



# Drug-Related Crime Annual Report 2019

Reported violations, investigations and seizures

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Vienna, 2020



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## Foreword

Dear readers,

Drug-related crime not only affects a specific segment of the population. It has much bigger ramifications and can take the form of crimes committed by users to support their drug habit or accompanying crime such as theft by breaking and entering, robbery and violent offences. Moreover, drug traffickers illegally generate funds that eventually flow back into and distort the legal economy, thus affecting the public sector and citizens. If individual offenders or organised crime groups clash, innocent bystanders might get hurt or even killed. In order to protect the population from such dangers, it is imperative that the police tackle this type of crime with resolve and professionalism.

Criminal activities related to drugs are usually performed secretly, as offenders are keen on avoiding attention from the police. As in many other fields, the challenges faced by the police in regard to narcotic drugs keep evolving rapidly. Trade in illicit drugs on the internet and darknet, followed by postal delivery, requires different avenues of investigation and control. This calls for an increasing and internationally coordinated investigative work, which is implemented by Criminal Intelligence Service Austria in close cooperation with subordinate police and customs services. We would like to take this opportunity to thank all officers for their dedication.

This report for the year 2019 illustrates the efforts undertaken in the fight against drug-related crime. It is our declared goal to effectively combat drug-related crime and all its undesirable effects in Austria, be it through frequent and deterring checks, international operations and cooperations, or prevention projects for young people. Austrians can count on the police to continue taking strong action against this type of crime and protecting each and every citizen.

Yours sincerely,

Karl Nehammer  
Austrian Minister of the Interior

Gerhard Lang  
Interim Director of Criminal Intelligence Service Austria



Karl Nehammer, Austrian Minister of the Interior, and Gerhard Lang, Interim Director of Criminal Intelligence Service Austria

# 1 General



## General information

The first chapter offers a general overview of the compilation of the statistics, followed by a summary of the drug-related crime situation in Austria in 2019 and organisational explanations of the fight by law enforcement against this type of crime. The chapter closes with an outlook for 2020.

## Explanatory notes

Information included in this report is drawn from data published by the Austrian law enforcement services on punishable offences involving narcotic drugs as defined in the Narcotic Drugs Act (Suchtmittelgesetz – SMG) in the year under review. The statistics contained herein reflect the number of reported violations of the Narcotic Drugs Act. Data on the reported violations is stored in the database hosted by the Data Processing Centre of the Austrian Ministry of the Interior (BMI) and is prepared for publication by Criminal Intelligence Service Austria (BK). The statistical data must be carefully interpreted in the context of additional relevant information, because it reflects not only general trends in drug-related crime, but also the resources used to combat this crime.

As monthly and sometimes annual fluctuations in the number of reported violations are not uncommon, investigations may take months or even years and are recorded in the statistics only after completion. For this reason, it is worthwhile to consider trends not only in comparison to the previous year, but over several reporting years and against a backdrop of additional background information.

The narcotic drugs statistics compiled by the Austrian Ministry of the Interior underwent a major renewal in 2015. Until then, the drug statistics had been drawn up independently of Austria's Police-Recorded Crime Statistics (PKS). In 2015, the drug statistics were incorporated in the Police-Recorded Crime Statistics. This involved automatic quality control and led to an increase in data quality. In addition, it enabled the recording of additional parameters, which in turn made it possible to retrieve enhanced information from the statistics and achieved a more complete representation of the situation. It shows connections between criminal groups, drug types and local distribution. The terms "indictable offence" and "summary offence" are used as defined in section 17 of the Austrian Penal Code ("Strafgesetzbuch" or StGB). "Indictable offences" are intentional acts that are punishable by life imprisonment or terms of imprisonment exceeding three years. All other criminal acts are summary offences.

The present report is structured as follows: The first part consists of a summary of the situation in Austria and the outlook for the year 2020.

The second part consists of key data on drug-related crime in Austria in 2019. The third part contains a status report on the individual types of narcotic drugs. The fourth part outlines the situation in Austria's provinces. The report concludes with a glossary of crimes punishable under the Narcotic Drugs Act and the New Psychoactive Substances Act, as well as the most common illicit drugs in Austria and their effects.

Use of the data (complete or partial) is only permitted if the source Police-Recorded Crime Statistics (PKS) is quoted.

## Summary

Austria serves as a point of consumption, transit and trade of narcotic drugs and as base for various criminal groups and distribution networks. There are five main factors that influence these criminal activities:

- Austria's proximity to the Balkan route, which is used to smuggle heroin and opiate products from Afghanistan to Europe. Conversely, drug precursors are smuggled along the Balkan route from Europe to Central Asia.
- Vienna International Airport is particularly used for trafficking cocaine from South American countries to Austria.
- Synthetic drugs produced in European countries
- Production of cannabis products in Austria
- Illicit drugs and new psychoactive substances that are increasingly offered on the internet or darknet and are then sent to Austria by post.

## Austrian law enforcement's fight against drug-related crime

In addition to their wide range of tasks, all law enforcement officers in Austria are also in charge of combating drug-related crime. 670 law enforcement officers are specially designated to deal with such offences, which are addressed on three levels: drug investigation teams at District and City Commands of the Federal Police, and on a provincial level the Drug Crime Investigation Departments at the Provincial CIDs. The central authority in Austria for investigating drug-related crime is the Sub-Department for Drug-Related Crime at Criminal Intelligence Service Austria.

The conjunction of these organisational units and levels form the foundation of Austrian law enforcement's fight against drug-related crime. Close national and international co-operation across ministries and agencies such as the customs administration reinforces this network and makes drug control even more efficient. Law enforcement officers in

the field of drug control account for only about 2% of the entire police force, but deal with about 9% of overall crimes.

## Outlook

Due to its geographical location on the Balkan route, Austria has an important role in the fight against international organised drug-related crime. As a transit country and marketplace for illicit addictive substances and as a base of operation for various multi-national criminal groups, Austria is constantly facing the challenge of effectively combating drug-related crime. Trade in illicit drugs on the internet and darknet is booming. This means that illicit drugs are bought on the internet or darknet, and are then sent as letters or parcels. This kind of drug trafficking must be tackled with the help of the multi-agency principle and interdisciplinary cooperation.

Aside from said acquisition channels, illicit drugs continue to be smuggled via traditional pathways such as the Balkan route or Vienna International Airport. Drug dealing on the streets requires special attention, as this method of distribution directly impacts the population's sense of security. It should also be noted that the situation with regard to foreign suspects presents a challenge, as they account for a very large percentage, especially in serious drug-related offences.

# 2 Overview

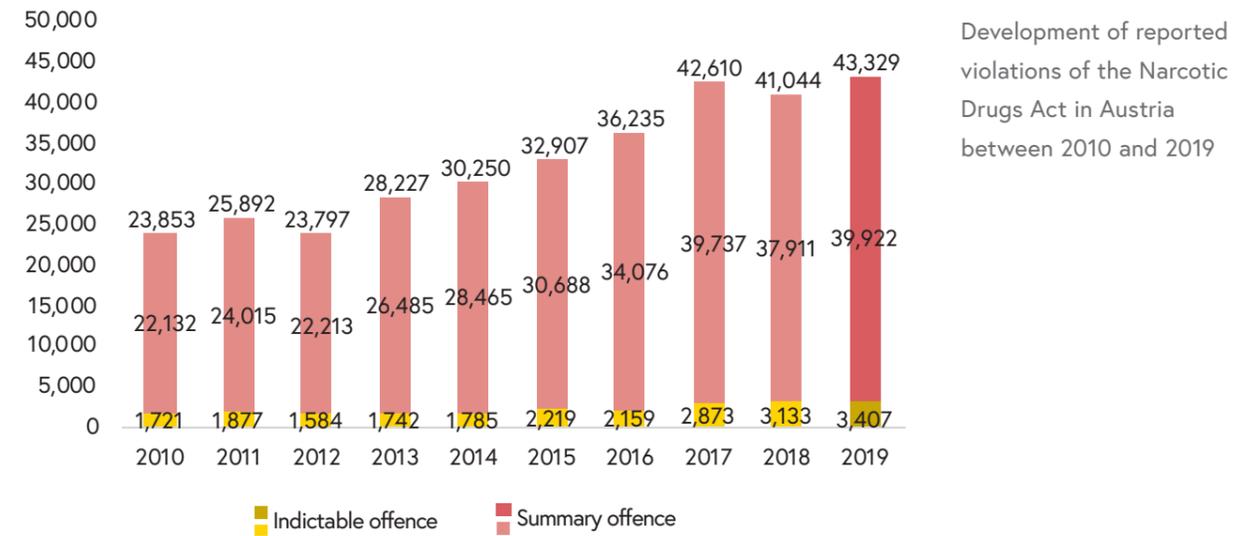


## Key data

The following section compares drug-related crime in 2019 to previous years, highlighting the development of these offences.

## Reported violations of the Narcotic Drugs Act

In 2019, the number of reported violations of the Narcotic Drugs Act rose by 5.6% from 41,044 to 43,329 and thus reached a new all-time high. This is in part owing to targeted campaigns as well as the rise in online drug trade and the concomitant interception of drugs parcels.



## Seized illicit drugs

In 2019, Austrian law enforcement seized about 95 kg of heroin, 87 kg of cocaine, 1,368 kg of cannabis products, 78,000 ecstasy tablets, 122 kg of amphetamine, 30 kg of methamphetamine and 272 kg of khat. The seizures show that cannabis products still dominate the illicit drugs market and were found on about 61% of individuals suspected of drug-related crime. Synthetic drugs, coming in at more than 150 kg, formed the second-largest category.

Table: Seizures of drugs between 2015 and 2019

Narcotic Drugs	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Cannabis	1,138,794.9 g	1,082,776.6 g	1,659,199.3 g	1,499,633.5 g	1,367,866.2 g
Heroin	69,534.7 g	68,916.1 g	69,950.0 g	76,362.4 g	94,644.1 g
Cocaine	119,675.3 g	86,449.2 g	71,425.0 g	74,990.5 g	87,119.9 g
Ecstasy	10,149.0 Stk	29,485.1 Stk	446,465.0 Stk	83,037.0 Stk	77,922.0 Stk
Amphetamine	66,657.5 g	87,649.4 g	50,268.0 g	76,770.7 g	122,214.2 g
Methamphetamine	2,944.0 g	4,800.4 g	5,036.4 g	8,000.0 g	30,197.6 g
Khat		451,301.2 g	633,456.4 g	533,992.2 g	272,205.7 g

Note that the amount of narcotic drugs seized in a reporting year is strongly influenced by large seizures. Therefore, the year-on-year comparison of seized drug quantities by itself is not a suitable parameter for judging the development of drug-related crime.

## Prices on the black market

In 2019, the average wholesale price per kilogram was EUR 3,600 for cannabis (herbal cannabis and cannabis resin), EUR 30,000 for heroin, EUR 48,000 for cocaine, EUR 10,000 for amphetamine and EUR 30,000 for methamphetamine. 1,000 ecstasy (MDMA) tablets sold for about EUR 6,500.

Going by the drugs seized in 2019, the following average street prices in Austria were calculated: The prices only serve to illustrate the money involved in drug trafficking, but may vary depending on region and quality.

Table: Black market value of seized drugs in 2019

Narcotic Drugs	2019
Cannabis	12,994,729 Euro
Heroin	4,495,595 Euro
Cocaine	7,187,392 Euro
Ecstasy	1,207,791 Euro
Amphetamine	2,902,587 Euro
Methamphetamine	1,943,971 Euro

## Quality of the illicit drugs

The following table shows the development of the quality of the seized and forensically examined illicit drugs over the past ten years, based on medians. Despite the wide variation, an increase was noticed in the quality of many types of drugs, especially synthetic drugs.

Suchtmittel	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Herbal cannabis /marihuana	9.8%	10.7%	9.6%	8.8%	7.0%
Cannabis resin/ hashish	15.2%	15.1%	13.2%	15.3%	16.5%
Heroin	13.7%	13.7%	15.0%	15.8%	17.7%
Cocaine	33.4%	45.9%	51.4%	53.2%	51.9%
Ecstasy/MDMA	48.7%	47.7%	38.3%	47.8%	41.5%
Amphetamine	18.5%	14.5%	13.8%	12.4%	19.8%
Methamphetamine	51.5%	58.7%	57.2%	49.9%	59.4%

Table: Drug purity in percent

## Suspects

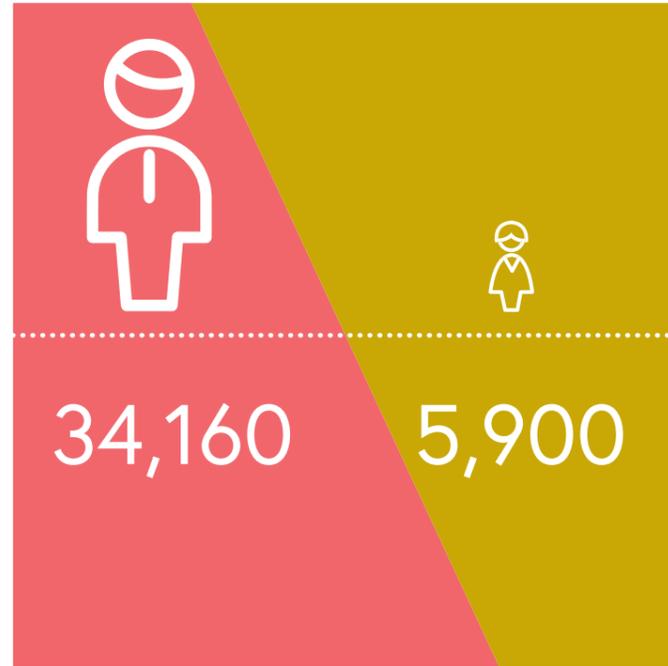
### Suspects broken down by age groups and gender

The 18- to 39-year-old age group and persons older than 40 years showed a significant increase in reported drug-related offences in 2019. The 25- to 39-year-old demographic accounted for most reported violations, standing at 14,883 violations or about 34% of total violations. Persons in the 18- to 20-year-old bracket saw a decline of 6% compared to the previous year.

Age groups	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Change from the previous year
Under 18 years of age	4,270	5,226	5,779	5,897	5,901	0.1 %
18-20	6,610	7,426	8,989	8,154	7,667	-6.0 %
21-24	6,253	6,847	8,061	7,462	7,519	0.8 %
25-39	11,167	11,462	13,817	13,019	14,883	14.3 %
40+	2,506	2,495	3,008	3,256	4,090	25.6 %
U.T.	2,101	2,779	2,956	3,256	3,269	0.4 %

Table: Distribution of reported violations according to age groups between 2015 and 2019 expressed in absolute figures and changes in percents

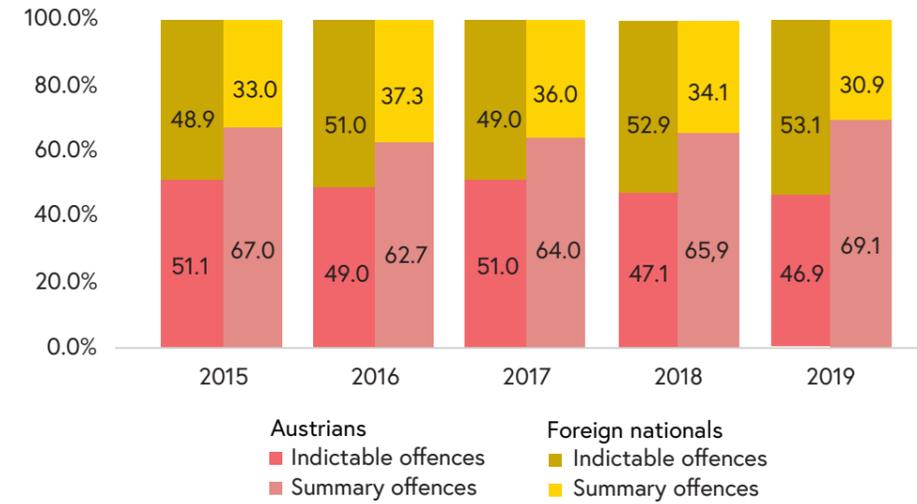
Distribution of reported violations according to gender in 2019



No significant changes were observed year-over-year in the gender ratio. Men (85%) continued to be reported much more frequently than women (15%) in 2019. The ratio in 2018 was 87% to 13%.

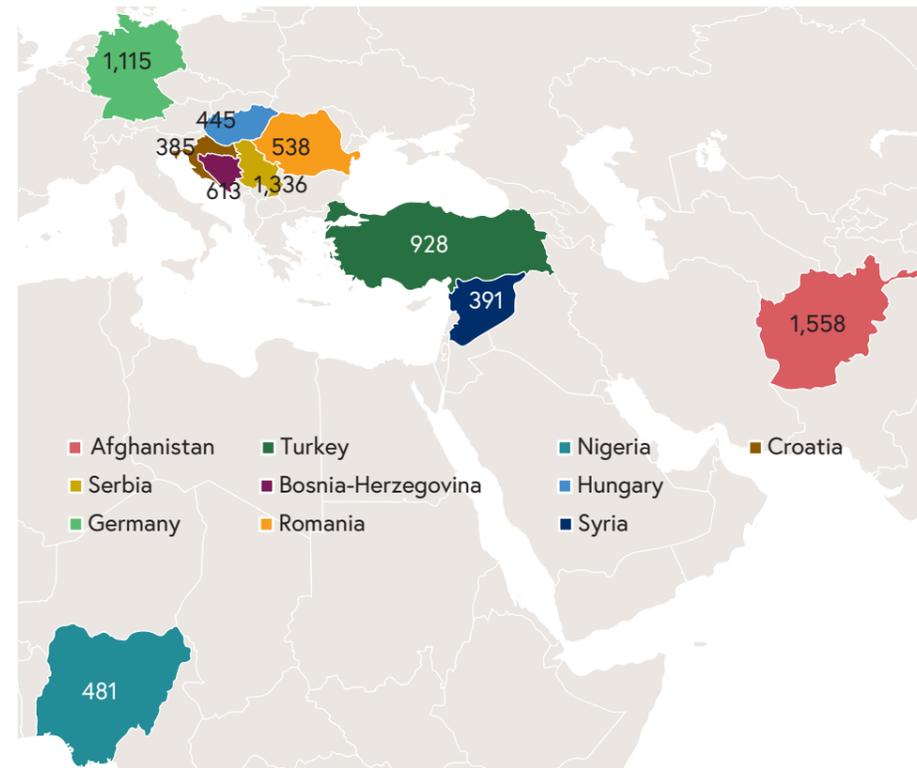
### Domestic and foreign suspects

In 2019, a total of 27,008 reports were filed against domestic suspects and 13,052 reports against foreign suspects for punishable offences that fall under the Narcotic Drugs Act. Following a steady decline between 2010 and 2017, the number of domestic suspects started climbing again in the years 2018 and 2019 to reach a portion of 67.4%. During the same period, the percentage of foreign suspects of both indictable and summary offences dropped to 32.6% in 2019. In the category of total reported indictable drug-related offences, the percentage of foreign suspects rose slightly in 2019 to reach a high of 53.1%. By contrast, the portion of domestic suspects of summary offences rose to 69.1% in 2019.



Distribution of indictable and summary offences committed by domestic and foreign suspects between 2010 and 2019

Foreign nationals from Afghanistan and Serbia were the most frequently reported for drug violations, followed by nationals from Germany, Turkey, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Romania, Nigeria, Hungary, Syria and Croatia. It should be noted that the number of reported violations filed against Nigerian nationals plummeted from previous years, putting Nigeria in seventh place. Serbia still leads in the number of indictable drug offences.



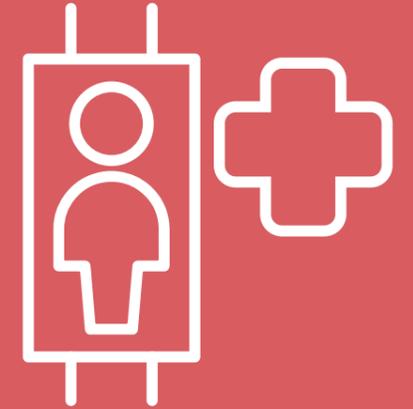
Number of suspects identified in 2019 according to countries of origin

## Composition of criminal groups

As in previous years, the nationalities of members of smuggling and trafficking networks as well as the types of narcotic drugs remained unchanged in 2019. In most cases, these criminals had ties to countries in which the drugs were produced, stored or transported.

Many criminal groups hail from countries situated along the Balkan route, especially Bosnia, North Macedonia, Serbia and Turkey. Austrian nationals took the top spot in terms of herbal cannabis production. Online platforms continue to see a rise in illegal drug trafficking. Law enforcement is also faced with the challenge of the darknet, virtual currencies and drugs sent through parcel delivery services.

# 3 Drug victims



## Drug-related deaths

In the wake of drug-related crime, drug abuse itself causes casualties each year. The Austrian Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection (BMSGPK) provides an overview of the latest case numbers in Austria for the years 2009 through 2018. Drug-related deaths increased to 184 in 2018 from 154 a year earlier.

Deaths directly related to drugs in the years 2014 through 2018, listed for each province (source: GÖG/ÖBIG, DRD Evaluation 2019, Statistics of the Austrian Population)

Provinces	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Burgenland	2	3	3	3	2
Carinthia	5	9	11	13	24
Lower Austria	9	21	15	15	22
Upper Austria	6	8	16	19	11
Salzburg	4	2	5	8	4
Styria	11	9	13	15	13
Tyrol	12	14	24	11	24
Vorarlberg	8	15	11	6	5
Vienna	65	72	67	64	79
n/a	0	0	0	0	0
Austria	122	153	165	154	184

# 4

## Law enforcement action



## Activities and priorities of the police

Narcotic drug offences only come to light when the police conduct investigations and checks. This means that an increased number of checks is reflected in a higher number of reported violations. Investigations on the darknet are constantly rising and provide a basis for structured investigations and analysis, which in turn lead to avenues of investigations for national and international investigations. Ever since 2015, migration flows have had an impact on reported violations of the Narcotic Drugs Act.

## International cooperation and projects

Intense international cooperation is required for decisively confronting organised cross-border drug-related crime. Austria's location alongside the main drug-trafficking route, the Balkan route, as well as the misuse of Vienna International Airport as drug-dealing hub require Austrian law enforcement to adopt special measures and show dedicated commitment. International cooperation relies on tried-and-tested communication channels such as Interpol, Europol, Eurojust, the United Nations network and Austrian liaison officers accredited to foreign countries and foreign liaison officers accredited to Austria.

Projects co-financed by the European Union provide valuable assistance in the fight against crime. With these projects, it is possible to test and implement necessary tactical measures as well as to create new critical infrastructure and police information networks.

## The Western Balkans and the darknet

Austria achieved strong results with lasting effects thanks to the project series "Drug Policing Balkan" and the project "Joint investigation to combat drug trafficking via the virtual market darknet within and also into the EU". Suppression strategies in the Balkans were strengthened, and at the same time tactical measures in the area of the internet and darknet were implemented. The ISF-P National Project "Drug Policing - Focus on the Western Balkans and darknet", which started in July 2017, uses the knowledge and networks gained in the previous projects to combat the development of crime in both areas. This project particularly aims to effectively support operational investigations. The support offered by the project benefited operations that ultimately led to hundreds of arrests, seizures of large amounts of drugs and cash, and criminal convictions at home and abroad. The reporting year 2019 successfully concluded the project.

## Project "Combating suspects dealing in drugs on the internet – prosecution and prevention"

In February 2019, the Sub-Department Drug-Related Crime at Criminal Intelligence Service Austria together with its partner, the Narcotic Drugs Department at the Bavarian State Criminal Police Office, launched the project "Combating suspects dealing in drugs on the internet – prosecution and prevention (CSI-PP)", which is co-funded by the European Commission and runs through 2021. The project was submitted and eventually implemented because postal drug deliveries were soaring, existing methods of detection seemed insufficient, legal challenges appeared and drug buyers lacked awareness of the unlawfulness of such acts. The ambition of this project is to focus on forensics in drugs trafficking and combine forensics with operational measures. It is also designed to try out new methods of investigations and test their suitability for everyday use. Other organisations such as the Innsbruck Department for Forensic Medicine, the Forensics Department of Criminal Intelligence Service Austria and of the Bavarian State Criminal Police Office, as well as customs administration are deeply involved, too. Prevention and networking between national and international organisations form another pillar of the project.

## Drug trafficking via darknet and postal services

Large parts of the internet are not accessible to conventional search engines. The so-called deep web is a part of the World Wide Web consisting of corporate networks, databases of libraries, universities and research facilities. Websites on the deep web can be accessed with a standard internet browser. However, most sites require a login. The deep web is the larger part of the internet. The darknet is an area of the internet that cannot be accessed with conventional browsers. In order to access the darknet, you need special browsers such as the Tor Browser. Data on the darknet is encrypted and transmitted anonymously between various servers, leaving no trace. Darknet addresses are alphanumeric, i.e. they consist of combinations of numbers and letters. Information transmitted on the darknet is decrypted into plain text on the receiving end. The darknet was originally designed for journalists and organisations threatened by censorship. It fell into disrepute, as it was also used as a platform for illegal arms and drug trafficking, hacking services and other criminal activities.

Online trade in prohibited substances has gone from being a trend to becoming a common way of committing drug-related crime in Austria. Both individual offenders and criminal organisations use darknet marketplaces to carry out organised drug trafficking and generate illegal profits. Everything is processed through encrypted networks, starting from establishing contacts to negotiating sales and effecting payment. In the physical world, drug users continue to commit acquisitive crimes to feed their habit. Investigations

show that the online drug trade has not yet displaced street-level distribution. Rather, the trade on online platforms is used to acquire illicit narcotic drugs of higher quality and to sell them in the streets at a profit. Thus, internet trade complements classic street-level trade. However, illicit substances of poor quality are also offered for sale, such as amphetamine paste, which is largely made up of solvents and waste products generated in the production of speed.

The following figures show the extent to which Austria is affected by the online drugs trade. Since September 2016, German customs officials have been making high-impact checks of outgoing post at the postal sorting centre Frankfurt am Main. So far, the customs investigation office Zollfahndungsamt Frankfurt am Main has seized about 13,200 letters and parcels that contained a total of about 1,200 kg of narcotic drugs. These letters and parcels were addressed to recipients in more than 90 nations. In terms of number of recipients, Austria takes second place behind the U.S. since checks began, and is trailed by destinations such as the UK, France and Australia. In the first half of 2019, Austria even topped this ranking. The letters and parcels destined for Austria contained a total of about 163 kg of drugs, mainly synthetic drugs such as amphetamines. The Netherlands have been identified as a source of many of these letters and parcels.

As part of joint checks, the police and customs administration in Austria seize drugs parcels on a regular basis. In the period of January 2016 to late 2019, about 9,100 letters and parcels were seized that contained a total of about 232 kg as well as 67,300 tablets of drugs. Follow-up investigations established that the drugs in the intercepted parcels had exclusively been ordered on darknet marketplaces. About 75% of parcels seized in Austria had been sent from the Netherlands.

The growing danger of the online trade is reflected by the mailing of designer drugs such as carfentanyl.

Such substances can cause considerable damage to health or even death, even if they are merely inhaled or come into contact with the skin. This not only exposes investigators to great danger, but any people involved in postal services.

### **Intelligence unit for drug and explosive precursors**

This section looks into the precursors for producing illicit drugs and explosives, followed by an outline of the national point of contact at Criminal Intelligence Service Austria and its activities.

### **Drug precursors**

Certain chemicals are misused by criminal networks for manufacturing narcotic drugs, for example synthetic drugs such as ecstasy. The chemicals themselves and their processing present a danger to the public. In order to prevent the diversion of such chemicals from legal channels for illicit manufacturing of drugs and explosives, Criminal Intelligence Service Austria on 1 December 2018 set up the Precursor Competence Centre. Businesses are legally required to report any suspicion to this unit that chemicals might have been diverted for illegal drug manufacturing. Private individuals may also report such observations

### **Explosives precursors**

Another focus of the Precursor Competence Centre is the monitoring of the trade in explosives precursors. Easily accessible chemical precursors can be used to build improvised explosives for terrorist attacks. Reports by businesses are checked for any criminal relevance and, where applicable, may then be referred to the Austrian Agency for State Protection and Counter Terrorism. In 2019, criminal investigations focused on raising awareness among businesses and their umbrella associations

### **Suspicious substances reports, sales history checks and tip-offs**

In 2019 the Precursor Competence Centre received 18 reports of chemicals and substances that were suspected of being used in drug manufacturing. In addition, the Centre analysed 203 sales histories and received 108 general tip-offs concerning possible drug offences.

### **Contact:**

Criminal Intelligence Service Austria (BK)  
Precursor Competence Centre  
Josef-Holaubek-Platz 1  
1090 Vienna  
Austria  
Fax: +43-(0)1-24836-951223  
Email: precursor@bmi.gv.at

# 5 Survey of the drug market



## Organised illegal drug trafficking

The following is an overview of what the situation of organised trafficking in illicit substances looks like in Austria

### Heroin

Opiates and opioids are heavily addictive painkillers and recreational drugs. While opiates in the strict sense of the term are psychoactive substances containing opium or opium alkaloid – especially morphine –, opioids comprise all substances that have an effect similar to morphine. The most well-known semi-synthetic opioid is heroin.

By international standards, most European countries recorded a small decline in opiate-related drug supply offences, but the numbers in Austria went up slightly from 2018. Opium accounts for only a very small part of the opiate problem, as its consumption is mostly limited to ethnic groups such as people of Iranian or Afghan origin. Opium was almost exclusively consumed in these highly traditional communities. A much wider problem were synthetic opioids, particularly fentanyl derivatives, which spread in the U.S. and Canada like an epidemic. Heroin and morphine continued to be among the most common illegal substances identified in drug-related deaths in Austria.

In the European drug market, heroin is still the most prevalent opioid. Its cultivation area hit a new high in 2017, with an estimated 418,000 hectares. Despite a drop in the cultivation area to 346,000 in 2018, supposedly owing to a period of extreme drought, the global area under opium poppy cultivation was up more than 60% from ten years earlier, according to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). Moreover, opium production in Myanmar, the world's second-largest opium producer, dipped to 520 tonnes in 2018 from 550 tonnes in 2017, perpetuating the recent decline of 20% since 2015. This is probably owing to lower demand for opiates from Myanmar, as opium was produced on a massive scale in Afghanistan in 2017 and the consumption of synthetic drugs shifted to drug markets in East and South East Asia.

Austria is situated along the main heroin smuggling route, the Balkan route, which runs from Turkey via Bulgaria, Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia and Austria to Western Europe.

As a result, there was no interruption in the supply of heroin and opiate products. The Balkan route, starting from Afghanistan via Iran and Turkey to Western Europe, is still considered the most important corridor in the world for trafficking opiates. UNODC estimates that approximately 47% of worldwide heroin and morphine seizures were made in countries along the Balkan route. The largest quantities of heroin across the smuggling route were seized in Pakistan, Iran and Turkey.

A large proportion of the suspects arrested in Austria were linked to international organised crime networks. Their well-structured and hierarchies have meanwhile been adopted by nearly all criminal organisations, regardless of whether they are multicultural or multinational or made up of nationals of only a single country.

There were no indications that “offline” heroin traffic shifted to online channels; rather, drugs supplied on darknet platforms were added to traditional drug trafficking. The majority of illegal products was supplied on websites that can only be accessed by Tor hidden services, and thus require a Tor browser.

## Cocaine

Cocaine was the second most commonly used illicit drug in Europe. Colombia was the world’s largest producer of cocaine, accounting for about 70% of global supply, followed by Peru and Bolivia. Cocaine is extracted from the leaves of the coca bush. In 2019, too, cocaine production ran at peak levels. The latest data in the European Drug Report 2019 show that both the number of seizures and seized drug quantities in Europe hit record highs. Increased availability of the drug is also suggested by the highest estimates of cocaine purity at retail level in a decade.

UNODC’s World Drug Report 2019 estimates global cocaine production in 2017 at an all-time high of 1,976 tonnes, up 25% from the year prior.

Drugs were transported to Europe mainly by sea and air. The classic smuggling routes led to North America. Cocaine was not only trafficked to Europe from producing countries, but also via Brazil, Costa Rica, Panama and often through African countries.

Most of the smuggled drugs were transported by sea and mostly in containers, and increasingly by ocean-going sailing vessels and private jets.

In Austria, cocaine smugglers mainly used Vienna International Airport and occasionally some smaller international airports. The still most frequent method of smuggling was body packing, in which persons swallow drug-filled packets or hide drugs in secret compartments of suitcases. To meet Austrian demand for cocaine, smugglers in Europe also travelled by rail and by coach. The average quantity of cocaine carried by travelling smugglers ranged between 0.3 and 1 kg. The composition of criminal groups operating in Austria varied from region to region. In the southern parts of the country, an increasing number of West African drug dealers came to the notice of authorities, in addition to organised groups from the Balkans, whereas in eastern Austria, mainly groups from West Africa and the Western Balkans were active. Groups from the Caribbean and Central America extended their influence in the centre of the country.

Occasionally, domestic dealers surfaced who arranged cocaine purchases in Spain or in the Netherlands and sold it for a profit in Austria. As in the previous year, the average purchase price for one gram ranged between EUR 50 and EUR 120. The quality sold on the streets was considerably inferior to the quality in the production countries. Cocaine, too, was increasingly trafficked via the internet and the darknet.

## Cannabis

Products made from the cannabis sativa plant were the most frequently consumed, distributed, produced and imported narcotic drugs in Austria, as in previous years. The preferred drug preparations from cannabis were dried flower buds, called marijuana, and the resin obtained from the flowering tops of the female cannabis plant, called hashish. While herbal cannabis or marijuana was increasingly produced in Austria, nearly all of the cannabis resin or hashish was imported. Austria continued to play an important role as transit country for the smuggling of cannabis products.

### Herbal cannabis (marijuana)

Domestically produced marijuana was mainly grown in indoor farms. For personal use it was cultivated in so-called grow boxes. These are freely available turnkey systems which are sold for a few hundred euros in hemp shops and on the internet.

Trade in this equipment is legal. However, the sale of cannabis seedlings and cannabis cuttings presents a problem. These products are offered in the open, even though the mature plants may contain high concentrations of THC. Grow boxes as well as small and large facilities cultivating up to 500 plants were predominately run by domestic suspects, but also foreign suspects. By contrast, facilities growing more than 500 plants were mainly operated by groups from Serbia. As in previous years, most of the marijuana imported to Austria in 2019 originated in Albania, the main cultivation area in Europe. Herbal cannabis produced in Albania was smuggled along the Balkan route or by sea via Italy. Albanian perpetrators set up caches in Italy, the Czech Republic, Germany and in Eastern European countries along the Balkan route and used them to export the marijuana to Central and Northern Europe. Marijuana continued to be imported by groups of various ethnicity and by domestic criminals directly from producers (e.g. large-scale indoor farms run by Vietnamese groups) and traffickers from the Netherlands, Belgium, Switzerland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary, both for personal use and sale.

### Cannabis resin (hashish)

Cannabis resin was almost exclusively smuggled from Morocco. The most popular smuggling routes from Morocco to Austria were Spain - France - Switzerland, Spain - France - Germany and Spain - Italy. No sizeable quantities of cannabis smuggled by air were

detected in 2019. Small amounts of cannabis resin were produced in Austria, especially for personal use, from buds of cannabis grown indoors.

### **Distribution, trade and consumption of cannabis products**

Apart from Austrian suspects, groups from the Maghreb countries, particularly Moroccan and Algerian offenders, as well as West African groups dominated the market. Groups of Afghan asylum seekers established themselves in the field of cannabis trafficking. Offenders from Germany, Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Turkey and Macedonia were also active in the distribution of cannabis products. Prices varied depending on purity and quantity. Wholesale prices stood at about EUR 4 per gram, while street prices ranged up to EUR 15. Regarding cannabis consumption, there were no significant socio-demographic variations. Cannabis was used across all age groups and social strata, and some people were not even aware of their wrongdoing.

## **Synthetic Drugs**

The majority of synthetic drugs seized in Austria had been illegally manufactured in the Schengen area. Production was no longer limited to established producing countries in the Schengen area, but included previously non-producing countries in the Schengen area. In a trend detected in 2019, overseas producing countries kept trying to expand their market into Europe via certain channels. The drugs were smuggled into Austria on road vehicles, trains and coaches. Depending on the distance to the country of origin, the drugs were either trafficked in smaller quantities but in more smuggling runs from neighbouring countries, in a bid to minimise the risk of interception by police; or, in the case of remote production countries and for better profitability, drugs were transported in large batches to Austria. The smuggling runs were carried out by persons of various nationalities or with ties to producing countries or to Austria.

The trend identified in 2018 to send drugs in letters and parcels continues. As in previous years, police completed numerous seizures in 2019. Austria remained an inconspicuous transit country for smuggling synthetic drugs into countries outside the Schengen Area, especially overseas. Large-scale smuggling mainly occurred in air travel and road transport.

## **Amphetamine, MDMA and Ecstasy**

Most amphetamine seized in Austria had been illegally produced in the Netherlands and in Poland. Amphetamine was traded as a powder, paste and in some cases as tablets on the Austrian market. Methylenedioxymethamphetamine was available on the Austrian market as pure powder or as active ingredient in ecstasy tablets. Ecstasy tablets offered

in Austria still contained a high amount of the active ingredient, potentially leading to death by overdose.

A rise in products sold as ecstasy tablets was observed, which contained new psychoactive substances (NPS) rather than MDMA. Depending on the NPS, this involved a higher health risk for consumers, as they lacked information about the substances and had no long-term experience with the drug's effect on the human body, its mechanism of action or dosage.

## **Methamphetamine**

Methamphetamine supplied to the Austrian market was not only produced in the Czech Republic and Slovakia, but also in other Schengen countries. Some of the production moved to Poland, the Netherlands and Hungary, which ensured the supply in Europe.

Methamphetamine mailed from Mexico to Austria continued to be intercepted. Up until a few years ago, methamphetamine was only available in areas close to the Czech and Slovak border, but has meanwhile reached the scene in all Austrian provinces. The methamphetamine seized continued to be of high quality, with a purity of 70% to 80%, and in some cases even higher. Due to the addictiveness of methamphetamine, its supply is expected to keep growing.

## **Psychotropic Drugs**

The availability of psychotropic drugs among drug users in Austria remained unchanged from 2018. Tablets and blotters containing benzodiazepines, which are analogous NPS, were seized in Austria. They were mostly ordered from online shops on the darknet or internet.

## **New Psychoactive Substances (NPS)**

Austria and the European market continued to see a rise in substances classed as NPS. NPS were available whose effect mimicked that of all conventional drugs, but produced a weaker or stronger response in the human body. Most of the NPS seized in Austria fell under the category of cannabinoids, opiates, tryptamines and ketamines. The seizures of synthetic cannabinoids increased significantly in 2019. The drugs were seized in their pure form as powder and processed into products such as herbal mixtures and tablets.

A growing number of the seized drugs were advertised as conventional drugs or NPS, but turned out to be mixtures of drugs and one or several NPS. This lack of information about the possible different effects put consumers' health significantly at risk.

At the moment, nearly 800 types of NPS are known worldwide, which were reported to have been seized by police, customs and health authorities. Most of the NPS seized in Europe still originated in China, even though the country had been trying to curb the production of NPS with legislation for quite a while. At the same time, there were indications about a fledgling illegal production of precursors in Europe. The final production of such drugs ready to be sold in the Schengen Area had already been completed. This came at a time of inconsistent regulations concerning the legality of NPS across Europe.

The substances were offered on specialised darknet sites run by operators in Europe. The drugs were delivered by postal and parcel services. After Austria amended its New Psychoactive Substances Act in 2016, a sizeable number of fresh NPS cropped up that were not subject to any legislation. The constant new development or modification of such substances made it possible to evade government regulations. However, the June 2019 Regulation on Narcotic Drugs added a large number of NPS to the Narcotic Drugs Act listing.

### Production of illicit drugs in Austria

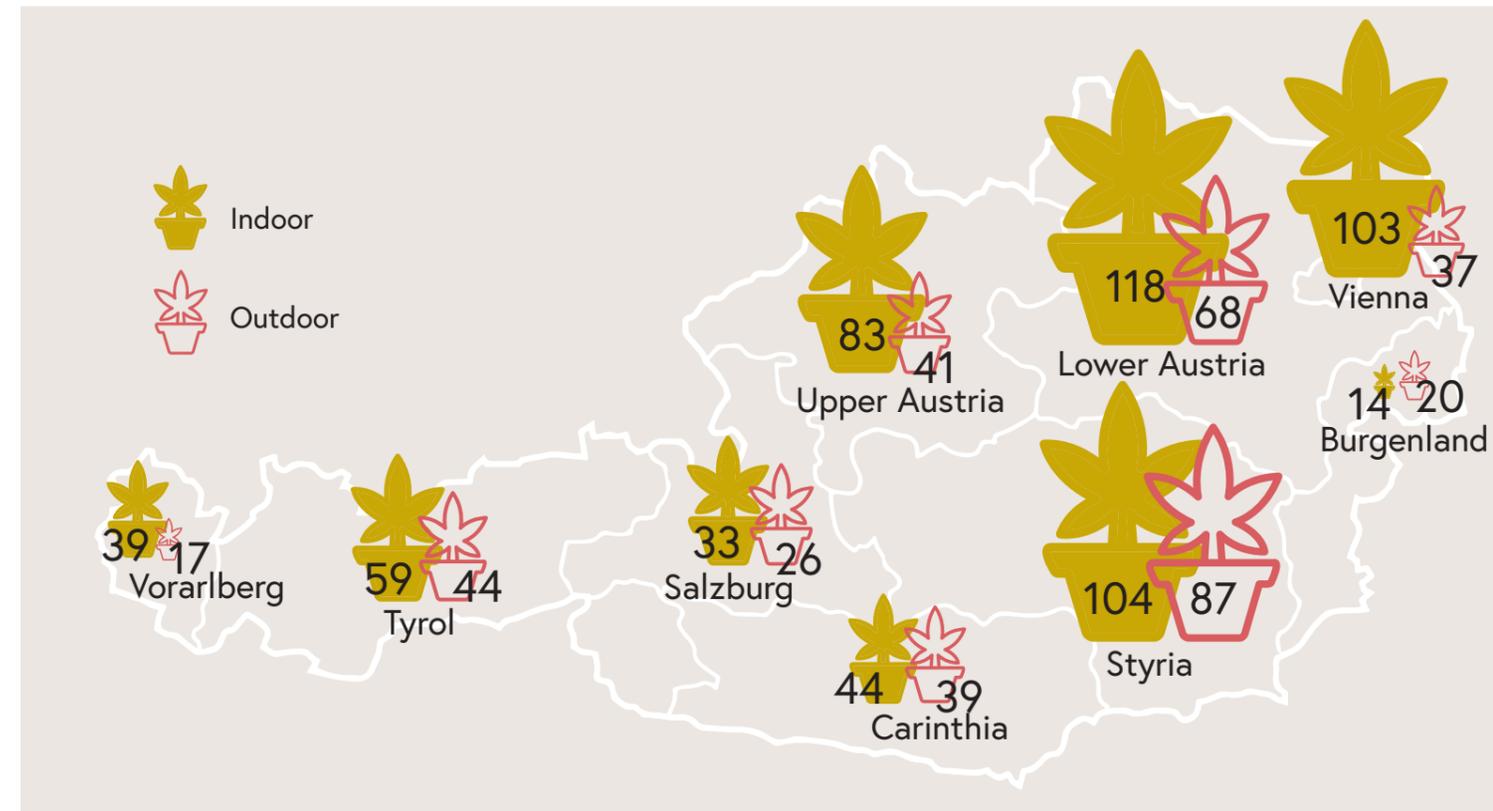
#### Illicit drug laboratories

In 2019, a total of four narcotic drug labs were detected in Austria: one in Styria, one in Upper Austria and two in Vienna. The predominant goal of the uncovered labs was to synthesise methamphetamine and amphetamine. Additionally, home-made explosives were found in one such laboratory. Most of the drugs produced in a lab were used to feed the producer's own addiction, and in some cases were supplied to a regional group of buyers. Most lab operators were Austrian citizens, except for one person. The chemicals were purchased in Austria, sometimes in neighbouring countries or on the internet or darknet.

### Cannabis farms

In 2019, too, cannabis products dominated the illicit drug market in Austria and the number of discovered cannabis farms rose to 976 from 887 in 2018.

Number of cannabis farms discovered in Austria in 2019

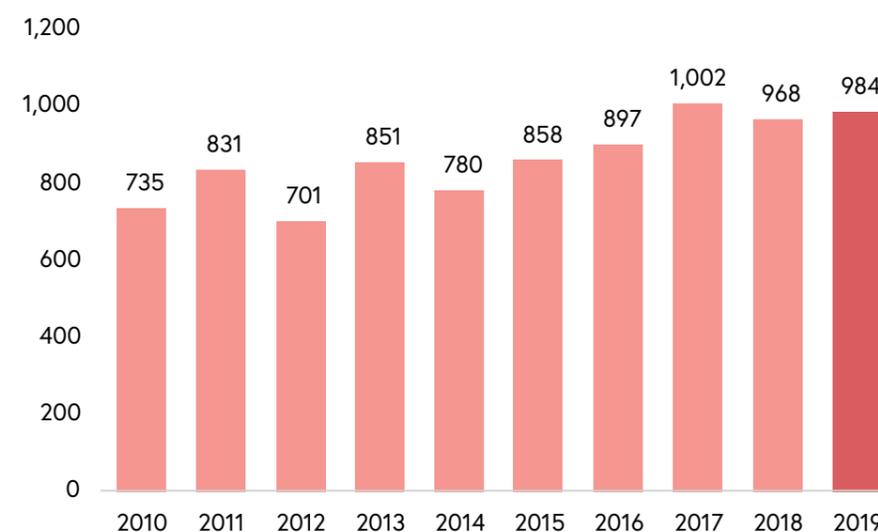


# 6 The situation in Austria's provinces



## Burgenland

Drug-related crime in Burgenland slightly rose by 1.7% in 2019, from 968 to 984 offences.



Reported violations of the Narcotic Drugs Act in Burgenland between 2010 and 2019

Approximately 2.2 kg of heroin, 82 g of cocaine, 28.3 kg of cannabis, 2,003 ecstasy tablets, 0.9 kg of amphetamine and 1.3 kg of methamphetamine were seized in Burgenland in 2019.

Drug type	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Cannabis	31,906.3 g	44,909.9 g	29,214.7 g	69,361.4 g	28,289.3 g
Heroin	23.6 g	1,004.8 g	0.1 g	81.9 g	2,164.5 g
Cocaine	456.1 g	615.6 g	564.4 g	1,553.9 g	82.3 g
Ecstasy	292.0 Stk	174.0 Stk	43.0 Stk	603.0 Stk	2,003.0 Stk
Amphetamine	823.4 g	144.1 g	390.6 g	1,653.5 g	908.3 g
Methamphetamine	43.7 g	440.8 g	1,612.1 g	867.5 g	1,298.3 g

Table: Drug seizures in Burgenland between 2015 and 2019

### Criminal groups, types of drugs and transport routes

Illicit drugs were smuggled into Austria from its neighbouring countries Slovakia and Hungary. As a rule, methamphetamine was smuggled from Slovakia across the Burgenland border. Disregarding any detours, most smuggling runs started in Bratislava. The drugs were smuggled on coaches and trains, but also in cars or taxis. The smugglers frequently carried the drugs on their bodies or hid them in the vehicle.

Recently, the smuggling runs also started in Hungary, although the smuggled methamphetamine probably originated in Slovakia. In most cases, the smugglers only crossed Burgenland, as the illicit drugs were destined for Vienna. The offenders hailed from Slovakia, Turkey and the Philippines, and to a much lesser extent from Austria, the Czech Republic and other countries. A group of Polish and Slovak offenders was under investigation for trafficking cannabis products and amphetamine, and operating cannabis farms. One Hungarian group was engaged in cocaine trafficking. Heroin was smuggled, among others, by one group consisting of a Bosnian, a Turk, a German and five Austrians.

Drug trade in public spaces was predominantly carried out by Afghan, Syrian and Chechen asylum seekers, and they mostly offered cannabis products, heroin and cocaine.

The topography of Burgenland was still exploited for outdoor cannabis cultivation, but cannabis was also grown in indoor facilities, including CBD farms.

### **Consumer behaviour and abuse of illicit drugs**

Herbal cannabis was still the most widely used drug, followed by amphetamine, ecstasy and cocaine. The district of Eisenstadt-Umgebung was an exception, where heroin was the number two illegal drug.

### **Darknet**

Several cases in 2019 proved that illicit drugs were purchased in Burgenland on darknet markets. Online purchases increased only minimally over 2018.

### **New Psychoactive Substances (NPS)**

Compared to reported violations of the Narcotic Drugs Act, the number of reported violations of the New Psychoactive Substances Act was extremely low. Intercepted parcels only contained very few NPS.

### **Developments in the area of acquisitive, accompanying and secondary crime**

Most of this crime took the form of property offences such as burglaries and thefts, and there were no notable changes.

### **Outlook**

The present situation is not expected to change in any significant way.

### **Success in the fight against drug-related crime**

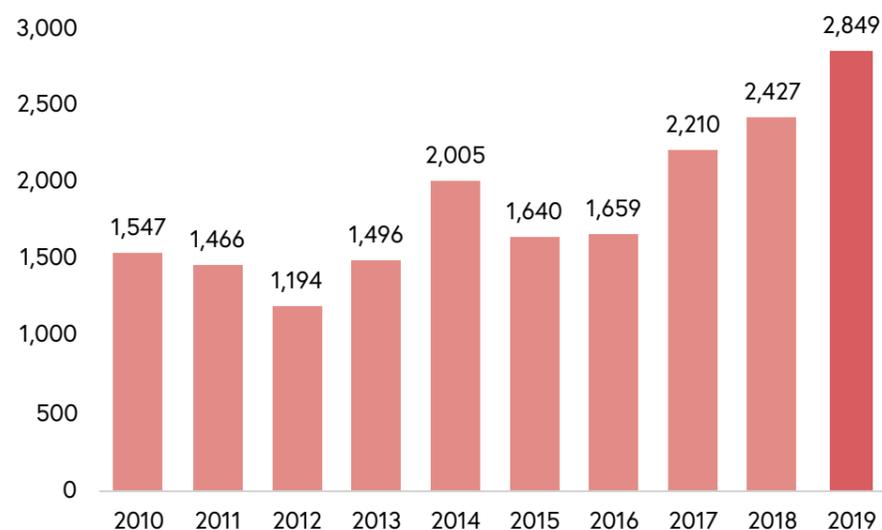
For several years, an Austrian couple had been smuggling large quantities of amphetamine and methamphetamine from Hungary to Austria, where they sold the drugs for a profit to buyers in the districts of Eisenstadt and Baden. In cooperation with Sopron police and a unit of the national drug authority of Győr police, the Hungarian supplier was eventually arrested in Hungary.

The Vienna Provincial CID took over the extensive and complex investigations into suspected serious and repeated fraud, the formation of a criminal organisation and money laundering. This resulted in several house searches and the inspection of the 58 accounts of the two principal offenders, who were placed into custody pending trial. In the course of the police intervention, several properties, gold, cash and bank deposits worth about EUR 3 million were seized.

## Carinthia

Drug-related crime surged in Carinthia in 2019 by 17.4% from 2,417 to 2,849 offences.

Reported violations of the Narcotic Drugs Act in Carinthia between 2010 and 2019



In 2019, about 5.9 kg of heroin, 1.6 kg of cocaine, 94.2 kg of cannabis, 1,150 ecstasy tablets, 2 kg of amphetamine and 0.6 kg of methamphetamine were seized in Carinthia.

Table: Seized drugs in Carinthia between 2015 and 2019

Drug type	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Cannabis	36,899.0 g	29,226.6 g	63,897.6 g	104,900.8 g	94,225.6 g
Heroin	3,032.0 g	836.8 g	2,546.2 g	1,059.9 g	5,858.8 g
Cocaine	1,005.4 g	740.9 g	3,251.8 g	3,608.4 g	1,652.9 g
Ecstasy	639.0 Stk	2,168.3 Stk	384.0 Stk	805.0 Stk	1,150.0 Stk
Amphetamine	122.0 g	435.5 g	1,487.9 g	4,482.2 g	2,027.4 g
Methamphetamine	18.8 g	34.9 g	189.9 g	166.1 g	548.2 g

### Criminal groups, types of drugs and transport routes

African and Afghan networks proved highly active among the different groups. Especially in the city of Klagenfurt, Nigerian offenders were predominantly engaged in cocaine trafficking. In most cases, body packers equipped with Italian ID cards smuggled the drugs into Carinthia. Drugs were also smuggled on public transport, such as coaches and trains, and hidden in luggage.

These groups have an excellent logistics system, which is controlled by a hierarchy built on the division of labour.

Herbal cannabis was increasingly distributed by Afghan groups, which recruited more juvenile Afghan asylum seekers as dealers.

The activities of these groups extended from the metropolitan areas of Klagenfurt and Villach into the neighbouring districts and were swiftly adapted to avoid police action. Most of the herbal cannabis was bought in Vienna and was subsequently transported on train and bus lines or in private vehicles.

The relatively high consumption rate of heroin was problematic. Heroin smuggling from Slovenia continued unabatedly. Domestic users and dealers mostly drove in private vehicles to Ljubljana or the greater Ljubljana area to buy heroin. Heroin was also supplied by Slovene mules, most of whom used the main roads across the Loibl Pass and Karawanks Tunnel. The smuggled quantities ranged from small to substantial, amounting to 100 g and more per purchase.

Heroin was not only distributed in the metropolitan areas of Klagenfurt and Villach, but also in other districts, particularly districts close to the border: Wolfsberg, Völkermarkt and Villach Land. Like in previous years, heroin prices kept dropping, as low as less than EUR 18 per gram, and cannabis farms run exclusively by domestic groups were seized.

### User behaviour and abuse of illicit drugs

The most frequently used drugs were cannabis products, especially herbal cannabis, and rarely cannabis resin. In an ongoing trend, consumption of illicit substances shifted to private areas. Hot on the heels of cannabis products, more heroin and cocaine were pushing into the market, and they were primarily absorbed via nasal routes. It was observed that amphetamine products stagnated. A still common way of obtaining drugs was by forging prescriptions.

### Darknet

Orders of illicit drugs placed on darknet markets continued rising. As a result, such drugs increasingly found their way into rural areas.

### New Psychoactive Substances (NPS)

In most cases, NPS were ordered on the internet and darknet. A large variety of products were detected, ranging from tablets and powder to liquids of various colours.

### Developments in the area of acquisitive, accompanying and secondary crime

A decline in this crime was achieved through stronger police action and an expansion of walk-in clinic for addicts.

### Outlook

There is no indication of a future decline in drug-related crime.

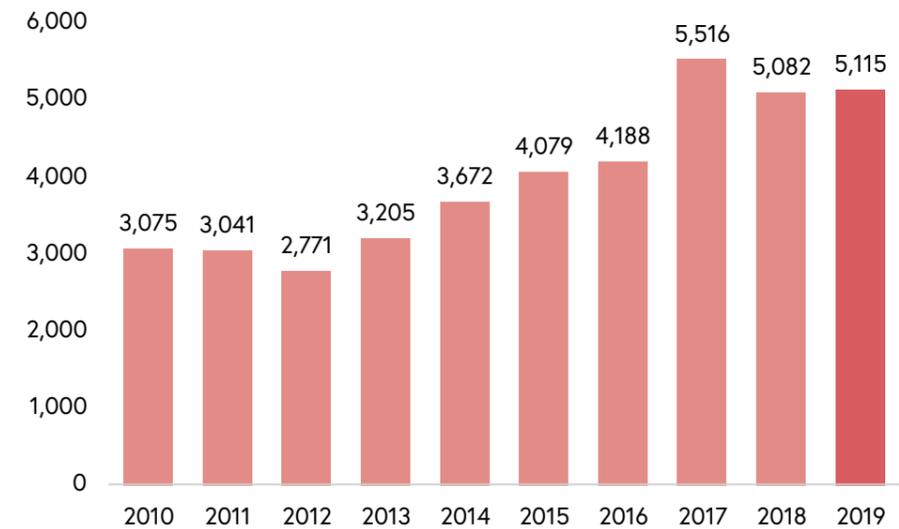
### Success in the fight against drug-related crime

The working group “AG Bitcoin” investigated a criminal group strongly suspected of having distributed about a dozen kilos of cocaine worth more than EUR 900,000 and of having trafficked cannabis.

170 buyers and subdealers were identified, 18 homes were searched and 16 arrests were made.

### Lower Austria

Drug-related crime in Lower Austria rose slightly in 2019 by 0.6% from 5,082 offences in the previous year to 5,115 offences.



Reported violations of the Narcotic Drugs Act in Lower Austria between 2010 and 2019

In 2019, about 29.4 kg of heroin, 11.8 kg of cocaine, 207.8 kg of cannabis, 6,254 ecstasy tablets, 4.3 kg of amphetamine, 5.5 kg of methamphetamine and 89.5 kg of khat were seized in Lower Austria.

Drug type	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Cannabis	162,114.7 g	23,899.7 g	222,063.1 g	370,335.9 g	207,806.8 g
Heroin	5,447.4 g	2,150.0 g	1,962.7 g	32,841.0 g	29,392.3 g
Cocaine	10,141.0 g	7,702.3 g	18,274.7 g	16,224.5 g	11,762.9 g
Ecstasy	1,769.0 Stk	2,518.2 Stk	9,217.0 Stk	2,405.0 Stk	6,254.0 Stk
Amphetamine	10,978.3 g	5,814.9 g	6,030.3 g	5,632.7 g	4,279.5 g
Methamphetamine	540.5 g	383.9 g	930.2 g	2,856.3 g	5,468.6 g
Khat		71,203.0 g	549,740.8 g	448,689.0 g	89,500.0 g

Table: Drug seizures in Lower Austria between 2015 and 2019

### Criminal groups, types of drugs and transport routes

Serbian groups dominated heroin trade and indoor cultivation of herbal cannabis in Lower Austria. Rarely, Serbian street dealers from Vienna and Lower Austria sold heroin directly to buyers. Thanks to the good quality to price ratio, many heroin users funded their lifestyle by purchasing large amounts of heroin (up to 30 g) in Vienna and sold the drug at a much higher price to buyers in Lower Austria.

Most of these subdealers from Lower Austria had a migratory background related to the Western Balkans. The smugglers transport the heroin on intercity buses or private vehicles from the Western Balkans via Burgenland and Lower Austria to Vienna. The smuggling and distribution of methamphetamine surged. Offenders from the Wiener Neustadt area, mostly of Turkish origin, smuggled methamphetamine from Slovakia and supplied buyers in southern Lower Austria. In western Lower Austria, Austrian, Czech and Slovak offenders bought large quantities of methamphetamine from Czech suppliers in the Southern Bohemian Region and Plzen, and smuggled the drugs into Austria. The smuggling routes ran from either Southern Bohemia via the Wulowitz border crossing point and Upper Austria to the district of Amstetten, or from Plzen via Bavaria and the Suben border crossing point to Upper Austria and on to the district of Amstetten. These meth smugglers and dealers then sold the drugs at a high profit to buyers in western Lower Austria. A large number of offenders smuggled various amounts of herbal cannabis from the Czech Republic to Austria for distribution or personal use.

They mostly used cars to smuggle the drugs into Austria, crossing the border crossing points of Gmünd-Ceske Velenice, Klein Haugsdorf, Laa an der Thaya, Drasenhofen or Reintal. Wiener Neustadt and St. Pölten were the drug hotspots in Lower Austria, where street dealers of various ethnicities mostly sold herbal cannabis. In most cases, the drugs were distributed near main railway stations. Most of the dealers came from Afghanistan or Chechnya. Cocaine was mostly smuggled into Austria via Vienna International Airport.

### **Cannabis farms and associated criminal groups**

In 2019, quite a number of products from indoor and outdoor farms were seized in Lower Austria. Most of the offenders were Austrian nationals. Some farms were run by Turkish, German and Serbian offenders. One of the biggest seizures was a farm located in the district of Gänserndorf with 450 cannabis plants that were in full bloom. Investigators identified a Serb and an Austrian with Serbian migratory background as suspects, which led to their arrest. Other farms were largely operated for personal use or for the distribution of the drugs to acquaintances.

### **Consumer behaviour and abuse of illicit drugs**

The number of cannabis users kept growing. Cannabis was increasingly consumed at an earlier age. While ecstasy tablets and amphetamines used to be considered party drugs, the motives of users changed. Users, many of them youths, took ecstasy and amphetamines to stay awake for several nights of online gaming. Methamphetamine was also not just used as mood enhancer, but as performance enhancer at work or during night shifts. The rising number of heroin users can be attributed to the abundant supply of cheap heroin offered by Serbian dealers. Computer-knowledgeable heroin users purchased the drugs on the darknet or internet and received very good quality for their

money compared to previous years. High-grade synthetic drugs (including NPS), mostly supplied by Dutch vendors on the darknet or internet, was found to be a growing problem.

### **Darknet**

The darknet evolved into a constant and low-risk source of supply for buyers.

### **New Psychoactive Substances (NPS)**

Reports of such criminal offences were on the decline, and there were no major NPS seizures in 2019. Drugs were seized at parcel delivery services and mail-processing centres.

### **Developments in the area of acquisitive, accompanying and secondary crime**

No notable changes were detected in this area.

### **Outlook**

As it stands, the number of seized parcels and letters as well as completed investigations of drug offences on the darknet linked to Lower Austria is expected to keep climbing. Serbian heroin dealers continued to dominate street-level drug trade in Vienna and flood the market with cheap high-grade heroin. This will fuel the growth of subdealer numbers and consumers in Lower Austria.

A large number of indoor farms for the production of cannabis buds is expected to persist, ranging from small cultivations for personal use to large farms, which are mostly run by Serbian groups. A rise is also forecast in the number of meth dealers smuggling large quantities of these drugs from the Czech Republic or Slovakia into Austria, which is expected to go hand in hand with a rise in consumer numbers.

### **Success in the fight against drug-related crime**

An international heroin and cocaine trafficking ring run by Albanian and Macedonian offenders was investigated and disrupted. Large quantities of heroin and cocaine was transported in cars along the Balkans Route and sold to bulk buyers in Austria. So far, four suspects were arrested in Austria, one suspect in Hungary, three in Serbia and two in North Macedonia. A total of 10 kg of heroin was seized in Austria, 5 kg of cocaine in Hungary and 7 kg of heroin in Serbia. Another 11.5 kg of heroin seized in Hungary might also be attributed to this criminal group.

### Vienna International Airport

In the passenger area of Vienna International Airport, a growing amount of drugs flown in from Spain and Africa was seized. Madrid-Barajas in Spain and Bole Addis Abeba in Ethiopia were used as airports of departure or stopover airports, respectively. Compared to 2018, seizures of drugs from South America went down. In seizures of drugs from Spain, these were mostly found on Spanish nationals of Dominican origin as well as Nigerian offenders, most of whom smuggled cocaine as body packers from Madrid via Vienna International Airport to Austria. The majority of the seized drugs had been intended for the Austrian drug scene.

As regards heroin, more drugs were seized coming from East Africa and Madagascar in 2019. Bole Airport in Addis Abeba, Ethiopia, turned out a major smuggling hub for trafficking to Vienna. In the smuggling runs, Austria exclusively served as a transit country for the final destinations of Italy and Poland. The smugglers were predominantly Eastern Europeans and Spaniards acting on behalf of Nigerian criminal groups. The average amounts seized ranged from 1 to 5 kg.

Like in 2018, the opium smuggled into Austria originated in Turkey. As part of two major operations, a total of 25 kg of opium was seized from passengers exclusively departing from Istanbul Airport. Austria was supposed to be a transit country, as the drugs were destined for Germany.

Groups of Iranians based in Germany were found to have orchestrated the smuggling operation.

Seizures of cannabis products at Vienna International Airport rose only slightly over 2018. Critically, parcels sent from the U.S. and containing a total of 13.5 kg of herbal cannabis were seized. The parcels, which were brought by parcel services to Vienna International Airport, were delivered to Chinese offenders in Vienna who were hired to forward the parcels to the UK.

African smugglers from Barcelona, Spain, remained active in 2019. The police managed to intercept a delivery of 2 kg of herbal cannabis to the Austrian drug market.

The 2018 trend towards amphetamine smuggling from Turkey to Vienna continued in 2019. Vienna International Airport exclusively served as a hub for onward transport to Japan.

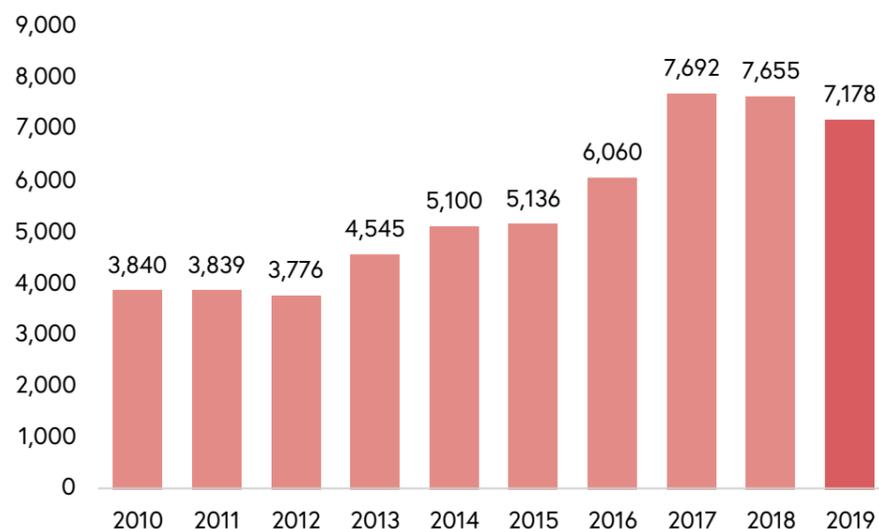
The smuggling of khat plants in passenger air travel plummeted in 2019, which can be particularly attributed to thorough checks at Vienna International Airport in cooperation with customs authorities.

No drugs were seized in the air freight sector in 2019. Volumes of imported, transit and exported cargoes kept climbing. The joint checks were conducted by customs authorities and K9 units.

## Upper Austria

In 2019, drug-related crime in Upper Austria dropped by 6.2% from 7,655 offences in the previous year to 7,178 offences.

Reported violations of the Narcotic Drugs Act in Upper Austria between 2010 and 2019



In 2019, about 1.2 kg of heroin, 4.9 kg of cocaine, 122.7 kg of cannabis, 24,031 ecstasy tablets, 13.7 kg of amphetamine, 1.9 kg of methamphetamine and 8.1 kg of khat were seized in Upper Austria.

Table: Drug seizures in Upper Austria between 2015 and 2019

Drug type	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Cannabis	109,655.9 g	104,756.4 g	225,067.6 g	112,857.6 g	122,678.4 g
Heroin	3,798.0 g	1,076.7 g	1,377.0 g	1,032.8 g	1,211.8 g
Cocaine	60,102.5 g	10,698.8 g	6,478.2 g	7,234.0 g	4,862.2 g
Ecstasy	558.0 Stk	5,524.5 Stk	407,407.0 Stk	4,490.0 Stk	24,031.0 Stk
Amphetamine	3,491.3 g	13,908.8 g	14,518.9 g	8,209.5 g	13,694.3 g
Methamphetamine	1,329.0 g	347.2 g	516.8 g	294.7 g	1,893.4 g
Khat					8,050.0 g

### Criminal groups, types of drugs and transport routes

Several criminal groups were active in Upper Austria. Large groups of Afghan nationals mainly dealt herbal cannabis in and around Linz and heroin in and around Wels. They purchased most of the illicit drugs in Vienna; the sellers sold the drugs directly and quickly to Afghan, Albanian and Serbian dealers, thus protecting their anonymity. In this way, several kilograms of illicit drugs found their way into

Upper Austria. Some of the offenders entirely relied on drug trafficking for a living. Albanians, Kosovo Albanians and North Macedonians smuggled and dealt in all kinds of illicit drugs. They transported large quantities of herbal cannabis in cars, lorries and with the help of bus companies to Upper Austria. Wholesalers and middlemen exchanged the drugs among themselves via so-called bunkers, which were restocked like vending machines. The aforementioned groups were not as present in street-level drug trade as the dominant Afghan groups. Heroin intended for distribution was not only smuggled via the Balkans Route to Upper Austria, but also from the Netherlands and Belgium via Germany.

In a one-off case, Bulgarian nationals smuggled cocaine and methamphetamine directly from Bulgaria.

In individual cases, German nationals were identified as smugglers, especially in the Innviertel region.

Dominican nationals were heavily involved in the drug scene. They dealt mainly in cocaine and herbal cannabis. Other illicit drugs were smuggled via Vienna International Airport, frequently by body packers. Other airports were also used by international smugglers. Austrian nationals, including those with a migrant background, mostly worked as subdealers or operators of indoor cannabis farms. Italian nationals who were members of the 'Ndrangheta were engaged in cocaine trafficking and money laundering in the greater Linz area. They had connections to Italy and Slovakia, in particular. Romanian nationals trafficked cocaine and supplied Romanian prostitutes, among others.

African groups were predominantly active in Linz and Wels; they mostly dealt in herbal cannabis, which they bought in Vienna. Somalian nationals dealt in khat, which they sent in the mail. Czech nationals smuggled methamphetamine and herbal cannabis to Upper Austria. Nationals from Bosnia, Croatia, Slovenia, Serbia and Montenegro dealt in various illicit drugs.

### Consumer behaviour and abuse of illicit drugs

Consumers purchased all kinds of available substances. Most of the heroin was either smoked or snorted.

### Darknet

The darknet was increasingly used as trafficking platform.

### New Psychoactive Substances (NPS)

Almost all NPS were purchased on the darknet.

### Developments in the area of acquisitive, accompanying and secondary crime

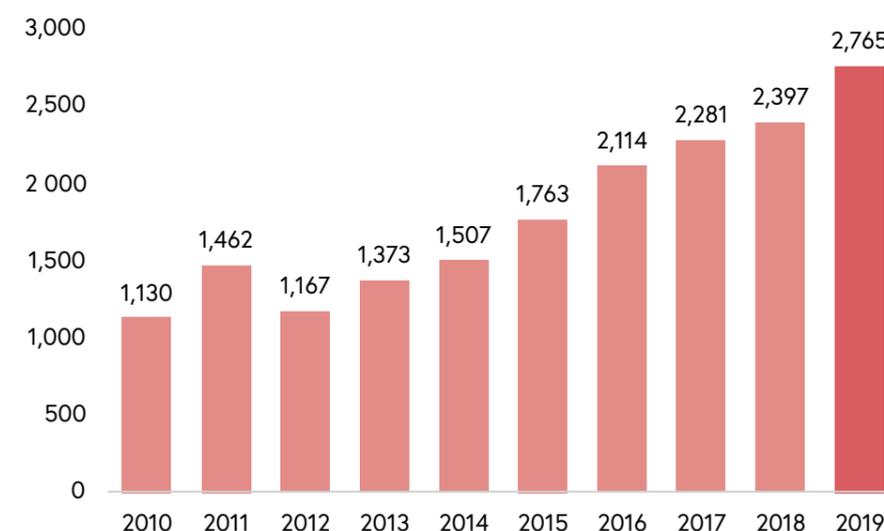
There was no significant change in this area.

### Outlook

Heroin and cocaine trafficking is expected to keep rising. Illegal substances that are increasingly distributed via the internet and darknet present a danger. Trafficking in open spaces is on the decline and will shift towards private areas.

## Salzburg

In 2019, drug-related crime climbed by 15.4% from 2,397 offences in the previous year to 2,765 offences.



Reported violations of the Narcotic Drugs Act in Salzburg between 2010 and 2019

In 2019, about 2.1 kg of heroin, 6.2 kg of cocaine, 160 kg of cannabis, 7,908 ecstasy tablets, 4.9 kg amphetamine and 0.4 kg of methamphetamine were seized in Salzburg.

Drug type	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Cannabis	72,212.8 g	40,330.0 g	164,636.1 g	82,611.3 g	160,002.5 g
Heroin	13,004.1 g	6,124.4 g	381.7 g	191.7 g	2,140.4 g
Cocaine	3,096.3 g	3,443.3 g	2,256.5 g	2,857.0 g	6,196.6 g
Ecstasy	331.0 Stk	1,688.7 Stk	1,270.0 Stk	328.0 Stk	7,908.0 Stk
Amphetamine	503.4 g	3,480.0 g	5,344.1 g	20,187.2 g	4,941.9 g
Methamphetamine	12.1 g	12.2 g	83.3 g	100.1 g	398.0 g

Table: Drug seizures in Salzburg between 2015 and 2019

### Criminal groups, types of drugs and transport routes

Albanian, Slovene and Serbian groups focused on international trafficking in cannabis products and cocaine. Increasingly, but at a low rate, they also traded in heroin. Turkish groups were engaged in heroin trafficking of international proportions. The smuggled the drugs in lorries via the Balkan route to Salzburg and on to other European countries. Moroccan, Afghan, Algerian Syrian and Pakistani groups focused on trafficking in cannabis products and cocaine. Most of the cannabis on offer was smuggled from Italy and the Czech Republic to Salzburg. These groups established dominance in street-level drug

trade in the city of Salzburg. Isolated cases of criminals from Subsaharan Africa also sold drugs on the streets, especially cannabis and cocaine. Dutch offenders operated predominantly in and around Zell am See, where they mostly dealt in cocaine and amphetamine. Only a few Austrian offenders or criminal groups were engaged in drug-related crime, and they were not specialised in any particular substance.

Cocaine was predominantly smuggled to Salzburg from the Netherlands, followed by a growing number from Slovenia and Germany, and also from Serbia. As in the past, most of the heroin was obtained from Slovenia, Serbia and the Netherlands. Cannabis products were primarily smuggled to Salzburg from Slovenia, Albania, Serbia, Italy and the Czech Republic. In many cases, cannabis was cultivated in indoor farms, mostly for personal use. The majority of synthetic drugs found their way to Salzburg from the Czech Republic and Slovenia, and to a growing extent from the Netherlands via orders placed on the darknet.

### **Consumer behaviour and abuse of illicit drugs**

Consumption of cannabis products, heroin, cocaine and amphetamine edged higher in 2019, while consumption of NPS and ecstasy stagnated.

### **Darknet**

Online purchases of illicit drugs on the internet and darknet became common. The drugs were almost exclusively sent from the Netherlands, Germany and Spain.

### **New Psychoactive Substances (NPS)**

There were no indications of a rise in NPS use in Salzburg in 2019. Most of the substances listed in the New Psychoactive Substances Act continued to be ordered on the internet or darknet and were subsequently sent to the buyer by mail. At the street level, these substances were hardly ever offered.

### **Developments in the area of acquisitive, accompanying and secondary crime**

Offences in the area of acquisitive, accompanying and secondary crime continued to rise in 2019. It was noticed that robberies occurred more frequently.

### **Outlook**

A rise in drug-related crime is expected, especially with regard to cannabis products, followed by amphetamine, cocaine and heroin. In general, drug trade on the internet

and darknet is set to spike. This is how illicit drugs find their way even into the remotest areas of Salzburg.

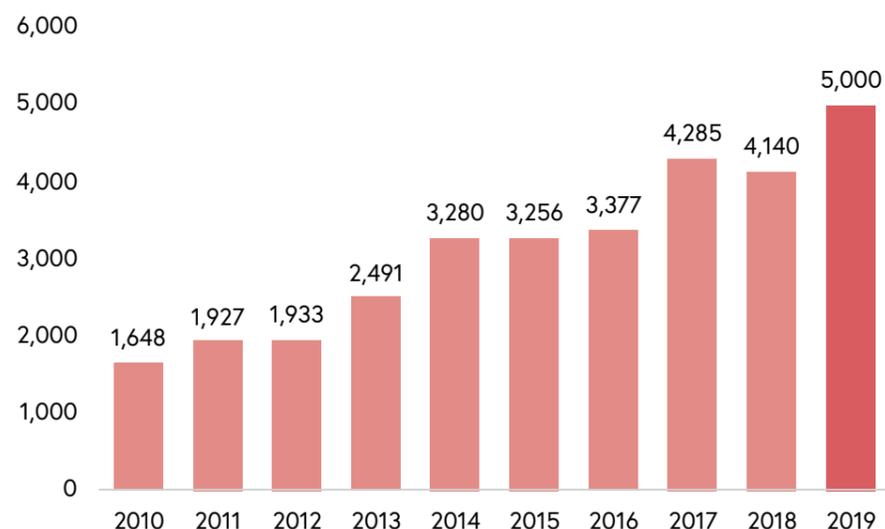
### **Success in the fight against drug-related crime**

Police were tipped off that a group of German and Turkish offenders allegedly were in possession of about 400 kg of heroin, of which about 100 kg was stored in a cache near Salzburg. Tactical investigations led to the seizure of about 19 kg of high-grade heroin with 50% purity and to the arrest of two suspects in March of 2019. Eventually, the principal offender was sentenced to nine years' imprisonment while the drug runner was handed a six-year sentence.

## Styria

In 2019, drug-related crime in Styria increased sharply by 20.8% from 4,140 offences in the previous year to 5,000 offences.

Reported violations of the Narcotic Drugs Act in Styria between 2010 and 2019



In 2019, about 0.5 kg of heroin, 1.8 kg of cocaine, 144.5 kg of cannabis, 8,279 ecstasy tablets, 16.5 kg of amphetamine and 5.9 kg of methamphetamine was seized in Styria.

Table: Drug seizures in Styria between 2015 and 2019

Drug type	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Cannabis	189,213.6 g	111,151.7 g	292,471.0 g	123,017.2 g	144,470.0 g
Heroin	38.2 g	38,531.8 g	268.4 g	88.5 g	531.9 g
Cocaine	7,901.9 g	8,066.1 g	5,430.9 g	2,344.0 g	1,766.8 g
Ecstasy	39,024.3 g	7,479.0 g	2,323.5 g	5,635.7 g	16,512.4 g
Amphetamine	98.1 g	105.8 g	214.9 g	178.1 g	5,924.7 g
Methamphetamine	1,158.2 Stk	2,199.9 Stk	2,742.0 Stk	4,751.0 Stk	8,279.0 Stk
Khat			660.0 g		

### Criminal groups, types of drugs and transport routes

Drugs were dealt and used in all Styrian districts, while substances listed in the New Psychoactive Substances Act tended to be less common in the past year. Readily available drug substitutes pushed back heroin consumption. Heroin was still smuggled into the province and was not in short supply.

This was illustrated by a Serbian drug dealer who was able to supply 10 kg of heroin within a short period of time.

The local market was still dominated by herbal cannabis, followed by cocaine, amphetamine and ecstasy tablets. The hotspot for drug trafficking in Styria continued to be Graz and the expanding neighbouring metropolitan area of the Graz Basin. The open border to Austria's southern neighbouring countries favoured drug smuggling.

Due to its geographical location, Styria turned out a hub for Western, Central and Northern Europe on the map of international drug-related crime. Narcotic drugs were trafficked from the south across Styria to various destinations, and vice versa. The preferred smuggling routes ran between the Netherlands and the Balkans.

The past few years saw a greater occurrence of drug dealers and runners from the Western Balkans states such as Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and Albania, but also from Croatia and Slovenia. Some of the drug deals were initiated in Austria or even in the countries of origin. The majority of offenders belonged to a group or a clan, which was especially true for nationals from Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro.

International drug dealers gained a foothold in Styria, sought refuge there and invested the proceeds of their drug deals in properties. This assessment is supported by the fact that Bosnian nationals formed a local community in the past few years. In the same period, asylum seekers from Afghanistan, Syria, Iraq and Pakistan banded together in Graz. Dealers from Afghanistan controlled nearly all of the trafficking in herbal cannabis – not only in Graz, but also in other Styrian districts. This group had strong ties to other provinces, especially Vienna. Moreover, they collaborated with other ethnic groups such as Albanians and Czechs, and they were able to have large quantities of herbal cannabis transported to Styria. Austrians operated cannabis farms in Styria in 2019, but were also engaged in drug smuggling. In 2018/2019, 40 kg of amphetamine, 22,000 ecstasy tablets, 18 kg of herbal cannabis and 500 g of cocaine were imported from the Netherlands to Styria and were offered to the market in the south and southwest of the province.

### Cannabis farms and associated criminal groups

Indoor and outdoor cannabis farms ranging from just a few plants to entire fields comprising hundreds of plants were detected in 2019.

Cannabispflanzen betrieben. Yet, the most common cultivations were small farms with between ten to 50 plants. Most of the drugs produced from such farms contained more than 10% delta-9-THC. In the course of a police operation in early October 2019, a field of 807 cannabis plants was harvested and 142.5 kg of herbal cannabis was seized.

The herbal cannabis previously produced from this field had been sold in the Graz city park. Police noticed a larger number of Slovenians, particularly in the region close to the border. They rented properties to cultivate the drugs indoors. This may be owing to Slovenian legislation, as Slovenia also prohibits the possession of hemp cuttings. The herbal cannabis thus produced was sold in Austria and Slovenia. Like in the rest of Austria, a growing number of vending machines and shops sold hemp and CBD products.

### **Consumer behaviour and abuse of illicit drugs**

As in previous years, users mixed drugs. So-called “uppers” are typically used at the start of weekends, while “downers” are used to “chill” towards the end of a weekend. The biggest demand was for herbal cannabis, which was either home-produced or supplied by various criminal groups.

Cocaine continued to be another frequently used drug, just like amphetamine and ecstasy tablets. These drugs were increasingly and clandestinely ordered on the internet or darknet and shipped by delivery services

### **Darknet**

Illegal drug purchases on the internet and darknet continued climbing in 2019. Youths and young adults, in particular, used this supposedly comfortable and risk-free method of obtaining illicit drugs, most of which were of high quality.

### **New Psychoactive Substances (NPS)**

These substances are almost exclusively ordered on the internet and darknet and mailed to the buyers, and are rarely offered by dealers on the streets.

### **Drug labs and associated criminal groups**

In an investigation supervised by the Graz Prosecutor's Office, an individual from eastern Styria was suspected of having smuggled a total of about 50 kg of coca leaves from Peru to Austria between 2017 and 2019 and of producing crack cocaine from this material. In June 2018, a parcel was intercepted that was addressed to him and contained 10 kg of coca leaves, which was found to be the equivalent of 79.3 g of crack cocaine. In total, the suspect was able to produce about 400 g of crack cocaine.

### **Developments in the area of acquisitive, accompanying and secondary crime**

Individual cases of acquisitive and accompanying crime came to light in the city of Graz near the drug hotspots, in particular robberies, low-level thefts and thefts by breaking and entering. However, no uptick in this area was observed in Styria.

### **Outlook**

A decline in drug-related crime is not expected. Drug users were found to lack awareness of the unlawfulness of such acts, and they had easy and low-risk access to illicit drugs via the internet and darknet.

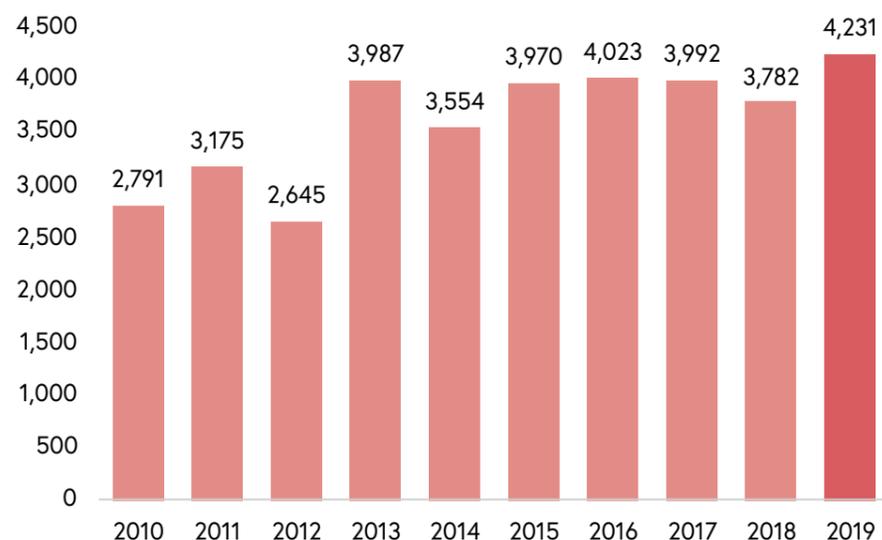
### **Success in the fight against drug-related crime**

The Styria Provincial CID had been investigating a group of Bosnian offenders since October 2016. In the course of the investigations in Graz, to Bosnians emerged as possible principal offenders. They were arrested in August 2018. Through a DNA comparison, one of them was found guilty of an assassination. Due to the complexity of the case and the international ties of the suspects, a Eurojust Joint Investigation Team took over the investigations in March 2019.

## Tyrol

In 2019, drug-related crime in Tyrol increased significantly by 11.9% year-over-year from 3,782 to 4,231 offences.

Reported violations of the Narcotic Drugs Act in Tyrol between 2010 and 2019



In 2019, about 0.2 kg of heroin, 5.6 kg of cocaine, 83.3 kg of cannabis, 1,957 ecstasy tablets, 11 kg of amphetamine, 1 kg of methamphetamine and 15.7 kg of khat were seized in Tyrol.

Table: Drug seizures in Tyrol between 2015 and 2019

Drug type	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Cannabis	115,161.7 g	152,058.4 g	106,502.4 g	101,802.0 g	83,288.5 g
Heroin	1,093.3 g	85.8 g	219.1 g	68.5 g	158.1 g
Cocaine	2,530.9 g	13,211.5 g	1,421.7 g	8,092.4 g	5,574.4 g
Ecstasy	244.0 Stk	1,011.3 Stk	2,080.0 Stk	2,430.0 Stk	1,957.0 Stk
Amphetamine	417.5 g	5,446.8 g	1,226.5 g	3,393.7 g	10,997.1 g
Methamphetamine	192.4 g	168.2 g	159.9 g	255.3 g	1,002.7 g
Khat		98.2 g		40,183.2 g	15,680.0 g

### Criminal groups, types of drugs and transport routes

In the cannabis trafficking scene in Innsbruck, some of the prevalent groups of North Africans were pushed out by groups from Afghanistan, but North African offenders were still present. Apart from Austrians, Chechens and asylum seekers from Somalia and Eritrea were engaged in cannabis and cocaine trafficking. A part of the cannabis resin and cocaine sold in Innsbruck city was smuggled by Maghrebi groups from upper

Italy (Milano, Turin, Bologna) and in some cases from Northern Europe to Austria and sold there. Drugs were trafficked to Austria by nationals from Magreb countries but also by Austrian addicts on trains or by car. The offenders from the North African scene withdrew somewhat from public spaces and moved their business to homes, asylum centres and, increasingly, establishments such as betting pubs. Despite large seizures of drugs and cash, the market was not undersupplied. The criminal group started to move to municipalities around Innsbruck.

A growing number of asylum seekers from Russia and Chechnya tried to enter the Innsbruck

“bouncer scene” and then move into drug trafficking. They mostly sold cocaine and also cannabis products, which they sourced from the greater Vienna area. This criminal group was also inclined to violence and was very well-connected and organised.

In a trend that became apparent in the past few years, the number of Afghan offenders strongly increased. There were several Afghan groups of offenders who operated across regions, had hierarchies and close ties. Afghan nationals purchased several kilos of marijuana in Vienna, and it was then transported by drug runners on trains to Kufstein, Wörgl or Innsbruck, from where it was distributed across Tyrol. Austrians and Germans, too, worked as subdealers. In Innsbruck, Afghans took over a part of the “open scene” from North Africans and mainly sold herbal cannabis of high or very high quality. Meanwhile, they also entered cocaine and ecstasy dealing and sold these drugs in various pubs and shops. The Afghan offenders were highly aggressive and violent, resulting in serious bodily injuries and knife attacks. Established groups from Africa were joined by asylum seekers from Somalia and Eritrea, some of whom sold illicit drugs on behalf of North African offenders.

The majority of German nationals involved in drug-related crime were users who purchased the illicit drugs on the darknet or from North African and Afghan dealers.

Naturalised nationals from Turkey and the Balkan states used and sold illicit drugs that were smuggled from their home countries, Germany or the Netherlands. More than before, they bought and used synthetic drugs at so-called “Goa parties” or “rave parties” and in some cases sold them to other partygoers.

Hungarian offenders were drug users or organised the drug trade, mainly among compatriots. They smuggled drugs from countries such as the Netherlands to Tyrol and sometimes on to Hungary, or from Hungary to Tyrol for local sales.

In many cases, Austrian nationals came to the attention of police as drug users, operators of indoor cannabis farms and dealers. Many of them bought the drugs, mostly cocaine,

amphetamine and herbal cannabis, on the darknet. Moreover, they purchased drugs in the Netherlands and in Germany, and smuggled them into Austria. In Austria, high-impact checks of postal distribution centres led to more drug seizures.

### **Cannabis farms and associated criminal groups**

Cannabis plants continued to be cultivated in indoor and outdoor farms. These farms were primarily established by Austrians who purchased the necessary seeds and cuttings on the internet or at grow shops. The herbal cannabis thus produced was of high or very high quality. The farms were fitted with high-end equipment and on average cultivated 50 to 100 plants. In 2019, police also seized farms where about 300 plants were grown. One criminal group had simultaneously rented two detached houses that were about 70 km apart for cannabis production.

### **Consumer behaviour and abuse of illicit drugs**

Herbal cannabis continued to be the most frequently used illegal drug in 2019, followed by cocaine and amphetamine, while demand for cocaine surged. By contrast, demand for heroin fell. Most synthetic drugs were bought and consumed at “Goa parties” or similar events and primarily by young people, who sometimes also sold them to fund their own habit.

### **Darknet**

Another surge in drug-related crime on darknet markets was observed in 2019, with the number of intercepted parcels more than doubling. The number of persons buying drugs on the darknet rose continuously.

### **New Psychoactive Substances (NPS)**

NPS did not play a major role. Most NPS were intercepted at postal distribution centres after they had been ordered on the darknet.

### **Drug labs and associated criminal groups**

In one case in Tyrol, lab equipment and chemicals were found, but the laboratory had not been set up yet.

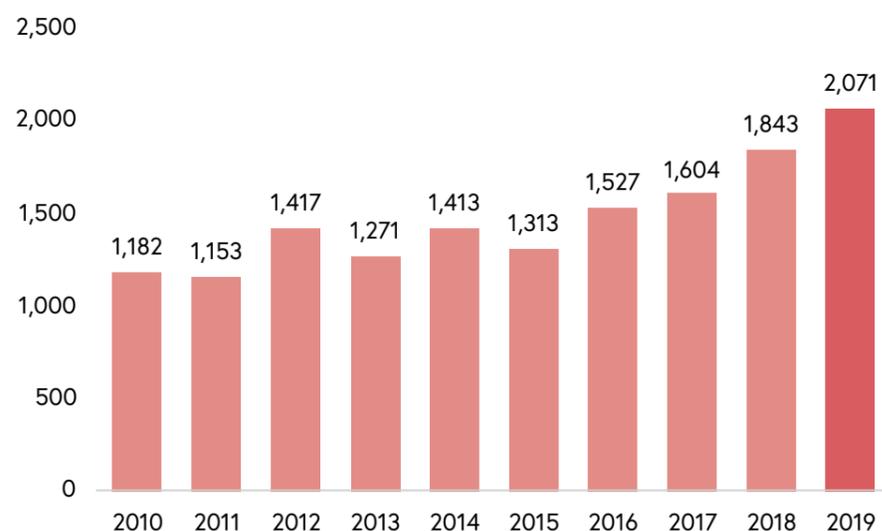
### **Developments in the area of acquisitive, accompanying and secondary crime**

Compared to previous years, the North African drugs scene tended to withdraw into private spaces. In its place followed asylum seekers from Afghanistan, Somalia, Eritrea and to a lesser extent from Syria. These groups committed robberies, thefts, damage to property, coercion and (serious) bodily injuries on a regular basis. Youth gangs showed a higher presence.

## Vorarlberg

In 2019, drug-related crime in Vorarlberg increased strongly by 12.4% from 1,843 offences in the previous year to 2,071 offences.

Reported violations of the Narcotic Drugs Act in Vorarlberg between 2010 and 2019



In 2019, about 0.7 kg of heroin, 12.2 kg of cocaine, 41.2 kg of cannabis, 291 ecstasy tablets, 1 kg amphetamine, 1.5 kg methamphetamine and 11.4 kg of khat were seized in Vorarlberg.

Table: Drug seizures in Vorarlberg in 2019

Drug type	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Cannabis	13,358.3 g	9,752.3 g	24,644.6 g	40,463.4 g	41,198.2 g
Heroin	29.8 g	216.6 g	265.6 g	471.4 g	707.4 g
Cocaine	2,308.9 g	2,444.6 g	3,444.7 g	601.6 g	12,214.6 g
Ecstasy	430.0 Stk	409.1 Stk	393.0 Stk	1,360.0 Stk	291.0 Stk
Amphetamine	901.6 g	657.2 g	1,390.7 g	5,278.3 g	1,016.6 g
Methamphetamine	6.2 g	27.0 g	49.8 g	226.1 g	1,465.2 g
Khat					11,350.0 g

### Criminal groups, types of drugs and transport routes

Numerous criminal groups operated in Vorarlberg. Turkish groups, sometimes helped by Dutch offenders, smuggled cocaine, cannabis products and rarely ecstasy via Switzerland to Vorarlberg. The smuggling routes to Austria also ran via the Netherlands, Belgium and Germany. Cocaine was sold from a Turkish pub and Afghan groups trafficked in cannabis

products, amphetamine and ecstasy. The drugs were purchased in Vienna and smuggled via Innsbruck to Vorarlberg, mostly by train or car.

Dutch, Turkish and Pakistani offenders smuggled cocaine from the Netherlands via German into Vorarlberg.

A Serbian-Bosnian group trafficked both cocaine and heroin from Vienna to Bregenz.

In the greater Vorarlberg area, one Albanian offender smuggled cocaine from the Netherlands via Germany and Switzerland to Austria.

A Serbian offender trafficked in cocaine, which was transported from the Netherlands via Germany and Switzerland by an Albanian group.

One Austrian suspect smuggled cocaine and cannabis products from Switzerland. The cocaine was supplied by an Albanian group.

### Cannabis farms and associated criminal groups

One Greek national operated a cannabis farm in which 1,019 cannabis plants in various stages of growth were seized. He had already prepared 2.9 kg of 50 g packages of herbal cannabis for sale.

### Consumer behaviour and abuse of illicit drugs

Cannabis and CBD consumption kept growing in 2019. Youths and young adults in particular used cannabis products, followed by MDMA, amphetamine, LSD and ecstasy, most of which they ordered online. Cocaine consumption, too, increased in 2019. In particular, high amounts of cocaine were used in the illegal gambling scene and party scene. It was noticed that the quality of the cocaine sold on the streets improved. The average purity of cocaine in Vorarlberg was about 64% in 2019.

Heroin consumption was at a high level, although classic heroin users were no longer observed. The quality of heroin went up as well. The average purity of heroin seized in Vorarlberg was 40.23%. Heroin ordered on the internet and darknet was found to be especially pure.

### Darknet

Die A high volume of drug orders continued to be placed on darknet markets in 2019, with offenders increasingly adapting to police action. Conspicuously for Vorarlberg, 250 g of cocaine was ordered on the darknet, which goes to show that some of the drug

shipments were not insubstantial. Drug users from Switzerland were remarkable in that they had their illicit drugs shipped to parcel pick-up stations in Vorarlberg close to the border from where they collected the drugs, thus avoiding customs control.

### **New Psychoactive Substances (NPS)**

Numerous drug users ordered NPS on the darknet. Initial drug tests classified many of these substances as amphetamine, which later turned out to be NPS.

### **Developments in the area of acquisitive, accompanying and secondary crime**

In drug user circles, robberies and frauds occurred repeatedly in 2019. In some cases, the offenders used significant violence against their victims. It is highly likely that the total number of incidents may be much higher, as they were frequently not reported. The brutality came to a head when a drug user was murdered by an unidentified Serbian drug runner in Dornbirn. Apparently, the user tried to rob the drugs from the runner and was subsequently stabbed to death. Drug users and small dealers were observed to carry blank guns, prohibited weapons or various pepper sprays. Dealers were frequently armed with handguns. A new phenomenon was a break-in into a CBD greenhouse in Vorarlberg, where the perpetrators focused exclusively on stealing CBD hemp plants.

### **Outlook**

Due to the current situation and the discussion about legalising cannabis, consumption of cannabis products is expected to keep growing, especially among youths and young adults. CBD use is on the rise, and such products are even offered at filling stations and vending machines across the country. The small-scale cultivation of cannabis plants is increasing, as owners of online shops and hemp shops are legally allowed to offer seeds and cuttings for sale.

Trafficking, smuggling and sales of cocaine in Vorarlberg climbed to a high level. Thanks to open borders, cocaine smuggling became less risky. In the border region of Vorarlberg, Germany and Switzerland, criminal groups with Albanian roots apparently became established and focused on cocaine and cannabis trafficking. To this end, they mostly used locations where persons from Austria rarely or never set foot, in a trend that is expected to increase.

### **Success in the fight against drug-related crime**

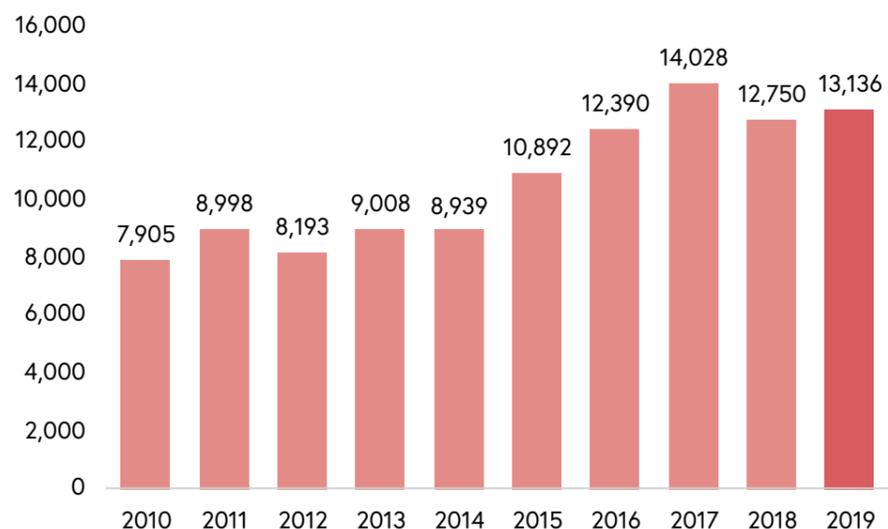
As part of investigations into an internationally operating criminal group, 0.5 kg of cocaine was seized in one of the offenders' vehicles. An ensuing house search led to the

seizure of another 4.5 kg of high-grade cocaine, 0.5 kg of heroin cut with paracetamol, 27 g of heroin, EUR 25,000 and two handguns. The offenders had planned to bury the illicit drugs in a forest in order to set up a cache. One of the offenders was already sentenced to seven years in prison.

## Vienna

In 2019, drug-related crime in Vienna slightly increased by 3.0% from 12,750 to 13,136 offences.

Reported violations of the Narcotic Drugs Act in Vienna between 2010 and 2019



In 2019, about 52.5 kg of heroin, 43 kg of cocaine, 485.1 kg of cannabis, 26,049 ecstasy tablets, 67.8 kg of amphetamine, 12.2 kg of methamphetamine and 147.6 kg of khat was seized in Vienna.

Table: Drug seizures in Vienna between 2010 and 2019

Drug type	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Cannabis	408,272.6 g	356,691.6 g	530,702.3 g	494,283.9 g	485,907.0 g
Heroin	43,068.3 g	18,889.2 g	46,929.2 g	40,526.8 g	52,478.9 g
Cocaine	32,132.4 g	39,526.1 g	30,302.1 g	32,474.7 g	43,007.2 g
Ecstasy	4,727.8 Stk	13,791.1 Stk	22,929.0 Stk	65,865.0 Stk	26,049.0 Stk
Amphetamine	10,395.9 g	50,283.1 g	17,555.5 g	22,297.9 g	67,836.8 g
Methamphetamine	703.2 g	3,280.4 g	1,279.5 g	3,055.9 g	12,198.7 g
Khat		380,000.0 g	83,055.6 g	45,120.0 g	147,625.7 g

### Criminal groups, types of drugs and transport routes

In 2019, there was a higher incidence of drug-related crime among asylum seekers from Afghanistan. They mostly sold herbal cannabis on the streets and more recently also sold ecstasy tablets. The illicit drugs were smuggled from the Czech Republic. They secretly stored the drugs in homes in Vienna, Lower Austria and Upper Austria.

Groups from Serbia, Macedonia, Albania, Kosovo and, to a lesser extent, Croatia controlled drug trafficking. The ethnic groups involved sometimes worked together by dividing up tasks. Serbian groups, in particular, dominated street-level dealing. They had a very strong presence in heroin sales, were well organised and assigned different tasks to their members (runner/stasher/smuggler/client). These groups relied on an established and wide-ranging network and used official and legal businesses such as pubs, shops and filling stations to launder the cash proceeds from drug trafficking. From caches hidden in the successor states of former Yugoslavia, heroin was mostly delivered in small quantities (up to a few kilograms) by car or on coaches to Austria. Apart from illegal smuggling of drugs into Austria for local distribution, Austria was also used as a transit country for large deliveries. Large caches were especially set up in Germany. Drugs from these caches were again transported to Austria. Cocaine from the caches were smuggled via the Netherlands and Germany to Austria. The relative ease to produce cannabis containing THC allowed offenders to manufacture the drug in Vienna or in Lower Austria or Burgenland. This was possible because organised crime groups were active in various property and motor vehicle businesses and thus were able to rent various properties for drug production. Cannabis was also smuggled via various Balkan states, where the drugs were produced. Onward transport to other EU countries only occurred to a small extent.

Austrian criminal groups were hardly organised and did not have a strong network; some dealers freelanced and used available connections.

In the area of heroin and cocaine trade, available distribution networks were used by established groups. Herbal cannabis was exclusively cultivated indoors.

Demand was also met by illegal imports from the Czech Republic, aside from the classic supply country, the Netherlands, or the Balkan countries.

Methamphetamine was smuggled from neighbouring countries, especially the border area between the Czech Republic and Slovakia, but also by mail from Asia. It was rare for methamphetamine to be produced in Vienna.

NPS were frequently ordered on the internet and sent by mail. This market continued to be dominated by the Netherlands, which is a producer country for synthetic drugs. Persian and Turkish groups were well organised and were more involved in smuggling than in selling.

Like in other countries such as the Western Balkan countries, groups were generally structured according to ethnicities such as Kurds, and they used existing connections in their home countries.

West African offenders continued their presence in Vienna, albeit to a lesser degree, which was in part due to Serbian street runners taking over. All means of transport (train, coach, car) were used to smuggle the drugs from Northern Europe such as Belgium and the Netherlands into Austria. Air transport, sometimes on misleading flight routes, was used for drug smuggling from South America. The majority of smugglers were body packers. Not only West Africans but also male and female Europeans worked as body packers. The smugglers had contacts in Austria, who distributed the drugs to West African middlemen, who in turn supplied street runners.

North African suspects sold marijuana on the streets in the form of “baggies” containing usually 1-2 g of the drug. Apart from said nationalities, individuals from Gambia and Somalia sold herbal cannabis, too. Smuggling runs originated in North Africa, Northern Europe and the Czech Republic.

### **Cannabis farms and associated criminal groups**

Cannabis farms were found and seized on a regular basis in Vienna. Their size ranged from a few plants to several thousand marijuana plants including seedlings and professional equipment. The plants were grown in living areas, cellar compartments, warehouses or other buildings. The exact number of discovered marijuana farms cannot be provided, as they are not listed separately in statistical records. Groups from former Yugoslavia ran indoor cannabis farms for the purpose of large-scale and cross-border trafficking, while Austrian nationals engaged in this practice for personal use.

### **Consumer behaviour and abuse of illicit drugs**

In addition to heroin, cocaine and cannabis products, synthetic drugs became an essential part of illicit drug use. Drug substitutes continued to be abused by addicts. Trafficking in drug substitutes allowed disadvantaged addicts to fund purchases of conventional narcotic drugs, especially heroin. Moreover, it became common to purchase narcotic drugs on the internet and darknet. Herbal cannabis can

be considered a typical gateway drug. However, cannabis has long been viewed as a harmless recreational drug that may be preferred over alcohol, for example. Synthetic drugs are often used as stimulants, party drugs or performance enhancers. Aside from damage to health, the risk of psychological side effects is underestimated or simply accepted.

### **Darknet**

Drug-related crime on darknet markets was constantly on the rise.

### **New Psychoactive Substances (NPS)**

Due to the low presence of such drugs in Vienna, any seizures or related problems are not worth mentioning.

### **Drug labs and associated criminal groups**

Such drug labs were rare in Vienna, as the bulk of NPS was imported. When such labs were found, they turned out to be normal residential rooms such as converted kitchens, some of which presented a hazard. Many of the offenders were Austrians with a more or less limited knowledge of chemistry who mainly manufactured the drugs for their own need or to supply a local group of buyers. No large-scale lab was observed. Foreign criminal groups, especially from Asia, produced these drugs in the Czech Republic and also in Slovakia, as the precursors for the manufacture of amphetamine and methamphetamine were more readily available or legal in these countries.

### **Developments in the area of acquisitive, accompanying and secondary crime**

Burglaries of basements and vehicle break-ins accounted for most of the reported criminal offences. The clear-up rate was improved, the police were in a better position to identify serial and repeat offenders.

### **Outlook**

Ordering narcotic drugs, especially psychoactive substances, on the internet became commonplace, as it does not require much knowledge. This method of obtaining drugs poses new challenges to law enforcement investigating and combating this phenomenon. At the same time, the street scene must not be overlooked and the activities of organised crime groups need to be analysed and monitored.

### **Success in the fight against drug-related crime**

From September 2017 to February 2019, the Vienna Provincial CID conducted investigations into a Serbian criminal organisation. As part of these extensive investigations, detectives cooperated with colleagues from Germany, Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, Hungary, Switzerland and Spain. This led to the arrest of 22 perpetrators belonging to the criminal organisation, the seizure of large amounts of narcotic drugs and the confiscation of assets.

# 7 Legal situation



## The chief penal provisions for drug-related crime

This chapter provides an overview of the chief penal provisions laid out in Austria's Narcotic Drugs Act and the New Psychoactive Substances Act, followed by a description of the most common illicit drugs in the country, their effects and legal classification.

### Statutory definitions in the Narcotic Drugs Act ("Suchtmittelgesetz" or SMG)

#### § 27 Illegal Handling of Narcotic Drugs

(1) Anyone who illegally

1. acquires, possesses, produces, transports, or imports a narcotic drug, offers to supply it to another person, passes it on to another person or procures it for another person contrary to regulations
2. grows opium poppy, the coca bush or the cannabis plant for the purpose of producing narcotic drugs
3. offers mushrooms containing psilocin, psilotin or psilocybin to another person, passes them on to another person, procures them for another person or grows them for the purpose of drug abuse

shall be punished with imprisonment not exceeding one year or with a fine of up to 360 daily rates.

(2) Anyone who commits such a criminal act exclusively for personal use shall be liable to a term of imprisonment of up to six months or a fine of up to 360 daily rates.

(2a) Anyone who offers narcotic drugs to another person, passes them on to another person, or procures them for another person, in return for a consideration and contrary to regulations, in a public transport system, a public transport facility, a public traffic area, a public building or in any other place accessible to the general public, shall be punished with imprisonment not exceeding two years.

(3) Anyone who commits a criminal act as specified in subsection 1, 2 or 2a above as a regular source of income shall be liable to imprisonment of up to three years.

(4) The punishment shall be imprisonment not exceeding three years if

1. the commission of a criminal act as specified in subsection 1 or 2 makes possible for a minor to consume a narcotic drug, provided the offender is of full age and more than two years older than the minor, or
2. if the offender commits such a criminal act as a member of a criminal association.

(5) Anyone who is addicted to a narcotic drug and commits a criminal act as specified in subsection 3, 4 sub-paragraph 2 chiefly for the purpose of procuring himself a narcotic drug for personal use or the means to buy it, shall merely be punished with imprisonment of up to one year.

### **§ 28 Preparation of Trafficking in Narcotic Drugs**

(1) Anyone who purchases, possesses or transports a narcotic drug in a quantity exceeding the threshold quantity specified in section 28b with the intent to distribute it contrary to regulations shall be liable to imprisonment not exceeding three years. The same punishment shall be applied to any person who grows the plants specified in section 27, subsection 1, sub-paragraph 2 with a view to extracting a narcotic drug in such a quantity for later distribution.

(2) Anyone who commits the criminal act described in subsection 1 involving a narcotic drug in a quantity exceeding fifteen times the threshold quantity specified in section 28b (large quantity) shall be punished with a term of imprisonment of up to five years.

(3) Anyone who commits the criminal act described in subsection 1 as a member of a criminal association shall be liable to imprisonment ranging from one to ten years.

(4) (4) If the conditions in section 27, subsection 5 are met, an offender shall merely be punished with imprisonment of up to one year in the case of subsection 1 above, imprisonment of up to three years in the case of subsection 2 above and imprisonment of up to five years in the case of subsection 3.

### **§ 28a Trafficking in Narcotic Drugs**

(1) (Anyone who produces, imports, exports a narcotic drug or offers to supply it to another person, passes it on to another person or procures it for another person contrary to regulations in a quantity exceeding the limit specified in section 28b shall be liable to imprisonment of up to five years.

(2) The punishment shall be imprisonment ranging from one to ten years if an offender commits a criminal act as specified in subsection 1 above

1. as a regular source of income and has been previously convicted of an offence as described in subsection 1
2. as a member of a criminal association, or
3. involving a narcotic drug in a quantity exceeding fifteen times the threshold quantity (large quantity).

(3) If the conditions in section 27, subsection 5 are met, an offender shall merely be liable to imprisonment up to three years in the case of subsection 1 above and to imprisonment of up to five years in the case of subsection 2

(4) The punishment shall be imprisonment ranging from one to fifteen years if an offender commits a criminal act as specified in subsection 1 above

1. as a member of a criminal association, was previously convicted of an offence as described in subsection 1,
2. as a member of an association of a larger number of people conspiring to commit such offences, or
3. involving a narcotic drug in a quantity exceeding twenty-five times the threshold quantity.

(5) The punishment shall be imprisonment ranging from ten to twenty years or life imprisonment if an offender commits a criminal act as specified in subsection 1 above and is a leading player in an association of a larger number of people conspiring to commit such offences.

### **§ 28b Threshold Quantity for Narcotic Drugs**

The Federal Minister for Public Health shall fix by decree, in agreement with the Federal Minister of Justice, for each narcotic substance a lower limit in terms of pure substance of the active agent capable of jeopardizing the life and health of people in larger doses (threshold quantity). In doing so, the addictiveness of the respective narcotic drug and the habituation behaviour of addicts to that drug shall be taken into account.

## Penal provisions for psychotropic substances

### § Illegal handling of psychotropic substances

(1) Anyone who acquires, possesses, produces, transports, or imports a psychotropic substance, offers to supply it to another person, passes it on to another person or procures it for another person contrary to regulations shall be punished with imprisonment not exceeding one year or with a fine of up to 360 daily rates.

(2) Anyone who commits such a criminal act exclusively for personal use shall be liable to imprisonment of up to six months or with a fine of up to 360 daily rates.

(3) An act as specified in subsections 1 and 2 above shall not be prosecuted as a criminal offence if a person acquires, possesses, transports, imports, or exports a medication containing a psychotropic substance for personal use or for administration to an animal, or

1. offers to supply such a medication to another person, passes it on to another person, or procures it for another person without material benefit
2. offers to supply such a medication to another person, passes it on to another person, or procures it for another person without material benefit provided that the quantity involved does not exceed the threshold quantity as specified in section 31b.

### § 31 Preparation of Trafficking in Psychotropic Substances

(1) Anyone who acquires, possesses, or transports a psychotropic substance in a quantity exceeding the limit specified in section 31b with intent to distribute it shall be liable to imprisonment of up to two years.

(2) The punishment shall be imprisonment not exceeding five years if an offender commits a criminal act as specified in subsection 1 above involving a psychotropic substance in a quantity exceeding fifteen times the threshold quantity specified in section 31b (large quantity).

(3) (Anyone who commits the criminal act described in subsection 1 as a member of a criminal association shall be liable to imprisonment ranging from one to ten years.

(4) (4) If the conditions in section 27, subsection 5 are met, an offender shall merely be punished with imprisonment of up to one year in the case of subsection 1 above, imprisonment of up to three years in the case of subsection 2 above and imprisonment of up to five years in the case of subsection 3.

### § 31a Trafficking in Psychotropic Substances

(1) Anyone who produces, imports, exports a psychotropic substance or offers to supply it to another person, passes it on to another person or procures it for another person contrary to regulations in a quantity exceeding the threshold quantity specified in section 31b shall be liable to imprisonment of up to three years.

(2) The punishment shall be imprisonment not exceeding five years if an offender commits a criminal act as specified in subsection 1 above involving a psychotropic substance in a quantity exceeding fifteen times the threshold quantity specified in section 31b (large quantity).

(3) Anyone who commits the criminal act described in subsection 1 as a member of a criminal association shall be liable to imprisonment ranging from one to ten years.

(4) If the conditions in section 27, subsection 5 are met, an offender shall merely be punished with imprisonment of up to one year in the case of subsection 1 above, imprisonment of up to three years in the case of subsection 2 above and imprisonment of up to five years in the case of subsection 3

### § 31b Threshold Quantity for Psychotropic Substances

The Federal Minister for Public Health shall fix by decree, in agreement with the Federal Minister of Justice, for each narcotic substance a lower limit in terms of pure substance of the active agent capable of jeopardizing the life and health of people in larger doses (threshold quantity). Section 28, second sentence, shall apply *mutatis mutandis*.

## Penal provisions for drug precursor substances

### § 32 Illegal handling of drug precursor substances

(1) Anyone who produces or transports a drug precursor substance or passes it on to another person with a view to being used in the production of narcotic drugs contrary to regulations shall be punished with imprisonment not exceeding one year.

(2) Anyone who acquires or possesses a drug precursor substance with a view to being used in the production of narcotic drugs contrary to regulations in a quantity exceeding the threshold quantity as specified in sections 28b and 31b respectively shall be liable to imprisonment of up to two years.

(3) Anyone who produces, imports, exports a drug precursor substance, offers to supply it to another person, passes it on to another person or procures it for another person with a view to being used in the production of narcotic drugs contrary to regulations in a quantity

exceeding the threshold quantity as specified in sections 28b and 31b respectively shall be punished with a term of imprisonment not exceeding five years.

### New Psychoactive Substances Act (NPSG)

#### § 4 Penal Provisions

(1) Anyone who - with intent to gain an advantage - produces, imports, exports or lets another person have or supplies another person with a new psychoactive substance specified by a regulation pursuant to section 3 or defined pursuant to section 3 as belonging to a class of chemical substance so that the other person or a third party can apply it in the human body with a view to achieving a psychoactive effect, shall be punished by up to two years of imprisonment.

(2) If the offence results in the death of a person or gross bodily injuries (section 84 para. 1 of the Penal Code) of a large number of persons, the offender shall be punished by one to ten years of imprisonment.

# 8 Types of illicit drugs



## The most commonly abused illicit drugs in Austria

The description of the following drugs, except for khat plants, is provided by Suchthilfe Wien GmbH, which in turn references information from the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA).

### Cannabis

Cannabis is the umbrella term for the hemp products hashish and marijuana. Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) is the most important psychoactive agent among the approximately 400 different chemical ingredients of the hemp plant. The highest THC concentration is found in the resin of the female inflorescences. Hashish ("dope", "shit") consists of the resin of the inflorescences, while marijuana (grass, ganja) consists of a mixture of crushed leaves, flowers and stem pieces of the hemp plant. Aside from marijuana and hashish, hemp is also processed into hashish oil. Despite its high THC content, hashish oil is the least common hemp product. The resin has different names, depending on the colour of the variety. There is Yellow Moroccan, Red Lebanese and Black Afghan. The potency of cannabis is determined by the THC content of the resin, the quantity of resin, age and storage conditions.

#### Effect

When marijuana is inhaled hundreds of different substances enter the body. So far, it has not been possible to identify the exact mechanisms of action. THC, the most important psychoactive substance, is absorbed through the pulmonary mucosa when marijuana is smoked and through the intestinal mucosa when it is consumed orally. In the bloodstream THC is transported to all organs, where it accumulates in tissues with a high fat content because of its elevated fat solubility. This is why traces of THC can be detected in the urine even after weeks. Although most effects of cannabis consumption are felt for only a few hours, half of the THC is still in the blood after 20 hours. In the brain, THC binds to the recently discovered cannabinoid receptors whose exact functions are yet unknown. A large number of cannabinoid receptors are located in a brain structure that is responsible for remembering new information. This explains why people can hardly remember anything under the influence of cannabis and have a different perception of time. Further cannabinoid receptors are found in the cerebellum, the brain region responsible for automatic movements such as walking. Hence the coordination difficulties that are experienced under the influence of cannabis.

#### Legal Framework

The acquisition, possession, import and export of cannabis, the procurement for and handing over to others (distribution and sale) is a punishable offence and may result in monetary penalties and imprisonment. Anyone who passes on a "joint" in convivial company – without taking a single puff themselves - is liable to criminal prosecution for possession or distribution of narcotic drugs. When a crime report is filed for the purchase and possession of a small quantity of cannabis for personal use, it is suspended by the public prosecution service for a probationary period of two years. Unless charges of purchase and possession of narcotics have been preferred within the last five years, the public prosecution service may abstain from involving the public health authority and suspend the charges immediately. Unless charges of purchase and possession of narcotics have been preferred within the last five years, the public prosecution service may abstain from involving the public health authority and suspend the charges immediately.

### Heroin

Heroin, whose chemical name is diacetylmorphine, belongs to the class of semi-synthetic opioids. What is called morphine base is extracted from the juice of the poppy plant (*papaver somniferum*) by distillation. After further chemical processing, including the addition of acetic anhydride, diacetylmorphine is formed. Illicit, non-medical heroin, called „H“, „brown“, or „poison“, is usually diluted by street dealers with substances like glucose, lime, powdered sugar or paracetamol and has, therefore, a relatively low degree of purity (between 45-45%).

#### Effects

Because of its chemical structure and high fat solubility, heroin enters the brain faster than morphine. The short „approach time“ brings about an intensive state of intoxication or „kick“. The faster a substance enters the brain, the greater its addictiveness. In the human body, heroin is converted into morphine and eventually excreted through the kidneys.

#### Legal Framework

Heroin is subject to the Narcotic Drugs Act and its penal provisions. In particular, the acquisition, production, import and export, transfer to and procurement for others (sale) is a punishable offence and may result in fines and imprisonment.

## Morphine and derivatives

Besides codeine, morphine is the main component of raw opium, which is obtained from the sleeping poppy (*papaver somniferum*) and is classified as a natural opioid. Morphine is an opium alkaloid and acts on the  $\mu$ -opioid receptor. Its activation causes euphoria, respiratory depression, cough suppression, constipation and dependence. Illicit non-medical morphine is also known as „M“, morph and Miss Emma and is usually distributed as a white crystalline powder with a bitter taste.

### Effects

Morphine is soluble in water and therefore passes the blood-brain barrier more slowly than fat-soluble opioids, such as heroin. As all other opioids, it stimulates the opioid and the enkephalin receptors and causes the release of dopamine. Morphine is administered orally, rectally or by intramuscular, subcutaneous or intravenous injection. Intravenous administration in non-medical use involves major risks such as the likelihood of overdose or the infection from impure syringes and syringe utensils. When illegally consumed on the streets, morphine is often smoked or snorted. It is rapidly transformed in the liver and excreted in the kidneys. Its effect lasts for four to five hours.

### Legal Framework

Morphine is subject to medical prescription under the Pharmaceutical Act. Anyone who passes on or sells this drug violates the Narcotic Substances Act, even if it was initially prescribed by a doctor. Morphine is also subject to the Narcotic Drugs Act and its penal provisions concerning psychotropic substances. In particular, the acquisition, possession, production, import and export, transfer to and procurement for others (sale) is a punishable crime and may result in fines and imprisonment. Bei einer missbräuchlichen

Thus, misusing morphine is liable to criminal prosecution both under the Pharmaceutical Act and the Narcotic Drugs Act.

## Raw opium

The capsules of the opium poppy (*papaver somniferum*), the variety used for producing opium, contain a milky juice, which is transformed into a brown mass when exposed to the air: raw opium. Opium contains between 25 and 40 different nitrogen compounds, so-called alkaloids, with morphine, narcotine and codeine being the most important substances in terms of quantity. Morphine is the basic substance for producing diacetylmorphine, or heroin. Opioids can be classified into natural (morphine, codeine), semi-synthetic (e. g. heroin), synthetic (like methadone) and endogenous opioids (en-

dorphins or enkephalines). Natural opioids are all substances found in the juice of the opium poppy and are also known as opiates.

### Effects

Opioids affect those areas of the brain that contain what is called opiate receptors, no matter whether they are injected, inhaled or taken orally. The duration of the action of opioids depends on the type and amount of substance, the route of administration, and on physical factors like weight or gender and ranges from one hour to more than one day. After several weeks of intensive opioid consumption, the body develops tolerance to the opioids taken, which means that their quantity needs to be increased in order to achieve the desired effect again. When consumption is discontinued, the body reacts with hot and cold shivers, severe pain in the limbs, depression and hallucinations.

### Legal Framework

In 1961, poppy straw concentrate, opium, raw opium, heroin, methadone, morphine and codeine were included in the New York Convention on Narcotic Drugs.

## Cocaine

Cocaine is a white, crystalline, bitter-tasting powder made from coca leaves by adding water, lime or sodium carbonate, kerosene and ammonia. On the black market, cocaine is diluted with other substances - usually cutting agents such as milk powder, but also vasoconstrictive, synthetic, analgetic or anaesthetic substances like lidocaine or novocaine. Typically, cocaine is snorted, but it can also be administered intravenously (injected). Chemical processing can turn it into the smokable drugs crack or freebase. When smoked, the onset of mental effects is within a few seconds, but the effects last for no more than ten minutes. Crack and freebase lead to severe psychological addiction more quickly than cocaine administered through different routes. Crack is a free base form of cocaine that is prepared with baking soda. Its purity of 80 to 100% makes it more dangerous than „standard“ cocaine. Crack looks like small, white or light yellow (sometimes pinkish) rocks, with grain sizes ranging from that of sand to pebble. Due to its strong short-term effect and subsequent misery, the psychological and physical dependence potential is much higher than for other narcotics.

### Effects

Cocaine enters the bloodstream through the nasal mucous membranes, when crack or freebase is smoked, or by injection. Cocaine is fat-soluble, i.e. it passes the blood-brain barrier and affects the brain. Unlike amphetamine, which causes an increased release of

the semiochemicals norepinephrine and dopamine in the brain, cocaine prevents these semiochemicals from being absorbed in the nerve cells. The result is similar in both cases: neurotransmitters accumulate in the synaptic gap, causing dopamine and norepinephrine to permanently stimulate the downstream nerve cells, which is psychologically experienced as euphoria and strength. Following intoxication, the brain needs a few days to rebuild the neurotransmitters, bringing about depressive moods, fatigue and apathy.

### Legal Framework

Cocaine and crack are subject to the Narcotic Drugs Act . The acquisition, possession, production, import and export, transfers and sale to others is a punishable crime and may result in monetary penalties or imprisonment.

### Ecstasy (MDMA)

Ecstasy is the street name for a series of amphetamine derivatives, which differ from amphetamines (“speed”) in small variations of their chemical structure. Originally, only methylene dioxy-methyl-amphetamine (MDMA) was named ecstasy. Over the last ten years, a number of additional amphetamine derivatives with a similar effect have emerged on the black market, and today MDA, MDE, MBDB and other compounds are subsumed under the term ecstasy.

Chemical analyses carried out by international organisations have, however, revealed that often completely different substances, such as speed and non-psychoactive substances such as medicines and placebos, are sold as ecstasy. Some samples include substances that present a major health risk such as atropine or methadone. Ecstasy is taken orally or by nasal route in the form of tablets, capsules or powder. The duration of action depends on the dosage, the route of administration and personal factors such as body weight, gender or previous food intake. The effect of an average dose of ecstasy lasts from 3 to 6 hours, the effect of an average MDA dose up to 12 hours.

### Effects

After adsorption into the bloodstream, part of the substance enters the brain where it affects specific areas. Ecstasy primarily causes an increased release of the neurotransmitter serotonin, resulting in reduced hunger and thirst, increased alertness, body temperature and blood pressure, as well as intensified feelings such as happiness and euphoria. When ecstasy ceases to affect the serotonin system after a few hours, the physical condition and mood start to reverse. Addicts report fatigue, exhaustion, confusion, sadness and depressive moods. The human brain takes up to four weeks to rebuild its natural serotonin level.

### Legal Framework

Ecstasy is subject to the Narcotic Drugs Act and its penal provisions on psychotropic substances. More specifically, the purchase, possession, production, import and export, transfer to and procurement for others (distribution and sale) is a punishable offence and may result in monetary penalties or imprisonment.

### Speed – amphetamine/methamphetamine

Amphetamines are fully synthetic, i.e. artificially produced substances with a chemical structure similar to natural ephedrine found in ephedra (mahuang) plants. Speed is a white or pink crystalline powder, which contains amphetamines or methamphetamines and is distributed as tablets or, more often, as capsules. The effect of methamphetamine is similar to that of amphetamine, except that it is longer and stronger. Speed is taken nasally or orally or, much less frequently, smoked or injected. Crystal meth (“ice”, “crystal”) is a crystalline and smokable form of methamphetamine that produces euphoria for several hours and is highly addictive. Typically, amphetamine is diluted with other substances before being sold on the black market.

### Effects

Amphetamines reach the bloodstream through the mucous membranes (of the mouth or nose), the stomach or through inhalation and injections. Amphetamine is fat-soluble, i.e., it passes the blood-brain barrier and takes effect in the brain. Amphetamine causes an increased release of the neurotransmitters norepinephrine and dopamine in the brain by pushing them out of the storage vesicles and into the synaptic gap. Both norepinephrine and dopamine belong to the group of catecholamines like adrenaline. Depending on dosage, they bring about a number of physical and mental distortions. Once speed has been degraded in the body, it no longer influences any neurotransmitters. The brain then needs a few days to restore neurotransmitter balance. During this period, the effects of speed are reversed: users previously full of energy now feel tired and weak, and feelings of strength and self-assuredness give way to irritation, dissatisfaction and lack of concentration.

### Legal Framework

In the 1950s, the WHO demanded prescription requirements for amphetamines. In 1972, amphetamine was included in the Convention on Psychotropic Substances and is now subject to the Narcotic Drugs Act and its penal provisions. More specifically, the purchase, possession, production, import and export, transfer to and procurement for others (distribution and sale) is a punishable offence and may result in monetary penalties or imprisonment.

## LSD

Lysergic acid diethylamide, a semi-synthetic preparation of the ergot fungi, is a colourless, tasteless and odourless substance. In general, LSD is generally distributed as paper trips (blotter paper), microtablets, tablets and capsules. When the substance is dripped onto blotter paper or tablets, the dose may vary considerably. On average, a paper square contains 80 micrograms of LSD.

### Effects

The chemical structure of LSD is similar to the neurotransmitter serotonin and affects specific serotonin receptors in the brain in a way that disrupts the natural selection mechanism of the brain, which prevents sensory overload. Situations in real life can then no longer be assessed in a natural way, as perceptions, voices, thoughts and the line between reality and fantasy blur.

### Legal Framework

LSD is subject to the Narcotic Drugs Act. In particular, the acquisition, possession, production, import and export, transfer and supply to others (sale) is a punishable offence and may result in fines or imprisonment.

## Kath

Khat or qat is the leaves and fresh tops of *Catha edulis*, an evergreen flowering shrub cultivated in East Africa and in the southwest of the Arabian peninsula. Khat leaves are typically wrapped in banana leaves. The main active agents are cathinone and cathine (norpseudoephedrine, also see the drug profile for synthetic cathinones). Chewing khat releases these substances into the saliva, and they are quickly absorbed and eliminated. Both cathinone and cathine are closely related to amphetamine, and in terms of quality, the pharmacological effects of cathinone resemble that of amphetamine, though they are weaker. In their chemical structure, both cathinone and cathine are closely related to phenethylamines. Users only chew fresh leaves, as cathinone quickly decays in old or dry parts of the plant.

### Effects

Khat consumption has effects similar to that of amphetamine: raised blood pressure, euphoria, enhanced alertness. Once the desired effects subside, users may experience dejection, irritability, lack of appetite and insomnia. Frequent use of high doses may provoke psychotic reactions. As far as the gastrointestinal tract is concerned, constipation

and urinary retention may occur. Little is known about the effects of other substances of the khat plant. Euphoria sets in after chewing khat for about one and a half hours. Cathinone levels peak in the blood plasma 1.5-3.5 hours after chewing. Median concentration of the drug (100 ng/ml) is reached after chewing 60 g of fresh khat for one hour. After eight hours, cathinone is almost not traceable in the blood. The first-pass metabolism of cathinone in the liver creates norephedrine. Only 2% of cathinone is passed unchanged in the urine. Khat consumption has been linked to heart attacks, liver failure and oral cancer, but distorting effects have precluded a definitive correlation.

### Legal Framework

In Austria, khat is subject to the Narcotic Drugs Act.

## Psychotropic substances

Psychotropic or psychoactive substance is a blanket term for all substances contained in medications and narcotics that act on the psyche through the central nervous system. Such an influence may be subliminal and may be experienced positively as stimulation, relaxation or pleasant change of mood. However, it can also have a far-reaching effect on the consciousness and lead to seizures, disturbances of consciousness, or – in the worst case – coma.

### Effects

Due to their different chemical structures, psychotropic substances bind to different receptors in the brain, where they trigger signals. Such an influence may be subliminal and may be experienced positively as stimulation, relaxation or pleasant change of mood. However, it can also have a far-reaching effect on the consciousness and lead to seizures, disturbances of consciousness, or - in the worst case – coma.

### Legal framework

In Austria, the use of psychotropic and psychoactive substances as narcotic drugs is restricted, which includes their acquisition, possession, production or import and export. The restrictions are laid down in the Narcotic Drugs Act and in the appended implementing provisions (Narcotic Drugs Regulation, Psychotropic Substances Regulation).

## Drug precursors

Drug precursors are chemicals that are misused for the illicit production of narcotics such as heroin, amphetamine, methamphetamine, cocaine as well as for the illegal production of medications.

### Legal Framework

In Austria, the use of psychotropic and psychoactive substances as narcotic drugs is restricted, which includes their acquisition, possession, production or import and export. The restrictions are laid down in the Narcotic Drugs Act and in the appended implementing provisions (Narcotic Drugs Regulation, Psychotropic Substances Regulation).

## New Psychoactive Substances (NPS)

Psychoactive drugs affect the human nervous system, and influence subjective experience and behaviour. Consumption of psychoactive substances results in a distortion of consciousness, mood and thought. These changes may be sedative or stimulating. Psychoactive drugs alter mechanisms in the brain that regulate mood, thought and memory. The states of consciousness may deteriorate into seizures and coma. All intoxicating drugs have mind-altering effects and can be considered psychoactive substances.

### Effects

Psychoactive drugs affect the human nervous system, and influence subjective experience and behaviour. Consumption of psychoactive substances results in a distortion of consciousness, mood and thought. These changes may be sedative or stimulating. Psychoactive drugs alter mechanisms in the brain that regulate mood, thought and memory. The states of consciousness may deteriorate into seizures and coma. All intoxicating drugs have mind-altering effects and can be considered psychoactive substances.

### Legal Framework

The New Psychoactive Substances Act entered into effect in 2012 and prohibits the gainful production, import, export, procurement and distribution of many research chemicals..



