

Drug related crime Austria Situation Report 2013



Situation and resulting tasks and main focuses

Austria's appearance in the field of drug crime is characterized by its geographical unchangeable conditions. It is an important drug transit country on the Balkan route and functions as logistical network for criminal groups based here. Depending on the type of drug these groups comprise various nationalities. Beside the steadily growing cannabis production new threat situations are occurring because of the so-called „New psychoactive substances“. Usually these illegal drugs are delivered by post from China straight to the consumers in Austria. But smuggling also happens through the countries Hungary and Slovakia. In connection with the Internet anonymous platforms of the “Darknet” increasingly develop to be important marketplaces for illegal drug trafficking. The international airport Vienna/Schwechat is still of high importance because it offers great smuggling potential due to the transit traffic.



Seizure

Drugs	Year		Black-market price in Euro	
	2012	2013	2012	2013
Cannabis kg	1.158,6	1.757,7	9.268.960	14.934.500
Heroin kg	222,1	80,2	13.326.540	4.800.000
Cocain kg	64,6	24,7	6.464.100	1.875.000
XTC Stück	8.998	5.768	89.980	34.608
Amphetamines kg	32,1	21,4	964.230	945.000

Foreigners

In 2013 there have been made 7.236 reports against foreigners due to criminal activities under the Narcotic Substances Act. This corresponds to an increase of 25,73 per cent compared to the year 2012. In comparison: The number of reports increased by 18,62 per cent.

Offender groups

Citizens of the countries Turkey, Germany, Serbia, Nigeria, Algeria, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Afghanistan, Morocco, Romania, Russian Federation, Croatia and Hungary are positioned in places 1 to 12 within the foreigner range of the Austrian drug crime statistics. Whereas black African offender groups are predominantly operating in the East of Austria, citizens from North Africa are acting primarily in Western Austria. Persian and Kosovar groups occur sporadically. Austrian citizens generally do not hold senior positions and are operating on lower levels on the execution of smuggling and trade orders. The production of cannabis products increases constantly, there also Austrian citizens hold senior positions.

Austria – in comparison with actual producer countries like Morocco – cannot be named as such. Due to the geographical location it is used as transit point for smuggling drugs into other European countries on the main smuggling routes. The nationalities represented in smuggler and dealer networks are different, depending on the type of illegal drugs. In most cases there can be identified a close link to the drug origin country and those countries which function as transit and depot countries.

Tasks and main focuses

A noticeable increase of reports represents a higher control density. Knowledge gained from the consequent combating of street crime is also used for structure investigations and their analysis. Based on these investigative approaches successful international investigations could be carried out.

Developments to be considered

Attention must be paid to the developments in the area of smuggling, trafficking and consumption of new psychoactive substances. With the introduction of the new-psychoactive-substances-law (NPSG) in January 2012 the production, trafficking, in- and export of new psychoactive substances, which do not refer to the Narcotic Drugs and the Psychotropic Substances Decree, got prohibited. In comparison to the reporting period 2012 there can be stated an increase of reports of 37.63 per cent.

The challenge lies in the elaboration of appropriate combating strategies, especially since the trade (order) primarily takes place on the internet and on specific platforms. The trade is carried out in complete anonymity, payment is realised with the aid of the virtual currency "Bitcoin".

Not only new psychoactive substances are traded on the internet and on its available illegal trading platforms. The virtual markets meanwhile offer drugs of all kinds, with the representational trading method a new phenomenon has occurred.

Concerning the international cooperation

The organized drug trafficking can only be combated through a vehement international cooperation of law enforcement agencies. Due to Austria's special role as transit country on the Balkan route it committed successfully in the field of multinational cooperation. This has been ensured by the usage of proven communication channels like Interpol, Europol, the network of the United States and the Austrian liaison officers. Beside of numerous bilateral alliances also cross-border drug project could be realized. The existence of the SELEC (Southeast European Law Enforcement Centre) installed in Bucharest/Romania appeared to be very useful.

In April 2013 the drug project "Drug Policing Balkan Advanced 2013-2014", funded by the European Commission, was launched already traditionally according to previous projects. The beginnings of this activity to combat cross-border drug crime, which has already become a project series under the leadership of the Austrian project management, lead back to the year 2006, when Austria held the EU Council Presidency. The project is realised in cooperation with the partner countries Germany and Croatia over a period of 16 months and ends in July 2014. The activities are based on joint investigations along the Balkan Route to combat the smuggling of drugs into the EU, particularly with regard to the smuggling of drug precursors and the confiscation of financial assets as a result of smuggling.

Key facts

27 member states (Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Germany, Denmark, Estonia, Spain, Finland, France, UK, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Latvia, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Sweden, Slovenia, Slovakia), 3 candidate countries (status: April 2013 – Croatia,

FYROM, Turkey); Western Balkan countries (Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, Serbia), as well as Switzerland, Ukraine, US, Europol, Eurojust, Interpol, EMCDDA, UNODC and EC.

Initiatives and projects of the “Notification office for drug precursors

In the reporting period 315 investigations have been processed, this amounts to an increase of 14,13 per cent. There were 4 reports according to section 32 (1), 4 reports according to section 32 (2) and 2 reports according to section 32 (3) Narcotic Drugs Act due to illegal handling of drug precursors. A total of 83 allegations were investigated which became known via the homepage BMI - “Notification office for drug precursors”.

In the reporting period 2013, 5 illicit drug laboratories in Austria could be localized with the help of the notification office for drug precursors. The aim was the production of methamphetamine (Crystal Meth). The drugs were mostly produced for private use of the laboratory operator, or rather to provide a limited customer base. An interesting finding was a mobile methamphetamine laboratory which was put into a trolley.

In terms of the project work a cooperation treaty between the Ministry of the Interior and the Federal Chamber of Economy Austria has been formalised in May 2013 applying to the topic range “monitoring drug precursors and explosives”. A joint information booklet regarding the subject area drug precursors along with suspicious criteria recommendations for actions for economic operators has been developed.

Further focal points of the Criminal Intelligence Service Office for Drug related crime

- Continuing improvement of the international cooperation (partnerships for security) and participation in international projects (also via Interpol and Europol)
- National and international collaboration with legal and custom authorities
- Strategic and operational crime analysis
- Targeted prevention measures
- Acceleration of the skimming of excess profits
- Improved strategies against money laundering
- Austrian-wide monitoring of trade with drug precursors and explosives by means of the “Notification office for drug precursors and explosives”