

INTRODUCTION: NPS IN EUROPE



New psychoactive substances (NPS) have emerged at the start of this millennium, initially attracting a small number of drug enthusiasts. Around 2010 the rise of brick & mortar NPS stores accelerated the diffusion of these unscheduled drugs in several EU countries and, with 400 new drugs notified to the EMCDDA in 2014, their proliferation as well. Scheduling new substances reportedly resulted in decreases in their overall availability but seems to fuel a rapid cycling but endless supply of new drugs and may also have contributed to their diffusion into more vulnerable population segments. With the rapid uptake of internet technology and ecommerce, *iDrugs* (Internet-sourced drugs) will increasingly find new customers in and beyond Europe. Drug services and drug policy makers have been slow to adjust to the “changing landscape of intoxication.” With the critique of international drug policy peaking at last month’s UNGASS on international drugs, yesterday’s drug policies responses are unlikely to contribute to effective drug control in the 21st century and may actually impede implementation of effective evidence-based responses.

This thematic issue documents and explores the rise of NPS and internet sourced drugs in different subpopulations in Europe and the development of drug policy, monitoring and harm reduction interventions in response. The issue contains an EU-wide inventory of NPS epidemiology, a 5-country RAR study of NPS use among people who use drugs heavily, reports from transnational European research projects, several interesting studies from Czech researchers affiliated with Charles University, critical analysis and commentary.

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