

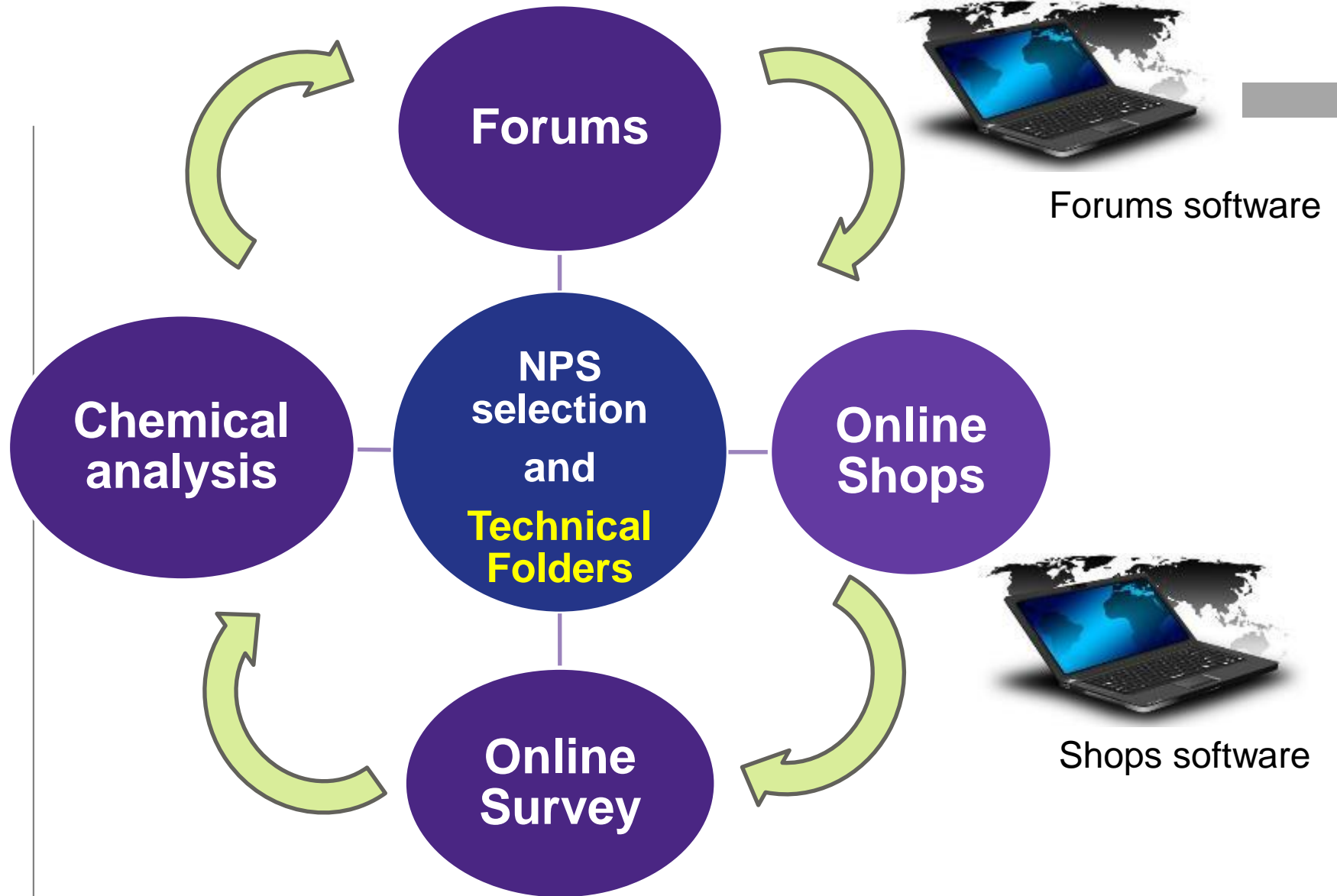


A software for exploring the number of online shops selling new psychoactive substances – One output of the I-TREND project

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I-TREND





www.i-trend.eu



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The European Union

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Drug Prevention and Information Program of the European Union.



- **The open source code of I-TREND SASF is available at**
<https://github.com/I-TREND/SASF>

What is it ?

- **A semi-automated software tool**
- **Inspired by the « snapshot methodology » of REDNET and EMCDDA**
- **For monitoring the number of shops on the surface web**

Schifano and al, 2006.
EMCDDA, 2011

Why creating it ?

- Differences with the « snapshot methodology »

Spare workload and time

1-2 weeks

Vs

1-2 days

Gather more data

Nbr. of webshops

IP address

...

Plus

Differentiate
« duplicates » and
« uniques » webshops
Rank popularity

Get a time-line observation



■ **Surface web**

Referenced by search engines

■ **Deep web**

Not referenced and not intended specifically for illegal purpose

■ **Dark web**

Anonymity tools and illegal purpose

How it runs ?

List of
selected NPS



Checking the « health »
of each e-shops
And collection of new
e-shops



Automatic
searches on
a weekly
basis

**Still with the
same NPS
list !**

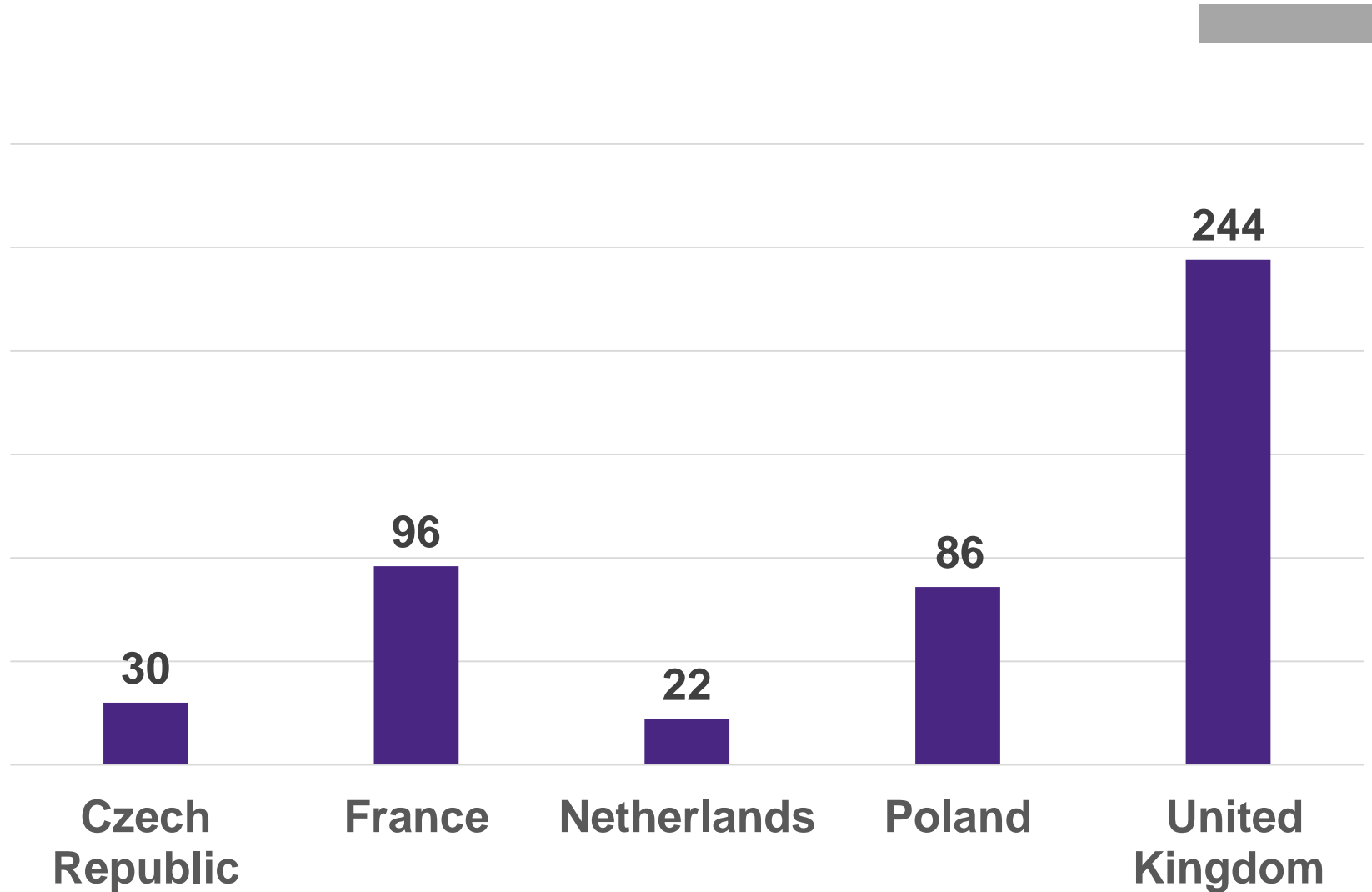
What we did ?

- **A sample of 584 web shops has been built between November 2013 and May 2014**
 - **We have studied and followed those e-shops plus the new e-shops beyond the I-TREND project until today**

Learning

- **Different national situations in a global and interconnected market**

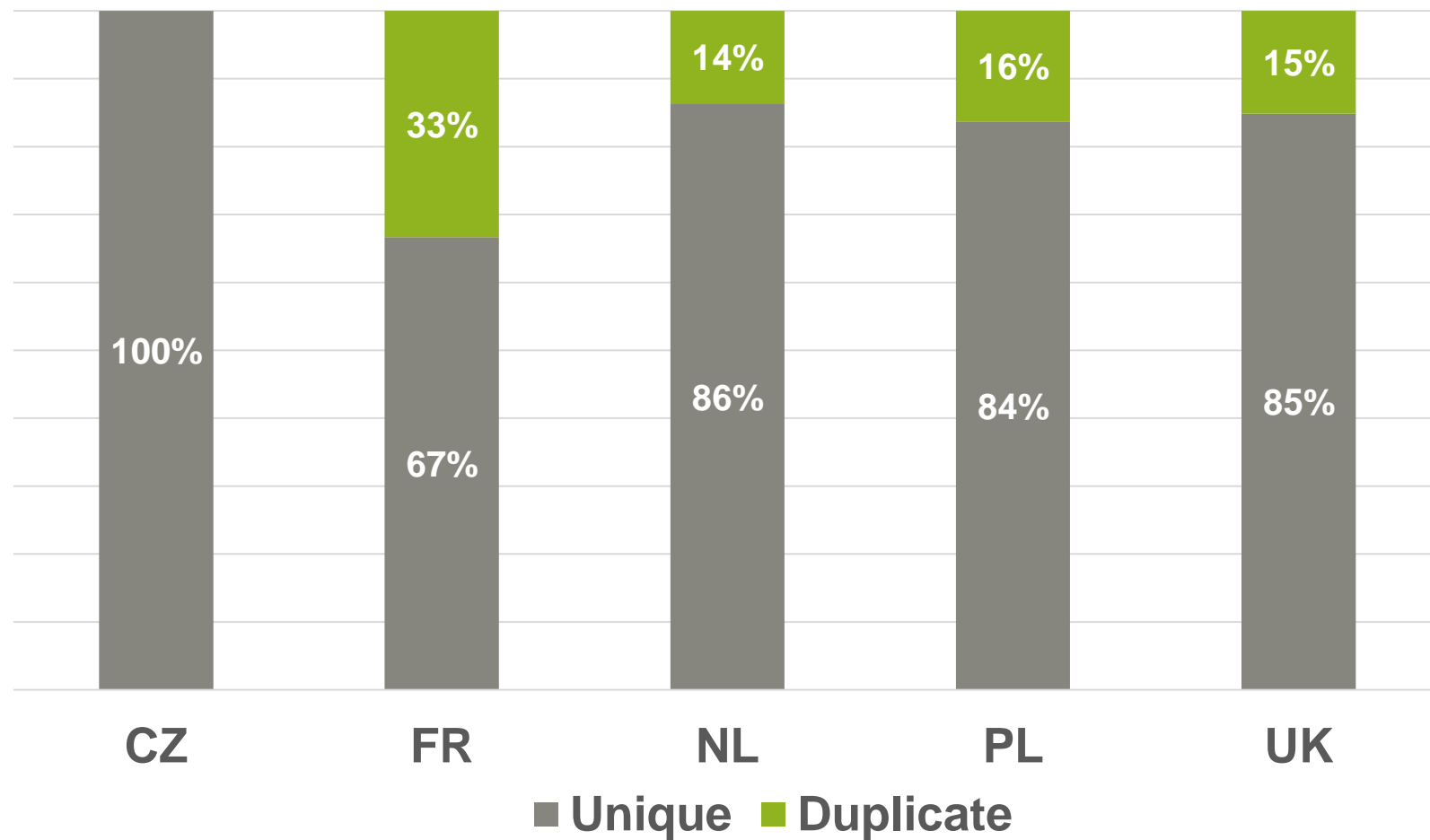
Distribution of web shops per country in May 2014



Learning 1 – distribution of web shops per country

- **The number of shops does not mirror:**
 - The national population size
 - The estimated drug prevalence during the 12 previous months
- **The number of web shops per national language varies a lot**
 - FR= 96 / NL = 22
- **Web shops in English are predominant**
 - UK = 244

Part of unique and duplicate webshops in May 2014



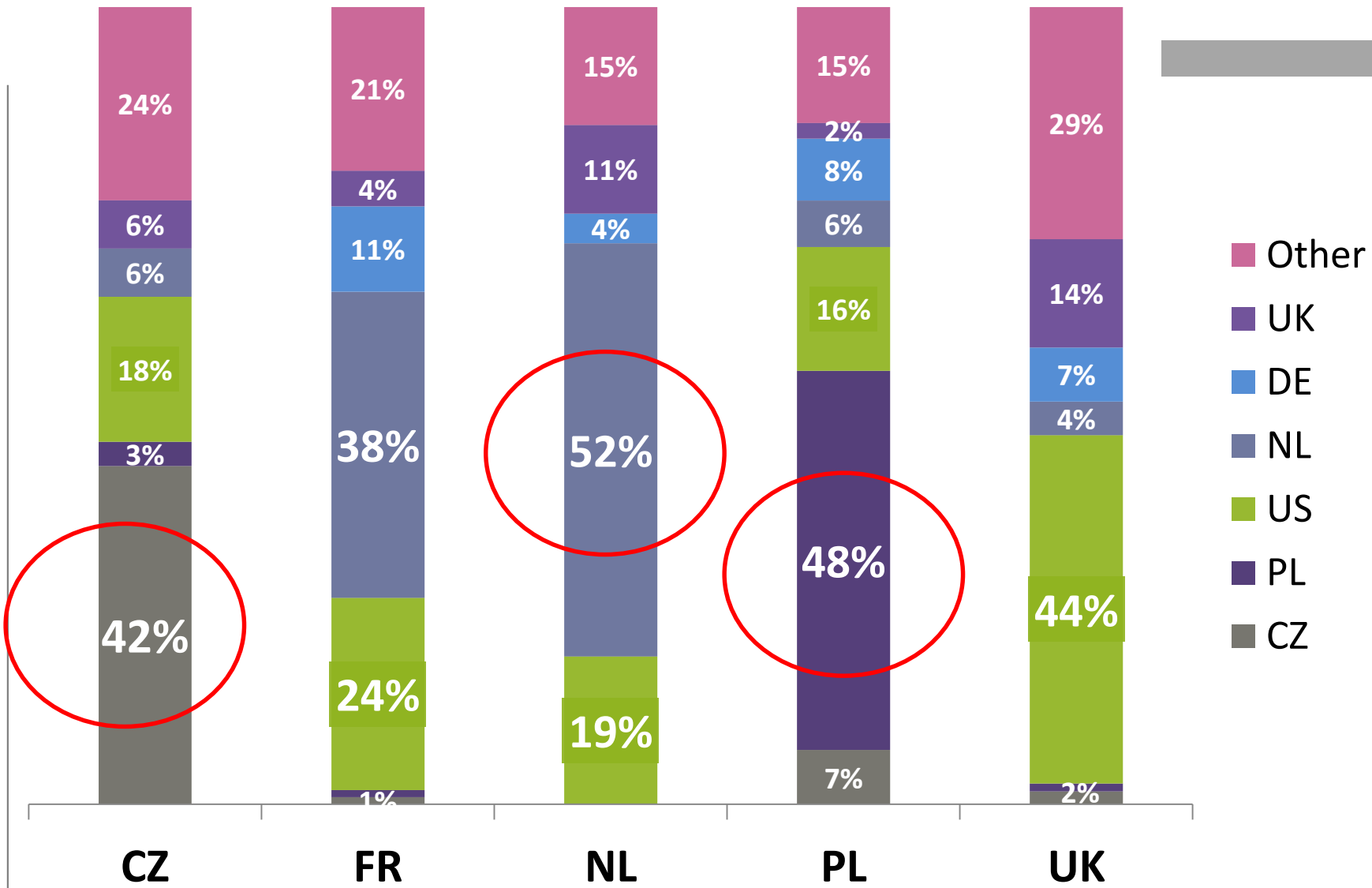
Learning 2 – Visible and invisibles web shops

- Some shops fight for their visibility
- But some of them use the opposite strategy:
 - “Deep web practices” impeding the automate monitoring
 - Back-store with restricted access
 - Display of false but legal activities
 - ...

Learning 3 – web shops and IP geographic location

- **Some countries have more than others websites with an IP address located on their own territory**

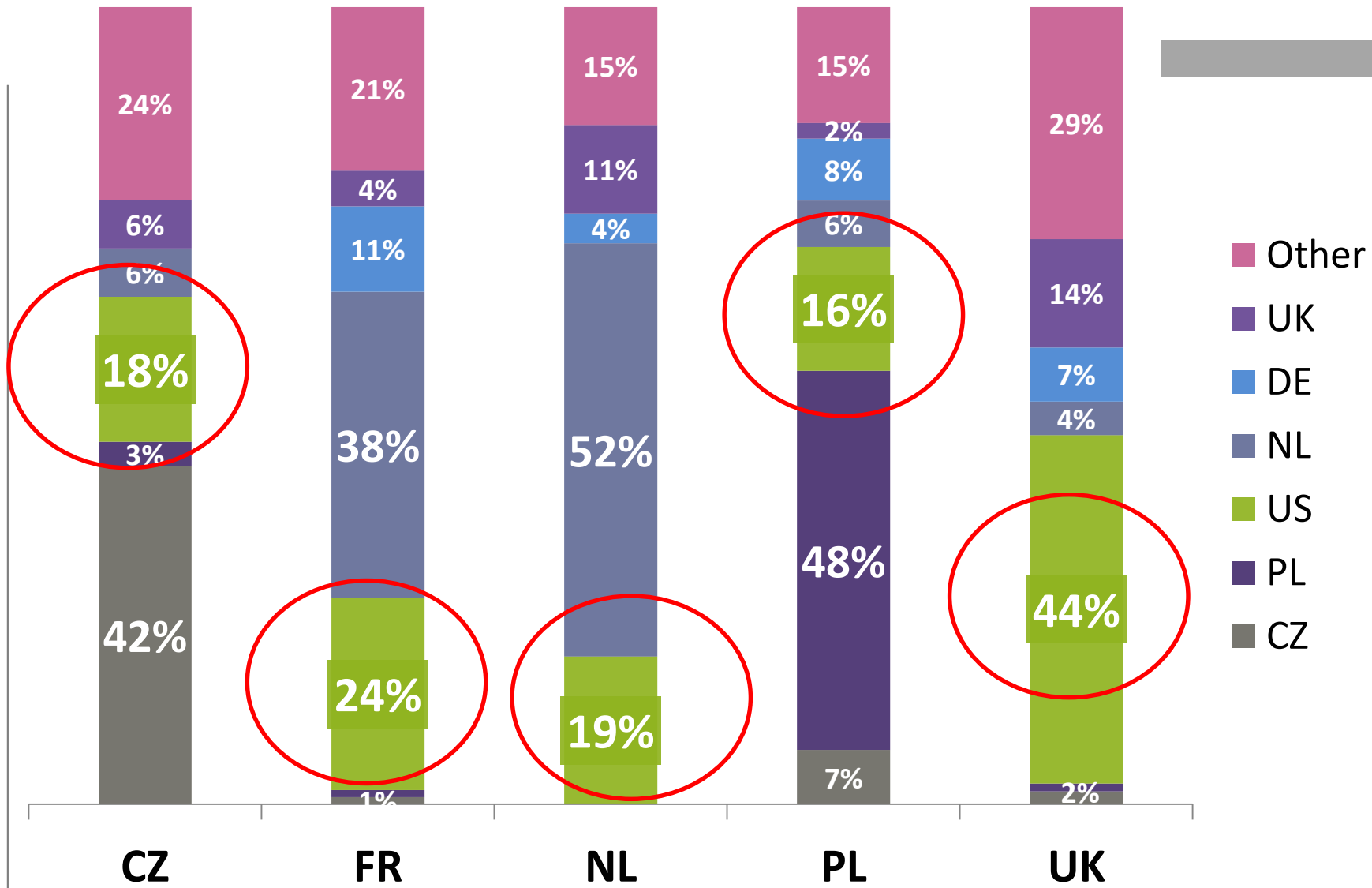
Breakdown of active online shops by IP location in May 2014



Learning 3 – web shops and IP geographic location

- American IP address are well represented in each national online market

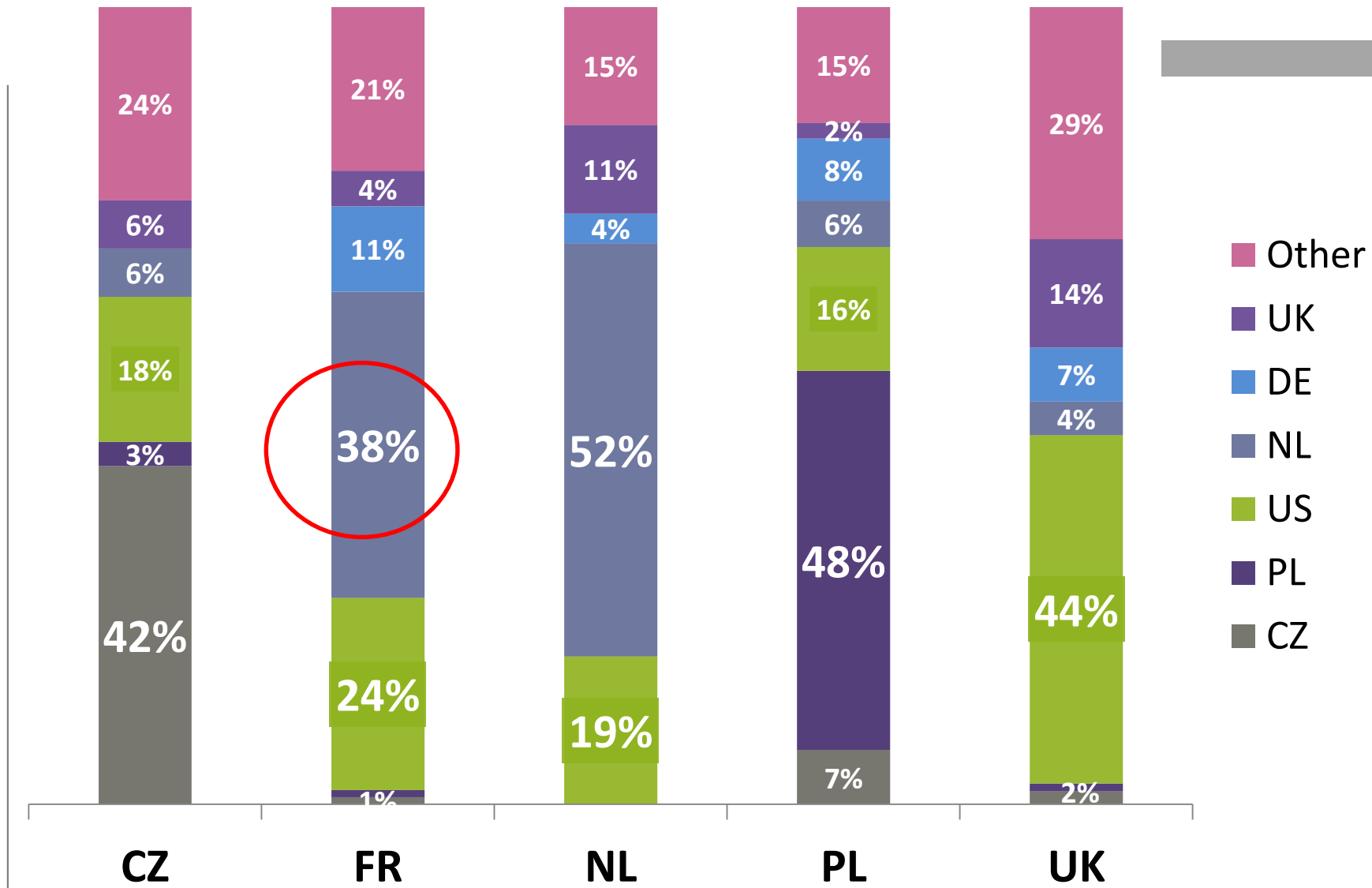
Breakdown of active online shops by IP location in May 2014



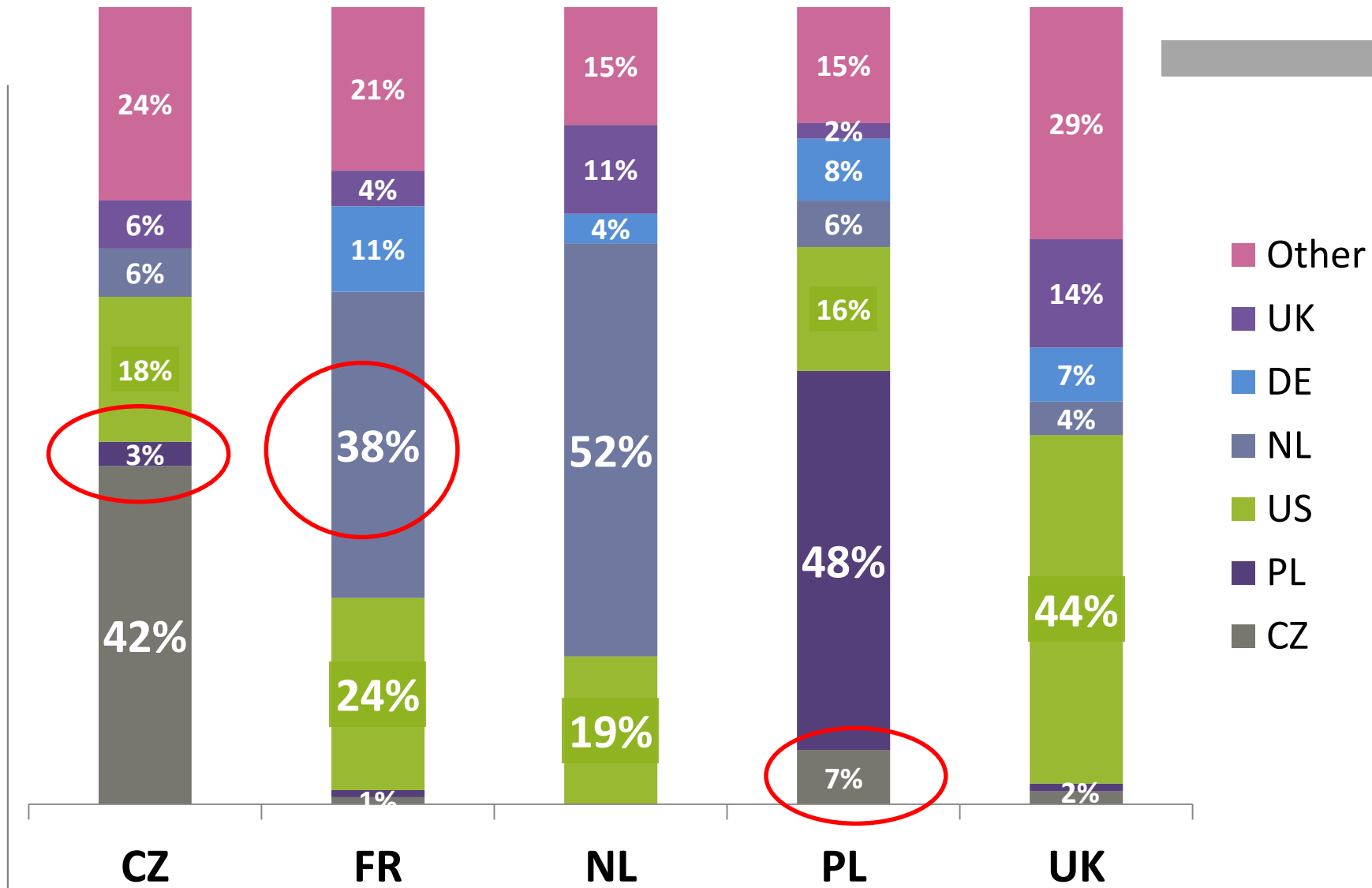
Learning 3 – web shops and IP geographic location

- **Transborder links exist between the observed IP address and the targeted country**
 - **France and The Netherlands**
 - **Poland and Czech Republic**
 - **Germany and the 3 countries around it**

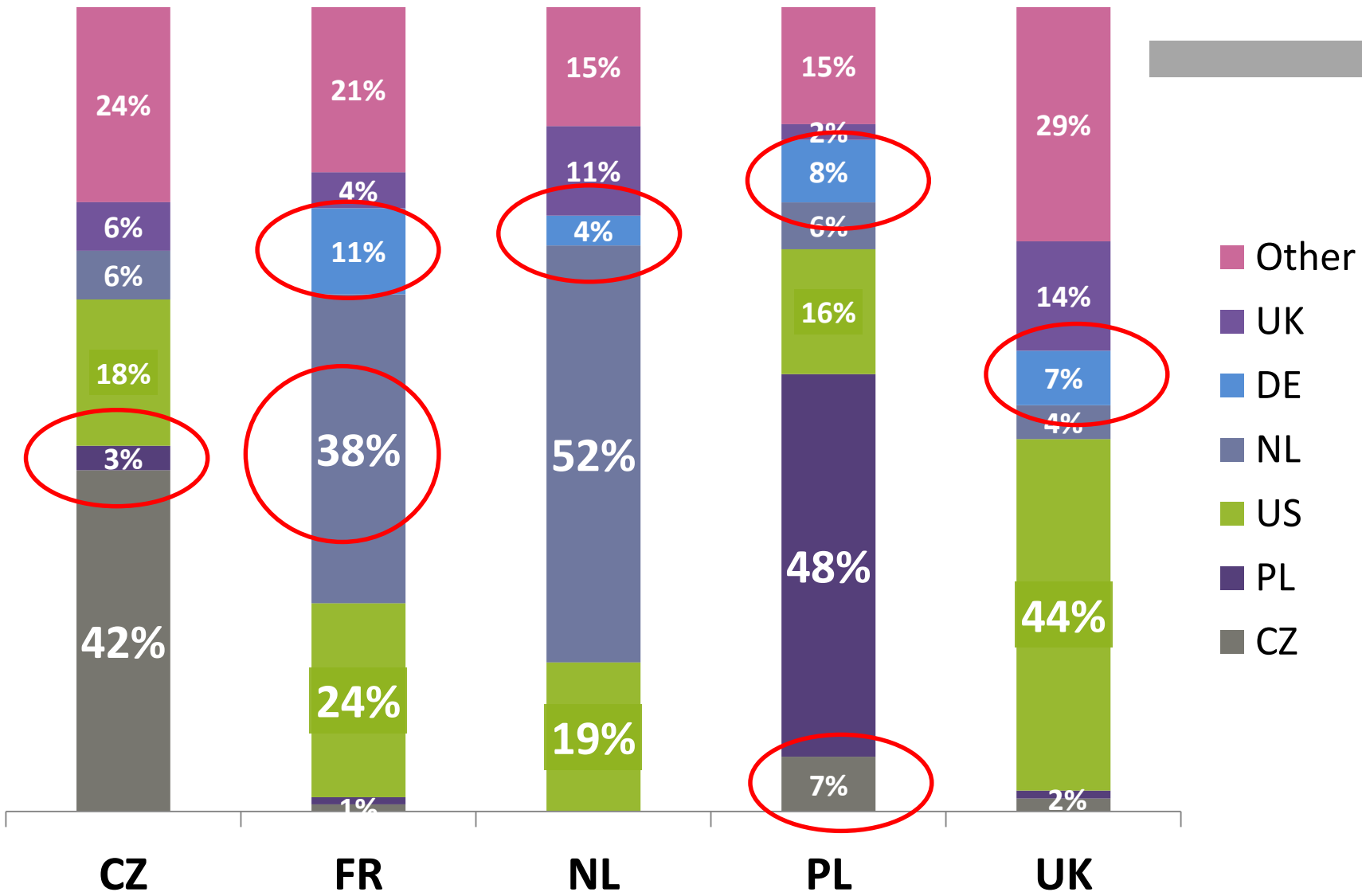
Breakdown of active online shops by IP location in May 2014



Breakdown of active online shops by IP location in May 2014



Breakdown of active online shops by IP location in May 2014



Learning 4 – Type of web shops per country

- **The market is segmented between two main types:**
 - **“RC shops” / Research Chemical shops**
 - **Commercial shops, also called smart, head or herbal shops**

Research Chemical shops

- Serious-looking, display NPS by their chemical names and offer them mainly with powder form
- **Intended for experienced users**



ETHYLPHENIDATE

★★★★★ 47 reviews | Write a review

Availability: In Stock

Powder:

--- Please Select ---

Crystal :

--- Please Select ---

Blue Crystal :

--- Please Select ---

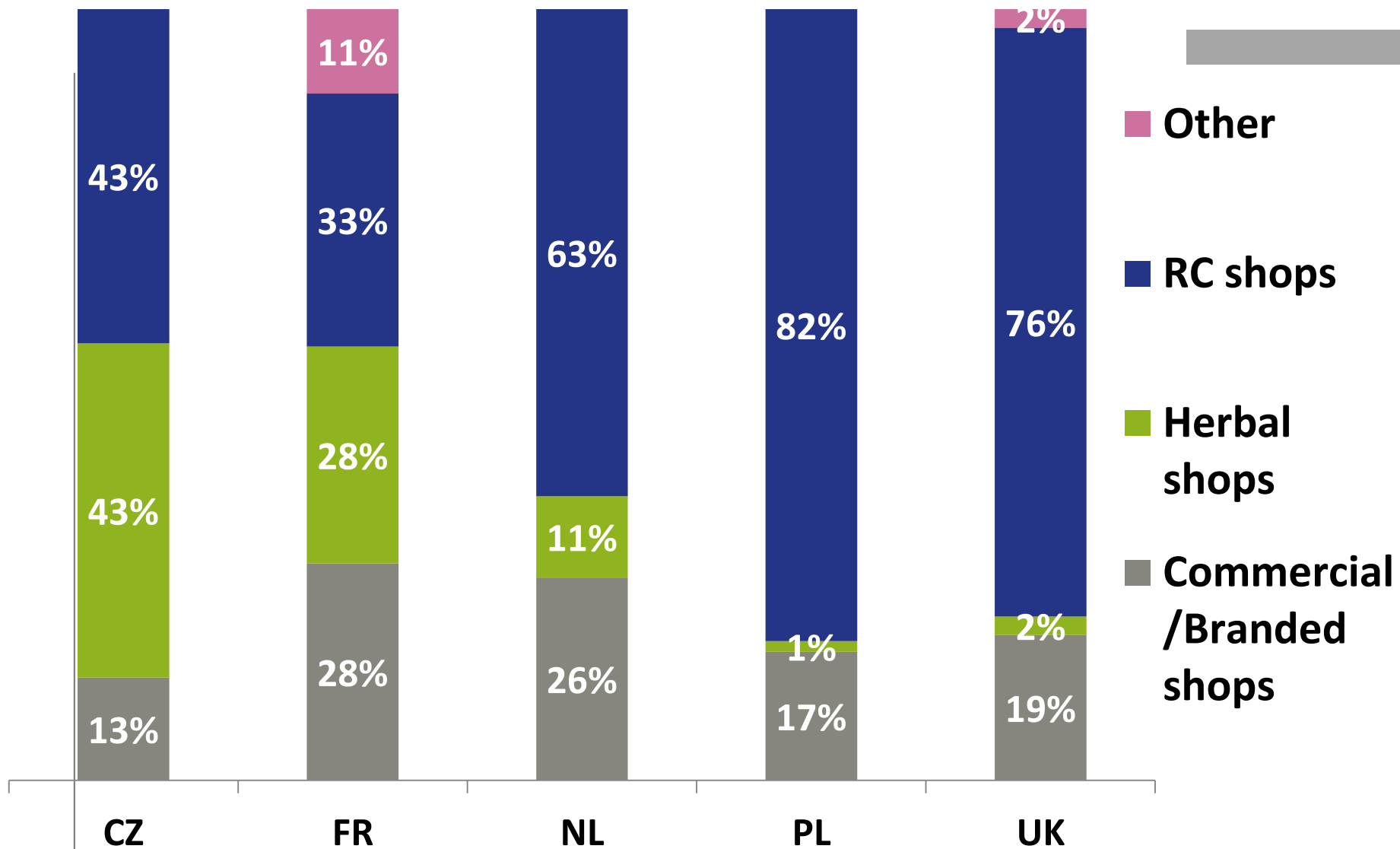


Commercial shops (smart, herbal,)

- Seductive layouts and packaging, NPS sold under trade names and in familiar forms (tablets, herbs)...
- Intended for naïve users



Type of online shops per country in may 2014



Learning 4 - Type of web shops per country

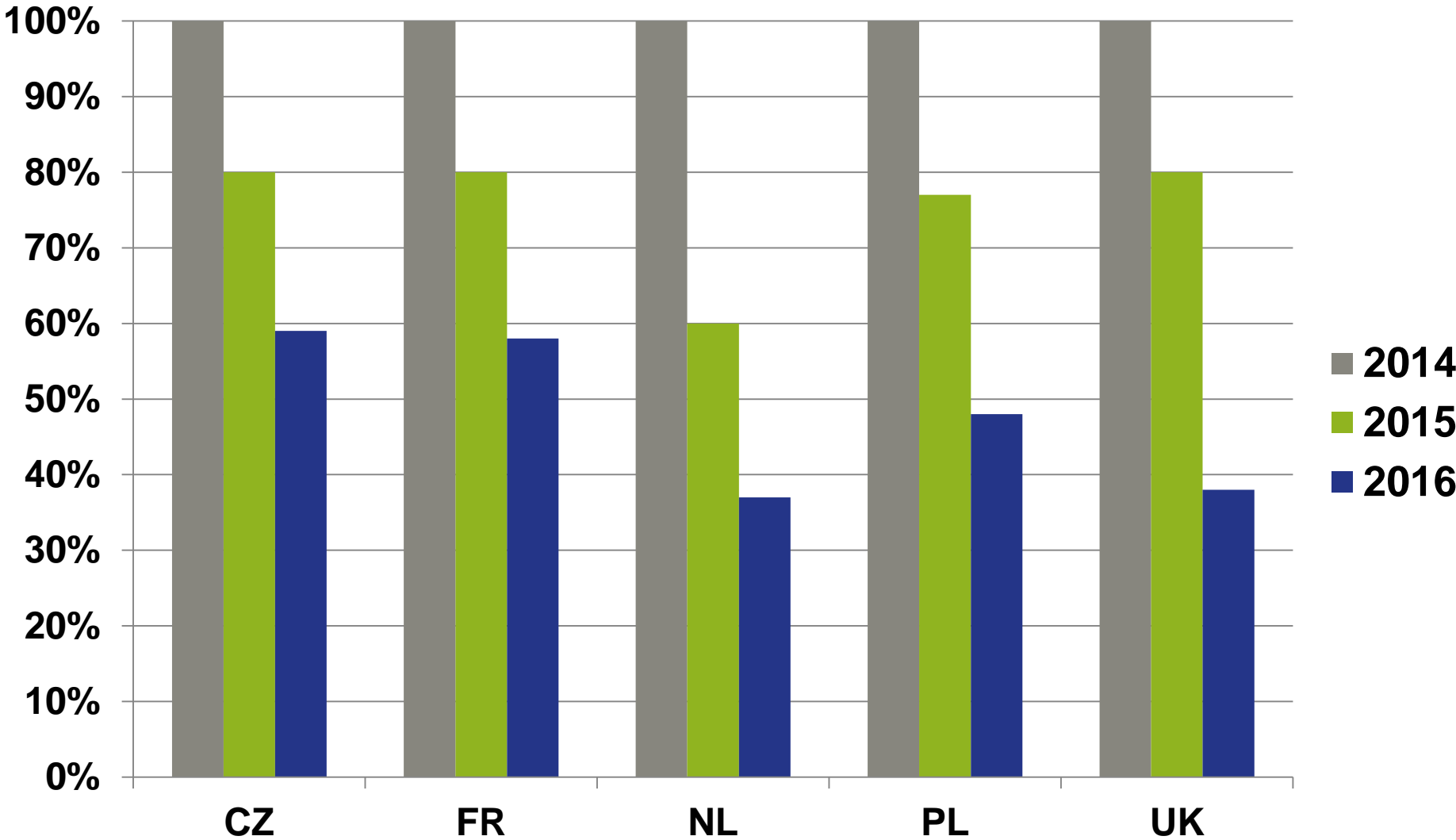
- It is possible that retailers adapt their online presence to “national drug preferences”
 - ESPAD data

Besides remember,

- Countries with brick-and-mortar shops are likely to have high prevalence of NPS,
 - Eg. The United Kingdom, Poland...

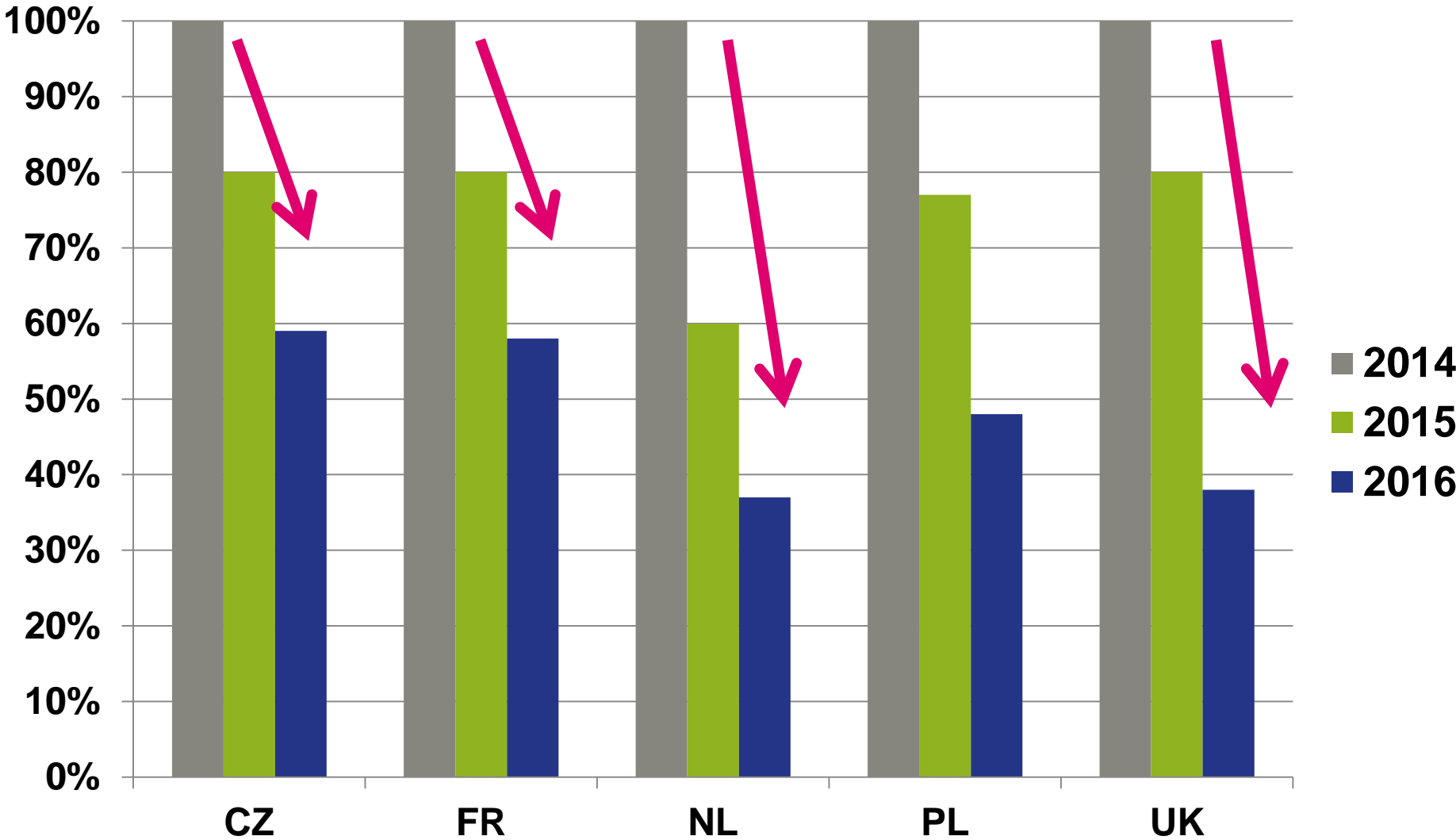
Learning 5 – Dynamics in the online market

Span-life of unique webshops



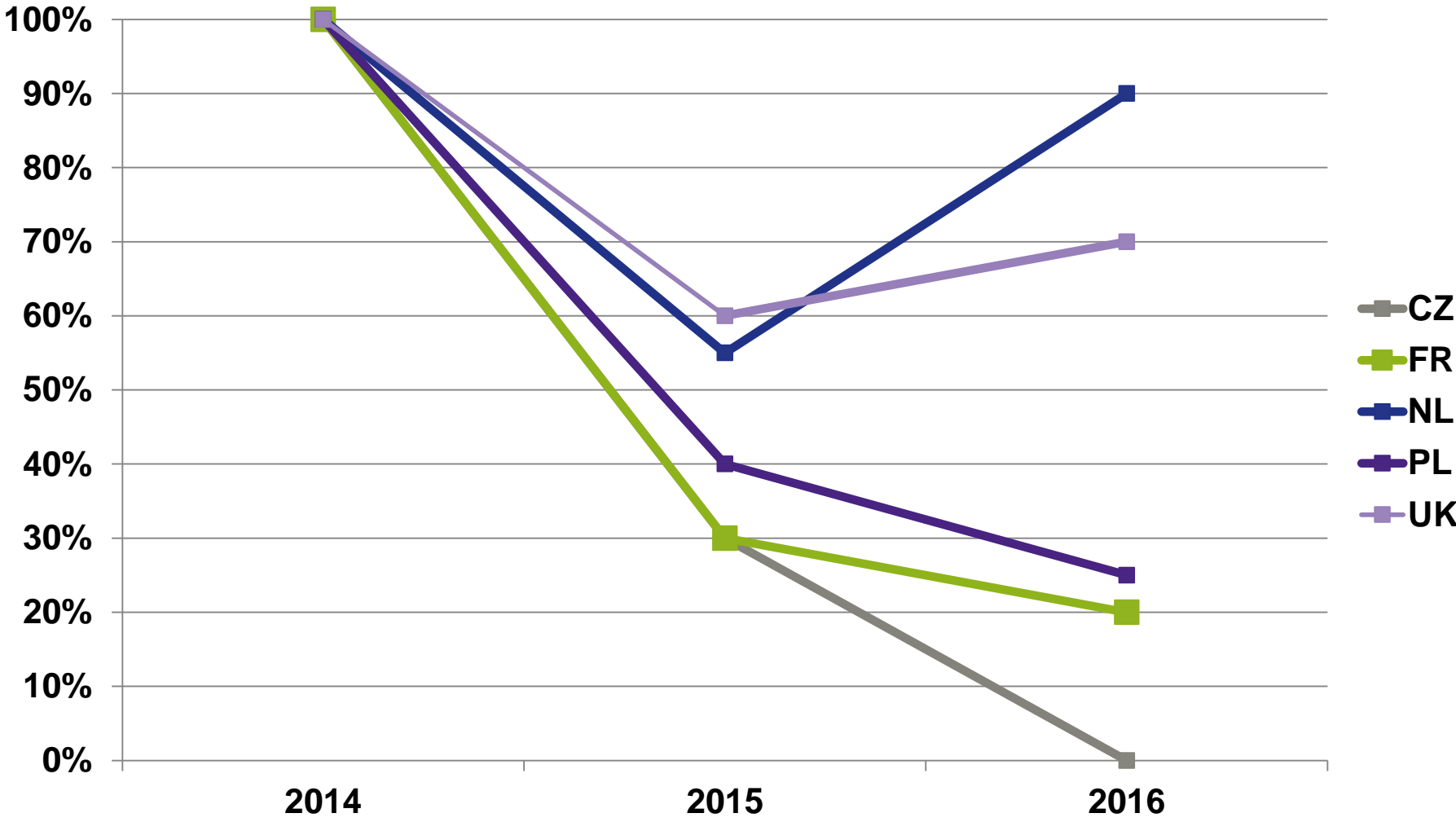
Learning 5 – Dynamics in the online market

Span-life of unique webshops

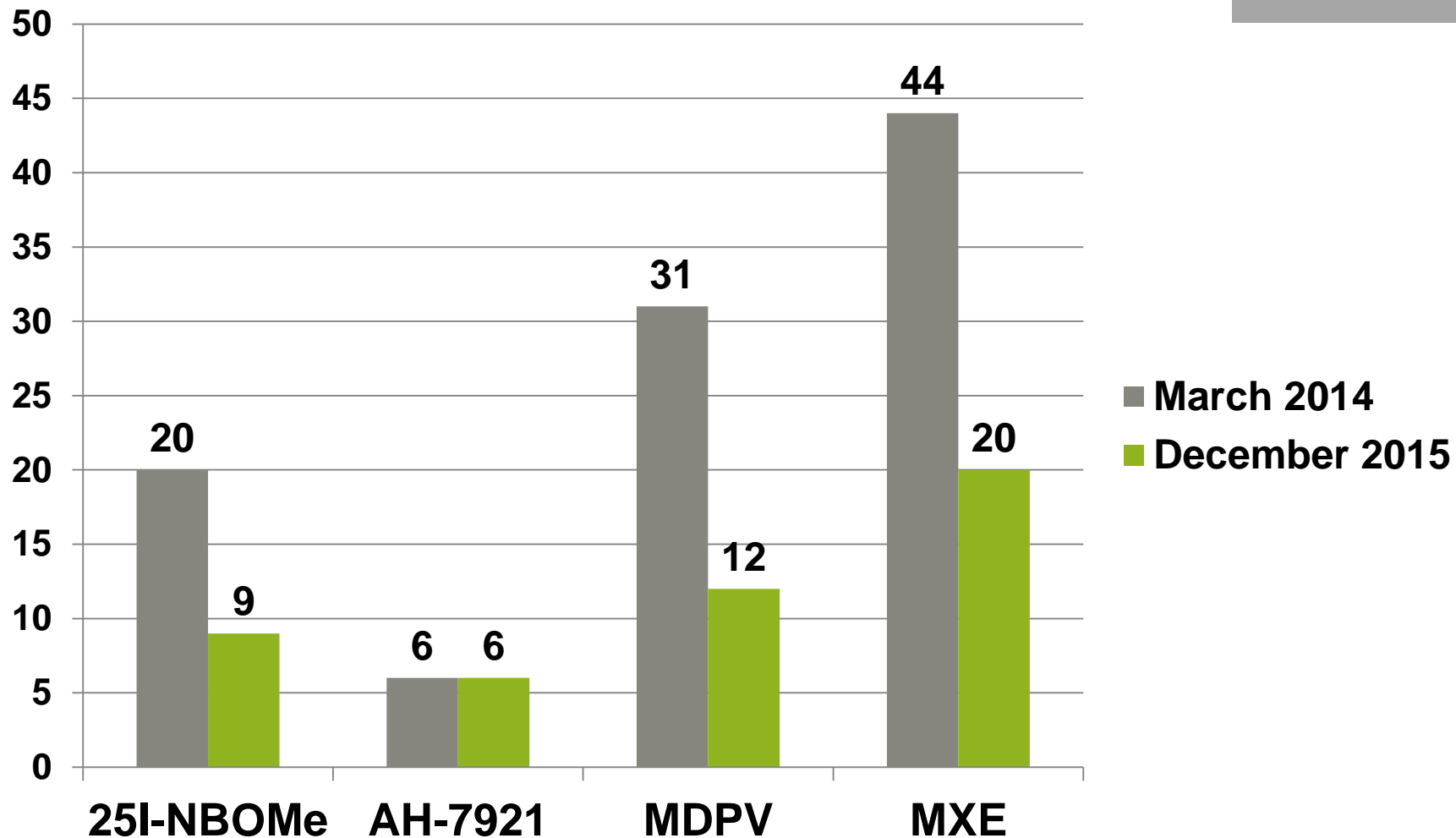


Learning 5 – Dynamics in the online market

Arrival of new e-shops



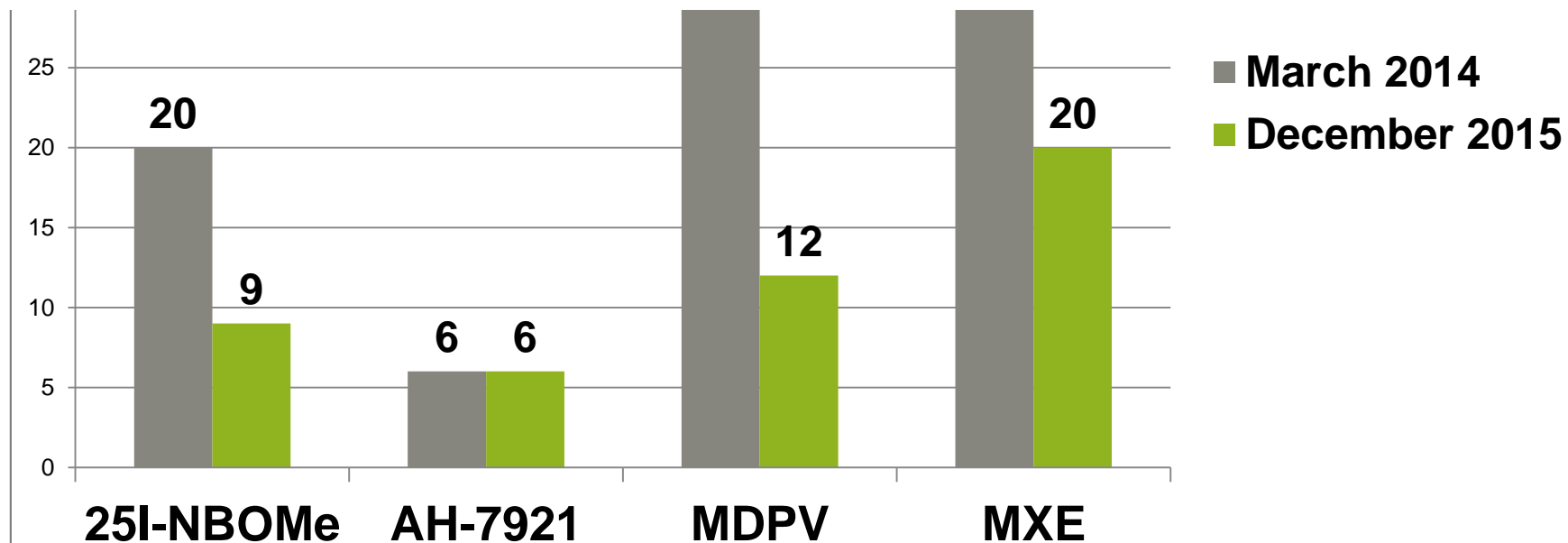
Eg. Ad hoc study on the original sample before and after the EU control of 4 NPS



Eg. Ad hoc study on the original sample before and after the EU control of 4 NPS

- Results seem to show an overall decrease

But...



Eg. Ad hoc study on the original sample before and after the EU control of 4 NPS

- **Some NPS began to be newly offered in some countries after the ban**
 - Eg. 25I-NBOMe and AH-7921 in France
- **For some countries, the number of e-shops offering controlled NPS has increased**
 - Eg. CZ and PL
- **Plus shift in extra EU IP address, and darkweb question...**

For more information...

- Belackova, Vendula; and all, *Assessing the online availability of 25I-NBOMe, AH-7921, MDPV and MXE – outcomes of a semi-automated monitoring of e-shops in five EU countries.*
Under reviewing by « Drugs: Education, Prevention & Policy ».
- Pazitny, M.(2016) An analysis of webshops with NPS and their marketing strategies (unpublished thesis).
1st Faculty of Medicine Charles University in Prague.
- Martinez, M., Kmetonyová, D., & Belackova, V. (2016). *A method for exploring the number of online shops selling new psychoactive substances: initial I-TREND project results, pp.97-104*
In: The internet and drug markets, MOUNTENEY J., BO A., OTEO A. (EMCDDA Insights n°21). Luxembourg: Publications Office of the EU.

Conclusion

- **Various type of web shops,**
- **Use different strategies for being on the market**
 - Spamdexing / deepweb practices
- **Target different kind of users**
 - Naïve or experienced
- **Likely to react differently to legal changes**
- **Likely to fluctuate over a long-time period**

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Thanks for your attention

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trend

Internet tools for research
in Europe on new drugs



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