the DPPCC of the Ministry of Interior.
- Meeting on "Technical Early Warning System (EWS) for the Neighbouring Countries of the European Union", an event organised by the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA) in the framework of the EU4MD project.
- Webinar on "Emerging Markets: Methamphetamines originating in Afghanistan", an event organized by the General Secretariat of the INTERPOL ICPO.
- Webinar on "Intersectoral interaction: partnership tools between NGOs and government institutions in processes to ensure sustainability of HIV and TB services from public resources" in the framework of the regional project "Sustainability of services for key groups in the EEAC region".
- Webinar on "Implications of recent developments in Afghanistan on drug markets", an event organised by the European Union Agency for the Training of Law Enforcement Officials (CEPOL).
- Webinar on "Synthetic Drugs and Illicit Laboratories", an event organised by the EU Law Enforcement Training Agency (CEPOL) in the context of the implementation of the project Training and Operational Partnership to Combat Organised Crime in the Eastern Partnership Region (TOPCOP).
- Workshop within the project "Strengthening the capacities of Moldovan police officers in combating all forms of organized crime"
- Participation in the annual plenary meeting of the Europol Suspicious Transaction Analysis Project, an event organised by EUROPOL. Etc.

## CUSTOMS SERVICE

In the area of "supply reduction and efficiency of specific activities to combat drug supply", the Customs Service participated in:

- International Conference on Crime against Drug Trafficking held on October 26, 2021 online via the CISCO WEBWX Meeting platform;
- Online webinar "Implications of recent developments in Afghanistan on drug markets", organised by CEPOL in the context of the implementation of the TOPCOP project on 01 December 2021;
- The second online webinar "Synthetic Drugs and Illicit Laboratories", organised by CEPOL (EU Law Enforcement Training Agency) in the context of the implementation of the TOPCOP project (Training and Operational Partnership to Combat Organised Crime in the Eastern Partnership Region) on 14 December 2021.
- Training programmes, with the implementation of modern learning systems - through the programme "ILIAS"

During 2021, as reported:

- 43 drug identification and detection searches were carried out, resulting in the arrest of 12 people.
- 55 cases of illicit drug trafficking were registered and 48 criminal cases were initiated.
- special investigative measures were carried out on 39 persons and 3 criminal groups involved in illicit drug trafficking.

## General Inspectorate of Border Police (GIBP)

Drug production, smuggling and distribution are highly profitable criminal activities, generating significant gains for criminal organisations that can adapt to change by exploiting opportunities to increase profits. The rapid advancement of technology and innovation in retail drug distribution is extremely dynamic and uses all available tools. Although there are various travel restrictions, alternative options for transporting drugs can be used, such as mixing drugs with other substances for concealment purposes and chemically extracting them after transport closer to the buyer. The international nature of drug-related crime has required the cooperation of the specialised subdivisions of the GIBP with the European and international structures with responsibilities in this field (Europol, Eurojust, Eurocustoms, Interpol, the United Nations Agency for Combating Drugs and Crime, etc.), this segment being constantly improved through close communication and reaction to incoming requests. GIBP cooperation with foreign authorities is manifested through the exploitation of existing police and judicial cooperation mechanisms (including judicial information cooperation, exchange of information, controlled deliveries). Systematic involvement of liaison officers in the exchange of operational data and information between GIBP and foreign subdivisions.

For the field of "supply reduction" of drugs in 2021, the General Inspectorate of Border Police (GIBP) reported the statistical data on illicit drug trafficking, which reflects the following situation by criminal cases initiated, of which forwarded according to jurisdiction or to the courts, 17- criminal cases, 6- sent to trial, 1- closed, 10- under procedure.

## MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND RESEARCH OF THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA (MER)

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In the area of "supply reduction" of drugs during 2021, the Ministry of Education has carried out the following interventions in both primary and general secondary education, promoting Health Education through all school subjects and not separately. In primary and general secondary schools, the prevention of drug, alcohol and tobacco consumption is continuously implemented through the curriculum, both in compulsory subjects (Biology, Chemistry, Personal Development, Education for Society) and in the optional subject "Health Education".

The curriculum area Counselling and Personal Development, includes the compulsory subject Personal Development, one hour per week in primary, secondary and high education. The subject has been implemented in accordance with the provisions of the Curriculum developed and built on the basis of the use of educational research and the theory of personality development. This is the concept with the aim of developing the necessary competences for students' self-awareness, for a healthy and independent way of life, in their becoming informed, active and upright citizens, who could relate to openly and freely, demonstrating responsibility in making career decisions and personal development throughout life, forming responsible behaviour for the life and health of themselves and others.

The compulsory subject Personal Development is structured in 5 modules, one of them being: Healthy way of life, which guides students in aspects related to physical health, emotional health, healthy eating, counteracting vices: drugs, alcohol, smoking influences of different kinds, etc.

In primary and general secondary education - an important role in raising society's awareness of drug, alcohol and tobacco prevention activities is played by parents' associations which were involved during the reporting period both in organising thematic meetings with parents and in activities with pupils.

If we refer to technical vocational education, students of the first year are taught the subject "Decisions for a healthy lifestyle". The focus is on developing skills to reduce health risks for oneself and others, to analyse the consequences of different behavioural choices in health risk situations. Teachers received the full set of materials: the Curriculum, the Teachers' Guide and the Student Workbook. In extracurricular classes, round tables, educational classes, topics of common interest are examined, such as "Tobacco, alcohol and drugs - negative effects", "My health and my group's health", "Consequences of 21st century vices", "Health and my family life", "Tobacco, alcohol, drugs - factors of self-destruction", etc.

In 2021, the implementation of interactive programs for the prevention of drug use in technical vocational education was carried out through various activities in the classes (1 hour/week), in the compulsory subject Civic Education (1 hour/week) and through extracurricular activities on the theme of prevention of drug, alcohol and tobacco use (courses, seminars, round tables) with the participation of about 1,000 people, including teachers, head teachers, parents, psycho-pedagogues, etc.

In higher education institutions, several anti-drug activities were organised: meetings, seminars, round tables, educational hours, conferences, etc., with the participation of about 1 500 students.

In addition, in order to provide information on the prevention of all types of drug use, meetings and thematic public lectures are organised, in particular at the faculties of pedagogy, with the invitation of specialists in the field. The framework plan for undergraduate (cycle I), master's (cycle II) and integrated studies, approved by the Order of the Ministry of Education.

By Order of the Minister of Education and Research, no. 196 of 25.02. 2021, the Programme of extracurricular activities in primary and secondary education, cycle I and II, for the year 2021 was approved, which included the Calendar of International and National (optional) Remarkable and Co-memorable Dates with the marking of 7 April - World Health Day, 18 May - Sports Day, 31 May - World Anti-Smoking Day, 26 June - International Day for Combating Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking, 18 November - National No Smoking Day. The pre-announced order is posted on the MER website.

In order to promote healthy lifestyles among young people in the Youth Friendly Health Centres, a series of information and training activities have been organised by training volunteers to disseminate information and experience through the peer-to-peer method, according to the interests and needs of young people.

The Ministry of Education and Research, together with the Ministry of Health, carried out information campaigns on health topics (STI prevention, HIV, alcohol, tobacco and drug abuse), in Preventive Medicine Centres, youth-friendly service clinics, high schools, vocational schools by distributing information materials and offering free consultations to children and young people. In high schools, vocational schools, students attended health classes taught by teachers and trained nurses. During 2021, most of the activities were conducted in online format for teachers in 23 school and vocational subjects provided by the 13 accredited Continuing Education Institutions, which contain the Psycho-pedagogical Module in which the topic "anti-drug education" is addressed.

Also, during the period specified, 15 442 teachers benefited from in-service training courses in school and vocational subjects.

#### MINISTRY OF HEALTH OF THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

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In the Primary Drug Prevention department, 17 doctors and 17 nurses were trained during 2021. Continuous training for psychiatrists-narcologists, staff working in the field related to treatment, rehabilitation, harm reduction are organized at the Department of Psychiatry, Narcology and Medical Psychology of the State University of Medicine and Pharmacy "Nicolae Testemitanu". Another training mechanism for health staff is the medical education courses organized by other institutions active in the field and non-governmental organizations, international institutions interested in the field of drugs.

RDN representatives organised and/or participated in meetings, workshops, round tables,:

- ✓ Training workshop on monitoring indicators of drug use and new substances with psychoactive properties, organised by EMCDDA online;
- ✓ Webinar on the NEPTUN programme, organized by UNODC Moldova in partnership with EMCDDA and EU for the local team of experts working on writing the National Clinical Protocol on "New substance use disorders with psychoactive and stimulant properties (adults and adolescents)".
- ✓ Launch of the online course "HIV and Gender", hosted on the newly created digital training platform [www.formare.md](http://www.formare.md)
- ✓ 17th annual conference of INEBRIA (International Network on Brief Interventions on Alcohol and Drug Abuse) on capacity building for screening and brief interventions to reduce alcohol-related harm;
- ✓ 10.11.2021 in the premises of the Republican Dispensary of Narcology was held the meeting of the technical working group for the development of the application with reference to video-guided assistance to patients in methadone and buprenorphine treatment in collaboration with UNAIDS, UNDP, PAS Centre;
- ✓ 16.12.2021- round table: Strategic visions for digitisation in health, under the auspices of the Deputy Prime Minister for Digitisation, Ministry of Health, in partnership with the World Health Organisation Office;
- ✓ RDN collaborators participate in all scientific conferences organized by the Society of Psychiatrists, Narcologists, Psychotherapists and Clinical Psychologists of the Republic of Moldova 12 thematic sessions;
- ✓ Working session on "The phenomenon of violence related to alcohol and psychotropic substances abuse", organized by the Ministry of Health, with the participation of the National Probation Inspectorate, the General Police Inspectorate;
- ✓ December 1, 2021 - International HIV/AIDS Day, with the slogans "For you, for them, for everyone!" and "It matters for all. Everyone matters!". In this context, the population was urged to get tested for HIV free of charge at the mobile HIV testing points.
- ✓ June 08, 2021, within the framework of the joint UN programme "Strengthening Human Rights", a meeting was held in the context of piloting referral schemes from the police to medical, social and NGO services for the vulnerable population in society,
- ✓ 06. 2021 on the GTL platform of the NCC TB/AIDS on-line, RDN collaborators participated in the workshop on reviewing commitments under the National HIV Control and Prophylaxis Programme 2021-2025, the GFATM 2021-2023 grant and those under the Global Anti-Discrimination Partnership for annual planning of resources and efforts aimed at reducing stigma and discrimination in the context of HIV.
- ✓ 6-12 September 2021 RDN collaborators gave lectures in the context of the Global Week of Action for the Prevention of Noncommunicable Diseases with the slogan: "Taking action against non-communicable diseases" at the EMINESCU International Academic Centre.
- ✓ Participation in the "Just test yourself" social campaign! launched by the Ministry of Health with the support of the National Agency for Public Health, the Public Association, Positive Initiative", UNAIDS Moldova and local authorities. Until 21 December, DRN collaborators informed the population about HIV/AIDS and promoted HIV testing.

In order to ensure transparency and good communication with the community in 2021, RDN participated in: 21 radio and TV broadcasts, 86 information was distributed via online networks, etc.

## CIVIL SOCIETY

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In 2021, the P.A. Positive Initiative has:

- started a 4-month programme for overcoming addiction and criminal lifestyle in 8 prisons. The programme has been completed by 96 inmates in 11 penitentiary institutions.
- organised information hours to raise awareness of the risks of drug use. These activities were attended by around 300 prisoners.
- organized online sessions with ex-addicts, who acted as mentors and shared their experience of how they got out of substance abuse. 4 sessions were held consecutively in 9 prisons, and each session was attended by 85 - 95 inmates.
- participated in 6 TV shows on the harm of drug use
- provided assistance to 58 multidisciplinary ex-offenders in an innovative aftercare program. Fourteen of them received 3-4 months accommodation in the 44 of them have attended training courses, personal development and 25 of them have been employed through SHARE project partners. On this segment, the organization has

worked intensively with the National Administration of Penitentiaries and the National Probation Inspectorate.

- conducted HIV, hepatitis C and syphilis testing of prisoners.
- provided informational and psychological support to people on ARV treatment for 80 HIV-positive prisoners who are fairly adherent to treatment, and 19 prisoners who have treatment deficiencies.
- P.A. Positive Initiatives provided employment support for 25 ex-prisoners.

## BUDGET ALLOCATIONS AND FINANCING

At the proposal of the National Anti-Drug Commission, the Government will co-finance the multidisciplinary programs within the policy in this field, implemented at local level. It is not possible to measure / estimate the expenditures in the national budget for the prevention of drug use and other measures to combat illicit drug trafficking. At the moment it is not possible to disaggregate for the calculation of the total expenses.

## PREVALENCE AND TRENDS OF DRUG USE

### POPULATION STUDIES ON PREVALENCE OF DRUG USE

Drug use, its patterns and trends in the general population are measured in population studies on a nationally representative sample. Studies provide estimates of the proportion of people who claim to have used specific drugs at time intervals. The questionnaires also provide useful contextual information on current or past consumption patterns, socio-demographic characteristics of consumers, risk perceptions, availability and attitudes towards drugs (as recommended by the EMCDDA).

In the Republic of Moldova, 3 standard indicators are used to assess drug use:

- Lifetime prevalence (drug use at any time of life),
- Prevalence in the last year,
- Prevalence in the last month.

Of the three standard measures, lifetime prevalence is less sensitive for reflecting the current situation. This measure does not reflect the current state of drug use, but can be useful for understanding patterns of use and incidence of first use. The focus is on consumption events in the last year and month.

#### Drug use in the general population

Specific data on drug use were collected in the survey "KAP 2010 15-64 years" years 2005, 2008, 2010. Results in trends are included in the annual report "Drug use and illicit drug trafficking in the Republic of Moldova", 2013.

#### Drug use among young people

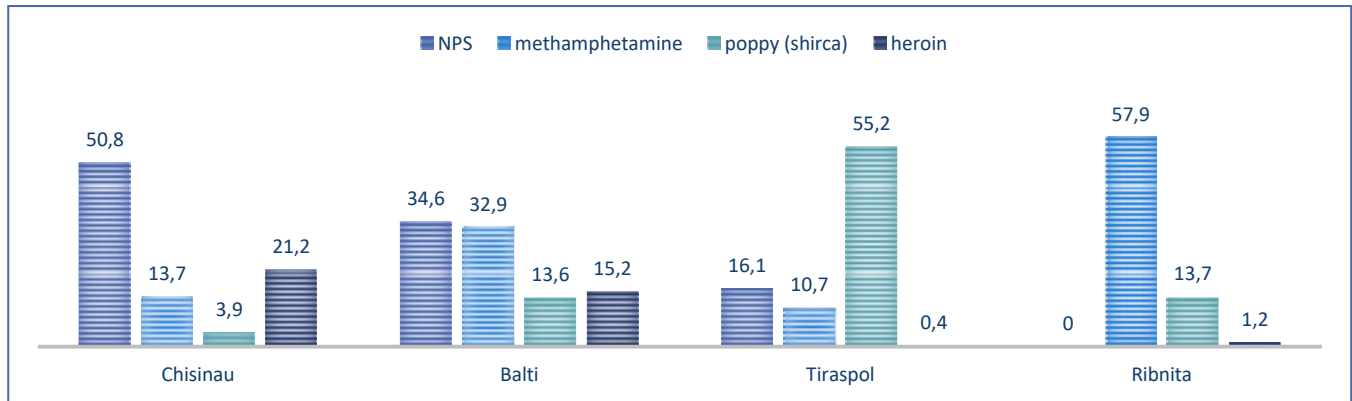
Data specific to drug use were collected in the survey "Knowledge, attitudes and practices of young people aged 15-24 with reference to HIV/AIDS", a .2006, 2008, 2010, 2012. Results in trends are included in the annual report "Drug use and illicit trafficking in the Republic of Moldova", 2013. The European School Research Project on Alcohol and other Drugs, commonly identified by the abbreviation ESPAD, was initiated in 1993 by the Swedish Information Council on Alcohol and other Drugs and the Council of Europe. The aim of the survey is to obtain comparable data at European level on the knowledge, attitudes and practices of 16-year-olds with regard to drug use, thus making it possible to obtain trends in the characteristics of drug use in this age group at national and European level. Surveys are repeated every four years, with the first survey in 26 countries carried out in 1995 as a starting point. The Republic of Moldova has implemented three rounds of the ESPAD survey. According to the methodology, all pupils in classes with a high proportion of pupils aged 16 (in the case of the Republic of Moldova these are in the 8th and 9th grades) are surveyed. a), but for comparability between countries in the final base of the study at European level only the pupils in the target group are kept (in ESPAD 2015 these are pupils born in 1999). The results in trends are included in the annual report "Illicit drug use and trafficking in the Republic of Moldova", 2015.

#### Civil sector injecting drug users

In the integrated bio-behavioural study IBBS 2020, conducted among IDU (injecting drug users), the main drug injected during the last month is diverse depending on the location of the study. The figure shows the most consumed types of drugs by locality. In Chisinau and Balti municipality the most commonly used type of drug during the last month are new psychoactive substances (NPS)

50.8% and 34.6%, respectively, 55.2% in Tiraspol opium extract (poppy) and in Ribnita methamphetamines 57.9%.

Figure 1. Most injected drugs during the last month, %, IBBS 2020



### Injecting drug users in departmental / penitentiary sector

In the IBBS 2020 study, the IDU subgroup in the penitentiary sector did not participate. According to the results of the IBBS study conducted in 2015/2016, among the detainees on the right bank of the Dniester River, 14.9% injected drugs at least once with an average age of 36.2 years. Of these, 17.6% are HIV positive, 40.5% are HVC positive, 4.1% are HVB positive and 5.4% are positive on the TP test. Of the sample, 4.2% (21 respondents out of 495) reported injecting drugs over the past 12 months. The average age of respondents who injected drugs in the last 12 months is 33.6 years, respondents who injected drugs in the last 12 months reported an experience in injecting drugs on average of 11.1 years. The type of drugs used for injection among respondents who have injected drugs in the last 12 months are: methamphetamine, heroin, "shirka" (local product), Subutex, poppy.

### OPERATIONAL ESTIMATION RESEARCH

#### CIVIL SECTOR INJECTING DRUG USERS

In 2020, the exercise of estimating the size of the groups of injecting drug users, sex workers and men who have sex with men was repeatedly carried out, based on the latest recommendations from the WHO Guide for Bio-Behavioural Surveillance in populations at high risk of HIV infection. Estimates were made separately for the municipalities of Chisinau and Balti on the right bank of the Dniester River and for the municipality of Tiraspol, Ribnita city on the left bank of the Dniester River. The estimated size of the IDU group in the Republic of Moldova in 2020 is 27.5 thousand, with 22.78 thousand for the right bank and 4.72 thousand for the left bank of the Dniester River. The estimated number of opiate injecting users is about 47% of the estimated number of injecting drug users, which is about 12,920 people. It is worth mentioning that opiate injection among IDUs differs significantly from one territory to another, the most widespread being on the left bank (about 54.8%).

#### MAIN TRENDS

Because data on drug use patterns over the years are not consistent, it is not possible to track trends in drug use. Information from various data sources currently available in the Republic of Moldova differs and in many cases is hardly comparable. Due to a lack of consistency over time, the available data reduce the possibility of analysing trends in drug use. The main sources of information for this sub-chapter are:

- ✧ Results of studies in the general population (KAP adults, 16-64 years)
- ✧ Results of studies among young people (KAP young people, 15-24 years)
- ✧ Results of studies among students (ESPAD)
- ✧ Results of Bio-Behavioural Surveillance among PUDI (IBBS)
- ✧ Routine RDN statistics aiming at the profile of new registered drug use cases;
- ✧ MIA statistical data on registered drug trafficking offenses, as well as the quantities confiscated;

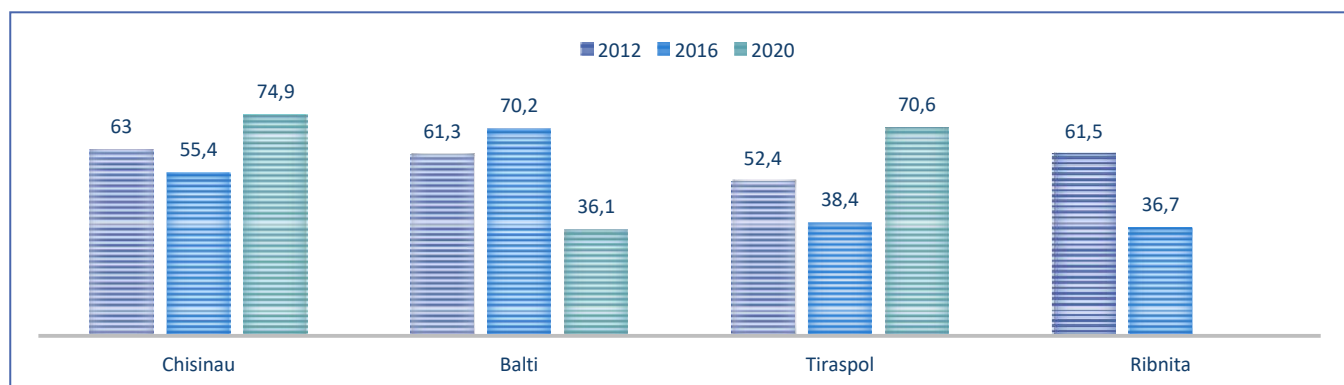
### CANABIS

Cannabis is the most commonly used illegal drug in the Republic of Moldova. In 2010 on the right bank of the Dniester River the prevalence of cannabis use during life in the general population aged 15-64 (KAP study) is 3.9%, in 2008 being 3.4%. The prevalence of cannabis use is highest compared to other illegal drugs. Cannabis use is more common in urban areas and among men.

The KAP study conducted in 2012 among young people aged 15-24 on the right bank of the Dniester River has a lifetime prevalence of cannabis use of 3.5%, which is the highest among illegal drugs (4.9% in 2010). The prevalence of cannabis use during the last year was 2.3% in 2010 and 1.2% in 2012. In the ESPAD study in 2015, there was a lifetime prevalence of cannabis use of 4.0% in 2008-5%.

According to the trend data from the IBBS study on non-injectable drugs, the most frequently used in the last month and in the last 6 months were cannabis / marijuana / hashish / cannabis resin in all four study locations, with the exception of IDUs (injecting drug users) from Chisinau, who reported the most frequent consumption of NPS / herbal mixture in the last 6 months.

Figure 2. Consumption of cannabis, cannabis resin, marijuana, hashish during the last month, IBBS, %



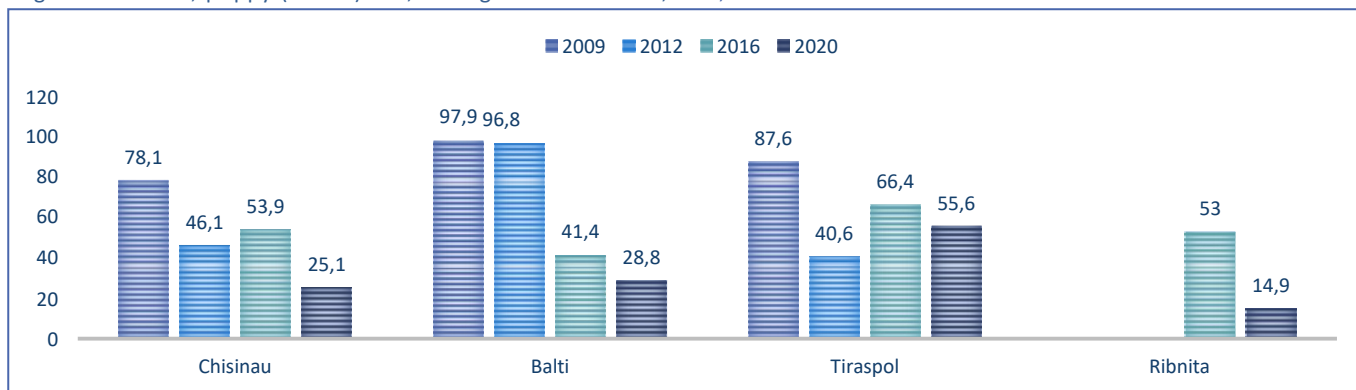
According to RDN data, of the new cases of non-addictive drug use registered in 2021, at the time of registration the majority were marijuana users 85.2%, administered via smoking 84.1% and predominantly by males 94.9%.

### OPIATES/HEROIN

In 2010, the lifetime prevalence of opioid use in the general population aged 15-64 was 0.4%. Lifetime experience of heroin use was reported by 0.1% of respondents. According to the survey, conducted in the 15-24 age group, the lifetime prevalence of opiate use in 2012 was 0.5%.

According to the IBSS 2020 study, there is a decrease in opioid use in all sites surveyed compared to previous years. This may be conditioned by the availability of new psychoactive substances on the drug market.

Figure 3. Heroin, poppy (shirca) use, during the last month, IBBS, %

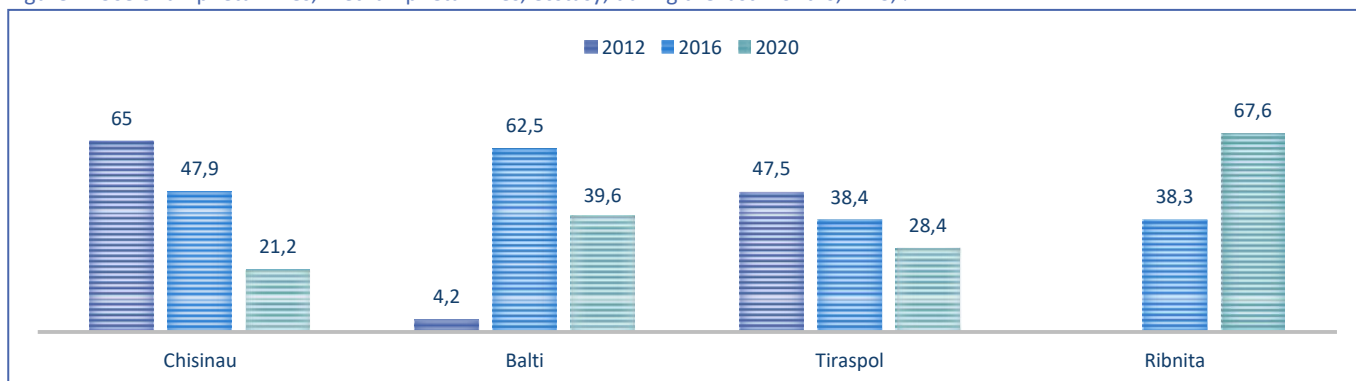


According to RDN data, in 2021 opioid use was recorded 85.7% in new cases of dependent use and 4.1% without dependence. Injection is the main route of administration of opiates in new cases of drug use with dependence 86,6%.

**STIMULANT DRUGS**

According to the 2010 KAP survey in the general population aged 15-64 the lifetime prevalence of amphetamine use was 0.1% and the lifetime prevalence of ecstasy use - 0.5%. The lifetime prevalence of amphetamine use according to the KAP 2012 survey was 0.1%, and the lifetime prevalence of ecstasy use among people aged 15-24 was 1.2%. According to ESPAD the lifetime prevalence of ecstasy uses among students in 2008 was 1.6%, in 2011 2% and in 2015 1%. The trend is towards lower values for synthetic drug use in most locations in the IBBS 2020 study apart from Ribnita city, where this type of drug is the main 67.6% and consumption is 1.7 times higher compared to the previous round of the study.

Figure 4. Use of amphetamines, methamphetamines, ecstasy, during the last months, IBBS, %



Amphetamine use in new cases registered for 2021 by the RDN is of 2,4%.

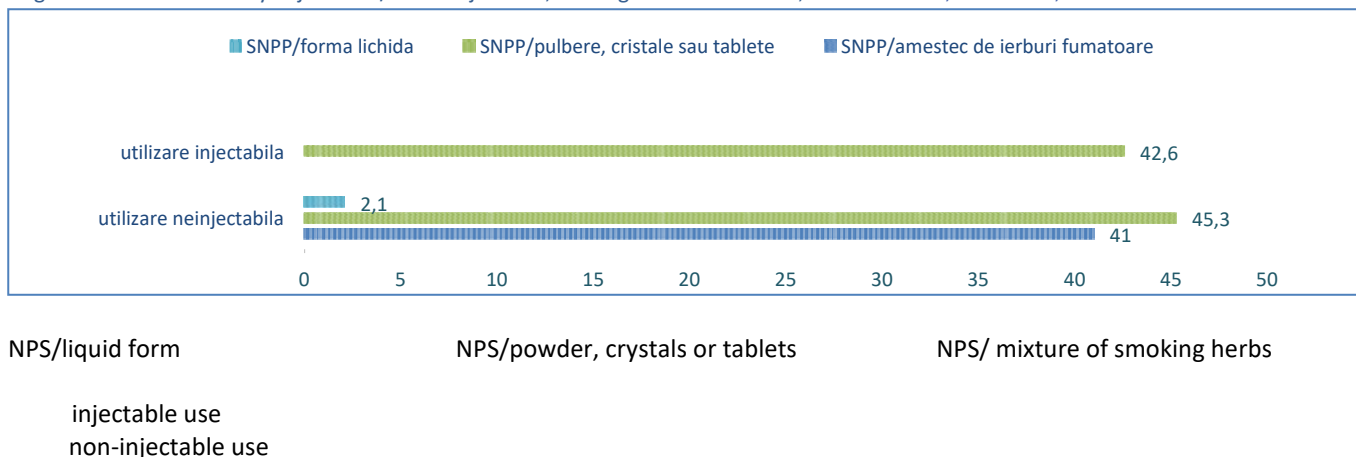
**HALLUCINOGENS**

According to the 2012 KAP 15-24 years, the lifetime prevalence of LSD use is 0.1%. Last month use of hallucinogenic drugs (LSD, hallucinogenic mushrooms, mescaline) reported in IBBS 2020 is 5.5%. LSD is very rarely encountered in new cases of drug use registered by the health system (RND). In the case of drugs seized by the MAI for 2021 (1479 LSD patches), a quantity six times higher than in 2020 (238 LSD patches) is recorded).

**NPS (NEW SUBSTANCES WITH PSYCHOACTIVE PROPERTIES)**

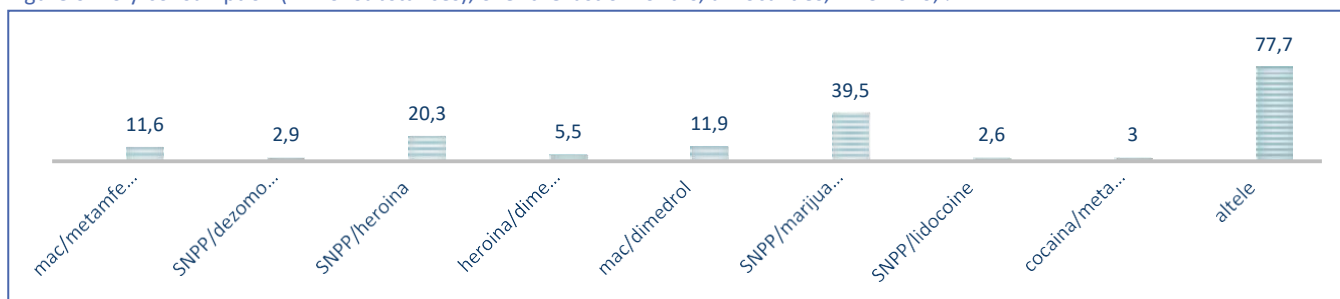
Use of new substances with psychoactive properties (NPS) reported in IBBS in 2020 shows that this type of drug is very popular and has higher values than the data reported in the previous round of the IBBS study in 2016. The trend of NPS use, according to the study data, has higher values for each locality (e.g., in Chisinau, non-injectable consumption in the last month was for 2016 - 35.8% compared to 2020 - 55.4%) and predominates on the right bank of the Dniester (in Chisinau 2020 - 55.4% and in Tiraspol 2020 -16.4%).

Figure 5. Use of NPS by injection / non-injection, during the last month, all localities, IBBS 2020, %



Questions about poly-consumption were included in the 2020 round of the survey. According to the survey data the most common mix of substances used (of those specified) are marijuana and NSP 39.5% and in the category other (of those not specified) the value is higher 77.7%. The use of NSP in new cases reported by RDN for 2021 is 7.8% and is increasing from 2020 1.1%.

Figure 6. Poly-consumption (mix of substances), over the last 6 months, all localities, IBBS 2020, %



## DRUG ADDICTION TREATMENT

### COORDINATION AND AVAILABLE SERVICES

In addressing the problem of drug use, the Republic of Moldova is based on the World Health Organization's concept of "Health for All in the 21st Century", according to which drug use is a problem that endangers public health and could hinder the healthy development of citizens and society in the wider context.

For the coordination of the narcological system in the Republic of Moldova, by order of the Ministry of Health, the PMSI Republican Dispensary of Narcology (RDN) was nominated.

The services provided by the institution are: outpatient, inpatient and supportive treatment; individual and group counselling; psychological testing by various methods; HIV and drug testing; information and education activities in special target groups on the risks related to the use of psychoactive substances, the formation of "harmless" behaviour; primary prevention activities, based on the concepts of informed decision-making, in schools and high schools of the Republic of Moldova; information and education of the population on the prevention of psychoactive substance use.

The RDN covers with consultative and hospital medical assistance patients from all over the Republic of Moldova in the subdivisions of the station and in the day station (anonymous), who are facing problems related to the use of alcohol, narcotic substances and psychotropic substances.

The achievement of these goals is due to the complex approach in the treatment of drug addiction. Treatment in the rehabilitation process is provided by a psychotherapeutic team of doctors, psychologists, social workers and volunteers (former drug users).

Law no. 263 of 27.10.2005 "On the rights and responsibilities of the patient" stipulates that a patient cannot be admitted to an inpatient facility without his/her consent, except in cases of advanced deterioration of personality or in cases when the person presents public danger. Thus, the person may voluntarily seek specialized help in public and private institutions. In private medical institutions, the offer does not differ from that of the public system. Detoxification is included in the minimum package of medical services covered by the compulsory health care insurance policy, which is available only to insured persons (those formally employed, who have purchased an insurance policy or are insured from the state budget, such as students, pupils, pensioners and invalids and, since 2007 - unemployed persons officially registered with employment agencies). For persons who do not belong to the insured categories and have not purchased a compulsory health insurance policy, detoxification is covered from the funds of the compulsory

health insurance and qualifies as a major medical emergency.

Drug users who do not have a compulsory health insurance policy are provided with specialized emergency outpatient and hospital care covered from compulsory health insurance funds in accordance with the Single Program of Compulsory Health Insurance and the Methodological Rules. For insured persons who do not wish to disclose their identity, detoxification is subject to a fee, as the use of the health insurance policy excludes anonymity.

## DETOXIFICATION TREATMENT

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Detoxification treatment provides for the following criteria, following which the person can benefit from treatment:

- anamnestically, clinically, paraclinical attested clinical signs of drug dependence;
- abstinence syndrome of different severity;
- identification of drugs in biological liquids.

The Regulation on detection, registration and recording of persons involved in the use of drugs and other psychotropic substances is approved on the basis of the Order of the Ministry of Health No 1043 of 18.10.2012.

By the Order of the Ministry of Health no. 235 of 09.06.2008 there were approved medical standards for diagnosis and treatment in narcology. These standards describe the algorithm for diagnosing, providing medical care and treatment for people who abuse alcohol and.

The "Health Care System for the Population", which is aimed at preventing alcohol abuse, illicit use of drugs and other psychotropic substances and ensuring the quality of health care services provided to the population, by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection, has been developed and approved: Order No. 107 of 26.01.2018 "On the approval of the National Clinical Protocol "Pharmacological treatment of opioid dependence"; the National Protocol is developed in accordance with current international guidelines on opioid dependence in adults and will serve as a basis for the development of institutional protocols, depending on the actual possibilities of each institution. At the recommendation of the Ministry of Health, additional forms, which are not included in the National Clinical Protocol, may be used for monitoring institutional protocols. At the same time, the nominated Protocol has also been reviewed by WHO and UNODC specialists.

## REHABILITATION AND REINTEGRATION

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According to the provisions of the Order of the Ministry of Health no. 365 from 26.09.2007, within the RDN was established the Centre for rehabilitation and resocialization of drug addicts, which offers the continuation of treatment of drug addicts after the detoxification stage. All the services offered by the centre are free of charge, carried out under ambulatory conditions. The socio-medical rehabilitation is one of the investigations that are carried out at the time of hospitalization, which determines: the patient's personality, the physical and mental status, the social and family status being defined in establishing the capacity of the person's involvement in the treatment.

Initiating the procedure for rehabilitation involves some criteria for admission to treatment, as well as contraindications. Thus, are admitted persons: who are addicted drug users; have a desire to be treated; have a referral from a psychiatrist or narcologist; mental ability to get involved in rehabilitation programs.

Once discharged from the hospital after detoxification, patients who, for various reasons, do not reach the Centre for Rehabilitation and Resocialization of Drug Addicts may, if desired, continue treatment in rehabilitation and reintegration programs offered by local NGOs or go abroad for residential treatment (those with high incomes), or to stop treatment, stopping at the detoxification stage.

The advantage of local NGOs is that they offer free services while maintaining anonymity.

According to the Standard of psychological assistance to drug users, rehabilitation in day centres and therapeutic communities is based on complex and regular initial assessment of existing problems, personal characteristics, existing psychosocial support, stressors, performed by competent staff, specially trained. Based on this assessment, several objectives are developed in the assistance of the person, and the progress is monitored throughout the assistance process. The component part of this type of assistance is the relations with other services in the field and the referral of the beneficiaries for their access.

The methadone substitution treatment program in the Republic of Moldova was approved by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection through Order no. 159 of May 20, 2003.

According to the Government Decision no.166 of February 15, 2005, methadone substitution treatment was instituted in the penitentiary institutions, thus the Republic of Moldova became the first country in the Commonwealth of Independent States to introduce the given treatment in penitentiaries.

The Order of the Ministry of Health no. 283 of 12.07.2007 "On the improvement of the forms and methods of applying substitute therapy to drug addicts" has excluded some restrictive enrolment criteria (evidence of the case of addiction to the narcologist), thus increasing the access to the therapy of substitution.

Based on the order of the Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection of the Republic of Moldova no. 107 of 26.01.2018 regarding the approval of the National Clinical Protocol (NCP) "Pharmacological treatment of opiate addiction", NCP is developed in accordance with the current international clinical guidelines on opiate addiction. Since 2002 the pharmacological treatment of opiate addiction with buprenorphine has been implemented within a project in the Public Medical-Sanitary Institution, Republican Dispensary of Narcology, and since 2004, methadone pharmacological treatment has been implemented within the Public Medical-Sanitary Institution, Republican Dispensary of Narcology, later in the Public Medical-Sanitary Institution, Municipal Clinical Hospital of Balti, Public Medical-Sanitary Institution, Cahul Hospital, Comrat, Edinet, Ungheni, Falesti and Rezina, Department of Penitentiary Institutions (13 penitentiary institutions, including 4 preventive detention isolators). The pharmacological treatment of opiate addiction with methadone and / or buprenorphine has been recognized as a cost-effective tool in solving health problems, preventing the spread of HIV infection and viral hepatitis and increasing the adherence of HIV positive people to ARV therapy. At the same time, the pharmacological treatment with methadone and / or buprenorphine contributes both to the prevention of overdose and illicit drug use, as well as to the reduction of crime among this quota. The OST with methadone or buprenorphine aims to enlist the patient in treatment, to alleviate the withdrawal syndrome and to ensure safety (avoiding overdose and death). The duration of treatment depends on the patient's health and social situation.

**The demand for treatment indicator** is one of the five key indicators in the field of drug epidemiology, which estimates the number and characteristics of the persons who ask for treatment for drug use, the substances used, the types of treatment offered. The estimation is based on the Common Protocol of the Treatment Demand Indicator of the Pompidou Group - EMCDDA.

Currently, the Republic of Moldova does not have a data collection system for measuring the treatment demand indicator. The potential components of a future data collection system for the treatment demand indicator in the Republic of Moldova, in accordance with the recommendations of the international experts, are:

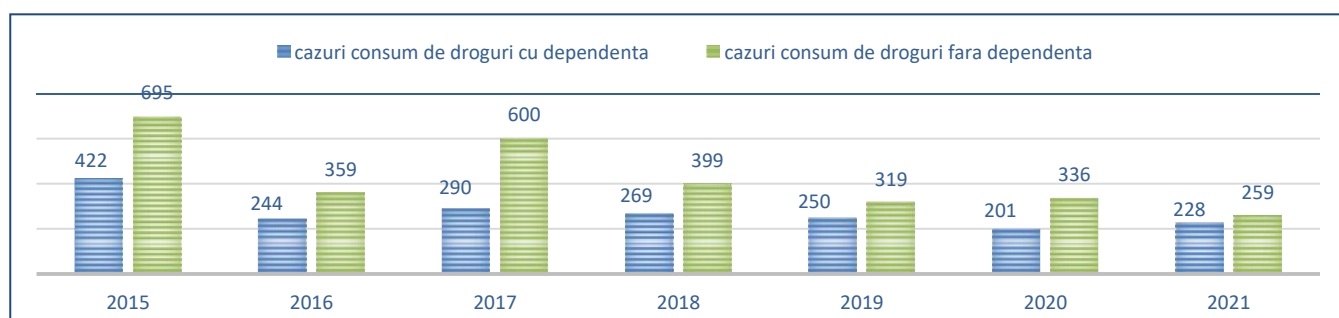
- ✧ Institution empowered to officially register cases;
- ✧ Units responsible for methadone pharmacotherapy;
- ✧ Public and private medical institutions;
- ✧ Department of Penitentiary Institutions of the Ministry of Justice;
- ✧ Risk reduction programs;
- ✧ Rehabilitation and re-socialization service providers;
- ✧ General Police Inspectorate of the Ministry of Internal Affairs;
- ✧ Probation Service of the Ministry of Justice.

### DATA COLLECTION SYSTEM FOR OFFICIALLY REGISTERED DRUG USERS

In the data collection system for drug users, the official registration of cases is the responsibility of the RDN, which enters all new cases officially registered in the database and ensures its maintenance. The case is considered officially registered when the notification form (on paper) is completed and sent to the RDN, where the information is entered into the database. The main source of detection of new cases of drug use are medical institutions (voluntary referral for treatment or accidental detection during prophylactic checks<sup>2</sup>) and the police (who refer to the narcological service for expertise of persons detained for various reasons). The regulation of detection, registration and reporting of drug users provides for different scenarios, therefore persons receiving treatment anonymously are not registered in the RDN database, so the information presented below does not include these patients. According to the clinical form, all new cases are divided into two broad categories: non-dependent drug use and dependent drug use.

<sup>2</sup> Ex.: examination of health status on enlistment for military service

Figure 7. Distribution of new cases of drug use, Republic of Moldova (right bank of the Dniester River), 2015-2021



Source: Republican Dispensary of Narcology

Chart: cases of drug use with addiction  
cases of drug use without addiction

For 2021 the two groups of new registered drug use cases can be described as follows:

1. The group of newly registered cases of drug use without addiction:
  - the average age at the time of registration is 21.0 years;
  - the drug consumed at the time of registration, in most cases, is marijuana (85,2%);
  - the way of administration at the time of registration, in most cases, is smoking (94,1%);
  - males constitute the majority (94,9%).
2. The group of newly registered cases of drug use with addiction:
  - the average age at the time of registration is 22.9 years;
  - the most used drugs are from the opiate group (85,7%);
  - the way of administration at the time of registration is injection (81,6%);
  - males constitute the majority (98,8%).

Analysis of the characteristics of newly registered drug use cases could only to some extent reflect trends in drug use in the country. At the end of the reporting year, the cumulative number of officially registered drug users in the database of the Republican Dispensary of Narcology was 11707 cases and 487 new cases.

Table 3. Number of new registered cases of drug use in the Republic of Moldova, according to RDN database

Years	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Number of new cases in medical records	603	890	668	569	537	487
Per 100 thousand inhabitants	17,0	25,0	18,8	21,53	20,63	18,73
Number of new cases in medical records	11259	11661	11805	11924	1158*	11707
Per 100 thousand inhabitants	317,0	328,7	332,2	451,53	446,13	449,63

\* The total number of cases on medical records is decreasing in 2020 as a result of updated information on the status of persons on medical records.

Of the total new cases reported, disaggregated by substance used, the majority are of marijuana 246 or (50.5%), followed by 176 (36.1%) opiates, 27 or (5.5%) NPS, 23 or 4.7% barbiturates, and 12 or (2.4%) amphetamines. Compared to 2020, the total number of new cases taken under surveillance shows a decrease in marijuana use by 1.2 times (309 cases), but an increase in NPS by 1.7 times (16 cases). At the same time, the difference in new cases of drug use, with dependence and without dependence according to the drug used is monitored.

<sup>3</sup> Incidence calculated on the basis of the indicator "usually resident population". The indicator "permanent population" is not officially published on statistics.gov.md.

Table 4. The share of drugs used, new cases of drug use, addictive and non-addictive, RND, 2020, 2021

Substance	2020		2021	
	addictive	non-addictive	addictive	non-addictive
Marijuana	11,7%	83,2%	13,5%	85,2%
Opiates	87,2%	7,4%	85,7%	4,1%
Amphetamines	1,1%	4,4%	0,2%	1,7%
NPS unspecified substances	0	1,1%	0	7,8%
Barbiturates	0	0,9%	0	1,2%

In the comparison between years, the consumption of marijuana increases in both addicts and non-addicts, while the consumption of opiates and amphetamines decreases. There is a considerable increase in the use of NPS among those without dependence compared to 2020.

At the same time, in new cases, the route of injection drug use decreases in those without dependence 3.9% (5.7%) and in those with dependence 81.6% (86.1%) compared to 2020.

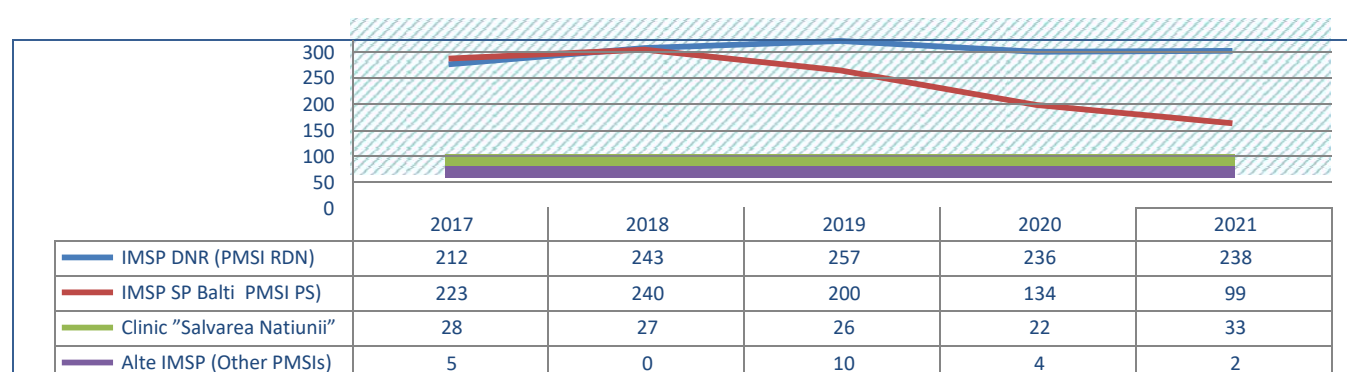
In the gender distribution of new drug use cases between years, there are no significant differences.

By level of education the majority share for 2021 as well as for the previous reporting year is in the group with secondary/special education 96.6% (96,4%).

#### DETOXIFICATION TREATMENT, MEDICAL CARE AND PSYCHOLOGICAL REHABILITATION

The main service available to drug users within the national health service system is inpatient and outpatient detoxification, medical care and psychological rehabilitation. Detoxification treatment is free of charge for insured persons (employees, students, pupils and pensioners with a compulsory health insurance policy purchased) who go to public health institutions, provided that the patient's name and other personal data are disclosed, followed by registration in the RDN database. Drug users who do not have a compulsory health insurance policy are provided with specialized emergency outpatient and hospital care covered from the funds of the compulsory health insurance according to the Single Programme of Compulsory Health Insurance and the Methodological Rules. Detoxification is also provided by an accredited private medical institution "Saving the Nation". In this institution this service is provided against payment and patients are not officially registered in any database. The distribution of the number of patients who received detoxification for the first time during the reporting year, by institution authorized to provide this service is shown in (Figure 8).

Figure 8. Number of patients who benefited from inpatient detoxification for the first time during the year, Republic of Moldova (right bank of the Dniester River), 2017-2021



#### OPIOID SUBSTITUTION TREATMENT (OST)

The OST program is implemented by achieving a collaborative synergy between the governmental and non-governmental sectors. The Republican Dispensary of Narcology together with other medical institutions ensures the implementation of the medical component, and the non-governmental organizations involved complement with psycho-social and support services to increase adherence to treatment. OST services are provided in nine sites through the Republican Dispensary of Narcology (in two OST points: Chisinau), Balti Municipal Hospital (in one OST point), Comrat District Hospital (in one OST point), Cahul District Hospital (in one OST point), Edinet District Hospital (in one OST point), Ungheni District Hospital (in one OST point), Falesti District Hospital (in one OST point), Rezina District Hospital (in one OST point) and National Administration of Penitentiaries (in 13 prisons: Taraclia, Leova, Cricova, Cahul, Sorooca, Rusca, Pruncul, Balti, Cricova, Pruncul, Rezina, Branesti, Chisinau). According to the data of the Republican Dispensary of Narcology in

2021, opioid substitution treatment (OST) services were decentralized in 9 localities in the country and in 13 penitentiary institutions, including 4 IUP. The cumulative number for the year 2021 in the Opioid Substitution Therapy Program was recorded as 2179 beneficiaries. The number of new cases for the reporting period is decreasing and constitutes 98 persons.

Figure 9. Total number of new and cumulative beneficiaries in opioid substitution treatment, Republic of Moldova (right bank of the Dniester River), 2017-2021

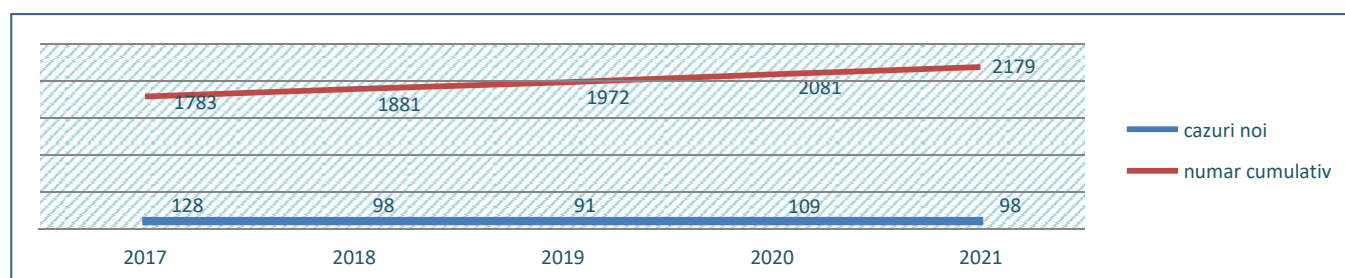


Chart: New cases  
Cumulative number

## REHABILITATION SERVICES FOR DRUG ADDICTS

The Psycho-Social Rehabilitation Centre for drug addicts operates within the Republican Dispensary of Narcology. The implementation of the program includes several strategic objectives:

- Psychological and social support
- Healing and maintaining long-term abstinence (abandoning drug use).
- Social and professional integration
- Improving relationships with others and family integration.
- Formation of interests that contribute to a healthy lifestyle.
- Accessibility of programs for beneficiaries

During 2021, 227 persons were included in the rehabilitation treatment and the number of female persons is expected to increase compared to the previous reporting year (192 men and 35 women; average age at the time of initiation 37-50 years). Out of the total number of persons who in 2021 started the rehabilitation course, 211 (92%) persons have successfully completed and it is increasing compared to 2020 (89%).

Table 5. Drug users benefiting from the services of the Rehabilitation Centre for Drug Addicts, right bank of the Dniester River, 2017-2021

	Have initiated rehabilitation course					Have successfully completed the rehabilitation course					Abandoned the rehabilitation course				
	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Total	215	246	241	237	227	215	215	223	211	211	16	22	23	10	8
Women	14	40	24	30	35	14	24	25	26	33	-	3	1	0	1
Men	201	206	217	207	192	201	191	198	185	178	16	19	22	10	7

Government Decision no.232 of 18.04.17 approved the Framework Regulation on the organization and functioning of the Integrated Social Service for users of psychoactive substances and substitution therapy patients and the Minimum Quality Standards.

The integrated social service for psychoactive substance users and substitution therapy patients comprises a complex platform in the context of addressing the needs of beneficiaries and service delivery. The multidisciplinary and intersectoral approach to the problems faced by psychoactive substance users and substitution therapy patients is ensured through the involvement of the *multidisciplinary team*, which is the group of specialists (social worker, peer counsellor, psychologist, if necessary psychiatrist, narcologist and/or other relevant specialists) who collaborate in the assessment and planning of interventions to achieve the aim of the integrated service, according to the provisions of case management. The Ministry of Health is a member of the National Coordinating Council of the national program for the prevention and control of HIV/AIDS, sexually transmitted infections and tuberculosis. In this respect, the Ministry collaborates with members of civil society -

social service providers for the target group, including in the technical working groups on the social assistance and protection, treatment, care and support component.

### TREATMENT IN PENITENTIARY INSTITUTIONS

According to the data of the National Administration of Penitentiaries, in 2021 in the penitentiary system of the Republic of Moldova (right bank of the Dniester River) the total number of registered drug users was 558 and is decreasing compared to 2020 (577 cases). In the context of medical assistance, the medical service of the NAP can provide detoxification treatment in case of withdrawal syndrome, 10 people were included in this service in the reporting period. The severity of the withdrawal syndrome also determines where detoxification is offered (at the detention facility or with travel to the republican destination prison hospital No. 16, Pruncul). According to NAP data during 2021, 105 beneficiaries (94 men and 11 women) were included in pharmacotherapy of which 24 (22 men and 2 women) are new cases. Compared to the previous reporting period (2020 - 110 cases) there is a non-significant decrease of cases included in OST. The criteria for admission to methadone pharmacotherapy of drug-dependent prisoners are identical to those in the civil sector. Since 2009, on release from prisons, patients undergoing pharmacotherapy receive a signed statement indicating the duration of participation in the program, the daily dose and the date of administration of the last dose. With this statement, the patient is transferred for further pharmacotherapy in the civilian sector.

Figure 10. Total number of detainees, drug users, Republic of Moldova (right bank of the Dniester river), 2018-2021

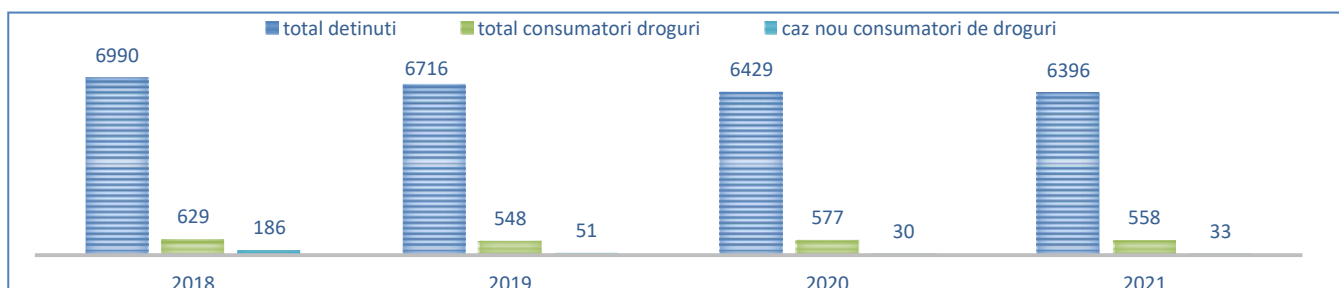


Chart: total detainees  
total drug users  
new drug user case

### DRUG ADDICTION TREATMENT - IBBS STUDY, 2020

According to the IBBS 2020 survey data the percentage of IDU (injecting drug users) who have never undergone drug dependence treatment is high for all the localities surveyed.

Figure 11. Treatment for drug addiction, IBBS 2020, %

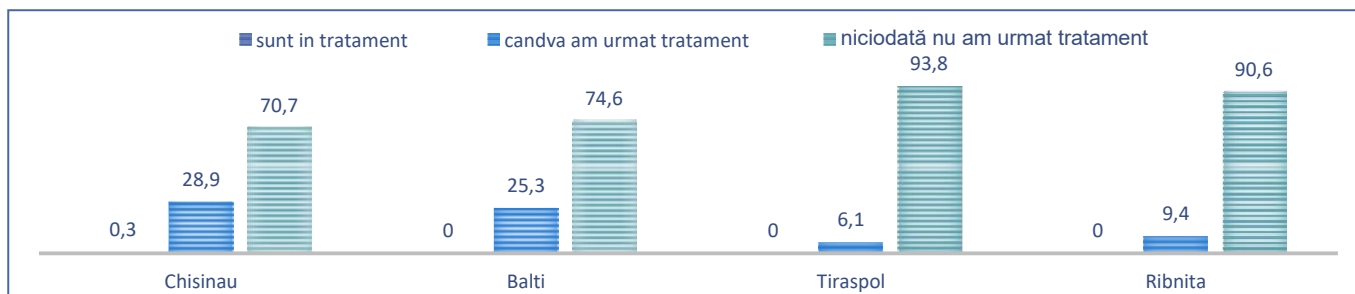


Chart: under treatment                      underwent treatment                      never received treatment

### INJECTING DRUG USERS - BENEFICIARIES OF RISK REDUCTION PROGRAMMES

Prevention programs for IDUs (injecting drug users) are implemented in the civil and penitentiary sectors, including the Transnistrian region in 29 administrative territorial units. In the penitentiary sector HIV prophylaxis activities for injecting drug users are implemented in 18 penitentiary institutions in the country including 3 in the Transnistrian region.

During 2021, 16,285 (16,302 in 2020) received services (syringe exchange being a basic one) of which 13,287 beneficiaries in the civilian sector and 2,998 beneficiaries in the penitentiary system. The number of consumables distributed in the IDUs group by RRP (risk reduction program) in 2021 are shown in (Table 6).

Table 6. Number of condoms and syringes distributed to groups at higher risk of HIV infection (IDU, IDU/Detainees), Republic of Moldova 2017-2021

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Condoms (total)	595.719	1.347.886*	411.515	468.650	581.927
Syringes (total)	2.931.429	2.902.391	2.279.009	2.243.154	2.750.015
Vials of naloxone	4 065	n/a	3,736	2,430	3.807

\* number of condoms allocated to the whole GHRI (groups at high risk of infection (IDUs, CSWs (Commercial Sex Workers), MSM (Men having sex with men)

In 2021 from NHIC sources in the total amount of 1,340,000 MDL were funded 2 NGOs providing risk reduction services for populations at high risk of infection. provided prevention services for through which 1,450 people received services from the basic package; additionally, 1,975 people received services from the supplementary (attractive) package. At the same time, three mobile clinics continued to operate providing prevention services for all key populations including injecting drug users.

## HEALTH CONSEQUENCES / MORTALITY RELATED TO DRUG USE

The Republic of Moldova does not have data for reporting according to the standard definition of Drug-related Death (DRD). In 2020, in the Republic of Moldova on the right bank of the Dniester River, no progress has been made in standardizing the definition of death associated with drug use. Data for the key indicator of drug epidemiology were collected from three sources:

1. Centre of Forensic Medicine of the Ministry of Health;
2. General mortality register, held by the National Agency for Public Health
3. PMSI Republican Dispensary of Narcology of the Ministry of Health.

Other sources regarding the DRD do not exist in the Republic of Moldova.

### Centre of Forensic Medicine

The Centre of Forensic Medicine (CFM) is the only public institution of judicial expertise specialized in the field of forensic medicine, forensic psychiatry, including in the toxicological expertise of the Republic of Moldova. The CFM organizational structure involves 25 territorial subdivisions (municipal and district) and 6 subdivisions with republican status. In the republican laboratories subdivisions, all biological samples taken (cadaveric material - blood, urine, tissues) from the entire territory of the Republic of Moldova except the left bank of the Dniester River are concentrated and investigated.

In the cases of deaths occurring outside the medical-sanitary institutions, the bodies are examined at the place of death by an operative investigation group with the participation of the forensic doctor, who performs the external examination of the corpse and the surrounding objects. After examination at the place of detection, the bodies are sent by the law enforcement bodies (criminal investigation officer, investigating officer, etc.) to the forensic examination in order to establish: the cause, the estimated age and the circumstances of the death; the age of the lesions; mechanisms of injury production and their causal relationship with death; the degree of bodily injury; the presence of alcohol, drugs (as appropriate) or other toxic substances, other problems related to the body; interpretation of the results of the forensic and medical laboratory research. The decision regarding the carrying out of a forensic expertise / finding is taken by the representative of the law enforcement body, as a result of the suspicion of violent death. The toxicological examination in the presence of drugs in the blood and in other biological fluids is performed based on the request of the representative of the law enforcement body or the forensic doctor. The legislation in force does not oblige the forensic doctor to perform the toxicological analysis in case of all the bodies subjected to forensic examination (as in the case of the determination of alcohol, which is performed in all the bodies subjected to forensic examination).

During 2021, 711 toxicological investigations (cadavers and persons) were carried out to determine the presence of illegal drugs and are 1.5 times more than in 2020 (478). Of the total toxicological investigations, (15.8) or 113 cases (55 persons and 58 cadavers) were positive for the presence of illegal drugs. Despite the lower number of investigated death cases 4836 for 2021 compared to the previous reporting year (2020 7881) the share of positive results is 1.2% higher. The low number of toxicological investigations for the identification of illegal drugs in the samples examined by the CML can be explained by the following:

- the lack of a well-established legislative regulation in this area, at the moment the decision is taken on the basis of a request from the prosecution authorities or by the forensic doctor following suspicions raised in the process of examining the body;
- insufficient and outdated equipment in the Forensic Toxicology Laboratory;
- reduced capacity of the Forensic Toxicology Laboratory due to shortage of human resources;
- insufficient cooperation between the Ministry of the Interior, the General Prosecutor's Office and sector forensic experts, including in the area of temporary storage and transport of cadaveric material within the prescribed terms.

Table 7. Number of cases of toxicological investigations according to CFM, Republic of Moldova (right bank of the Dniester River)), 2017-2021

Years	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Deaths investigated by CFM	7362	7823	7936	7881	4836
Deaths suspected of violent death	2517	2536	2308	2096	2040
Number of toxicological investigations regarding the presence of illegal drugs	298	221	260	478	711
Positive results of toxicological investigations (total)	101	72	50	65	113
Positive results of toxicological investigations, corpses	33	22	16	20	58

For the year 2021, 58 DRD (drug-related death) cases were registered, (8.1%) from positive results of toxicological investigations showing an increase compared to 2020 (4,2%).

Table 8. Distribution by age and sex of positive DRD cases according to CFM, Republic of Moldova (right bank of the Dniester River), year 2021

Corpses	20 years of less	21-24 Years	25-30 years	31-40 years	41-45 Years	46 years or more
Men	0	3	4	23	5	16
Women	1	1	2	1	1	1
Type of identified drug						
opium	0	0	0	4	0	0
alfa-PVP	0	1	1	6	0	0
benzodiazepine	1	1	2	8	5	5
cannabis	0	0	0	1	0	0
Barbituric acid	0	0	0	2	0	0
methadone	0	0	2	6	0	0
de. amphetamine	0	0	1	0	0	0
tramadol	0	1	0	3	0	1
heroin	0	0	0	1	0	0
antidepressant tricyclic	0	0	0	0	1	0
phenothiazine der.	0	0	1	1	0	0

The majority of DRD cases are in the age segment 31-40 years followed by 46 years and older, 51 male and 7 female.

Figure 12. Distribution of DRD cases by gender, comparative data 2017 - 2021

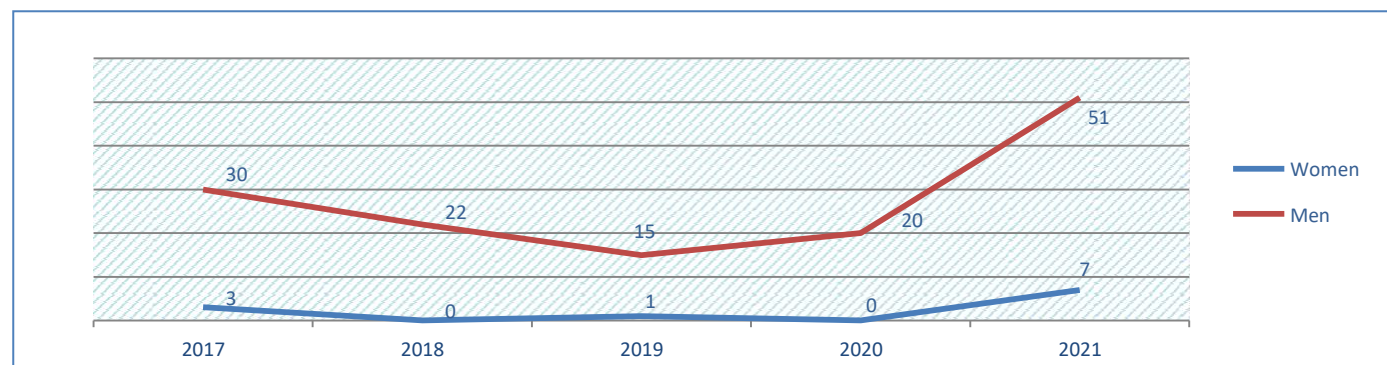
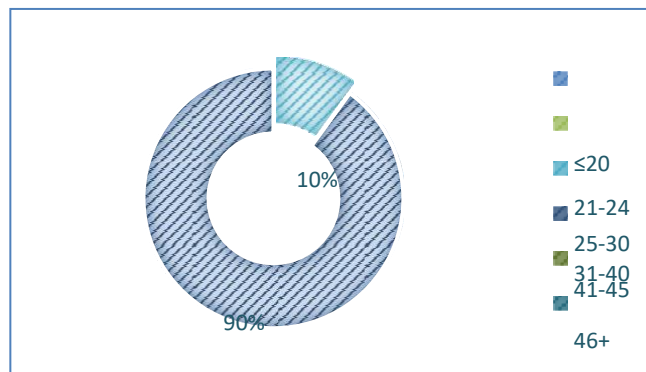


Figure 13. Distribution of DRD by age group (number of cases), 2021

Regarding the age of people who died as a result of drug use (Figure 12), it is observed that out of the total DRD cases for the reported year, most cases 24 people are in the age range between 31 and 40 years, and in the segment 46+- (29%) cases



For the year 2021, the statistical picture of the toxicological investigation of the drug consumed in DRD cases reveals that the most substance consumed remains as in the previous year benzodiazepines (22 cases), followed by methadone (14 cases), barbiturates (12 cases), alpha-PVP (9 cases). (Figure 14)

Figure 14. Distribution of deaths by substance detected in toxicological examinations during the period 2017-2021

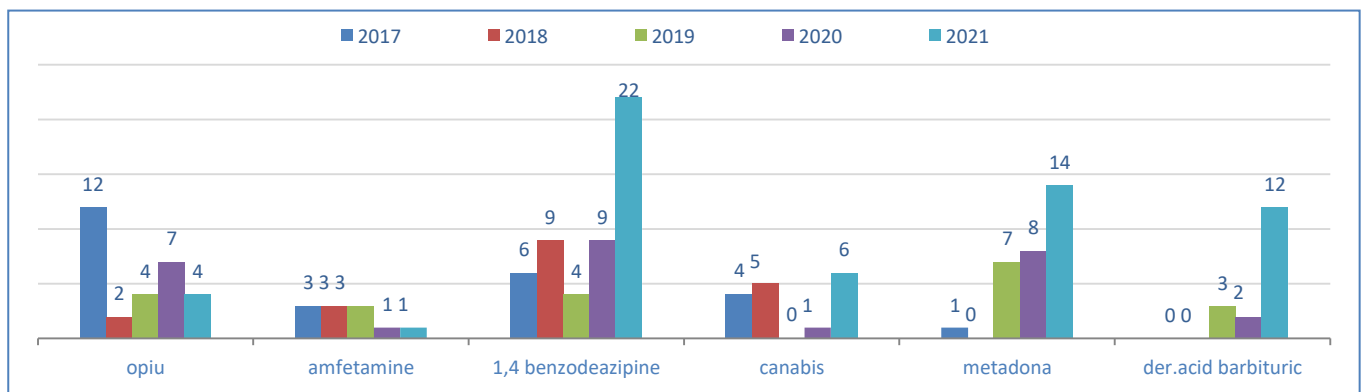


Chart: Opium  
Amphetamine  
1.4 benzodiazepines  
Cannabis  
Methadone  
Opium  
Barbituric acids

At the same time, the CFM reports the detection by toxicological investigation of poly-drug use in 14 DRD cases, an increase compared to 2020 (4 cases).

The variations of the combined substances detected were:

cannabinoids+benzodiazepines; methadone+benzodiazepines; barbiturates+tramadol; methadone+barbiturates+benzodiazepine;; tramadol+morphine+benzodiazepine+alphaPVP; alphaPVP+cannabinoids; methadone+amitriptyline; alphaPVP+tramadol; barbiturates+benzodiazepine; methadone+alphaPVP; methadone+phenothiazine+benzodiazepines; methadone+cannabinoids; barbiturates+benzodiazepine+phenothiazine.)

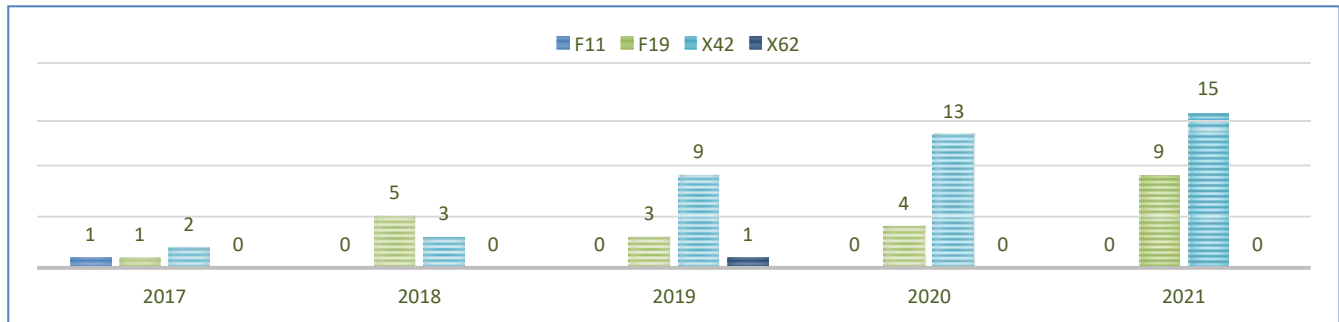
### General Mortality Registry

DRD cases are not registered in a separate database, but they can be extracted from the General Mortality Register (GMR). Medical death certificates are checked, coded and processed in the General Mortality Register within the National Agency for Public Health (NAPH).

In the reporting year, 24 DRD cases (23 males and 1 female) were registered in the General Mortality Register according to the International Classification of Diseases, revision X (ICD X), Figure 15. The data show a 1.4-fold increase in cases compared to the previous year (17 cases). The age range of DRD cases is between 25 and 47 years.

The number of DRD cases can be defined as uncertain due to the fact that the death certificates must be issued, according to the law, before the burial of the body (i.e. within a few days after finding the body) and the results of the toxicological investigation are available much later (in 3-4 months), and doctors do not change the cause of death in the death certificates afterwards.

Figure 15. Distribution of the number of DRDs registered according to the causes of death from the death certificates, GMR, Republic of Moldova (right bank of the Dniester River)), 2017-2021



Source : NAPH

SF11 - - opiate use

F19 - use of multiple drugs and other psychoactive substances

X42 - accidental intoxication by or on exposure to narcotics and psy-chodysleptics (hallucinogens)

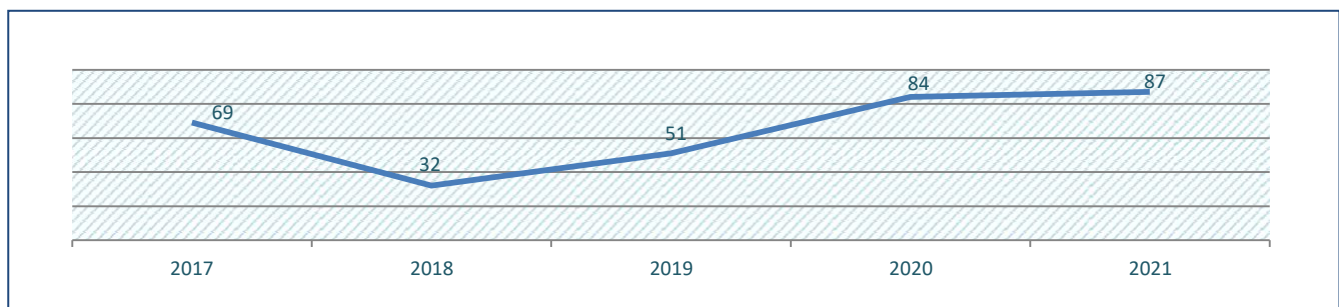
X62 - Accidental intoxication by and on exposure to organic solvents and halogenated hydrocarbons and their emanations

### REPUBLICAN DISPENSARY OF NARCOLOGY

The narcologists report to the PMSI Republican Dispensary of Narcology the cases of deaths of drug users or former registered users once they become known. In terms of the European Union, these data illustrate to some extent the "overall mortality" of drug users officially registered in the Republic of Moldova. As of 2011, the cases of overdose deaths among officially registered drug users are not reported. It is difficult to interpret the trends due to the unknown consistency of the data collected from this source (the character of completing the reports at district level).

During 2020, 84 cases of death were registered (51 cases in 2019) in known drug users (with elements of clinical examination - necropsy - medical history and investigation data eloquent), but whose cause of death was related to pathologies associated with or consecutive to chronic drug use (cases with so-called indirect causality).

Figure 16. Number of deaths from officially registered cases of drug use, Republic of Moldova (right bank of the Dniester River), years 2017-2021



Source: Republican Dispensary of Narcology

### OVERDOSE AMONG INJECTING DRUG USERS, IBBS STUDY 2020

According to the results of the IBBS study in 2020, overdose in the last 12 months has higher values in the localities on the right side of the Republic of Moldova (Chisinau 14.6%, Balti 16.3%) and is increasing compared to the 2016 round for all cities entered in the study.

Figure 17. Share of IDU respondents who reported overdoses in the last 12 months %, Republic of Moldova, IBBS 2016, 2020

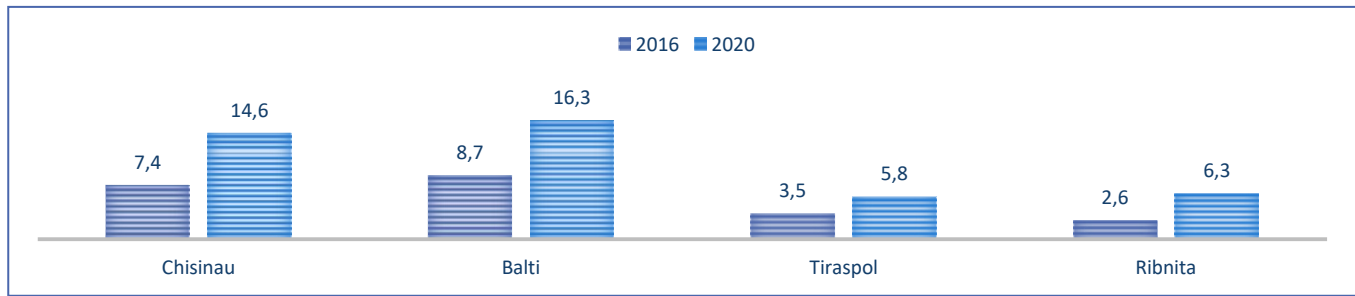
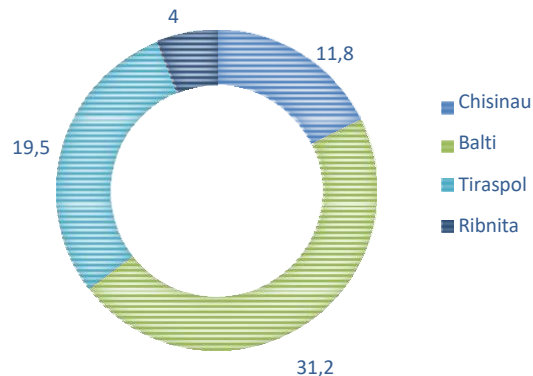


Figure 18. Share of IDU respondents who used naloxone for themselves or another users%, Republic of Moldova, IBBS 2020

The availability and use of naloxone, by the IDU group, through risk reduction programs indicates that this service is needed.

The highest values of naloxone use are in Balti 31.2%, Tiraspol 19.5% followed by Chisinau 11.8% and the lowest is in Ribnita 4%.



**DATA INCONSISTENCY**

The number of variable DRD cases between sources could be explained by the social stigma, the complexity of the procedures related to the confirmation of a DRD case according to the legislation in force and the fact that the results of toxicological investigations become available later (3-4 months after death). In the latter case, doctors do not always change the cause of death in the medical certificate of death. Cross-checking of data collected between sources was not performed.

The inconsistency of the data from the previously presented sources confirms that the reality of DRD and fatal overdoses with drugs and other psychotropic substances remains little known in the Republic of Moldova.

In the context of the above, the deficiencies of the DRD investigation and registration system are obvious. Toxicological investigations for the presence of illegal drugs in the biological samples of the examined corpses are not mandatory and are carried out against payment, which increases the risk of losing sight of DRD cases. Carrying out the expertise only in case of suspicions, such as bodily injuries (injection sites), syringes found on the spot, dust, etc., in fact excludes other cases of DRD, which lack external signs of drug administration. The technical capacities of the CFM toxicological laboratory and of the territorial structures of the CFM offer only the possibility of qualitative analysis to the main groups of illegal drugs. Thus, credible support for a correct diagnosis is not available. The long time between biological sampling and the availability of results (3-4 months) makes the registration of death remain under a different code of the International Classification of Diseases than the cause established by the medical examiner. The social stigma and the complexity of the related legal procedure determine the relatives of the deceased to resort to hiding the real cause of death associated with drug use.

**INFECTIOUS DISEASES RELATED TO DRUG USE**

HIV infection in the Republic of Moldova continues to be a priority health issue; the HIV epidemic is considered to be concentrated in groups at high risk of infection, especially among injecting drug users. The first case of HIV in the Republic of Moldova was detected in 1987. In the Republic of Moldova, the minimum set of infectious diseases of interest for this indicator includes HIV / AIDS and viral hepatitis B and C. Sexually transmitted diseases, syphilis and tuberculosis are also part of the monitoring.

HIV

STUDIES AND RESEARCH

HIV infection in the Republic of Moldova is concentrated in vulnerable groups including the population of IDUs (injecting drug users). Since 2001, six HIV seroprevalence studies have been performed among IDUs. In the last four rounds 2009/2010, 2012/2013, 2015/2016, 2020 it was applied the same method of analysis (RDS), which offers the possibility to observe the trend prevalence. (Table 9).

Table 9. HIV prevalence % in the IDU group, Republic of Moldova, IBBS 2009/2010, 2012/2013, 2015/2016, 2020

Location of data collection	2009/2010		2012/2013		2015/2016		2020	
	Sample	HIV prevalence	Sample	HIV prevalence	Sample	HIV prevalence	Sample	HIV prevalence
Chisinau	301	16,4	339	8,5	362	13,9	365	8,1
Balti	362	39,8	362	41,8	342	17,0	357	14,9
Tiraspol	281	12,1	297	23,9	334	29,1	333	23,5
Ribnita	n/d	n/d	97	43,7	300	22,2	322	14,5

HIV prevalence studies conducted in 2001 and 2003/2004 applied the time-location sampling method with testing the washing of used syringes of beneficiaries of risk reduction programs. The HIV seroprevalence study, conducted in 2007, applied the probabilistic sampling of beneficiaries of risk reduction programs with blood sample testing. In 2009/2010, 2012/2013, 2015-2016, 2020, it was applied the sampling guided by the respondents with the qualitative testing of blood samples.

ROUTINE STATISTICS

The incidence of HIV infection in 2021 was 19.8 cases (2020, 16.8) per 100 thousand population. In the data disaggregated by territories of the country, for the right bank of the Dniester 17.9 (year 2020 15.9) and those in the East 34.4 (year 2020 30.0) increase is observed compared to the previous reporting year. There was an increase in incidence by gender both for men 24.1 cases (year 2020 20.4) and for women 15.9 cases (year 2020 13.5). The heterosexual transmission route remains the priority 88.1% of cases (as of 2020 90.3%) followed by drug use 3.7% of cases (as of 2020 3.1%), then homosexual transmission 3.2% (as of 2020 4.2%), then mother-to-child transmission 2.6% (as of 2020 2,4%).

Of all HIV tests in 2021, 3.7% (4.2%-year 2020) of tests were performed in the group of people at higher risk of infection and their sexual partners. Of the IDU group in 2021, 38 people were confirmed and entered into medical records.

Figure 19. Number of HIV cases detected, Moldova (right bank of the Dniester River), years 2018-2021

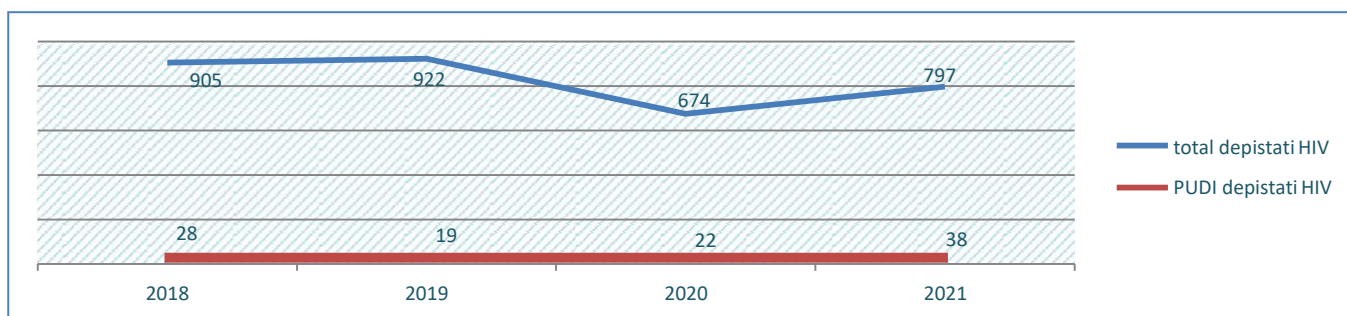


Chart: total HIV detected

Total IDUs HIV detected

As regards HIV testing in the prison system, out of the 4496 rapid HIV tests carried out, 92 were positive. According to the data of the Medical Directorate of the National Administration of Penitentiaries, at the end of 2021 there were 175 HIV patients in the prison system, of which 20 new cases.

## VIRAL HEPATITIS

### STUDIES AND RESEARCH

For the first time, a seroprevalence study of hepatitis C virus (HCV) and hepatitis B virus (HBV) among IDUs (injecting drug users) was conducted in 2007, among IDUs benefiting from risk reduction programs, being applied the probabilistic sampling with testing of blood samples for HIV, HCV, HBV. The next rounds of the IBBS study from 2009, 2012/2013 and 2015/2016, 2020 were performed by the RDS method (sampling guided by respondents with qualitative testing of blood samples). According to the results of IBBS 2020, the prevalence of hepatitis C virus is 49.2% and hepatitis B virus is 3.5% in Chisinau, 49.1% and 1.2% respectively in Balti, 42.1% and 1.7% respectively in Tiraspol, 63.1% and 10.8% respectively in Ribnita (Table 10) the Republic of Moldova is considered an endemic region for viral hepatitis B and C. General immunization of new born against viral hepatitis B began in 1995.

Table 10. Prevalence % HCV and HBV among IDUs, IBBS 2012/2013, 2015/2016, 2020 Republic of Moldova

Location of data collection	2012/2013		2015/2016		2020	
	HCV prevalence	HBV prevalence	HCV prevalence	HBV prevalence	HCV prevalence	HBV prevalence
Chisinau	65,4	6,6	60,4	4,9%	49,2	3,6
Balti	38,5	12,4	41,8%	5,4%	49,1	1,2
Tiraspol	35,3	4,1	62,1%	4,0%	42,1	1,7
Ribnita	61,4	0,0	32,7%	1,0%	63,1	10,8

### ROUTINE STATISTICS

For the year 2021, the incidence of acute viral hepatitis B is 0.27 cases (by 2020 0.12 cases) per 100 thousand population and acute viral hepatitis C is 0.30 cases (by 2020 0.45 cases). Relevant to the demographic characteristics according to the epidemiological data sheet, viral hepatitis B and C were diagnosed predominantly in urban localities, predominantly in the mature group.

In order to increase early diagnosis and access to treatment of viral hepatitis among groups at high risk of infection, marker testing for hepatitis was introduced (objective of the National Programme to combat viral hepatitis B, C and D) covered by NSIH funds.

Screening tests for viral hepatitis B and C are carried out in the republic with rapid diagnostic tests, increasing the accessibility of the population to testing. In 2021 with rapid diagnostic tests 77813 people from groups at high risk of infection were tested for HBsAg marker and 69556 people for anti-HCV marker.

In accordance with the National Program to combat viral hepatitis B, C and D and the Vaccination Plan for 2021, immunization against viral hepatitis B of people in the groups at high risk of infection was carried out. The vaccination coverage against viral hepatitis B of groups at high risk of infection in 2021 showed an increasing trend, constituting with the 1st dose - 58.7%, with the 2nd dose - 52.6%, with the 3rd dose - 31.5% and with the 4th dose - 80.5%, compared to 2020, respectively 39,0 %, 47,9%, 48,0 % and 53,2%

### OTHER COMORBIDITIES RELATED TO DRUG USE

Data on tuberculosis cases on both banks of the Dniester River are stored in an electronic database (SIME TB) at the Institute of Phthisiopneumology. Since 2006, a question on drug use has been added to the data collection form on tuberculosis cases. Drug use is a highly stigmatized and hidden practice in the Republic of Moldova. Thus, TB patients prefer not to provide information on this topic. This could be one explanation why the number of TB patients who report drug use is so low.

Table 11. Reported TB comorbidity, Republic of Moldova, 2016-2020

		2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Number of patients with tuberculosis, new cases and recurrences		3333	3020	2879	2253	2067
Patients with tuberculosis new cases and recurrences who reported drug use	Number	42	29	26	27	21
	Share	1,26	0,96	0,90	1,19	1,01

Source: SIME TB, IFP

In 2021, out of 2067 patients with tuberculosis new cases (1616) and relapses (451), 21 patients reported drug use and thus show a downward trend from the previous reporting year. Since October 01, 2014 in the RM the TB REACH/PAS funded project "Expanding access to rapid TB diagnostic method (GeneXpert) in vulnerable groups (injecting drug users and homeless people)".

## SOCIAL CORRELATIONS AND LEGAL CONSEQUENCES

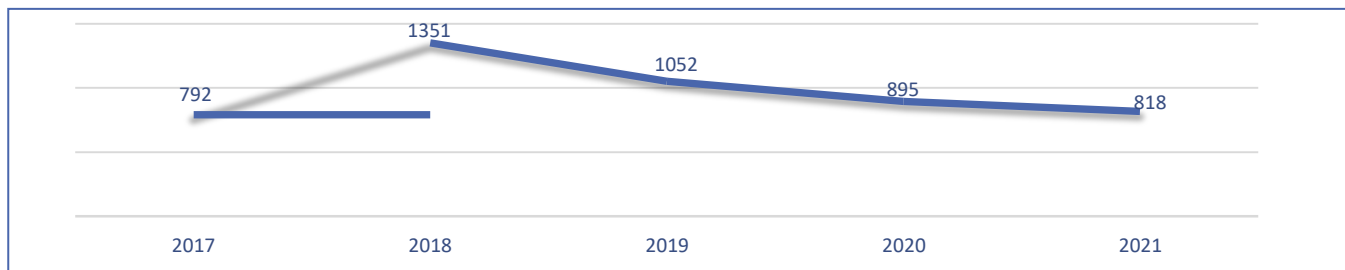
### SOCIAL ISSUES

According to the EMCDDA, the concept of social exclusion associated with drug use - a concept developed for European Union countries - is a multidimensional one. This involves exclusionary practices such as economic deprivation or poverty and their consequences; social and political discrimination; dismissal and reduced access to health, education and qualification services. Social exclusion appears as a topic in research in recent years on the characteristics of drug use and the social, legal and health consequences. The available information includes the socio-economic factors associated with drug use and, in particular, problem drug use, concentrated in population groups that are subject to multiple exclusion processes, such as minority affiliation, drug use and bearing the consequences of social and economic exclusion. The prevention of discrimination against drug users is carried out based on Law no. 121 on ensuring equality of 25.05.2012, Law on Health Protection no. 411-XIII dated 28.03.1995, Law no. 263- XVI of 27.10.2005 on the rights and responsibilities of the patient, as well as other laws and government decisions. The non-discrimination of drug users in the field of public health is expressly provided for in paragraph (1) of Art. 17 of the Law on Health Protection no. 411-XIII dated 28.03.1995<sup>4</sup>, as well as by Law no. 263- XVI of 27.10.2005 on the rights and responsibilities of the patient.<sup>5</sup>

## OFFENCES RELATED TO DRUG TRAFFICKING

During 2021, 818 drug-related crimes were recorded on the right bank of the Dniester River (Figure 19), thus showing a decrease in the total number of drug-related crimes compared to 2020.

Figure 20. Number of crimes related to drug trafficking, Republic of Moldova (right bank of the Dniester River), 2017-2021



Analysis of drug-related crime data in relation to the seriousness of the offences shows that the majority of drug-related offences fall into the less serious and light category.

During 2021, the number of crimes related to illicit drug trafficking and consumption, the number of particularly serious cases amounted to - 84 crimes, serious amounted to - 231 crimes and less serious and light amounted to - 503 crimes.

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.amed.md/legea411.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> [http://www.sibm.md/uploads/files/lege\\_263-XVI.pdf](http://www.sibm.md/uploads/files/lege_263-XVI.pdf)

Figure 21. Seriousness of drug-related crime, 2018-2021

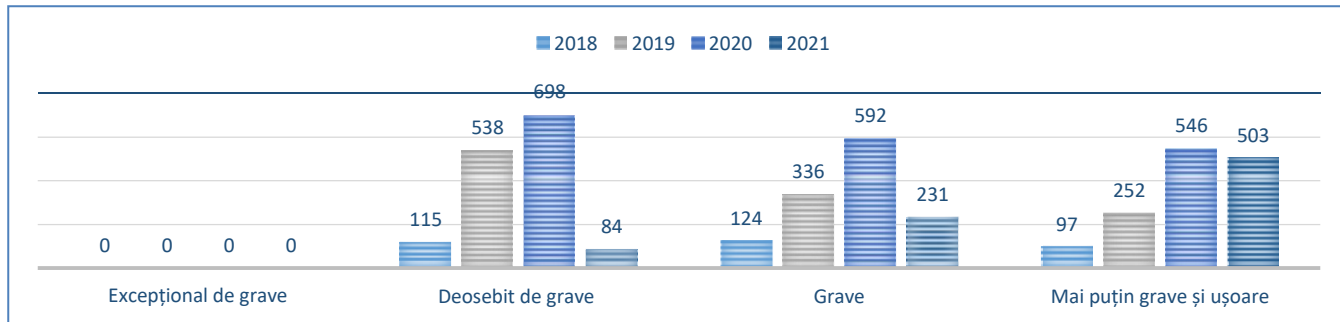


Chart: Exceptionally serious

Particularly serious

Serious

Less serious and light

The number of criminal investigation files for drug trafficking and consumption offences during 2021, registered -818 files, sent to prosecutor- 533, sent to trial-511, terminated-8 files, closed- 33 files. Analysing the activity carried out by the prosecution bodies in cooperation with the prosecutor's offices, there is a stable annual trend of prosecution activity. Criminal cases filed by type of drug for the year 2021:

Ethnobotanicals ± 94 files,

Marihuana ± 122 files,

Medicines ± 26 files,

Heroin ± 7files,

Hashish ± 4 files

Others ± 462 files

Cane plants ± 19 files

Amphetamine ± 25 files,

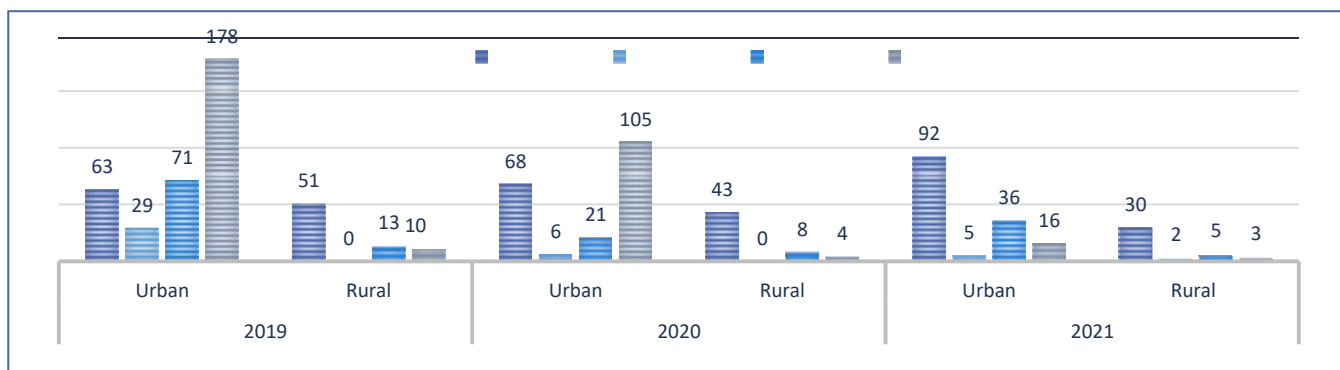
MDMA ± 17 files

PVP ± 32 files,

Poppy plants ± 10 files,

Marijuana is the object of drug-related crime according to the reported data, followed by heroin, amphetamine, ethnobotanicals, mostly specific to urban areas. (Figure 22)

Figure 22. Share of drug type for the period 2019– 2021



The analysis of the zonal distribution of trafficked drugs shows that in the districts of the central area of the country there is documented increased trafficking of marijuana, ethnobotanicals, amphetamines. The northern part of the country also ranks first in terms of trafficking in marijuana and ethnobotanicals, while in the southern part of the country amphetamines, marijuana and cannabis plants prevail. (Figure 23)

Figure 23. Zonal (territorial) distribution of trafficked drugs, 2021

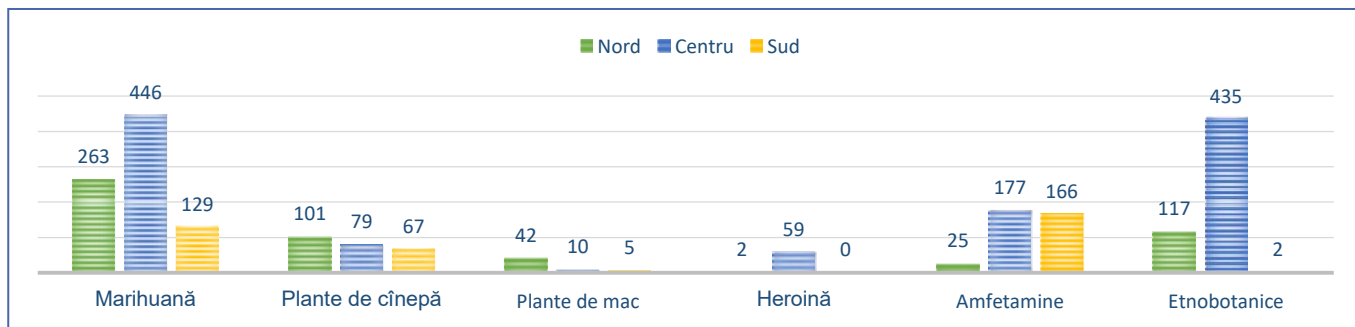


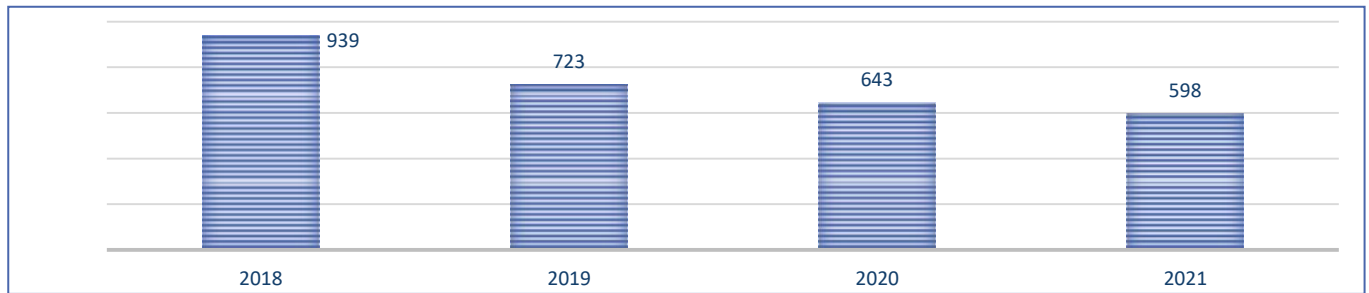
Chart: Marijuana

- Cane plants
- Poppy plants
- Heroine
- Amphetamines
- Ethnobotanicals

The number of cases of keeping narcotic substances for the purpose of transmitting them to inmates in penitentiary institutions in 2021 were registered 57 cases and are increasing compared to 2020- 37 cases.

According to the statistical data for the years 2017-2020, there is a decrease in the number of persons investigated for drug trafficking, sent to trial. For the year 2020, the number of persons investigated for drug trafficking, sent to trial was of 598 persons. (Figure 24)

Figure 24. Number of persons under investigation for drug trafficking prosecuted, Republic of Moldova (right bank of the Dniester River), 2018- 2021



The total number of persons investigated for drug-related offences for 2021 is 657. Of which women - 45, men - 612. As regards the gender distribution of persons under criminal investigation for drug trafficking compared to 2020, there is an increase in the share of men (Figure 25)

Figure 25. Number of persons investigated for drug trafficking %, disaggregated by sex RM (right bank of the Dniester river), 2018-2021

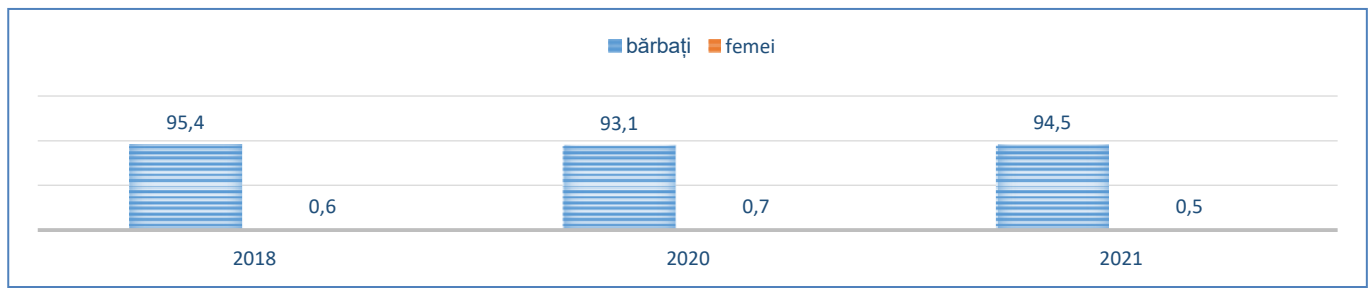
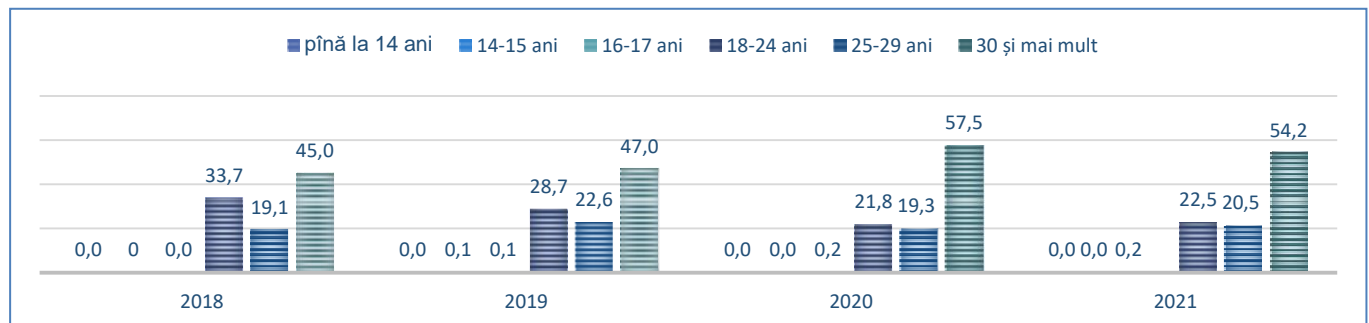


Chart: men  
women

Analysing the circumstances of the commission of drug-related crimes, we find that most of the crimes are committed by people who are the first offenders of this kind, who are not employed in the field of work, but also those with a criminal record at the time of committing the crime. In the section on the age distribution of people involved in crimes related to drug trafficking, the group of people aged 30 and over has the largest share over time in crimes related to drug trafficking. People suspected of committing drug-related crimes are committed by people aged between 18-24 and over 30, mostly male (Figure 26)

Figure 26. Distribution by age groups %, persons investigated for drug trafficking, Republic of Moldova (right bank of the Dniester River), 2018-2021



Source: MIA

Chart: up to 14 years old

14-15 years old

16-17 years old

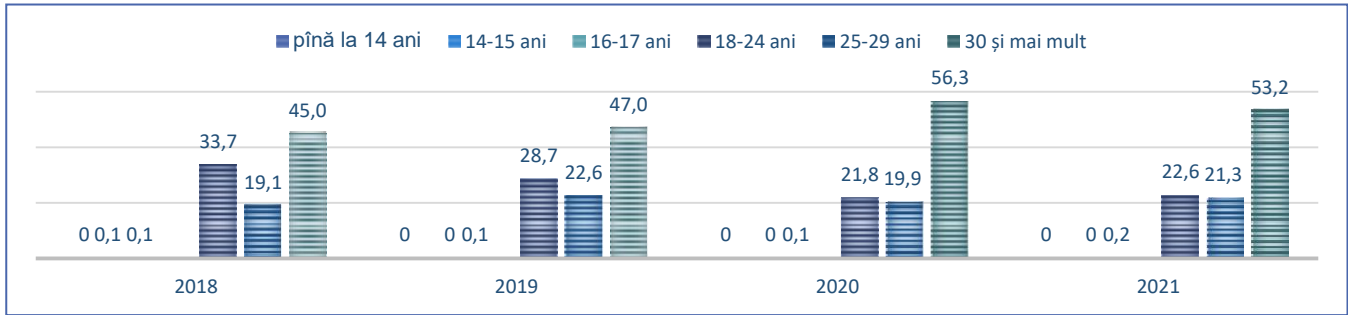
18-24 years old

25-29 years old

30 and over

In the case of men involved in drug trafficking offences, the age group 30 years and over has the highest share during 2018-2021 (Figure 27).

Figure 27. Distribution by age group %, male persons investigated for drug trafficking, Republic of Moldova (right bank of the Dniester River), 2018- 2021.



Source: MIA

Chart: up to 14 years old

14-15 years old

16-17 years old

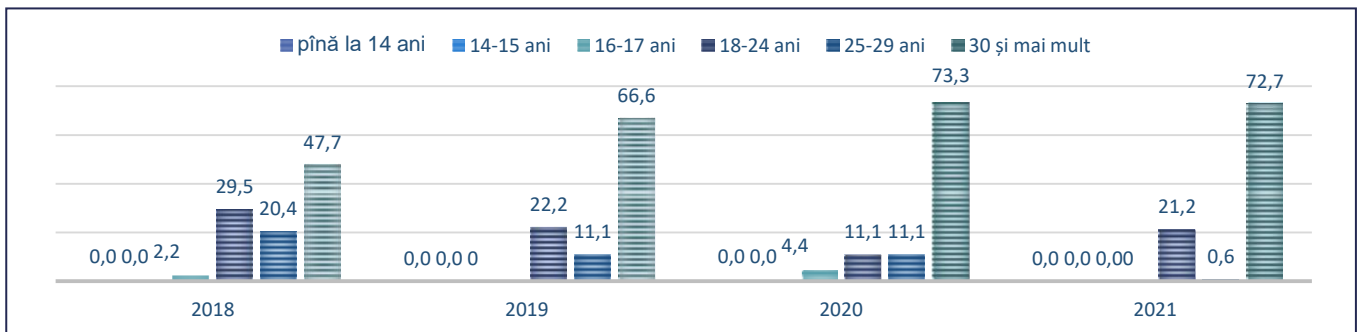
18-24 years old

25-29 years old

30 and over

Distribution by age group %, male persons investigated for drug trafficking, Republic of Moldova (right bank of the Dniester River 2020.

Figure 28. Distribution by age group %, female persons investigated for drug trafficking, Republic of Moldova (right bank of the Dniester River), 2018- 2021



Source : MIA

Chart: up to 14 years old

14-15 years old

16-17 years old

18-24 years old

25-29 years old

30 and over

In the case of persons under criminal investigation for cultivation of narcotic plants, according to Articles 217 paragraph (1) and 217<sup>1</sup>(1), the majority of persons are male.

Table12. Distribution by sex of persons under criminal investigation for cultivation of narcotic plants, Republic of Moldova (right bank of the Dniester River), 2021

	Men		Women		Total	
	nr.	%	nr.	%	nr.	%
With the purpose of appropriation (art. 217 <sup>1</sup> paragraph .1)	2	0,35	-	0	2	0,33

Without the purpose of appropriation (art. 217 paragraph. 1)	21	3,65	11	33,33	32	5,26
Total (art.217, al.1 and 217 <sup>1</sup> , paragraph.1)	23	4,0	11	33,33	34	5,59
Total persons held criminally liable for committing drug-related crimes	575	100%	33	100%	608	100%

Source: MIA

The majority of persons (men and women) under criminal investigation for cultivation of narcotic plants without the purpose of sale (Art. 217 paragraph (1)) are 30 years or older.

Table 13. Distribution by age group and sex of persons investigated for cultivation of narcotic plants, Republic of Moldova (right bank of the Dniester River), 2021

	Men		Women		Total	
	For the purpose of appropriation (art. 217 <sup>1</sup> paragraph.1)	Without the purpose of appropriation (art. 217 paragraph.1)	For the purpose of appropriation (art. 217 <sup>1</sup> paragraph.1)	Without the purpose of appropriation (art. 217 paragraph.1)	For the purpose of appropriation (art. 217 <sup>1</sup> paragraph.1)	Without the purpose of appropriation (art. 217 paragraph.1)
14–15 years	-	-	-	-	-	-
16–17 years	-	-	-	-	-	-
18–24 years	2	1	-	-	2	1
25–29 years	-	1	-	-	-	1
30 years and more	-	19	-	11	-	30
Total	2	21	-	11	2	32

Source: MIA

## DRUG MARKET

### DRUG SEIZURES

According to the MIA report, a priority objective is to uncover the smuggling and trafficking of illegal drugs. Drug seizures are qualified by experts, less as an indicator of drug supply, perhaps more as a direct indicator of drug law enforcement activities, while reflecting the vulnerabilities of traffickers. Also, in terms of detecting large quantities of drugs Art. 217 para. 4(b) (particularly large proportions), during 2021 there were 140 cases and in Art. 217(1) para. 3 lit. f (large proportions), 24 cases were registered. (Figure 29)

Figure 29. Number of files for drug seizures, 2018-2021

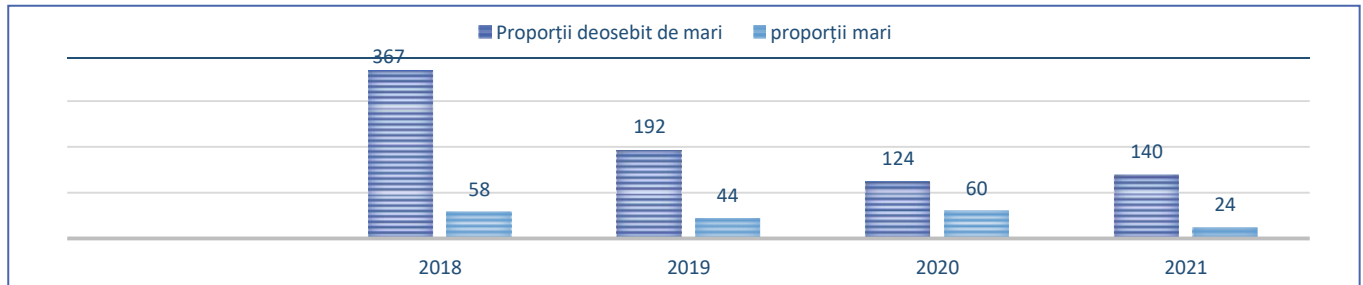


Chart:  
particularly large proportions  
large proportions

In 2021, the illicit drug market in the Republic of Moldova shows the following trends:

- Quantities seized: marijuana (104kg 336gr), cannabis plants (7984 plants), PVP (24kg 275gr), LSD (1479 stamps), ethnobotanical substances (1kg 98gr) etc.... Cannabis remains the most seized drug nationally.
- Increasing trend for LSD (from 238 stamps in 2020 to 1479 stamps in 2021), cocaine (from 374 grams in 2020 to 553.8 grams in 2021), PVP (from 15 kg 365 grams in 2020 to 24 kg 275 grams in 2021), medicines (from 1037 pills in 2020 to 5537 pills in 2021) poppy plant (from 4397 plats in 2020 to 7984 in 2021), amphetamines (from 295gr in 2020 to 1kg 282gr in 2021), NSP as well as an increase in criminal cases from 170 in 2020 to 554 in 2021.
- Decreases have also been recorded for catches of straw (23886 plants in 2020 to 9351 plants in 2021), methamphetamine (from 1kg 49gr in 2020 to 306 gr in 2021). Drug trafficking and consumption as a phenomenon remains concentrated in urban areas in the central and northern parts of the country.

Drug trafficking and use as a phenomenon remains concentrated in urban areas. The data provided by the Directorate of Drug-Related Crimes on the quantities of illegal drugs seized on the territory of the right bank of the Dniester River in the period 2017-2021 are presented in (Table 14).

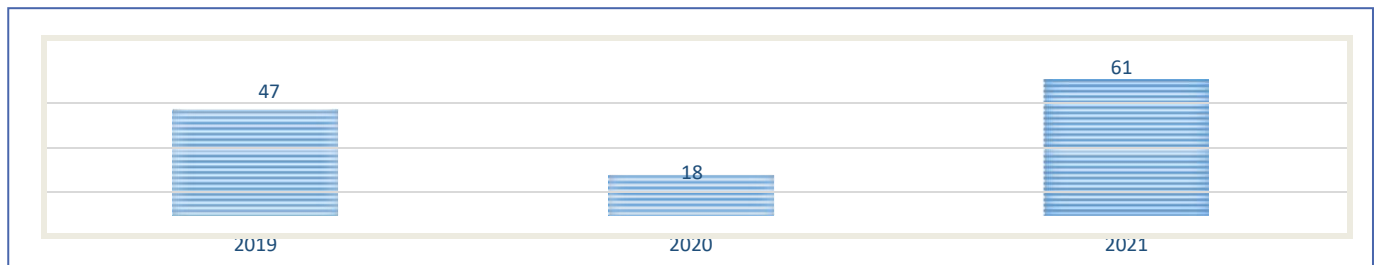
Table 14. Quantities of seized illegal drugs, Republic of Moldova (right bank of the Dniester River)), 2017-2021

	Seized quantities				
	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Poppy straw	19kg886gr	6kg167gr	1kg 633gr	1 kg 329 gr	1kg 197gr
Marijuana	137kg464gr	44kg 718gr	188kg 477gr	81 kg 969 gr	104kg 336gr
Opium	3,79gr	3,94gr	1,6gr	1,48 gr	-
Ecstasy	4423 pills/	3385pills 6kg 938gr	9939pills/6kg 720gr MDMA	7941pills/5kg 747gr MDMA	-
Ephedrine/Pseudoephedrine	0,3ml	59,6gr	-	-	0,82gr
Tramadol	103 pills	7firole/98pills	-	-	122 pills
Amphetamines	230,2gr	209gr	70,5gr	295gr	1kg 282gr
Methamphetamines	8,7gr	106gr(dry mass) 136ml(liquid mass)	16,65gr 3,2ml	1,49gr, 7ml	306gr
Poppy plants	32024 plants	5381 plants	3939 plants	4397 plants	7984 plants
Hemp plants	15331 plants	32474 plants	24109 plants	23 886 plants	9391plants
Heroin	620gr	79 kg 412gr (78kg 938gr seized a.2017/expertise	1kg 515gr	322,7 gr	218kg 493gr
Cocaine	4kg970gr plant mass	5,75 gr	39gr+200gr	374,1 gr	553,8gr
Hashish	241kg511gr	29kg 900 gr	3kg 299gr	1kg 579 gr	2kg 958 gr
LSD/LSD-25	0	6 stamps	4stamps	238 stamps	1479
PVP	150gr	1kg 353gr	8kg 582gr	15kg 367gr	24kg 275gr
Ethnobotanicals	5kg 372gr	2kg 355gr	647gr	63 gr	1kg 98gr
Methadone	8,24 gr(mass	18,2gr	13,9gr/15ml	33,4 gr	7,49gr
Medicines	1501 pills	1037 pills 17 ampoules	1123 pills	1037 pills, 3 ampoules	5573 pills

Source: MIA

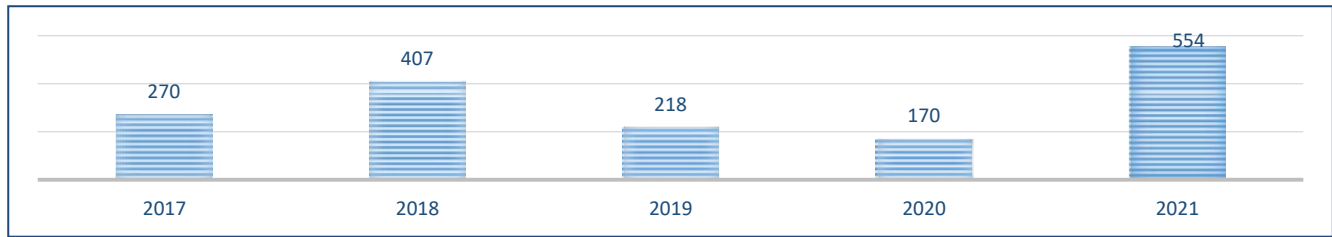
Another drug crime-related phenomenon that puts pressure on state security is drug smuggling. Thus, during 2019 there were 47cases in 2020 there were 18 cases of drug smuggling which denotes a considerable decrease, but with a noticeable increase for 2021- 61 cases. (Figure 30)

Figure 30. Number of drug smuggling cases, 2019-2021



Analysis of data on the circulation of new psychoactive substances, which have become available to the general public, poses a security threat. These substances are more readily available and affordable than other narcotic substances. Analysis of data on the circulation of new psychoactive substances shows the efforts made by the institutions responsible for reducing the supply of drugs in the area of detecting and bringing under control new substances detected in the illicit circuit. However, the long-term results will be visible in the long term (Figure 31)

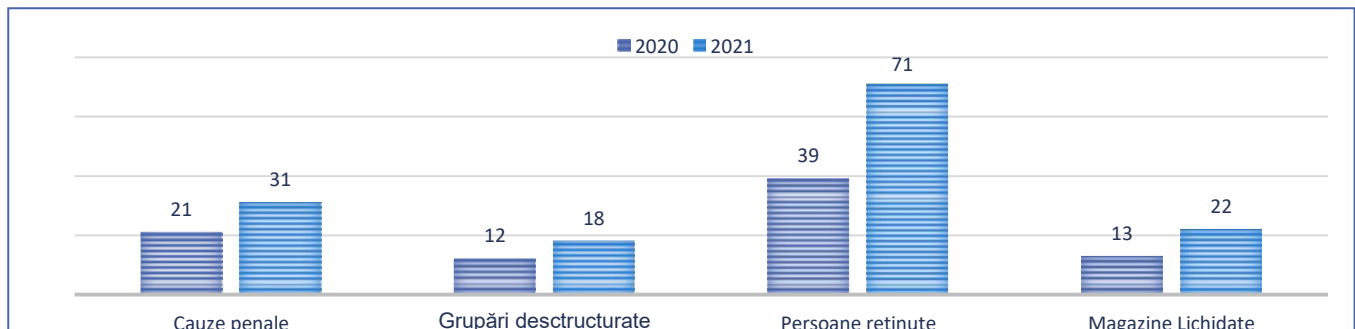
Figure 31. Share of criminal cases involving NPS (New Psychoactive Substances) 2017– 2021.



DRUG PRICES AND PURITY

Recently in the Republic of Moldova there has been a change in the method of drug trade and payments for drugs purchased. The illegal circuit of drugs and payment for them has moved online. Thus, the phenomenon of online drug dealing began with the use of VIBER and TELEGRAM applications installed on mobile phones and payment for drugs purchased was made through electronic payment terminals QIWI and B PAY. As a result of the development of this scourge the organizers during 2019 have taken new measures to improve and secure illegal activities in this way transferring illegal activities from the open online environment (LEGALIZER platform) to the DARKNET environment, and lately transferring illegal activities to the encrypted HYDRA platform, and payment for purchased drugs is made through virtual currencies (BITCOIN, LITECOIN, ETHERIUM, etc., Information on the price of illegal drugs is obtained by the MIA from confidential informants' reports, from knowledge gained during operational actions, as well as from personal observations during undercover activities. The prices of illegal drugs on the market of the Republic of Moldova did not register essential changes in 2020. With reference to the year 2020, the given phenomenon continued, the number of cases and drug seizures traded online with the use of various applications and information systems increased. The activities carried out in 2020 focused in particular on early detection, liquidation of online shops and apprehension of the persons involved (Figure 31)

Figure 32. Fighting the online drug trade, years 2020-2021



- Chart:
- Criminal cases
- Unstructured groups
- Persons arrested
- Liquidated stores

Table 15. Variations of distribution prices on the illicit drug market, Republic of Moldova 2019-2021

Drug type	Average price		
	2019	2020	2021
1ml of opium extract	-	-	-
100g of marijuana	MDL 2000	MDL 2000	MDL 1000
1 Ecstasy Pill (MDMA)	MDL 250	MDL 250	MDL 240-400
1 gr of heroin	MDL 4000	MDL 4000	MDL 4000
1 gr of cocaine	MDL 4000	MDL 4000	MDL 2400
1 gr of hashish	MDL 150	MDL 150	MDL 200

100g of poppy straw	MDL 500	MDL 500	MDL 500
1 LSD brand	MDL 250	MDL 250	MDL 250
1 gr of amphetamine	MDL 500	MDL 450	MDL 600-800
1 gr of methamphetamine	MDL 600	MDL 600	MDL 600
1 medicine pill	≈ MDL 20	≈ MDL 20	≈ MDL 20
1 gr of PVP	MDL 600-500	MDL 600-500	MDL 500-600
1 Subutex pill	MDL 600-500	MDL 600-500	MDL 500-800
100gr of ethnobotanicals	MDL 600	MDL 600	MDL 700
20ml of methadone	MDL 250	MDL 250	MDL 250

Source: MIA

### SCHOOL AND EXTRACURRICULAR PROGRAMS

Measures aimed at the prevention of drug use among pupils and out-of-school education are provided for in the Law of the Republic of Moldova No 713 of 6 December 2001 "On the control and prevention of alcohol abuse, illicit use of drugs and other psychotropic substances".

The practical actions are set out in the National Action Plan for 2020-2021, part of the National Anti-Drug Strategy for 2020-2027. Their main priority is to stop the increase/decrease of drug use in society, especially among minors, and to contribute to stopping the increase/decrease of illegal injecting drug use. In order to raise awareness, educate and prevent drug use by the collaborators of PMSI Republican Dispensary of Narcology in collaboration and with the participation of NCBs, national campaigns, a series of educational, informational and collaborative activities have been launched: lectures in schools and higher educational institutions, training seminars, informative seminars held in schools, higher educational institutions on topics of interest related to the prevention of drug trafficking and use or related topics. In primary and general secondary schools, the prevention of drug, alcohol and tobacco consumption is carried out continuously, through the curriculum, both in compulsory subjects ("Civic education, "Biology", "Chemistry", „Personal development, „ Education for society, „ ) and in the optional subject "Health education".

Personal Development, 1 hour per week, in primary, secondary and high school and has been implemented in accordance with the Curriculum. The compulsory subject "Personal Development" is structured in 5 modules, one of which is the Healthy Life Module, which guides pupils in aspects related to physical and emotional health, healthy nutrition, counteracting vices: drugs, alcohol, smoking, different kinds of influences, etc. and includes such content units as:

- ✓ *Say NO to drugs and other substances, the dangers of drug use, the dangers of taking drugs without a doctor's prescription, the impact of drug use on physical, mental and emotional health in adolescence, addiction to drugs and harmful substances, prevention of drug use, personal and social consequences.*

The optional subject "Health Education" (grades I-XII) was studied in 474 primary and general secondary schools.

In 2020, the implementation of interactive drug prevention programmes in technical vocational education was carried out through various activities in the classes (1 hour/week), in the compulsory subject of civic education (1 hour/week) and through extracurricular activities on the theme of drug, alcohol and tobacco prevention (courses, seminars, round tables) with the participation of teachers, head teachers, parents, psycho-pedagogues. In secondary and post-secondary technical vocational education institutions, the subject "Decisions for a healthy lifestyle" is taught to first-year students. The main objective - to develop skills to reduce health risks for oneself and others; to analyse the consequences of different behavioural choices in situations of health risk.

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## REDUCING THE RISK ASSOCIATED WITH DRUG USE

The "International Harm Reduction Programme" sees harm reduction as a "pragmatic and humanistic approach to reducing the negative individual and social consequences associated with drug use, in particular the risk of HIV infection. It seeks to mitigate the problems associated with drug use through methods that protect the dignity, humanity and human rights of people who use drugs. Harm reduction programmes provide a range of services to achieve its objectives. Syringe exchange and substitution treatment are the most effective harm reduction interventions. Since 2018, the project of distributing materials (syringes, condoms, etc.) through pharmacy networks, which consumers can access through a magnetic card, is being implemented. Other support services for drug users are provided through the mobile clinic service, such as health education, information about the risks of drug use, HIV testing and STI screening, psychological counselling, as well as referral to medical services. By providing accessible services that respond to the needs of drug users, harm reduction programs often serve as a meaningful point of contact that can connect drug users with other community, health and social service resources." Harm reduction programmes have become important links in the work to prevent the spread of HIV, other blood-borne and sexually transmitted infections and other harms associated with injecting drug use, referral to other specialised services, etc. These programmes provide drug users with sterile equipment, personal protective equipment and safe disposal of injecting equipment used. Harm reduction programmes in the Republic of Moldova started in 1997 and are still active today.

### DESCRIPTION OF INTERVENTIONS

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Risk Reduction or syringe exchange programmes are implemented on both banks of the Dniester and in all penitentiary institutions on the right and left bank. The package of services provided also includes gender-specific services for women and adolescents, overdose management, Naloxone dispensing and diversification of the modality of delivery of prevention services: at the syringe exchange point, through field workers, through the pharmacy network, through mobile units. These services were provided exclusively from Global Fund sources.

#### *Services offered within the project*

- ✓ exchange of syringes (at the syringe exchange point, through field workers, through pharmacies, mobile units);
- ✓ distribution of condoms (at the syringe exchange point, through field workers, through pharmacies, mobile units);
- ✓ information, education and peer counselling (at the syringe exchange point, through field workers, through pharmacies, mobile units);
- ✓ distribution of informational materials;
- ✓ organizing mutual support groups;
- ✓ counselling and referral to VCT for HIV and hepatitis;
- ✓ community testing with the use of rapid HIV tests and support at specialized medical institutions to confirm the diagnosis and treatment if necessary;
- ✓ counselling, referral and accompanying opiate substitution treatment;
- ✓ counselling, referral and support to specific medical services for hepatitis, TB, STI, ARV;
- ✓ training activities in order to reduce the risks for IDUs and their sexual partners for the adoption of risk-free behaviours - the use of sterile injection equipment and the use of condoms;
- ✓ overdose prophylaxis;
- ✓ Naloxone release;
- ✓ gender-specific services, including medical consultations, investigations and treatment;
- ✓ legal, psychological counselling, for social assistance;

All activities are implemented in the civil sector and in penitentiary institutions.

## INTERVENTIONS IN PENITENTIARY INSTITUTIONS

### ASSISTANCE FOR DRUG USERS IN PRISONS

Within the medical service of the National Administration of Penitentiaries (NAP), for the period 2021, according to Article 103 of the Criminal Code, a total of 29 prisoners were registered, of which 2 new cases (year 2020, 45 prisoners).

Figure 33. Number of convicted cases, cumulative and new, according to art.103, 2017-2021, RM

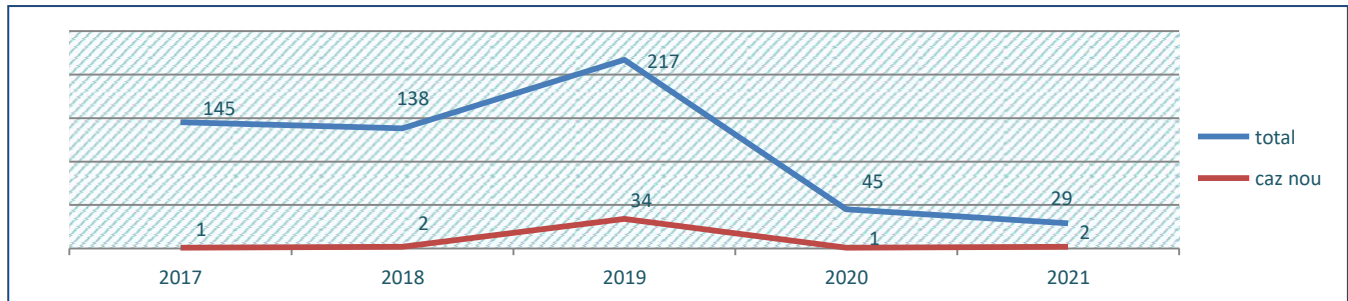


Chart: total

New case

The activity in this field is in accordance with the Regulation on the alcohol testing and medical examination for determining the state of intoxication and its nature, approved by GD no.296 of 16.04.2009, The examination of the prisoner suspected of drug consumption is done at the request of the representatives of the security, regime and supervision service addressed to the doctor of the medical service of the penitentiary institution. Due to the lack of paraclinical tests for the identification of drugs in biological fluids, the finding of intoxication can be made only on the basis of clinical signs without assessing its nature. In this respect, it is common to accompany the prisoner to civil narcological institutions to establish narcological intoxication. The offences set out in Article 217 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Moldova No 985/2002 belong to the category of "offences against public health and social life" and require a medical, rather than criminal, approach in the case of drug users. The number of those convicted under Article 217-219 CC in the period 2021 is 936 (404 cases in 2020) in total of which 405 new cases (136 cases in 2020).

Figure 34. Number of convicted cases, total and new, according to art.217-219 CP, 2019-2021, RM

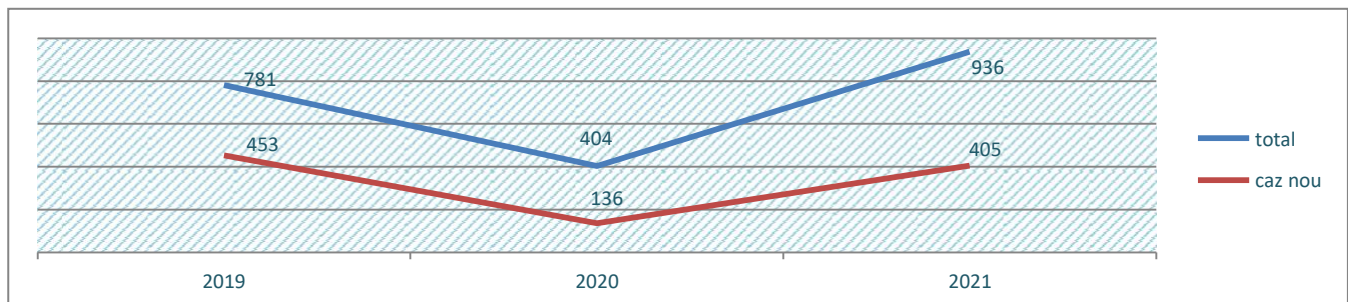


Chart : total

new case

During 2021, the services in the field carried out a number of interventions including: searches, investigation activities and prevention actions. Thus, 12107 searches were carried out, of which: planned 5176 and unannounced 6931. At the crossing and control points, as well as at the guard buildings of penitentiary institutions, regime measures were carried out, as a result of which civilians were detained, who tried to introduce prohibited objects and substances for use by convicts. Thus, the number of cases of illegal circulation of drugs (art.322 CP) in the reporting period registered 86 cases in total (42 cases in 2020) of which in the penitentiary 39 cases (22 cases in 2020) and through checkpoints 47 cases (20 cases in 2020). The number of cases of transmission or attempted transmission of prohibited substances (art.342, 345 CC) through the security building amounted to 77 cases (55 cases in 2020).

As a result of the regime measures carried out, narcotic substances in the amount of approximately 700 grams were detected and seized from the convicts, from hiding places and civilians. Of the 65 suspected cases of consumption on the territory of the prison, 7 cases were confirmed. In the context of medical assistance, the ANP medical service can provide detoxification

treatment in case of withdrawal syndrome. The severity of the withdrawal syndrome also determines where it is detoxification is offered (at the detention facility or with travel to the Republican Prison Hospital No. 16, Pruncul).

According to NAP data during 2021, 105 beneficiaries (94 men and 11 women) were included in pharmacotherapy, of which new cases 22 men and 2 women. The criteria for admission of drug-dependent inmates to OST are identical to those in the civilian sector. Since 2009, when leaving the penitentiary institutions, patients in pharmacotherapy receive a signed statement indicating the duration of participation in the programme, the daily dose and the date of administration of the last dose. With this statement, the patient is transferred for further pharmacotherapy in the civilian sector. In order to optimise and increase the efficiency of the process of preparation for release from detention, the Programme on the preparation of convicts for release from detention at the end of their term and conditional release before their term has been started. During 2021, 381 inmates participated in the Program on preparation for release of prisoners according to the end of term, and in the preparation for early conditional release - 1052 participants. The aim of the programme is to inform and teach convicts how to solve the problems they face after release from detention and to successfully reintegrate into society by demonstrating pro-social behaviour.

from 2021, the Social Skills Development Programme will be implemented in penitentiary institutions, which aims to develop the pro-social skills of persons deprived of their liberty by creating and enhancing assertive communication skills, empathic skills, interpersonal and conflict management skills, problem-solving skills for successful social inclusion after release.

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## STANDARDS

**The Standard for Psychosocial Assistance for Drug Users** provides for equity, continuity of care for drug users and is based on experience. The system of care for psychoactive substance users includes several components or areas of intervention, related to distinct stages of addiction, such as in emergencies or in need of immediate care, treatment and care of the addiction itself or social reintegration. In all cases, therapeutic interventions are carried out in a specific unit, operationally integrated with other units where general, specialised and specific interventions are carried out, possibly also with social or community services.

The national clinical protocol "**Mental and behavioural disorders related to opioid use**" contains methodological recommendations for health workers on substitution therapy with the aim of improving public health, abandoning intravenous drug use among young people, reducing the risk of viral hepatitis and HIV/AIDS among drug users, infection prophylaxis. For the operational integration of specific interventions is approved and reviewed every two years

" **The standard of harm reduction associated with injecting drug use and psychosocial assistance to drug users**" being a system of assistance that represents a combination of therapeutic interventions, in the form of content, covering the whole spectrum of services (centres, programmes, services, types of assistance...) available to the user of psychoactive substances in accordance with his/her needs and within a given period of time; as well as the totality of services offered subsequently during the evolution of the use disorder. Since 2007 on the whole territory of the Republic of Moldova the Voluntary Counselling and Testing Service for the whole population, including risk groups, started its activity, and in 2013 it was approved by the order of the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Moldova no.1162 of 18.10.2013 "On the approval of the Standard "HIV counselling and testing of vulnerable groups with the use of rapid tests in non-governmental organizations".

Purpose of the standard: to assist VCT (Voluntary Counselling and Testing Service) service providers in the development and expansion of VCT for populations at higher risk of infection by describing and defining the VCT algorithm, principles and requirements for these services.

**The standard for the organisation and operation of HIV prevention services in the setting of key populations, including young people in these groups**, hereinafter referred to as the organisation and operation standard, is a component ensuring the quality of a public health service provided and includes all the quality standards for the provision of public utility services established by normative acts.

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## ALTERNATIVES TO DETENTION FOR DRUG ADDICTS WHO HAVE COMMITTED CRIMES

Drug-related crime, through its social, economic, medical, cultural and political consequences, causes considerable damage not only to the interests of the state, but also to those of society and of many private individuals; it is an attack on the life and health of citizens and has a demoralising influence on people's conscience and behaviour.

The Criminal Code of the Republic of Moldova has a separate chapter entitled: "Offences against public health and social harmony", which designates articles providing for a fine, unpaid community service, imprisonment and deprivation of the right to hold certain positions or to exercise a certain activity for a term set by the court. Thus, the categories of offences contained in Articles 217-219 provide for the penalties described above according to the degree of seriousness determined by the court. Moldovan criminal procedure legislation provides for the possibility of applying a wide range of preventive measures as alternatives to detention in the case of serious and particularly serious offences, etc. Given the reluctance to apply non-custodial measures, further study of the cases is required, as well as the identification of solutions that would fully ensure the principle of investigating the suspect in conditions of freedom, especially in the case of certain categories of more vulnerable subjects. In order to facilitate the social reintegration of persons in conflict with the law, electronic monitoring has been introduced in the Republic of Moldova, being regulated by Law no.138 of 03.12.2015. Drug addicts who have committed crimes can be sent for compulsory detoxification treatment following a court decision. The State should develop a series of alternatives starting from the total reduction of the criminal penalty for drug use and the application of more contravention penalties or those that do not deprive the person of liberty, such as: unpaid community work, certain voluntary actions, house arrest, treatment and rehabilitation programs. The Moldovan organisations propose a different approach to the problem of drug use: 1. legislative change and 2. referral schemes involving the local police by informing them about the existence of rehabilitation services and giving them a choice. In practical terms, today the state pays far more for the incarceration of a drug user than it would for placing them in rehabilitation services.

An alternative proposed by civil society is an educational programme or a psycho-social assistance programme that responds to the needs of addicts and helps them to overcome their addiction and prevent further drug-related offences. Promo-Lex in collaboration with the Union for HIV Prevention and Harm Reduction (UORN) has developed a draft concept on the implementation of alternative measures to pre-trial detention and custodial sentences in drug-related cases.

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