

# Drug Market and Crime workbook 2024

*FRANCE*

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**When responding to the workbook, please be certain to use the fields associated with each question to allow the EMCDDA to identify the relevant parts.**

## **T0. Summary**

Please provide an abstract of this workbook (target: 500 words) including a summary of the following points:

National profile

- Domestic drug market (domestic production/cultivation; trafficking routes for imported drugs) (a summary of T1.1.1 & T1.1.2)
- National drug law offences (main drugs linked to offences; distinguishing between possession/use, trafficking, cultivation/production) (a summary of T1.2)
- Key drug supply reduction activities (summary of T1.3)

### *Domestic drug market (summary of T1.1.1 & T1.1.2)*

The illicit drug market in France is structured around four main substances: cannabis (resin, herbal), cocaine, heroin and MDMA/ecstasy. There are also secondary markets - amphetamines, new psychoactive substances (NPS) but, given the low consumption levels of these products among the general population, the supply is difficult to quantify. Given France's geographic position at the heart of Western Europe, it is a transit area for the main illegal substances (cannabis, cocaine, heroin, and synthetic drugs) produced worldwide. France is also a production area for certain drugs, particularly cannabis. While almost all illicit psychoactive drugs consumed in France are produced abroad, herbal cannabis is subject to significant cultivation activity, both in mainland France and in the overseas territories, in addition to the volumes imported from EU countries, particularly neighbouring countries (such as Spain). More generally, the cannabis market in France remains characterised by the significance of cannabis resin but this share has been decreasing in the past decade in favour of herbal cannabis. Cannabis resin comes almost entirely from Morocco, one of the main worldwide producers along with Afghanistan.

Over the last ten years or so, like other EU countries with a coastline, France has been particularly affected by cocaine trafficking on container ships, partly because of the geographical proximity of its overseas territories (Antilles, French Guiana) to the major production zones (Colombia, Peru, Bolivia) and transit zones (Ecuador, Brazil, etc.) in South America. A significant share of the cocaine imported across the French territory goes through French Guiana or the French Antilles and crosses the Atlantic to be unloaded at the main French commercial ports such as Le Havre, Dunkirk, Saint-Nazaire and Marseille. Another route towards France leaves from the Port of Santos in Brazil which is playing an increasingly large role in the supply of the European market.

Like the cocaine market, the psychoactive drug market is expanding, as demonstrated by the combined increase in the seized quantities of MDMA/ecstasy and amphetamine.

Finally, the heroin market is also characterised by a certain vitality which reflects the extent of the seizures. 2022 was the 5<sup>th</sup> consecutive year where seizures exceeded one tonne (1.4 tonnes). Consumption levels remain fairly stable. Most of the heroin consumed in France comes from Afghanistan, the world's leading producer, and travels through the Balkans, even though opium poppy production in Afghanistan has fallen sharply since 2022. As with cocaine and psychoactive drugs, the Netherlands and Belgium are significant providers of the French market since they are home to the wholesale or retail markets where criminal or user-dealer networks come to get their supplies and then redistribute the product across mainland France.

### *National drug law offences (summary of T1.2)*

In 2023, the total number of people charged for the use of narcotics in France was around 260 300. Most of the people prosecuted for drug offences were charged for simple use (84%). The number of people arrested for trafficking offences is way lower (48 300 in 2023). As of September 2020, simple use violations can be sanctioned by a criminal fixed fine (AFD in French). In 2023, the Interior Ministry's statistics department made a list of more than 160 000 criminal fixed fines, thus demonstrating the significant growth of this measure to tackle drug use (particularly those of cannabis). Since 2022, a criminal fixed fine have become the main response to drug use. However, these progressions are very contrasting geographically. Most of the fines relate to the use of cannabis (almost 98%), far ahead of cocaine (less than 2%), with other products accounting for virtually no share.

### *Key drug supply reduction activities (summary of T1.3)*

Action for combating drug trafficking is part of the 2023-2027 Interministerial Strategy for Mobilisation against Addictive Behaviours, which establishes the new strategic government policy framework, and the priorities for the coming years. This strategy highlights the importance of comprehensive and coordinated action between the different services involved, particularly cooperation between internal security forces and the judicial system to combat drug trafficking and organised crime. It also emphasises the need for public action to be underpinned by in-depth knowledge, promoting the dissemination of knowledge, the involvement of the scientific community, and continuous support for research. The strategy calls for strengthening European cooperation to prevent, deter, and disrupt drug-related crime, particularly organised crime. That includes police, customs, and judicial cooperation, exchanging intelligence, seizing and confiscating criminal assets, alongside combating corruption. In addition, in accordance with the directions of the national anti-narcotics plan which aims to develop the seizures of criminal assets, the resources of the Agency for the Recovery and Management of Seized and Confiscated Assets (AGRASC) have been enhanced to such an extent that, in 2022, the asset seizures reached a record level of 771 million euros. Thus, the "Narcotics" support fund, established annually from sums permanently confiscated by a judicial authority for drug trafficking, was 53.8 million euros in 2023, which is five times higher than 10 years ago. As for the model for restructuring the services operated in France for combating terrorism, a new service was created in 2020 to fulfil the role of sole leader in the fight against drug trafficking: the Home Affairs Department's Anti-Narcotics Office (OFAST). This creation is one of the main operational adaptations of the national anti-narcotics plan. It corresponds with the Government's desire to increase cooperation between the different services responsible for law enforcement: police, customs, gendarmerie, and justice. Combating trafficking is also based on the interaction between customs and the justice system which takes place within the National Jurisdiction Against Organised Crime (JUNALCO). In order to enhance the efficiency of the fight against drug trafficking, the government has developed more targeted actions addressing, for example, the places of the arrival of cocaine: thus, in 2022, a coordination body in charge of combating drug trafficking was created at the Port of Le Havre which is under the authority of the public prosecutors of Paris, Douai and Rouen. This plan is part of the enhancement of cooperation in terms of combating trafficking within European ports and protecting port infrastructures.

Moreover, [law no. 2023-610 of 18 July 2023](#) revised the legislative framework for customs action, adapting the powers of customs officers to new digital realities and trafficking developments. This reform includes a review of the customs inspection right, detailing the terms and conditions of these operations to strike a balance between customs offences and respect for individual freedoms and privacy, but also provisions aimed at modernising the monitoring and investigative capabilities of all customs services.

Finally, in November 2023, the Senate launched a committee of inquiry on the impact of drug trafficking in France and measures to address it. The committee began its hearings on 27 November 2023, and published its conclusions on 14 May 2024, with three main recommendations: consider trafficking for what it is, which is a threat to a nation's fundamental interests, "hit the top" of the trafficking pyramid, and better structure the action of services responsible for combating drug trafficking.

Other players take part in combating trafficking, including the Minister of Europe and Foreign Affairs and the Ambassador Extraordinary of the fight against terrorism and organised crime.

## T1. National profile

The purpose of this profile is to provide a commentary on the drug supply chain within your country.

### T1.1. Drug market

The purpose of this section is to summarise the basic structure of the drug market in your country. Namely it should provide a commentary on

- Sources of drugs in your country: international sources of the drug, trafficking routes, domestic production/cultivation
- Information available on the wholesale drug market
- Information available on the retail drug market
- The numerical data submitted through ST11, ST13, ST14, ST15, ST16

**Note:** Please focus on the main/most important drugs in your country.

T1.1.1. Please describe any domestic production of drugs within your country by drug. For synthetic drugs please include also processing stages such as tableting operations.

Herbal cannabis is the main illegal substance leading to a domestic production in France, even though a portion of the volumes consumed come from other European countries, mainly Spain, the Netherlands, Belgium and Albania. Given the volumes of plants seized by the law enforcement services (customs, police, gendarmerie) in certain parts of the national territory (76 807 plants seized in 2022), production proves to be very present in the overseas territories (French Polynesia, La Réunion) where most of the seizures have occurred. In Metropolitan France, local production remains present.

Domestic production of herbal cannabis is characterised by many recent changes: marked for a long time by its handmade dimension (since small producers grow some plants for their personal consumption or their family members' consumption), it has evolved since the 2000s, which has resulted in the appearance of cannabis factories managed by organised crime gangs (INHES 2009) but also in a more significant visibility of the plantations (of more diverse sizes) destined to supply a market which is no longer merely local. However, this production is not substantial enough to meet the growing demand for herbal cannabis which is satisfied most often by foreign production sources within the EU coming from Spain (the main European producer of herbal cannabis), in particular, or Albania.

Different producers of herbal cannabis can be distinguished in France:

- Small growers, estimated between 150 000 and 200 000 persons in the years 2010s, who produce for themselves or for their immediate circle of friends or family.
- Individuals getting involved in relatively large-scale commercial herbal cannabis production (several dozen plants).
- Criminal groups implementing real production units ("cannabis factories") with up to several thousand plants, with an increasing involvement of groups coming from so-called "sensitive" suburban areas that originally were specialised in importing and distributing cannabis resin.

Other than the production of herbal cannabis, there is no significant production of illegal drugs in France, except for some illegal "kitchen" laboratories producing synthetic drugs, such as MDMA/ecstasy (OFAST 2023a).

T1.1.2. Please comment on any available information on the routes of trafficking for drugs imported into your country whether in transit or not. Information relevant to this answer includes:

- origin
- most recent country prior to your country
- any other information on trafficking routes as well as the mode of transport

Owing to its geographical position at the heart of Western Europe, France is a transit area for certain illegal drugs. The South-to-North route is used for the transit of cannabis resin, produced in Morocco and transiting via Spain (where it is stored and redistributed), notably destined to supply Northern European markets. The North-to-South route is used for the transit of synthetic drug shipments through France (ecstasy, MDMA), produced in the Netherlands and Belgium, destined for Spain, Italy or more recently for North Africa (OFAST 2023a). This transit route is also reported for heroin, stored in the Netherlands (Rotterdam, Maastricht, etc.), in transit from North and South of France to Spanish and Italian markets. Finally, France appears to be a strategic cocaine transportation zone, given its overseas departments in the American continent (French Guiana, Guadeloupe, Martinique) near the main areas of production (Colombia, Bolivia, Peru) and cocaine transportation (Brazil, Venezuela and Suriname for cocaine, and Iran, Turkey and Albania for heroin), which represent departure points of cocaine towards Europe, but also due to its many ports which are used by the trafficking networks as a gateway into Europe for cocaine.

### *Cannabis*

The supply of cannabis, in both France and the European Union, is essentially centred on two products, herbal cannabis and cannabis resin, even though other substances are observed on the market, such as the oil or derivatives of cannabis which are high in THC (butane hash oil, ice-o-lator or ice hash<sup>1</sup>). The cannabis resin smoked in France comes almost exclusively from Morocco. Shipments leaving the Rif region in Morocco, after crossing the Mediterranean, reach Spain via speedboats or goods vehicles. Spain is the main transit country of cannabis resin transported to France, and is now in competition with other countries in the Eastern Mediterranean. France is also a point of transit enabling the supply of markets in the North (United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Germany etc.) and South (Italy) of Europe. At the beginning of the 2010s, the French market, marked for a long time by the supremacy of cannabis resin imported from Morocco, experienced a change due to the increase in the consumptions of herbal cannabis (Obradovic 2016), imported from Spain or the Netherlands, or produced across the national territory (Gandilhon *et al.* 2019) particularly in the overseas departments (Obradovic 2020).

### *Cocaine*

The cocaine used in France mainly comes from Colombia, the largest producer worldwide of coca leaves (UNODC 2022). To reach France, once the European continent has been reached, it mainly passes through the south via Spain (Algesiras) and the north via the Netherlands (Rotterdam) and Belgium (Antwerp) and more recently via French Guiana and its daily airport links to Paris. Most of the cocaine reaches France by sea (container ships or, less frequently, pleasure sailing boats) even though delivery by air is progressing. Over the past few years, the port of Le Havre has become a major gateway for cocaine to France. This change is explained by the connections between the Antilles port of Fort-de-France and Le Havre in the West-Northern metropolitan area in a context where the French West Indies are becoming a major developing zone for cocaine destined for France and Europe. The shipping line between the port of Santos in Brazil and Le Havre also seems to play an increasing role in supplying the French market. The strengthening of security and controls at the Port of Le Havre in 2023 made it more difficult for drug traffickers to use this port to bring their goods into French territory. Law enforcement authorities identified an increase in the practice of “drop-offs”, which appeared to offset the restrictions in place at the Port of Le Havre. That would explain why 2023 was marked by discoveries of consignments of cocaine washed ashore on beaches or recovered from the deep sea. In addition, this restriction has led to an increased use of secondary ports, such as the one in Montoir-de-Bretagne, where many seizures were made this year. While their capacity is well below that of the Port of Le Havre, these secondary ports are often less secure and offer greater freedom of movement for traffickers (Durain and Blanc 2024).

Because of its geographical position in the EU, France is particularly affected by cocaine trafficking (OFDT 2023). On the one hand due to its location in the heart of Western Europe which makes it a transit location connecting the Netherlands and Spain in particular; on the other hand, due to its proximity to the main areas of production in South America and in the French Antilles across the overseas territories. While the French Antilles are

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<sup>1</sup> BHO and ice-o-lator are both resins with very high THC contents (in general, 60 to 80%) and extraction processes based on butane, on one hand, and iced water on the other hand, in order to obtain higher contents.

traditionally a rebound zone for the maritime transport of cocaine destined for the French market, French Guiana has played a significant role in the metropolitan market for about ten years. The Cayenne-Paris route, used by smugglers transporting goods *in corpore* and/or in their luggage, has gained importance in recent years. However, in October 2022, security measures at Cayenne Airport were strengthened, particularly through the introduction of systematic passenger screening for those departing for Paris. In addition, as part of the “Mules plan” in French Guiana, a “100% control” system has been in place at Cayenne Airport since November 2022, which has gone hand in hand with a more effective interception of trafficking attempts (12 500 orders to deny boarding issued since the implementation of the system). As a result of the implementation of this control system, the number of cocaine seizures by customs at Orly Airport (destination from Cayenne), has decreased threefold. This control thus appears to have had a deterrent effect, according to law enforcement authorities. Nevertheless, it appears that the traffickers, faced with this strengthened customs response in Cayenne, have sought ways to bypass through the West Indies, opting for origins which are considered to be less monitored, such as Guadeloupe and Martinique (OFAST 2023b). Planes travelling to the West Indies are subject to less systematic controls. This bypassing strategy was confirmed by the authorities during two 100% control tests on flights from Fort-de-France, where, of 150 passengers, 10 mules were identified each time (Durain and Blanc 2024). This adaptation of traffickers is also illustrated by the seizure of 2.7 tonnes of cocaine at the Port of Le Havre, from Guadeloupe, in March 2024 (AFP 2024).

Regarding intra-European routes, the Netherlands and Belgium, due to their importance as a secondary cocaine market for Western Europe, are a source of the cocaine consumed in France. The Dutch-Belgian hub therefore supplies criminal organisations or user-dealer micro networks which come to purchase the merchandise in Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Maastricht or Anvers. Given the significant role of the Netherlands and Belgium in the production of synthetic drugs such as amphetamines and MDMA/ecstasy, these cities are also the main sources in terms of importation of these products into the French market. France is also a passing point for the Southern European markets such as Spain, Portugal and Italy.

### *Heroin*

The heroin market is also characterised by the extent of the seizures (1.4 tonnes in 2022, +8% compared to 2021). This was the fifth consecutive year where the heroin seizures exceeded one tonne.

The introduction of opioid substitution treatments (methadone, Subutex<sup>®</sup>) in the mid-1990s had the effect of breaking the dynamics of the distribution of heroin, which started in the 1980s, and marked the beginning of a clear fall in the following years, particularly through the very clear decrease in the number of seizures and arrests of users and traffickers. However, from the second half of the 2000s, the seizures faced another clear increase in quantities and numbers, thus confirming the persistence of a market which nonetheless remains insignificant compared to the cannabis or cocaine market. In addition, the heroin market, unlike the cocaine or cannabis resin markets, is characterised by strong regional variations. It is particularly in the suburban territories in the North East and East of France that this market remains the most persistent, particularly due to the proximity of the Netherlands, the main redistribution zone of heroin in Western Europe (EMCDDA and Europol 2019) but also the proximity of the end of the “Balkans route”. One of the



noteworthy phenomena in terms of supply, in addition to the record heroin levels recorded in France these last few years, is the increasing role, which began almost ten years ago, of the Albanian branches in the Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes region (OCRTIS 2019).

The heroin used in France mainly comes from Afghanistan (brown heroin), the world's leading producer, and is transported *via* the Balkan route (Turkey, Greece, Albania/Bulgaria) through Iran. White heroin originating from the Golden Triangle (Thailand, Myanmar and Laos) is also imported. However, this phenomenon is unclear due to its marginal nature. The Netherlands, ahead of Belgium, is the main platform which supplies French dealers. As with cocaine and synthetic drugs, the Netherlands and Belgium are a significant secondary source of the French market. In these two countries, there are wholesale or retail markets where the criminal or user-dealer networks come, mainly via road vehicles, to get their supplies and they then redistribute the product across mainland France.

#### *Amphetamines and MDMA/ecstasy*

The synthetic drug market is growing, as evidenced by the significant increase in seizures of MDMA/ecstasy during the first 11 months of 2023. During this period, 3 990 000 pills were intercepted, which represents a 180% increase in comparison with the same period in 2022 (OFAST 2023a). Moreover, customs seizures of amphetamines also increased in 2023. The weight of goods seized doubled to reach almost 300 kg, while the number of doses seized amounted to 173 524, which represents a 1 534.40% increase in comparison with 2022 (DGDDI 2024).

Synthetic drugs used in France, such as MDMA/ecstasy and amphetamines, hail predominately from the Netherlands, the main production zone in Western Europe, and are mainly transported by land. France also serves as a transit country for traffickers, particularly to the United Kingdom and Spain, via the same channels. In addition, a share of these drugs are returned via express and postal freight to the American continent, Oceania, and less often, to Réunion. In recent years, France has become an important conduit for the Belgian-Dutch supply of MDMA/ecstasy to be shipped to North Africa, with mules trafficking via air or sea, and also via road transport in hiding places (OFAST 2023a). The amphetamine-type stimulants (ATS) market in France has been widely dominated by MDMA/ecstasy since the end of the 1990s. Certain territories, such as French Polynesia (Simon and Valiergue 2022), are particularly exposed to the circulation of amphetamines and methamphetamines. The significant changes observed on the markets are connected with the form of the product and the emergence of the powder and crystal form on the market at the start of the 2010s, in the context of the decline of the “pill” form (Gandilhon and Néfau 2016).

#### *New psychoactive substances (NPS)*

NPS, which circulate on the French market via the web, are mainly produced in Asia, particularly in China and India. They all have legal applications in the industry or pharmacy.

T1.1.3. Please comment on any available contextual information on trafficking within your country.

Information relevant to this answer includes:

- range and relative importance of different products
- size of transactions

- smuggling methods
- organisation

In 2022, 156.7 tonnes of narcotics were seized, a historic level of interception by law enforcement services, thus showing the extent of the supply and the availability of illegal products. Most of the seizures are related to cannabis: in 2022, the seizures reached a record level of 128.6 tonnes (+15% compared to the previous year). The law enforcement services intercepted twice more cannabis resin (more than 87 tonnes in total) than herbal cannabis (41 tonnes). As for the other drugs, the seizures also increased in 2022: this was the case for both cocaine (27.7 tonnes in 2022, +5%) and heroin (1.4 tonnes, +8%). The seizures of synthetic drugs also increased considerably (+21% between 2021 and 2022), with 273 kg of amphetamines and methamphetamines, and more than 1.5 million ecstasy and MDMA pills.

The narcotic seizures are an important activity of the law enforcement services, particularly the customs services who seized 92.64 tonnes in 2023, which shows strong mobilisation towards the interception of illegal drugs, especially cannabis (69.65 tonnes seized in 2023, cocaine (12.03 tonnes), heroin and opiates (424 kg) and ecstasy (1 056 207 doses) (DGDDI 2023).

The cannabis, cocaine and heroin markets are the three largest illegal drug markets in France. In 2020, the global sales of illicit drugs (cannabis, cocaine, heroin, MDMA/ecstasy, amphetamines) in France was estimated at 4.2 billion euros (Cochard and Cuvilliez 2021). The market with the highest value is cannabis. According to the latest available estimation, the sales amounted to 1.2 billion euros in 2017 compared to nearly 700 million euros in 2010, an increase of around 72% (Spilka and Legleye 2020). This estimate, carried out by the OFDT, is based on the 2017 expenditures of users aged 18 to 64 and those aged 17. Other estimations suggest higher figures but identify the same market dynamic for cannabis (Ben Lakhdar *et al.* 2016; Ben Lakhdar and Massin 2021). The cocaine market's turnover nearly reached 1.7 billion euros in 2017 (Ben Lakhdar and Massin 2021), compared to 902.3 million euros in 2010 even if the basis for estimation was not perfectly comparable (Ben Lakhdar *et al.* 2016). This latest estimation puts the cocaine market's business turnover in a bracket of between 0.936 and 2.4 billion euros which rises to between 1.1 and 2.65 billion euros if crack cocaine is included. In France, the cocaine market has the second highest value after the cannabis market. Despite comparability limitations, the cocaine market allegedly doubled in France during the second half of the 2000s in both volume (going from 8.3 tonnes consumed in 2005 to 15 tonnes in 2010) and value (from 488 million euros in 2005 to 902 million in 2010), before continuing to progress (26 tonnes in 2017).

The French cocaine market is increasingly influenced by the three overseas departments located near coca production areas, particularly Colombia. Latin America and the West Indies supply mainland France through two main means: maritime and air. Maritime supply is by far the most prominent. More than 75% of cocaine seizures made in 2022 are reported to be carried out through this means, with containers playing a major role, as they remain the preferred method of concealment for traffickers (OFDT 2023). The exit ports are generally located in Brazil and Ecuador, as the producer countries are being increasingly controlled. These maritime flows sometimes go through the French Antilles and French Guiana. Martinique and Guadeloupe are no longer only areas where free base cocaine

(crack) is used but it now plays an increasingly important role in supplying the mainland market through maritime routes (Obradovic 2020). In this respect, given its status as France's leading port for container transportation, linking it to the French West Indies and Latin America, the port of Le Havre is an important gateway for cocaine on the French and European markets, as are other major ports in northern Europe, such as Rotterdam, Antwerp and to a lesser extent Hamburg (OFDT 2023). Just like other European countries (especially Belgium, Spain and the Netherlands), some cocaine transformation laboratories have been demolished in France. The latter involve defendants linked to different South American organisations.

While sea transportation remains dominant for cocaine, air transportation progressed and represented 17.1% of the quantities seized in 2022 (i.e 3.7 tonnes) compared to 12.4% in 2021 (OFAST 2022). At the heart of the air routes, the role of French Guiana is central, to the point that the route from Cayenne to Metropolitan France is one of the main routes for bringing cocaine into France. The strengthening of air traffic control between Paramaribo, the capital of Suriname, and Amsterdam is probably one of the causes of French Guiana's growing role in the supply of cocaine to Metropolitan France. As the only airport with direct daily flights to France (and therefore Western Europe), French Guiana is also a strategic point for Surinamese organised crime to export cocaine via Cayenne and its international airport. In parallel with the predominant role of Surinamese drug traffickers, in the past few years, criminal gangs in Guiana have become more empowered. They recruit French "mules" to travel to Paris, so as to set down roots in small and medium-sized metropolitan cities. In 2018, police services recorded an increasing collaboration of these networks with the criminal community that controls the cocaine and crack market.

The cocaine which passes via Guiana is of equivalent quality (average purity of about 65% in 2017) but half the cost (5 000 euros per kg on average) as that purchased in the West Indies or in the Dominican Republic. This competitive price, combined with the uncertainty faced by the inhabitants, has contributed to the significant growth of the French Guyanese channel in recent years. However, in October 2022, security measures at Cayenne Airport were drastically strengthened, particularly through the introduction of systematic passenger screening for those departing for Paris. This control appears to have had a deterrent effect, according to law enforcement authorities. Faced with this strengthened customs response in Cayenne, traffickers have sought ways to bypass through the West Indies, opting for origins which are considered to be less monitored, such as Guadeloupe and Martinique (OFAST 2023b). Similar phenomena to those observed in Martinique currently in play, with the emergence of a local market and bartering of cannabis resin for cocaine.

The law enforcement services have also observed an increase in postal cocaine trafficking originating from French overseas departments such as Guiana and the French West Indies (Guadeloupe and Martinique). Express and postal freight is the main alternative for mules. In 2022, this mode of transport represented 36% of cocaine seizures made by Roissy Fret customs services, originating from French Guiana (OFAST 2023b). The customs figures show an increased use of postal and express freight for all "traditional" drugs: as well as cocaine, these transport vehicles are also reported for cannabis and heroin (DGDDI 2023).

In fact, postal delivery is increasingly mentioned as a purchase method by illicit drug users. This choice offers a certain comfort to the latter because it does not involve any physical contact with the drug dealer or the delivery person. The speed of delivery,

often guaranteed within 24 to 48 hours, is also a major factor of its appeal. Traffickers using this distribution method usually have a storage location, such as an apartment rented through *Airbnb*, which also serves as an order packing workshop. These apartments are often equipped with vacuum sealers to mask suspicious odours, and printers for labelling packages. People circulate these locations to collect orders and ship them at the nearest post office or pick-up point (Tissot 2024). The postal route was initially used mainly for trafficking substances in relatively small, often specific, quantities, such as cannabis concentrates or ketamine, and GBL or cathinones, ordered on specialised websites. However, users have increasingly resorted to using this delivery method for other, more widespread substances such as cannabis and cocaine, no longer via dedicated websites, but instead via trafficker accounts on applications and social networks.

The wholesale and semi-wholesale levels of drug markets are controlled by major organised crime networks. The police departments highlighted Spain's major role as a gateway and rebound area for cocaine destined for the rest of Western Europe, where French criminal gangs are well established. It is in the south of the Iberian Peninsula that they wholesale trade resin from metropolitan wholesalers and launder a share of the money made from trafficking. Alongside these "large" networks exist a myriad of small trafficking channels run by user-dealers, directly supplied by the Netherlands and Belgium (Cadet-Tairou *et al.* 2020).

Heroin trafficking in France is highly fragmented and relatively diversified. In addition to foreign criminal organisations particularly Turkish, Georgian, and Albanian ones, there are small groups from the outskirts of the metropolitan areas that supply the Netherlands, the main destination country for the substance in Europe. What's more, so-called "cités" networks (housing estate networks within deprived neighbourhoods) have become increasingly involved in heroin trafficking in recent years. Micro-networks of user-dealers, sourcing from the Netherlands and Belgium, play an important role in explaining the availability of heroin in France, particularly in the north-east of the country, where use in rural and peri-urban areas is no longer confined to eastern France, as evidenced by TREND observations in the Grand-Est region (Bailly and Zieleskiewicz 2024; Tissot 2023). The involvement of networks "within deprived neighbourhoods" contributes to the expansion of the availability of heroin in the suburbs of many French cities. For example, TREND observations in Brittany revealed that in 2023, heroin was increasingly present at dealing spots in Rennes, with a growing number of these resale outlets (Pavic 2024). In Toulouse, heroin is also increasingly accessible at dealing spots, and in 2022, for the first time, a heroin delivery service was identified, with sales being made via a Telegram account which also offers cocaine and cannabis (Tissot 2023).

The past few years has seen the significantly strong presence of criminal Albanian gangs in the Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes region, operating in both the wholesale and retail drug markets. Whilst their visibility in the retail trade has decreased in metropolitan Lyon, they remain active in the more rural and cross-border areas of the region. Points of sale in central Lyon, once held by these groups, disappeared in favour of suburban networks which have taken over heroin trafficking in the city in recent years (Tissot 2024).

The observations from the TREND scheme also indicate a slight increase in the price of heroin at points of sale or “fours” (points of sale within deprived neighbourhoods), as well as the increasingly widespread practice of fixed price sales in Lyon, Lille, and Rennes (€50, €20, or €10) for small quantities, which allows the most precarious users to access the product (G erome 2023).

T1.1.4. Please comment on available information on the wholesale drug and precursor market.

Information relevant to this answer includes:

- range and relative importance of different products
- size of transactions
- common prices
- product transformation
- adulteration
- the nature and organisation of buyers, sellers and intermediaries

France is not a direct producer of synthetic drugs but is a precursor transit country, especially given the platform of Roissy, in a context where Europe, today, is one of the major production zones of synthetic drugs. Regarding wholesale markets, one of the major events of these last years was the control of the cocaine market by the criminal organisations importing cannabis resin, thus showing a merger of these two wholesale markets.

For the first time since 2020, the wholesale price of cocaine has risen. In 2023, the average price per kilogram of wholesale cocaine in metropolitan France is €32 586, against €32 000 in 2022 and €32 500 in 2021. Since the peak of the 2010s (reached in 2014 at €35 000), the wholesale price has decreased by 6.90%. A wholesale cocaine market exists, notably in the French West Indies and French Guiana, where prices are lower as dealers obtain supplies at €5 000 per kilogram in 2023 (OFAST 2024).

A similar trend is observed for cannabis. In 2023, the wholesale price of cannabis resin reached €3 206 per kg, against €3 000 in 2022. The wholesale price of herbal cannabis was €4 852 per kg, against €4 500 in 2022. Since 2010, herbal cannabis and cannabis resin prices have increased by +28.24% and +76.4% respectively. On the other hand, the wholesale price of heroin has fallen, from €15 000 in 2022 to €14 600 in 2023 (OFAST 2024).

T1.1.5. Please briefly comment on available information on the retail drug market.

Information relevant to this answer includes:

- nature and organisation of buyers, sellers and intermediaries
- range and relative importance of different products
- size of transactions
- common prices
- purity of products
- market locations and settings

Three types of players are at the heart of the illegal drug street market. First of all, the so-called “city” networks, established in the popular peripheral districts of the large metropolises, invested either in the sales of different narcotic products, in wholesale or in retail. The most notable changes these last ten years particularly concern their growing dominance on the cocaine market, at the wholesale and retail level, and the increasingly

frequent use of home deliveries or techniques comparable to direct marketing techniques (packaging, “best deals”, loyalty cards, etc.) through social media (G erome and Gandilhon 2020). The second type of players are organised crime gangs, particularly Albanian and Georgian ones, which are very present on the heroin markets and the markets focused on the trafficking of opioid substitutes such as Subutex<sup>®</sup> (Balduc and Gandilhon 2020). The third and oldest one, finally, are the users-dealers at the head of micro-networks who get their supplies in the Netherlands or Spain in particular.

The change in price and purity of the circulating products in France has been measured by the OFDT via the SINTES scheme for more than 20 years. The average and median contents calculated from the SINTES analysis results are indicative and are not representative of the average contents of products circulating in French territory. As the SINTES collections were not carried out randomly, they observe specific collection patterns (selection bias). Moreover, the number of samples is too small to be representative. In order to express the statistical data in the most accurate way and to facilitate their understanding, the interquartile ranges are included. SINTES data should therefore be treated with caution like other data from epidemiological surveillance scheme. The SINTES scheme collected 730 samples in 2023, which is a 17% increase in comparison with 2022 (627 collections made). The 2023 data is currently being processed and will be published in the next SINTES Update (publication expected in late 2024).

### *Cannabis*

Cannabis retail prices appear to have been stable since 2020. In 2023, the usual price for herbal cannabis is around  10 per gram, with a range between  8 and  12. For resin, the price is  8 per gram, with a range between  6 and  11 (OFAST 2024).

The average THC content of seized cannabis resin (data from the STUPS<sup> </sup> file), at 30% in 2022, is the highest ever recorded (27.7% in 2021 and 26.5% in 2020. In 2022, according to the OFDT's SINTES scheme, the average THC potency of the analysed resin samples was 25.2% (IQR: [23.0-32.0]). An increasing trend in the content, as compared to the previous year, has been reported, due to the end of the alert on cannabis adulterated with synthetic cannabinoids. The observation is consistent with herbal cannabis, with an average content of 8.2% (IQR: [3.0 –12]) for 13 samples with THC quantification performed.

Suspected adulteration is established when THC levels are low despite reports of adverse effects suggestive of acute cannabinoid intoxication.

On developments in the cannabis market, the Customs Laboratories Joint Service noted a 38% increase in seizures of cannabis, mainly due to so-called 'wellness' products (oil, gum, etc.). While this phenomenon has been perceived in the European Union for almost two years (EMCDDA 2020), it was in 2020 that this phenomenon became so significant in France. The legal status of CBD in the country may have hindered its development.

Three of the trends identified in previous years are still relevant:

- the development of a concentrated resin supply (obtained by repeatedly passing through several increasingly fine sieves, or with artisan techniques allowing the maximum amount of THC to be extracted) available at prices higher than on the traditional resin market;
- herbal cannabis with low (or no) THC levels;

- and the circulation of herbal cannabis that has a low level of natural cannabinoids and containing synthetic cannabinoids, most often MDMB-4en-PINACA).

### *Cocaine*

According to the OFAST, in 2023, after many years of decline, the current price of the cocaine chloralhydrate was stabilised at around €66, as compared to €65 in 2022 and 2021, €66 in 2020, €67 in 2019 and €70 in 2017/2018 (OFAST 2024). These data converge with those of OFDT's TREND scheme, showing a stabilisation in cocaine prices, which contrasts with the sharp rise in the active ingredient content of products circulating on the retail market.

The average seizure content (retail, semi-wholesale, wholesale) was 72% in 2022 versus 66.1% in 2021, up from 63.5% in 2020, with a maximum rate of 100% (SNPS 2022). The average content of the street seizures suggests a high availability of cocaine in mainland France.

### *Heroin*

According to OFAST, in 2023, the usual price for a gram of brown heroin has continued to fall, to around €28, compared with €30 in 2022 and €33 in 2020. This was the lowest level since 2010 (€40) (OFAST 2024). Data collected by the TREND scheme also point to a nationwide decline in heroin prices. However, there are regional disparities, with the Hauts-de-France region recording the lowest current prices, fluctuating between 10 and 20 euros per gram. (Dutilleul 2024). The average potency of brown heroin seizures in 2022 (20%) was significantly higher than in 2021 (16.9%). The samples of brown heroin collected as part of the SINTES scheme had an average potency of 18.3% (73 samples, including 60 quantifications) compared to 21.3 % in 2021. The collections made via the SINTES scheme in 2022 (n = 73) confirmed previous observations of low heroin levels in the samples, with a median level stable at 11% (IQR: [7.4 – 25.0]) (Cherki 2023).

In 2023, the heroin market in Île-de-France experienced significant disruptions. Supply constraints were reported, with prolonged periods where heroin was not available at the usual points of sale. The composition of the substances sold as heroin showed great variability, making the heroin market particularly unstable. Worrying phenomena were observed, such as the presence of MDMA dosed at 80% and sold as heroin; heroin cut with synthetic cannabinoids; and a great variability in the levels in opioids and adulterated substances. These concerning changes are consistent with three waves of serious acute heroin-related incidents in the region, highlighting the growing instability of the heroin market in Île-de-France (Juszczak *et al.* 2024).

### *MDMA/ecstasy*

Price and purity depend on the galenic form in which the substance is sold: tablet, powder or crystal. In 2023, according to OFAST, the usual price for an ecstasy tablet is stable around 10 euros, compared to previous years. This retail price does not fully reflect the reality of the retail market since users tend to buy several dozen tablets at a time to lower the price per unit. By doing so, consumers can lower the unit price of a tablet to €2.50.

In 2022, the average content of MDMA tablets was 28%, as compared to 32% in (SNPS 2022).

### *New psychoactive substances (NPS)*

In France, the OFDT notified the identification of 26 NPS for the first time ever. These substances are mostly produced within the European Union, particularly in the Netherlands, but also in Belgium, Czech Republic and more recently in Germany and Spain. According to the latest available data (in 2020), there were 1 666 seizures or checks<sup>2</sup> linked to 126 different NPS<sup>3</sup> (compared to 1 255 seizures and checks in 2019 for 111 NPS). In 2022, the main noteworthy event regarding NPS was the amendment of the 3-MMC market following the Dutch classification in October 2021. 3-MMC was progressively replaced by other molecules of the same family, most often without the buyers' knowledge. In 2023, analyses in Île-de-France revealed that 3-MMC was often substituted with other cathinones such as 2-MMC, 3-CMC, and 4-MMC. Among the samples analysed, around 50% of substances labelled as 3-MMC actually contained 3-CMC. The remaining 40% were divided equally between 3-MMC and 2-MMC, while the other remaining 10% consisted of various other cathinones, including preparations (Juszczak *et al.* 2024).

The most often observed families were cathinones, synthetic cannabinoids and arylcyclohexylamines. ketamine, 3-MMC and DMT have been among the 10 most seized substances since 2014.

## **T1.2. Drug related crime**

The purpose of this section is to provide a commentary on the context and possible explanations of drug law offences within your country.

### T1.2.1. Please comment on drug law offences data.

Please structure your response around supply data (if possible distinguish between trafficking, cultivation/production, wholesale/ retail, and other supply offences) and possession/use data.

In 2022, the Interior Minister's statistics department amended the data collection system, counting only the use and trafficking of narcotics. In 2023, the total number of persons charged for narcotic use in France was about 260 000. Aside from these drug use offences (84% of the total), the police services and French *Gendarmerie* charged around 48 000 individuals for drug trafficking. In 2010 (since 2010 national statistics no longer provide details of arrests for each substance), 90% concerned simple cannabis use, 5% heroin use and 3% cocaine use. As of September 2020, simple use violations can be sanctioned by a criminal fixed fine (AFD in French). In 2023, the Interior Ministry's statistics department made a list of more than 160,000 criminal fixed fines, thus demonstrating the significant growth of this measure to respond to consumers (particularly those of cannabis).

<sup>2</sup> A substance, when not classified as a narcotic, may nonetheless be removed from postal/express freight in order to limit its diffusion. In this case, this act is perceived as a control and is not counted as a seizure.

<sup>3</sup> The data presented concern synthetic substances and exclude plants or extracts perceived as a new psychoactive substances (NPS) by the EMCDDA. However, they include products that are old and do not fit well with the idea of "novelty" in the European definition, such as ketamine, DMT or GBL.



According to the latest available data, in 2022, according to the Ministry of Justice, convictions for drug law offences (DLOs) as a main offence (single or multiple) accounted for 9% of the national total for all offences, i.e. around 50 000. These offences can be broken down as follows: illicit use (39%), possession-acquisition (47%), supply and sale (5%), trade-transport (1%), import-export (0.12%), helping others use (0.06%) and other DLOs (0.8%). Prison sentences account for the majority of sentences handed down for possession-acquisition offences (83%) - this qualification being used in the case of drug trafficking - while using offences were mainly sanctioned by fines (71%). In 2023, a total of 4 461 fixed penalty notices (art. 41-2 of the Code of Criminal Procedure) were accepted and executed for offences against legislation on poisonous substances, narcotics and doping products.

T1.2.2. If possible summarise any available data on drug related crime outside of drug law offences (i.e. possession/supply), e.g. money laundering, crimes undertaken under the influence of drugs (e.g. driving under the influence of drugs) or as a result of the use of drugs, crimes committed to fund drug use, crimes between drug market actors (e.g. violent crime, including homicide).

Driving under the influence of narcotics has been an offence in France since 2003. These prosecutions represent more than 28% of road safety offences, but their numbers almost tripled between 2013 (19 196) and 2022 (54 000). As a comparison, in 2022, convictions relating to driving under the influence of alcohol account for almost 36% of road safety offences. Driving after drug use is mainly punished by fines, which accounted for almost 52% of convictions for driving after drug use in 2022 (Protais *et al.* 2024).

The revenue coming from the confiscation of goods from people convicted of drug offences are used to contribute to the MILDECA “narcotics” support fund. According to the 2022 activity report of the Agency of the Recovery and Management of Seized and Confiscated Assets<sup>4</sup> (AGRASC), 41.8 million euros were paid to MILDECA in 2022, compared to 49.3 million in 2021 and 22.9 million in 2019 (AGRASC 2023) (see T1.3.1).

The increasing practice of seizures and confiscations is also the result of an increased awareness of the prosecutors, through the dissemination of a guide to seizures and confiscations which was completely remade and re-updated in January 2021 (Ascensi 2023). It is an educational, legal and technical tool of reference for all practitioners. In addition, since 2018, the appointment in each public prosecutor’s office of a contact prosecutor dealing with criminal seizures and confiscations has guaranteed the distribution of best practices within the jurisdiction.

According to a 2023 threat status report by the OFAST, drug traffickers use various sophisticated methods to launder the funds derived from their illegal activities. In French Guiana, they mainly channel cash sums from smugglers on return flights from Orly to Cayenne or via express or postal freight. The leaders of Albanian clans, who are often based in non-EU countries, prefer to transfer illicit funds to their home country, where these sums are invested into the local economy, particularly the property market. Road transport, using hiding places concealed within light vehicles, is also commonly used for these

<sup>4</sup> Created as part of the law of 9 July 2010, the AGRASC is responsible for the contribution to the “narcotics” supply fund.

transfers. In 2023, a major laundering network, operating within disadvantaged neighbourhoods in the South of France, was dismantled. This network was using offsetting techniques, transferring the laundered funds to Algeria. Construction and public works companies collected cash and made offsetting transfers to shell companies, who then organised a vehicle purchase-resale circuit between Europe and Algeria. Over 40 million euros derived from drug trafficking is said to have been laundered in five years. Chinese criminal groups in France also play an important role in money laundering for French drug traffickers. They use various laundering methods, such as the physical transportation of money to non-EU countries, the purchase of luxury goods for others, and laundering via convenience stores such as PMU *bar-tabacs* (bar tobacconist's). These groups also practice offsetting, relying on networks of collectors from the diaspora, involving financial transfers across several countries (OFAST 2023b).

In 2023, an increase in violence related to drug trafficking was observed, due to territorial rivalries and competition between criminal organisations. This violence includes settlements of scores, intentional homicides, attempted murders, and abductions and sequestrations. According to the Central Office for Combating Organised Crime (OCLCO), between 80% and 90% of settlements of scores, murders, and attempted murders among offenders were linked to drug trafficking disputes. In 2023, settlements of scores increased by 38%, with 87 deaths compared to 67 in 2022, and a total of 418 victims in comparison with 303 in the previous year. Of the 8 000 weapons seized by the police in 2023, almost 300 were war weapons, which illustrates the magnitude of drug trafficking-related violence. Moreover, these acts of violence also spread to medium-sized towns and rural areas. For example, in Verdun, a town with 18 000 inhabitants, violent abductions and sequestrations, and heavy gunfire were reported in 2023 (Durain and Blanc 2024).

A phenomenon reported by the police is a decrease in the age of the perpetrators and victims of violence. Young people, often minors or young adults, recruited as lookouts or dealers, are particularly exposed to violence at drug dealing spots. In 2022, 53% of victims of intentional or attempted homicide were under 25 years of age. An emerging phenomenon is the recruitment of minors or young adults, often with no criminal record, as contract killers. The normalisation of the use of weapons and a lack of control leads to an increase in stray bullets, which results in collateral victims. In 2023, the settling of scores between traffickers caused highly publicised collateral damage, involving the death of a 10-year-old in Nîmes, and a 24-year-old student in Marseille - both victims of drug trafficking-related violence. Individuals from outside of the drug trafficking network, such as dockers and transport drivers are also targeted to be forcibly recruited or intimidated to facilitate the transportation of drugs (OFAST 2023b).

### **T1.3. Drug supply reduction activities**

The purpose of this section is to summarise the drug law enforcement activities for drug supply reduction.

- T1.3.1. Please comment on drug supply reduction activities within your country. Please structure your response in terms of
- a) the key priorities of supply reduction
  - b) areas of activity of supply reduction
  - c) organisational structures/co-ordinating bodies

Please note that information on specialist drug law enforcement (eg. drug squads) is part of a separate focused data collection.

In March 2023, the French government adopted the 2023-2027 Interministerial Strategy for Mobilisation against Addictive Behaviours, which defines the strategic framework for the coming years. This strategy highlights the importance of comprehensive and coordinated action between the different services involved, notably cooperation between internal security forces and the judicial system to combat drug trafficking and organised crime. Moreover, the strategy emphasises the need for public action to be underpinned by in-depth knowledge, promoting the dissemination of knowledge, the involvement of the scientific community, and continuous support for research. Particular attention is given to the development of research on the illicit supply of narcotics through the development and management of an Interministerial Applied Research Programme to Combat Drugs (PIRALAD). This programme has allowed estimates of the French illicit drug market to be updated, in terms of volume used, value, and jobs generated by trafficking. Moreover, this programme sparked an international study on the environmental impacts of illicit drug production, in partnership with the UNODC, and an analysis on the impact of digital technology on drug trafficking developments. International cooperation is also emphasised, particularly in view of the crucial role played by the French overseas departments (Guiana, Martinique, Guadeloupe and Saint-Martin) in supplying cocaine to the mainland market. The strategy calls for strengthening European cooperation to prevent, deter, and disrupt drug-related crime, particularly organised crime. That includes police, customs, and judicial cooperation, exchanging intelligence, seizing and confiscating criminal assets, alongside combating corruption. To reduce the availability of narcotics, the strategy plans to impede their arrival from production areas, strengthen international cooperation, detect and prevent their movement within the national territory, and strip traffickers of their criminal assets. It also proposes the strengthening of technological and judicial means to combat organised crime and deconstruct the positive image of traffickers (MILDECA 2023a).

Since 2023, France has participated in the [“Global Coalition to Address Synthetic Drug Threats”](#). This coalition aims to combat the threats posed by the expanding synthetic drugs market by creating a global space for reflection to create the best actions and policies to pursue on this subject. The coalition meets monthly through working groups and subgroups which cover each different aspect of the synthetic drug problem. For example, the “Manufacturing of Synthetic Drugs and their Precursors” subgroup focuses on strategies targeting the first stages of the drug supply process, including the manufacture of synthetic drugs and illegal laboratories, alongside chemical precursors and medico-legal laboratory testing. The “Trafficking of Synthetic Drugs” subgroup on the other hand, seeks to strengthen the capabilities of governments to counter synthetic drug trafficking within their borders, through shared borders and on a global scale.

The governmental strategy regarding the fight against the national trafficking of narcotics was built in 2019 in a national anti-narcotics plan (Ministère de la Justice *et al.* 2019), which includes 55 measures aiming to meet 6 objectives: improve knowledge on trafficking; step up and rationalise field activities; enhance the fight against the underground economy and the drug trafficking laundering routes; reinforcing the seizure of criminal assets; develop international cooperation; strengthen the capacities of services. A second “anti-narcotics plan”, currently being finalised, has been announced by the Prime Minister.

On the same model of the service reorganisation operated in France as part of the fight against terrorism, a new service has been created to guarantee the role of sole leader in the fight against drug trafficking: the Anti-narcotics Office (OFAST). In February 2020, the Ministry of the Interior officially announced the creation of OFAST, which succeeds OCRTIS (Central Office for the Repression of Drug-related Offences). This creation is one of the main operational adaptations of the national anti-narcotics plan. This creation corresponds to the State's desire to increase cooperation between the various services in charge of law enforcement: police, customs, military police [*gendarmerie*] and justice. OFAST is organised into three divisions, "strategy", "intelligence" and "operations", to respond to the three missions "understand", "target" and "act". They are headed respectively by a customs administrator, a military police [*gendarmerie*] colonel and a divisional commissioner. The deputy head of the office comes from the judiciary. At a territorial level, OFAST has 14 regional offices and 5 territorial detachments. Since September 30, 2020, 104 operational drug intelligence units (CROSS) have been deployed throughout the country, one per department. One of their missions is to establish a map of the deal points located in the French territory and their evolution on a quarterly basis. In 2021, the government announced the creation of a reporting portal for citizens to provide the police and *gendarmerie* with information about narcotic trafficking and its actors. This information is then transmitted to the CROSS for processing. In addition, the extent of trafficking in ports and airports has led OFAST and Customs to create CROSS THEMATIQUES covering port, airport and postal activities.

In addition, in accordance with the strategy of the national anti-narcotics plan which aims to develop the seizures of criminal assets, the Agency for the Recovery and Management of Seized and Confiscated Assets (AGRASC) has been considerably enhanced with the increase in its staff members (83 agents in 2022 compared to 45 in 2020) and the creation of 4 regional offices in Marseille, Lyon, Rennes and Lille in 2021. In 2023, three new offices were to be set up in Bordeaux, Nancy and Fort-de-France. In 2022, the seizures increased to 771 million euros, a level which had never been reached since the AGRASC's creation in 2010, an increase of 6.3% compared to the previous year and 30% compared to 2020. The confiscations increased to 171 million euros, an increase of +13.9% compared to 2021 and +100% compared to 2020.

The "Narcotics" support fund is established every year and funded by the amounts permanently seized by a judicial authority from drug trafficking activities. In 2023, this fund amounted to 53.8 million euros, which is five times higher than 10 years ago. The allocation of the credits of this fund is as follows: 35% for the Police, 25% for the Gendarmerie, 10% for Customs, 20% for Justice, and 10% for preventive actions led by MILDECA. The objectives of this fund are to strengthen the means of combating drug trafficking, improve international coordination, support territorial actors in the prevention of addictive behaviours, and prevent risks for drug users and repeat offences among prison populations (MILDECA 2023b).

Total amount of "Narcotics" support fund (accrual N+1)

2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
16 110 531	12 812 965	14 564 663	25 674 228	19 816 288	52 691 387	45 488 985	53 788 400

As well as the Anti-narcotics Office (OFAST) which enables cooperation between different law enforcement authorities (police, customs, gendarmerie, and justice, as mentioned above), the fight against trafficking also relies on a close interaction between customs and justice, particularly with the National Jurisdiction Against Organised Crime (JUNALCO). In addition, in 2022, France created a coordination body in charge of combating drug trafficking at the port of Le Havre which is under the authority of the public prosecutors of Paris, Douai and Rouen. This measure is part of the enhancement of cooperation in terms of combating trafficking within European ports and protecting port infrastructures.

The 8 specialised inter-regional jurisdictions (JIRS) created between 2004 and 2022 also participate in the fight against narcotics by having enhanced technical resources to successfully carry out their enquiries. Active in 8 regional metropolises (Paris, Lyon, Marseille, Lille, Rennes, Bordeaux, Nancy and Fort-de-France), these include prosecutors and investigating magistrates who have specific competence and experience in combating organised and financial crime.

In 2023, [law no. 2023-610 of 18 July](#) revised the legislative framework for customs action in depth, adapting the powers of customs officers to new digital realities and trafficking developments. This reform includes a review of the customs inspection right, detailing the terms and conditions of these operations to strike a balance between customs offences and respect for individual freedoms and privacy. The scheme for combating the funding of organised crime and terrorism was enhanced by the introduction of a temporary detention of cash amounts, thus enabling the detection of financial circuits derived from criminal activities within the territory. Customs money laundering offences have been broadened to include all offences pertaining to laws enforced by customs or affecting the European Union's financial interests. This extension also covers digital assets, illicit activity committed abroad, and operations to raise and transport funds, specifically aiming to impede organised fund-raising networks. Customs officials now have increased powers and penalties set out in the Customs Code, to combat the use of non-scheduled chemical precursors in the manufacture of synthetic drugs. The law includes provisions aimed at modernising the monitoring and investigative capabilities of all customs services, and also affirming the non-invocability of professional secrecy to their investigations. The law also stipulates a series of measures adapted to new digital realities, strengthening the CYBER intervention capacity of customs in research on, and the prevention of, Internet fraud (DGDDI 2023).

Since the end of 2023, a series of police and national gendarmerie operations have been carried out to combat drug trafficking, marking an intensification of public safety efforts. Between 25 September 2023 and 12 April 2024, 473 operations labelled as "clean sweeps" were carried out, 24 of which were in Overseas France (Durain and Blanc 2024). These actions led to the arrest of 3 816 individuals, as well as the seizure of 632 weapons, 3 tonnes of cannabis, 38 kg of cocaine, 31 kg of heroin, and almost 5 million euros. Over 51 000 police officers and gendarmes were mobilised for these operations (Préfet des Côtes d'Armor 2024). These operations were targeted to urban areas, medium-sized towns, and rural municipalities, in both Metropolitan and Overseas France, in order to respond to trafficking developments and traffickers' methods. The interventions included checks of common areas and cellars in block of flats, identity checks at the request of the public prosecutor, the use of drug and firearm detection dogs, checks of businesses, securing public transport, and the routine removal of abandoned vehicles. These overt and

extended operations were prioritised in the problem areas of large cities and planned in collaboration with the National Directorate of Public Security (DNSP) and the National Directorate of Judicial Police (DNPJ) (Police nationale 2024).

In November 2023, the Senate launched an inquiry on the impact of drug trafficking in France and measures to address it. The committee began its hearings on 27 November 2023 and published its conclusions on 14 May 2024. This committee of inquiry auditioned numerous national actors and institutions involved in the fight against the trafficking and use of illicit drugs in France. Among the persons heard were representatives from police, gendarmerie, and customs services, the OFAST, as well as researchers, members of MILDECA, the OFDT, lawyers, and representatives from various relevant ministries. Mr. Bruno Le Maire, the then Minister of the Economy, Finance and Industrial and Digital Sovereignty, Mr. Éric Dupond-Moretti, the then Minister of Justice, and Mr. Gérald Darmanin, the then Minister of the Interior and Overseas, were also heard. This committee of inquiry's final report made several key recommendations. It encouraged increasing the priority of and resources allocated to combating drug trafficking, strengthening efforts to dismantle trafficking networks at the "upper end of the spectrum", and restructuring the action of services responsible for combating drug trafficking (Durain and Blanc 2024).

Finally, many other players take part in combating trafficking, including the Minister of Europe and Foreign Affairs and the Ambassador Extraordinary of the fight against terrorism and organised crime.

## T2. Trends

The purpose of this section is to provide a commentary on the context and possible explanations of trends in drug markets and crime within your country.

T2.1. For the most important drugs in your country, please comment on the possible explanations of short-term trends (5 years) and/or long-term trends (greater than 5 years) in the following aspects of the drug market:

- seizures (by weight bin if possible)
- price (wholesale and retail if possible)
- purity (wholesale and retail if possible)

Examples: changes in police practices, patterns of drug use, interruptions to the supply of drugs or the emergence of substitutes or alternatives.

Over the past 20 years, the supply of drugs in France has undergone changes due to the diversification of the products on offer and a much more competitive market. The level of seizures shows that the quantities intercepted have risen sharply over the last twenty years, especially for herbal cannabis, cocaine and amphetamines and methamphetamines (see table 1).

**Table 1: Average annual quantities seized in France by decade**

	2001-2011	2012-2022
Herbal cannabis (kg)	4 074	23 630
Cannabis resin (kg)	64 747	64 524
Cocaine (without crack) (kg)	5 884	14 052
Heroin (kg)	802	985
Amphetamines and methamphetamines (kg)	238	474

	2001-2011	2012-2022
Ecstasy/MDMA (tablets)	1 279 251	1 065 614

Source: OFDT/OFAST

These changes mask the recent expansion of the supply of certain products, measured with regard to the quantities seized such as cocaine (+101%) or, to a lesser extent, amphetamines (+21%) (see table 2).

**Table 2 : Quantities of drugs seized (in kg) in the last 5 years and changes 2021/2022 (in %)**

Drugs seized	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	Evolution 2021/2022 (%)
Cannabis: resin	85 354	74 340	50 248	72 400	87 600	+21
Cannabis: herbal	29 800	29 952	46 277	39 500	41 000	+3.8
Cannabis: plants	138 561	183 034	115 365	101 771	76 807	-24.5
Heroin	1 100	1 073	1 132	1 300	1 400	+7.7
Cocaine	16 400	15 761	13 145	26 500	27 700	+101.5
Crack	20	na	na	na	na	
Amphetamines	208	na	706	226*	273*	+20.8
Méthamphetamines	126	na	na			
Ecstasy (tablets)	na	1 699 848	1 227 876	1 454 085	1 543 421	+6
LSD (blotter)	2 979	na	na	na	na	na
Ketamine	249	na	na	na	na	na

Source: OSIRIS (OFAST)

na: not available

\* Total amount of the amphetamine and methamphetamine seizures.

Contrary to trends in previous years, prices for most drugs have risen slightly or stagnated compared to 2022, with the exception of heroin (see table 3).

**Table 3 : Change in retail usual drug prices over 5 years (in euros)**

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Heroin	30	33	30	30	28
Cocaine	67	66	65	65	66
Ecstasy (tablets)	10	10	10	10	10
Cannabis resin	8	8	8	8	8
Herbal cannabis	9	10	10	10	10
Amphetamines	15	15	12,5	10	13
LSD (blotter)	10	10	na	na	na

Source: OFAST (2023),  
Drug prices in France in  
2023  
na: not available



According to the Ministry of the Interior, by the end of 2022, France, including its overseas territories, had 3 159 “dealing points”, defined as permanent and structured sales outlets located in the public sphere, compared to nearly 3 325 in 2021 and 4 034 in 2020 (Premier ministre 2022). This leads to a growing diversity of actors involved in the supply side, while the development of information and communication technologies (ICTs) favours a renewal of the ways in which networks and new relationships with users are organised.

Before differentiating the trends by product, some general factors may be mentioned to explain these developments. Several phenomena explain the expansion of the range of services on offer and the more visible use of ICTs over the past decade. Urban renewal policies in certain peripheral neighbourhoods of large metropolises have aimed not only to renovate the buildings, but also to reduce the deal areas (Gérome, 2023). These developments have led many networks to build up customer files in order to maintain contact with users and thereby ensure the sustainability of the deal. Home deliveries have also been developed, notably with "cocaine call centres" and/or central purchasing offices. In the Paris region, the phenomenon has developed considerably in Seine-Saint-Denis, where the drug squad dismantles several dozen purchasing offices each year. Their activity is not limited to cocaine. Cannabis (in its resin or herb form) and ecstasy may also be offered. Most of these central purchasing offices are extensions of the activities of the points of sale within deprived neighbourhoods, which are clearly adapting to the needs of inner-city customers in a more competitive market. The phenomenon is developing in most French cities as well as in medium-size cities. In addition to home deliveries, the use of the Internet is also encouraging postal drugs trafficking. In fact, delivery is increasingly mentioned as a purchase method by illicit drug users. This choice offers a certain comfort, because it does not involve any physical contact with the drug dealer or the delivery person. The speed of delivery, often guaranteed within 24 to 48 hours, is also a major factor of its appeal (Tissot 2024).

The development of door-to-door sales does not mark the end of the traditional model of direct resale established in working-class neighbourhoods. It is constantly adapting to the changing aspirations and profiles of consumers. Therefore, the single-product model is disappearing. Even if some traffickers still focus on cannabis resin, the transition to a multi-product offer based on two main products: cannabis resin and cocaine, which are more and more systematically combined.

According to observations from the TREND scheme, the segmentation of the activities carried out by drug trafficking networks has been accentuated in recent years, leading to a specialisation of tasks and an occupational distribution. This organisation means pooling resources between networks, which can be observed at both regional and national level. A notable example is the pooling of resources for the import of drugs, where dedicated teams are responsible for transport and border crossing for many different networks. This tendency to specialise also implies a growing outsourcing of certain duties, such as product conveying, which is entrusted to dedicated teams. This phenomenon is often accompanied by a strict compartmentalisation of teams and individuals, who are generally not directly connected to one another. A small number of individuals act as intermediaries for specific logistics needs, such as the provision of lorries, the recruitment of staff, or border crossing. During the dismantling of networks, it is common to find that those arrested barely know each other, or not at all (Tissot 2024).



The trafficking networks are recruiting more and more adolescents, particularly those in precarious situations, and who have often recently immigrated, who live in the suburbs of metropolitan areas. Another strategy among traffickers involves recruiting lookouts, dealers, and, since 2020, team leaders, from outside of their home neighbourhood or region. The adolescents recruited are often under significant pressure to continue working, even though they want to stop, under threat from real or fictitious debts, and are exposed to frequent violence. They may also be perpetrators of routine violence themselves, especially when it is directed at people with whom they have little or no previous connections.

Moreover, women are becoming increasingly visible in trafficking activities, even though they remain in the minority. They are mainly recruited for their discretion, being less frequently monitored (G erome 2023). Observations from the TREND scheme in Auvergne-Rh one-Alpes show that they may be found in vehicles transporting cannabis, cocaine, or heroin, often accompanied by men, to appear as a couple. They increasingly participate in retail delivery, working as a two, and concealing products during police interventions. Some women organise trafficking at a higher level, often in collaboration with a male partner in prison, in order to maintain their activity. They may also manage telephone lines and contact with clients and are traditionally recruited as minders. In fact, they appear increasingly often in promotional videos, playing different roles, involving packing or testing products (Tissot 2024).

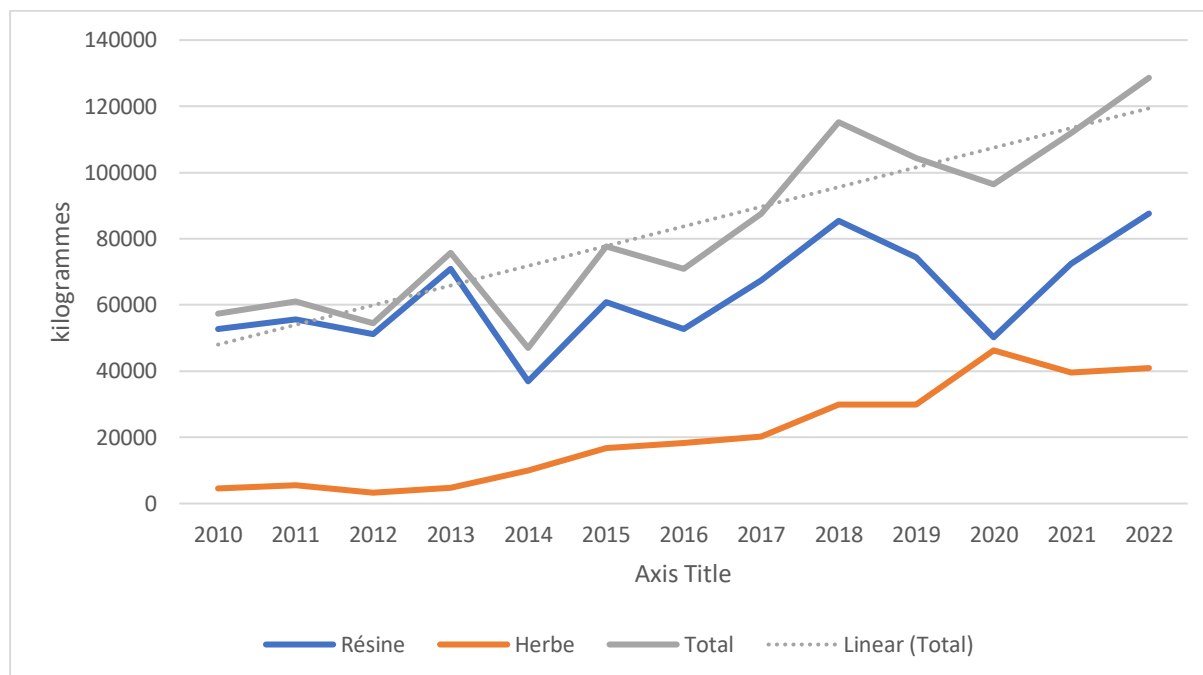
### *Cannabis*

The changes in the French market can be spotted in the progressions of the intercepted quantities of cannabis resin and herbal cannabis throughout the national territory. While, in the 2000s, the average number of the annual cannabis resin and herbal cannabis seizures reached 65.6 and nearly 4 tonnes respectively, in the 2010s, the average was 60.5 tonnes for cannabis resin and 18.4 tonnes for herbal cannabis. In 2022, the herbal cannabis seizures reached the second highest level ever observed, with more than 41 tonnes compared to 39.5 tonnes in 2021. The cannabis resin seizures of 87.6 tonnes compared to 50.3 tonnes in 2020 (this year was marked by the closure of the borders between Morocco and the EU as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic) returned to significant levels which were 45% higher than the average of the previous decade. On the other hand, the number of cannabis plants seized in 2022, with 76 807, was the lowest since 2011<sup>5</sup>. Regarding this total, 56% of the plants seized were seized in the French overseas territories, first of all in French Polynesia: this production was exclusively destined for the local market.

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<sup>5</sup> During the 2000s, an average of more than 53 000 plants were seized each year in France.

**Figure 1: Quantities of cannabis seized (in kg) in France (2010-2022)**



Source: OCRTIS/OFAST

### *Cocaine*

The cocaine market, driven by a steady increase in demand over the last twenty years and a more recent growth in supply, is very dynamic. In 2020 and 2021, the lockdown measures affected the functioning of the market, with the banning of party events, the suspension of airlines to French Guyana and the closure of the border with Belgium (making it more difficult for the trafficking networks to supply the Netherlands, where the main wholesale cocaine market in Western Europe is located and boosting postal freight traffic). But the effect of this containment was short-lived.

In 2022, cocaine seizures reached a historic record of 27.7 tonnes, as compared to 26.5 tonnes in 2021. This level is well above the average level observed between 2012 and 2022, i.e. 14 tonnes. Crack cocaine (or base form cocaine) seizures reached one of their highest levels. Traditionally based in the Paris region, the trafficking of this product has now been spotted in regional metropolises such as Lyon and Marseille, as well as in the main cities of the French Antilles and French Guiana. Produced from cocaine hydrochloride close to where it is consumed, trafficking in crack appeared at the end of the 1980s and has continued ever since. One of its characteristics is the continuity of the players who are at the heart of this trade and the dominance of networks from Senegal. With no real known hierarchy, they are very small in size, not very violent and have a virtual monopoly on the supply of crack cocaine in Paris. The second significant player in drugs trafficking in the Île-de-France region is the housing estate networks, particularly in the Seine-Saint-Denis department. Although the resale of crack cocaine, compared to cannabis resin or cocaine, is still marginal, it is likely to increase in the future given the strong growth in cocaine base use over the last ten years, particularly among a more socially integrated population.

## *Heroin*

The heroin market, based on the proportion of annual users in the population aged 18-64, is much smaller than the cocaine market. However, it is one of the largest markets in Western Europe. With regards to its availability, OFAST noted an increase in the amount of heroin in the territory, while highlighting the great regional disparities in this area. Since 2018, the Lille metropolitan area experienced an increase in trafficking and is becoming a national centre for the wholesale resale of heroin for the French networks. Similar phenomena are also emerging in the main cities in the East of the country: Grenoble, Nancy, etc.

The strong recovery of the market at the end of the first lockdown period, expressed by a tenfold increase in seizures between May and November, resulted in the highest level of seizures ever recorded in France in 2022 at 1.4 tonne. The average purity of the product, as measured by the samples analysed by the National Forensic Science Institute (SNPS) in 2022, is the second highest it has been for 10 years.

## *Synthetic drugs*

The synthetic drugs market is still dominated by MDMA/ecstasy. It is expanding: 1 543 421 tablets seized in 2022 (+6% compared to 2021). For the past few years, major changes have been observed with the development of the "crystal" form, which has attracted strong interest from younger generations (under 25s) in the recreational setting; this phenomenon transcends both cultural affiliation and social class. Furthermore, after years of decline, there has been a resurgence in the use of tablets in the recreational setting, whether in the commercial scene (clubs, discotheques). Moreover, the supply network is organised via user-dealer micro-networks who obtain supplies in Belgium and the Netherlands where most of the European production units are based. The high level of seizures of ecstasy tablets in 2021 and 2022 (see Table 2) clearly confirms the dynamics of this market whose strong demand keeps the price of the tablet at a high level (in contrast to the "crystal" form for which the price per gram has rather tended to fall since 2010).

The same upward trend is recorded for amphetamine seizures (273 kg in 2022, +21% compared to 2021). Methamphetamine is very scarce on the mainland French market due to the lack of structured supply. It is distributed within tightly restricted social circles. In 2014 and 2015, however, this substance was identified in the Bordeaux (Aquitaine) region via the SINTES scheme. According to user claims, it originates from purchases on the deep web, where it sells for between 20 and 30 euros as capsules, and between 80 and 120 euros per gram. On the other hand, a methamphetamine market has been developing in French Polynesia for the last ten years (Simon and Valiergue 2022).

The SINTES scheme collected 2 samples of methamphetamine in 2022 with levels respectively at 86.0% and 96.0%. Both samples came from products purchased on the darknet.

*T2.2. Optional. Please comment on the possible explanations of long term trends and short term trends in any other drug market data that you consider important.*

The spread of e-liquids containing synthetic cannabinoids, described in previous reports has continued since 2018, and now concerns the south of the country. This spread is more low-key, seen through police cases or SINTES collections, rather than through local health

agencies, as was previously the case. In 2022 the SINTES scheme collected 23 vaping liquids. This number is stable as compared to the previous year.

The French department of Mayotte located in the Indian Ocean is also characterised by a specific practice of consumption of synthetic cannabinoids (Cadet-Tairou and Gandilhon 2018). Since 2011, a new substance, known locally as “*la chimique*” or “chemical tobacco” (a mixture generally including synthetic cannabinoids, tobacco and alcohol) has emerged on the street market and is overwhelmingly affecting vulnerable young men. The still fragmented information on the structuring on the supply of “chimique” from the toxicological analysis suggest trafficking which is mainly supplied by sea. The “Chasse-Marée” study, launched in 2022, aims to document the composition of *la chimique* in Mayotte through many fundraising campaigns.

T2.3. Please comment on the possible explanations of short- and/or long-term trends in the following drug law offences data:

- supply (if possible distinguish between trafficking, cultivation/production, wholesale, retail, and other supply offences)
- possession/use

Examples: changes in law enforcement practices, government priorities, patterns of drug use, sources of drugs.

T2.4. **Optional.** Please comment on the possible explanations of long term trends and short term trends in any other drug related crime data that you consider important.

In terms of narcotics, the control of demand is a major aspect of law-enforcement service (police) activities. Hence, the majority of accused individuals are drug users, mainly for cannabis (as an indication, arrests currently represent less than 4% of the estimated number of active cannabis users). Between 2010 and 2020, the total number of individuals accused of narcotic use in metropolitan France increased from nearly 138 000 to nearly 190 000. After a decrease between 2014 and 2020, they rose again, partly due to the entry into effect of the criminal fine procedure, and accounted for almost 103 000 suspects by the police and *gendarmerie* in 2021 and 160 000 in 2023.

T2.5. Please indicate notable trends or important developments in the organisation, coordination and implementation of drug supply reduction activities in your country over the past 5 years.

### T3. New developments

The purpose of this section is to provide information on any notable or topical developments observed in drug market and crime **since your last report**.

T1 is used to establish the baseline of the topic in your country. Please focus on any new developments here. If information on recent notable developments have been included as part of the baseline information for your country, please make reference to that section here. It is not necessary to repeat the information.

T3.1. Please report on any notable new or topical developments observed in the drug market and crime in your country since your last report.

In 2020, the illicit drug market in France has been heavily impacted by the measures taken by the State and the European Union to contain the COVID-19 epidemic. The most visible impact occurred during the first lockdown from 17 March to 11 May 2020, during which seizures of the main drugs (resin, herbal cannabis, cocaine, heroin) fell sharply compared to March-April (OFAST 2020). It seems that, in 2022, the market faced a strong dynamic given the record seizures of cocaine and heroin, and very high cannabis (herbal cannabis and cannabis resin) seizures carried out by the police, gendarmerie and customs across the national territory.

In 2023, the illicit drugs market was hit by an increase in violence linked to drug trafficking and minor local disturbances in the heroin market, particularly in Île-de-France. Territorial rivalries and competition between criminal organisations led to an increase in violence, including settlings of scores, intentional homicides, attempted murders, and abductions and sequestrations. According to the Central Office for Combating Organised Crime (OCLCO), 80% to 90% of settlings of scores and murders among offenders were linked to drug trafficking disputes. In 2023, settlings of scores increased by 38%, rising from 67 deaths in 2022 to 85 in 2023, with a total of 418 victims in comparison with 303 in the previous year. Of the 8 000 weapons seized by the police in 2023, almost 300 were war weapons, which illustrates the magnitude of drug trafficking-related violence. These acts of violence also spread to medium-sized towns and rural areas. The heroin market in Île-de-France also experienced disruptions, with supply problems and periods of unavailability, including the presence of MDMA dosed at 80%, heroin cut with synthetic cannabinoids, and a great variability in the levels in opioids and adulterated substances. (Juszczak *et al.* 2024).

## T4. Additional information

The purpose of this section is to provide additional information important to drug market and crime in your country that has not been provided elsewhere.

T4.1. **Optional.** Please describe any additional important sources of information, specific studies or data on drug market and crime. Where possible, please provide references and/or links.

In 2022, the TREND scheme once more reported the growing visibility of 3-MMC at festive parties in clubs and discotheques (in Paris, Bordeaux, Marseille and Lyon, for example). Consumed by sniffing or ingestion, this synthetic cathinone with both euphoric and empathic effects is perceived by users as combining the effects of cocaine and MDMA/ecstasy for a price per gram (€20 to 40) that is lower than those of the above-mentioned substances. The use of 3-MMC was previously almost exclusively observed among men who have sex with men (MSM). Its spread would be favoured by its increased presence in the range of products available (resin, herbal cannabis, cocaine, MDMA, ketamine, etc.) in the context of home sales. As with GHB/GBL in 2018, this diffusion among other groups takes place at parties attended by both MSM familiar with the product and other drug users who are going to experiment with it (Gérome 2021).

T4.2. **Optional.** Please describe any other important aspect of drug market and crime that has not been covered in the specific questions above. This may be additional information or new areas of specific importance for your country.

## T5. Sources and methodology

The purpose of this section is to collect sources and bibliography for the information provided above, including brief descriptions of studies and their methodology where appropriate.

T5.1. Please list notable sources for the information provided above.

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T5.2. Where studies or surveys have been used please list them and where appropriate describe the methodology?

## **Methodology**

### Data on prices

Two resources make it possible to collect unit sale prices of illegal substances:

- A periodic OFAST survey based on data collected at 69 sites throughout metropolitan France records the median semi-wholesale and retail prices of certain illegal substances (heroin, cocaine, cannabis and ecstasy);
- The TREND scheme, on the basis of interviews and observations with drug users, workers in harm reduction facilities (CAARUD) and workers in techno party settings of each site of the scheme. For each substance under consideration (illicit or diverted), the current retail price as well as the lowest and highest price observed are reported.

### **STUPS<sup>®</sup> national database**

*French National Forensic Science Institute (INPS)*

Created in 1986, the French National Register of Drug Seizures (FNDS) initially focused on heroin analyses; from 1990, cocaine samples were also studied, before being extended to all drugs, as part of the STUPS<sup>®</sup> (harmonised narcotics processing system) database, initiated in 1999.

Five national forensic science institutes (Lille, Paris, Lyon, Marseille, Toulouse) and the Forensic Sciences Institute of the French *Gendarmerie* (IRCGN) add their analyses to this database, accompanied by photos, logos, etc. in order to identify the substances in circulation.

### **National Criminal Record [*Casier judiciaire national*]**

*Ministry of Justice, Sub-Directorate for Statistics and Studies (SDSE)*

Data from the National Criminal Record makes it possible to describe the punishable offences, the court order procedures, the diversity of responses provided by the courts (convictions imposed, but also alternatives to prosecution, fixed penalty notices, dismissal, etc.), the nature and quantum of sentences and the socio-demographic profile of people who have been convicted since 1984 (when the record was automated). The Criminal Record is based on a detailed classification, grouping around thirty offences into seven classes that are different from the police categories (regarding drug law offences (DLO)): use, possessing-procuring, trafficking, transport, supply and sale, helping others use and other DLO. Since 2017, the system for using the National Criminal Record and recording data has been undergoing a revision in order to improve the quality of conviction statistics. This revision concerns the determination of the main offence (a convicted person may be convicted of more than one offence), which is what the statistics are based on. The Ministry of Justice has been providing their data revised since 1995 on this new basis.

### **SINTES: National Detection System of Drugs and Toxic Substances**

*French Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (OFDT)*

The SINTES scheme is based on collecting samples of illegal and legal substances directly from drug users. The products collected are forwarded to one of the 8 forensic laboratories working in partnership with OFDT, to determine their composition. At the same time, drug users are asked to complete a questionnaire on the context of use for the substance and its purchase price. This makes it possible to directly correlate the price and purity of a given substance.

The SINTES scheme has three sections:

- The observation section provides an annual overview of the composition of a particular illegal substance. The SINTES observation scheme relies primarily on the French TREND network.
- The monitoring section comes under the health alert system. It is based on the TREND network sites as well as sites outside of this network that have signed agreements. The contributions made in this section are limited exclusively to the identification of newly circulating molecules and up-to-date information on the composition of certain substances at a given moment and in a given location.
- Since 2010, SINTES has been exploiting the Internet to monitor for new psychoactive substances (NPS) and document them.

### **TREND scheme: Emerging Trends and New Drugs**

*French Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (OFDT)*

The aim of the TREND scheme, which was established in 1999, is to provide information about illegal drug use and users, and on emerging phenomena. Emerging phenomena refer either to new phenomena or to existing phenomena that have not yet been detected by other observation systems.

The system is based on data analysed by eight local coordinating sites in mainland France (Bordeaux, Lille, Lyon, Marseille, Metz, Paris, Rennes and Toulouse) that produce site reports, which are then extrapolated to a national level:

- continuous qualitative data collection in urban settings and the party scene, by the local coordination network, which has a common data collection and information strategy;
- the SINTES scheme, an observation system geared towards detecting and analysing the toxicological composition of illegal substances;
- recurring quantitative surveys, particularly among harm reduction facilities CAARUD clients (the ENa-CAARUD survey);
- partner information system results;

thematic quantitative and qualitative investigations that aim to gather more information about a particular subject.