



MINISTRY OF HEALTH
OF THE REPUBLIC OF
MOLDOVA

NATIONAL PUBLIC
HEALTH AGENCY

ILLCIT DRUG USE AND TRAFFICKING
2022 ANNUAL REPORT

REPUBLIC OF
MOLDOVA

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Abbreviations and terms

CNAM	National Health Insurance Company, www.cnam.md
CML	Forensic Medicine Centre of the Ministry of Health, www.medicina-legala.md
DA	Anti-drugs Directorate
DRD	Drug Related Deaths
DU	Drug Users
EMCDDA	European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction, www.emcdda.europa.eu
ESPAD	European study on drug, alcohol and tobacco use among pupils
GBPI	General Border Police Inspectorate
GD	Government Decision
GFTAM	Global Fund to Fight HIV, Tuberculosis and Malaria
GPI	General Police Inspectorate
IBBS	Integrated bio-behavioural studies among groups at high risk of infection
IDU	Injecting Drug Users
KAP	"Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices on HIV/AIDS" surveys
MoH	Ministry of Health of the Republic of Moldova http://www.ms.gov.md/
Mol	Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Moldova, www.mai.gov.md
MoJ	Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Moldova www.justice.gov.md
NBS	National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova, www.statistica.md
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NPA	National Prison Administration of the Ministry of Justice, www.anp.gov.md
NPHA	National Public Health Agency, www.ansp.md
NPI	National Probation Inspectorate, www.probatiiune.gov.md
NPS	New Psychoactive Substances
OST	Opioid Substitution Therapy
RDN	IMSP Republican Dispensary of Narcology of the Ministry of Health, www.imspdrn.md
RDS	Respondent Driven Sampling
RM	Republic of Moldova
RRP	Risk Reduction Programme
SARP	Substance Abuse Reduction Programme
SDMC	IMSP Dermatology and Communicable Diseases Hospital, www.sdmc.md
SFM	Soros Foundation Moldova
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
VCT	Voluntary Counselling and Testing
WHO	World Health Organization

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The National Report on Illicit Drug Use and Trafficking gives an overview of the drug phenomenon in our country, and presents the efforts of the central public authorities, national governmental and non-governmental organizations, institutions competent to combat illicit drug use and trafficking in the Republic of Moldova and the results of population surveys. The document contains annual data and information related to drug use and trafficking in the Republic of Moldova, highlighting the evolution and trends recorded in our country, both in terms of drug demand reduction and drug supply, as well as interventions and measures adopted by the competent authorities to combat drug-related problems. The content covers a number of relevant aspects related to the activities carried out in the political, institutional and legal framework (adoption of drug use and trafficking prevention and combating normative acts, drafting of new normative acts or amendments to existing ones, application of legal regulations), as well as drug use prevention activities (prevention in schools, prevention in the family, prevention in the community). At the same time, the report highlights the best practices on drug supply and demand reduction.

Review of the year 2022:

Legal framework : Pursuant to Article 5 letter a) and Article 6 letter h) of the Government Law No. 136/2017 (Official Gazette of the Republic of Moldova, 2017, No. 252, Art. 412), with its subsequent amendments, the Government DECIDES:

- GD no. 233/2020 approving the National 2020-2027 Anti-Drug Strategy and the 2020-2021 National Anti-Drug Action Plan (Official Gazette of the Republic of Moldova, 2020, no. 104-105, art. 320) are repealed
- The 2022-2025 Crime Prevention and Control Programme is approved, which aims at establishing a set of medium-term objectives and actions for preventing and combating crime in the Republic of Moldova based on cooperation and focusing on decreasing drug demand, reducing drug supply and risk assessment.

Drug supply reduction: for the year 2022 there is an increase in drug-related crime (925 cases) compared to 2021 (818 cases). Analysis of drug-related crime data in relation to the seriousness of the offences reveals that the majority of drug-related offences fall into the less serious and mild category. The analysis of the zonal distribution of trafficked drugs shows that in the districts of the Central area of the country, increased trafficking of ethnobotanicals, marijuana, amphetamines has been documented. The Central area ranks first in terms of trafficking in ethnobotanicals and marijuana, followed by the Northern area, while the Southern area is dominated by marijuana and cannabis plants. Most documented are cases of trafficking in ethnobotanical substances, followed by marijuana, amphetamine, are recorded in urban areas. According to statistic data, in 2022 in urban areas cannabis use is the object of crime, followed by amphetamine use. Drug offences are committed by first-time offenders, unemployed and those with a criminal record at the time of the offence. Following the analysis of all types of NPS seized in the illegal circulation, the share of cases constitutes 71.4% in 2022 of all drug-related offences.

Drug market: Drugs removed from the illegal circulation: Marijuana - 5 kg 720 gr, Cannabis oil - 12 mg, LSD stamps - 788 doses, Hashish - 601 gr, PVP - 15 kg 912 gr, Mephedrone - 2 kg 167 gr, Methadone - 202 gr, Amphetamine - 2 kg 043 gr, Extasy pills - 5 497 pills, MDMA powder - 176 gr, Heroin - 1 gr, Cocaine - 611 gr, SUBUTEX 306 pills, Fluoxetine 11 pills, Mushrooms with narcotic effect - 155 gr, Mushrooms with narcotic effect - 2 497 gr, Mushrooms with narcotic effect - in chocolate 1200 gr, Tetrahydrocannabinol in electronic cigarettes 45 pieces.

Increasing seizures: poppy straw (from 1kg197g in 2021 to 2kg512g in 2022), hemp plants (from 9391 plants in 2021 to 19994 plants in 2022), PVP (from 24kg 275g in 2021 to 37kg 615g in 2022), ethnobotanicals (from 1kg 98g in 2021 to 5kg 379g in 2022), methadone (7,49g in 2021 to 47,179g in 2022).

Decreasing seizures: amphetamines (from 1kg 282g in 2021 to 1kg 153g in 2022), marijuana (from 104kg in 2021 to 90kg in 2022), poppy plants (from 7984 plants in 2021 to 3885 plants in 2022), heroin (from 218kg493g in 2021 to 2kg 0.31g in 2022), LSD (from 1479 stamps in 2021 to 946 stamps in 2022). Drug trafficking and use as a phenomenon continues to be concentrated in urban areas in the Central and Northern parts of the country.

Treatment demand in 2022, the number of new cases of drug users taken into supervision increases. In the total number of new cases there is a one fold decrease in marijuana/opiate use and a two fold decrease in amphetamine/barbiturate/cocaine use, but an increase of 1.9 times in NPS. According to the survey data, the type of used drugs differs by type and locality in Moldova. The trend of injectable and non-injectable NPS use is gaining momentum.

In the gender distribution of new cases with year on year comparison, disaggregated by dependent and non-dependent use, there is an increase among female users. There is an increase of referrals for detoxification treatment, OST and of those who have successfully completed rehabilitation.

In **DAD cases**, for the reporting year, in the context of gender, there is a decrease among male and an increase among female users. The number of cases detected by toxicological investigation of poly-drug use of psychotropic substances increases.

Drug-related infectious diseases: following the trend of new HIV cases detected among the drug-using population, an increase was observed in the reporting year.

COUNTRY OVERVIEW

The Republic of Moldova is located in South-Eastern Europe. To the North, South and East it borders Ukraine, and to the West - Romania. The Republic of Moldova became independent on 27 August 1991. It is a parliamentary republic and the president is elected by parliament for a 4-year term.

The total length of the borders is 1,389 km, 450 km with Romania and 939 km with Ukraine. The country covers an area of 33,843 km², of which 472 km² are water - mainly the Danube and Nistru rivers, the Prut and Răut rivers and the Beleu, Bîc and Dracele lakes. Although the Republic of Moldova is landlocked, the port on the Danube in Giurgiulesti serves maritime transport.

As a result of the political conflict in the 1990s, which is now frozen, the territory on the left bank of the Nistru River is not fully controlled by the Moldovan Government.

The largest cities of the country on the right bank of Nistru River are Chisinau and Balti. Administratively, the Republic of Moldova is divided into 35 districts, 3 municipalities (Chisinau, Balti and Comrat), and the Transnistrian region (with 2 municipalities: Tiraspol and Bender).

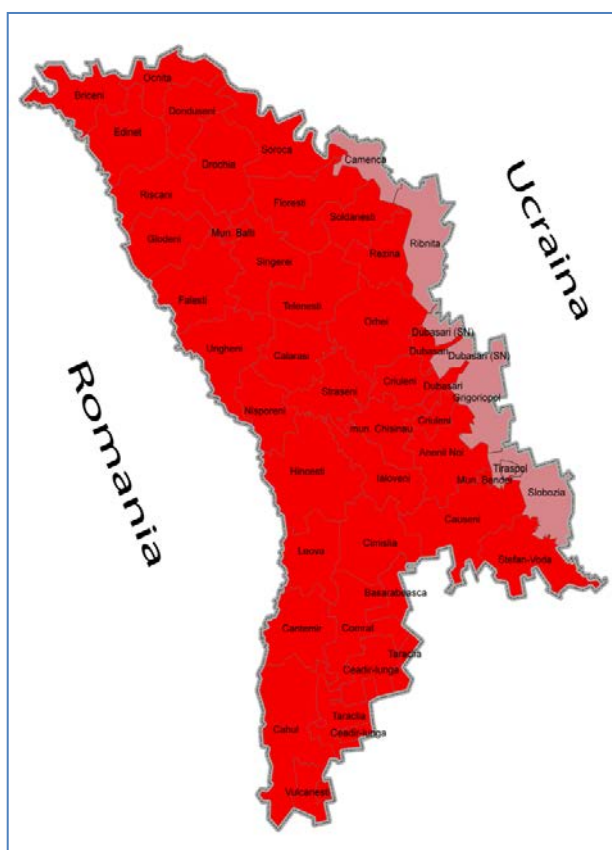


Table 1. Social-economic situation, Republic of Moldova (right bank of Nistru River), 2022

	Year	Media	Source
<u>Population, thousand residents</u> <i>Data are recalculated by applying the international definition of usual residence. Usual residence is defined as the place where the person has predominantly lived in the last 12 months</i>	2022	2 512.800	NBS
<u>Unemployment rate, percentage of labour force</u> <i>In estimating the results of the survey, the number of the usual resident population was used. The information is presented without the data of the districts on the left side of Nistru and mun. Bender.</i>	2022	3.8	NBS
<u>Minimum subsistence, lei, monthly average per person</u> <i>In estimating the results of the survey, the number of the usual resident population was used. The information is presented without the data of the districts on the left side of Nistru and mun. Bender.</i>	2022	2867.4	NBS
<u>Drug offences in the territorial profile</u> <i>The information is presented without the data of the districts on the left side of Nistru. The number of offences recorded by the Operational Services Directorate, the Centre for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, the National Anti-Corruption Centre, the Customs Service cannot be broken down by territorial profile.</i>	2022	733	NBS

DRUG POLICY

INTRODUCTION

The problem of globalization of drug use and illicit drug trafficking in various countries, including the Republic of Moldova, requires a process of developing and improving the regulatory base that determines the national policy in the field of preventing drug use and combating illicit drug trafficking, reducing the risks and supply of drugs, as well as providing treatment and rehabilitation services for drug users. Illicit drug use and trafficking remains a problem that has a negative impact on the sustainable and safe development of our society through its criminal and social implications, while having, at the same time, new forms of manifestation, the development of new information and communication technologies. The vulnerability of the state to the illicit drug circulation is influenced by several factors and depends on the effectiveness of the measures taken to reduce the drug demand and supply on the Moldovan market. When addressing the problem of drug use, the Republic of Moldova bases on the World Health Organization's concept of "Health for All in the 21st Century", according to which drug use is a problem that jeopardizes public health and could hinder the healthy development of citizens and society in the wider context. In response to the increase in illicit drug trafficking and consumption, the Republic of Moldova has developed and continues to improve its legislative and institutional framework. Legislation has been drafted to regulate the circulation of narcotic and psychotropic substances in the Republic of Moldova and to punish any violations of the rules. In this regard, the Law on the Circulation of Narcotic Drugs, Psychotropic Substances and Precursors sets out the general rules and restrictions on the circulation of drugs on the territory of the Republic of Moldova. At the same time, the Contravention Code of the Republic of Moldova and the Criminal Code of the Republic of Moldova define the legal scope for sanctioning natural and legal persons who have violated the legal provisions on the circulation of narcotic and psychotropic substances. The Codes lay down the grounds and conditions for punishment, as well as the types of penalties applied. An emerging threat is the appearance on the market of new narcotic and psychotropic substances, as well as new-generation synthetic preparations, the use of which also entails serious health consequences. Thus, the Republic of Moldova's commitments with regard to reducing drug demand and supply, reducing drug-related risks as well as the provision of treatment and rehabilitation services for drug users, define the institutions' objectives and necessary actions to reduce the scale of the drug phenomenon at national level, study the needs, identify the problems of society and combat this phenomenon.

POLICY FRAMEWORK

REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA - EUROPEAN UNION ASSOCIATION AGREEMENT

The EU-Moldova Association Agreement is an extremely important milestone in promoting reform processes and strengthening the rule of law, democracy and market economy. Given the complexity of the Agreement, its provisions are translated into concrete actions that have been included in National Action Plans for the Implementation of the Association Agreement (NAPIA). The National Action Plan for the implementation of the EU-Moldova Association Agreement is the basic instrument for monitoring the European integration process. Establishing clear roles and competences between the competent institutions in the prevention and investigation of drug trafficking has facilitated inter-institutional cooperation in the fight against illicit drugs. Operational measures to identify and document criminal groups involved in the illicit trafficking of narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and precursors continued. In the context of the fight against illicit drugs, the Republic of Moldova continued an effective cooperation with the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA), sending to the EMCDDA a report on illicit drug use and trafficking in Moldova.

Art. 17¹ "Fight against illicit drugs" of the Action Plan for the implementation of the EU-Moldova Association Agreement, aims at ensuring the implementation of the actions foreseen in 2022-2025 Plan for the prevention and fight against crime. On the basis of the latest reports on the implementation of the Association Agreement between the Republic of Moldova, on the one hand, and the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community and their Member States, on the other hand (hereinafter - Association Agreement), the Government was urged to intensify its fight against corruption, money laundering, arms smuggling, organised crime and their dismembering, including trafficking in human beings. Moreover, the Association Agreement outlines a number of priorities aimed at preventing and combating crime related to illicit drugs:

- keeping up the cooperation in the field of drug prevention through regional projects and programmes, and by fully aligning drug policies with EU positions, as well as fully participating in the "EU4Monitoring Drugs" programme managed by the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction.

European integration is a strategic objective of the Republic of Moldova's foreign and domestic policy, aimed at ensuring the creation of a system of security, stability and prosperity at home, governed by democratic values and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. As a result, the efforts of the Republic of Moldova have been and are oriented towards the responsible implementation of its external commitments towards the European Union, such as the Association Agreement and the implementation of the EU-Moldova Association Agreement (2019/2201(INI))

LEGAL FRAMEWORK

2022-2025 CRIME PREVENTION AND CONTROL PROGRAMME

Pursuant to Article 5 letter a) and Article 6 letter h) of the Government Law No. 136/2017 (Official Gazette of the Republic of Moldova, 2017, No. 252, Art. 412), with its subsequent amendments, the Government DECIDES:

- to repeal the Government Decision no.233/2020 approving the 2020-2027 National Anti-Drug Strategy and the 2020-2021 National Anti-Drug Action Plan.
- to approve the 2022-2025 Crime prevention and control program.

¹ Article 17 Combating illegal drugs

1. The Parties will cooperate, within their respective powers and competences, to ensure a balanced and integrated approach to drug-related issues. Drug-related policies and actions will focus on strengthening structures to combat illicit drugs, on reducing the supply, trafficking and demand for illicit drugs, on overcoming the health and social consequences of drug abuse, and more effectively preventing the diversion of chemical precursors for the illicit manufacture of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances.

2 The Parties will agree on the methods of cooperation necessary to achieve these objectives. Actions will be based on agreed principles, in line with relevant international conventions, the EU Drugs Strategy (2013-2020), the Political Declaration and the Special Declaration on the Guiding Principles of Drug Demand Reduction adopted at the twentieth session of the United Nations General Assembly on drugs in June 1998.

The 2022-2025 Crime prevention and control programme (hereinafter - the Programme) is a public policy document that aims at establishing a set of medium-term objectives and actions to prevent and combat crime in the Republic of Moldova in an effective, result-oriented manner, that would reduce this phenomenon.

The programme ensures alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals (hereafter - SDGs). The objectives set out in this document contribute to the achievement of the national sustainable development targets established under the National Monitoring Framework for the implementation of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, approved by Government Decision No 953/2022), such as:

- SDG 3.5. *Strengthening prevention and treatment measures for alcohol abuse, illicit use of drugs and other psychotropic substances;*

The programme ensures the translation of several strategic objectives outlined in public policy and planning documents, such as the National Development Strategy ,*"European Moldova 2030"* (hereafter - NDS ,*"European Moldova 2030"*), which provides a long-term vision, focused on the needs of citizens and linked to the sustainable development goals that are part of the United Nations 2030 Agenda (hereafter - 2030 Agenda). To implement the above priorities and areas of intervention, new tools will be put in place that would mitigate the impact of the activities of criminal organisations, enhance the response capacity and investigate crimes committed through information technologies, and an advanced data exchange will be ensured to allow the analysis of crime trends in various areas (illegal circulation of drugs, ethnobotanicals, narcotics, psychotropic substances, precursors and their analogs, cyber security, trafficking in human beings, property crimes and offences against persons). The program will intervene in a timely manner in response to the most pressing regulatory, operational and functional issues in such a way that they are achievable within a medium term (3 years). The objectives of the Programme were identified on the basis of a detailed SWOT analysis exercise in specific areas, which was underpinned by a problem tree and solutions to address them. Finally, areas of intervention were identified, around which the following was developed:

General objectives

1. *Access to adequate tools and mechanisms in the fight against and prevention of cybercrime (improving the regulatory framework and building institutional capacities in the field of preventing and combating cybercrime created and facilitated. Clearly, the phenomenon of cybercrime requires a cross-sectoral approach based on the complexity of the processes and their effects)*
2. *The national mechanism for preventing and combating the production and sale of drugs, ethnobotanicals, analogs and precursors thereof is more effective (the implementation of a national mechanism for preventing and combating drug-related phenomena is the only solution in the fight against the production and sale of drugs in the country).*
3. *The mechanism on arms access restriction is revised, civilian circulation arms monitoring, marking and control established (illicit trafficking of arms and ammunition requires a prompt response from the authorities through harmonisation of the legal framework, modernisation of the administrative structure and facilitation of capacity building; streamlining law enforcement activities by facilitating operational cooperation, information exchange and cooperation in the field of ballistic analysis).*
4. *Capacities to identify and dismember high-risk criminal groups and organisations built (application of new methods of operation using sophisticated communication channels; insufficient qualification of staff working in the relevant institutions responsible for fighting organised crime; lack of a functional framework for the protection and recovery of victims of criminal groups; insufficient international cooperation on preventing and combating organised crime).*
5. *National vulnerabilities in preventing and combating trafficking in human beings and child trafficking reduced.*
6. *Capacities to prevent and combat crimes against life and property built.*

CONTRAVENTION CODE

During 2022 the Contravention Code has not been amended or supplemented in Art. 85 (1), (2), Art. 86, Art. 87. The Contravention Code of the Republic of Moldova provides for introducing the liability of the legal person and the application of unpaid community work as a sanction for some of the drug-related administrative offences. According to the provisions of the Code, at:

Article 85: Illegal purchase or keeping of drugs, precursors, ethnobotanicals and analogs thereof in small quantities or taking drugs without a doctor's prescription.

Paragraph (1) Illegal purchase or keeping, without the purpose of selling, of drugs, precursors, ethnobotanicals and analogs thereof in small quantities, as well as the use of drugs without a doctor's prescription shall be punishable by a fine of 30 up to 60 conventional units or by unpaid community service of up to 72 hours.

Paragraph (2) Should a person voluntarily surrender illegally possessed drugs, precursors, ethnobotanicals and analogs thereof, or voluntarily seek or consent to seek the assistance of a medical institution in connection with its drugs illegal use, then the contravention liability for the acts referred to in this Article shall be waived.

Article 86. Failure to take measures to ensure the protection of fields with plants containing drugs, precursors and analogs thereof. "Failure to take the measures provided for by law to ensure the established system of protection of the fields of opium poppy, cannabis, coca bush, the places for storing and processing of the harvests of these crops, failure to take measures for the disposal of the remains after harvesting and production waste containing drugs, precursors and analogs thereof shall be punishable by a fine of 90 to 210 conventional units imposed on the person in charge, a fine of 300 to 600 conventional units imposed on the legal person".

Article 87. Illegal cultivation of plants containing drugs, precursors and analogs thereof and manufacture of ethnobotanicals. "Illegal cultivation of plants containing drugs, precursors and analogs thereof and the manufacture of ethnobotanicals not for the purpose of alienation, if the acts do not constitute an offence, shall be punishable by a fine of 42 to 60 conventional units imposed on a natural person, a fine of 180 to 300 conventional units imposed on a person with responsibility, a fine of 300 to 600 conventional units imposed on a legal person, in all cases with or without deprivation of the right to carry out a specific activity for a period of 1 to 3 years."

CRIMINAL CODE

Over the years, essential amendments and additions have been made to the rules governing penalties for drug-related offences, with the prison sentence being reduced or increased, where appropriate, by applying an administrative offence as a penalty; the new provisions are in line with international standards, according to the expertise of the Council of Europe and other independent experts, through the humanisation of criminal penalties, the promotion of alternative penalties to deprivation of liberty and the adjustment of the national criminal law. The main features of the amendment process are the reduction of the minimum and maximum level of penalties (especially imprisonment) and the general revision of all penalties prescribed by law for offences, the exclusion of the concept of repeated offence, the logical arrangement of the content of the Criminal Code.

During 2022, the Criminal Code of the Republic of Moldova, which includes the chapter on illicit drug use and trafficking, has not been amended or supplemented and the provisions regulating penalties for drug-related offences remain in force. These are provided for in the following articles:

Art. 134¹ Drugs, precursors, ethnobotanicals and analogs thereof

Art.209 Luring minors into illegal consumption of drugs, medicines and other substances with narcotic effect.

At the same time, the offences set out in Article 217 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Moldova No 985/2002 are part of the category of "offences against public health and social life" and require a medical approach, and not a criminal one in the case of drug users.

Art.217. Illegal circulation of drugs, ethnobotanicals or analogs thereof not for the purpose of alienation

Art.2171 Illegal circulation of drugs, ethnobotanicals or analogs thereof not for the purpose of alienation

Art.2172 Illegal circulation of precursors for the purpose of producing or processing of ethnobotanical drugs or analogs thereof

Art.2173 Illegal circulation of materials and equipment aimed at producing or processing of drugs, ethnobotanicals or analogs thereof.

Art.2174 Theft or extortion of drugs or ethnobotanicals

Art.2175 Illegal public consumption or organization of illegal consumption of drugs, ethnobotanicals or analogs thereof

(1) Illegal consumption of drugs, ethnobotanicals or analogs thereof, in public or on the territory of educational institutions, social rehabilitation institutions, prisons, military units, places of recreation, in places of education, training of minors or youth, other cultural or sports activities or in their immediate vicinity, shall be punished by a fine of 400 to 700 conventional units or by unpaid community service of 180 to 240 hours.

Art.2176 Deliberate illegal introduction into the body of another person, against his/her will, of drugs, ethnobotanicals or analogs thereof

Art.218 Illegal prescription of drugs or violation of drug circulation rules

Art. 219 Organization or maintenance of dens for the consumption of drugs or ethnobotanicals

Art. 248 Smuggling

Art.322 paragraph (3) Silent transmission of control by any means to persons detained in penitentiary institutions of alcoholic beverages, drugs, ethnobotanicals or analogs thereof.

INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

NATIONAL ANTI-DRUG COMMISSION

The Government Decision No. 481 of 2011, establishes the institutional framework by setting up the National Anti-Drug Commission and by defining its tasks. To implement the 2020-2027 National Anti-Drug Strategy and the National Anti-Drug Action Plans, as well as to fulfil the commitments undertaken by the Republic of Moldova to combat illicit drug trafficking and use, the National Anti-Drug Commission, as a consultative, coordinating and Government initiative body of the Government, creates a platform for continuous communication with ministries, other representatives of central and local public administration, public associations, other entities contributing to the drug policy implementation (including non-commercial organisations). The National Anti-Drug Commission submits draft anti-drug strategies and action plans to the Government, coordinates and evaluates their implementation and oversees the fulfilment of the tasks set out in this Strategy and in the national action plans at all stages. Drug control work at central government level is carried out by the National Anti-Drug Commission. The Committee of Executive Representatives of the National Anti-Drug Commission - is composed of civil servants from ministries responsible for drug policy issues, representatives of state institutions (health, social, law enforcement, etc.), international institutions active in the field of drugs and involved in the process of policy making and funding, as well as NGOs. Local government plays a key role tasks and know how transfer from the central to the local level and vice versa. Thus, it is of major importance to involve and negotiate with these bodies in the drafting of action plans for national drugs policy implementation. The Executive Committee of the National Anti-Drug Commission, set up within the National Anti-Drug Commission, is a permanent coordination structure aimed at ensuring efficient cooperation among the central public administration authorities that are members of the National Anti-Drug Commission. The organisation and management of the work of the Executive Committee of the National Anti-Drug Commission is ensured by the Ministry of Interior. In accordance with the priorities of the Strategy, the Executive Committee of the National Anti-Drug Commission will address issues requiring urgent decisions in the field of combating illicit drug use and trafficking, manage the organisational activities for the fulfilment of the objectives and tasks of the National Anti-Drug Commission, carry out the coordination of activities to prevent and combat illicit drug use and trafficking, as well as cooperate on these matters with the members of the National Anti-Drug Commission, public authorities and representatives of the civil society, will ensure the creation and operation of working groups for the elaboration of national anti-drug action plans, in order to implement the provisions of the 2020-2027 National Anti-Drug Strategy, will monitor the implementation of the actions foreseen in the national anti-drug action plans, will carry out the exchange of data and information with the members of the National Anti-Drug Commission, as well as will identify and elaborate proposals for the improvement of drug legislation. At the same time, in order to increase the effectiveness of the measures to combat illicit drug trafficking, both at national and regional level, as well as to ensure an effective response to the increase in drug abuse in Moldova, there is a need to strengthen the institutional mechanisms for drug control and the legislative framework. At the moment the Secretariat of the Commission is assured by the Anti-Drug Directorate of the National Investigation Inspectorate of the General Police Inspectorate. Mandate of the Secretariat:

- coordinates the process of developing drug policy papers;
- monitors and evaluates the implementation of anti-drug policies by the relevant institutions;
- sets up inter-agency working groups to develop drug policies improvement proposals;
- organises exchanges between central government authorities and not for profit organisations involved in drug demand and supply reduction activities;
- cooperates with public authorities, international and intergovernmental organisations, other agencies and civil society representatives;
- with the consent of the President of the National Anti-Drug Commission, convenes meetings with the participation of not for profit organisations, foreign partners, other institutions aiming at monitoring the work and providing assistance in the field of drugs;
- if needed, involves experts from various fields into the work of the National Anti-Drug Commission;
- identifies resources for carrying out anti-drug surveys/research to assess the trend of the phenomenon in the Republic of Moldova;
- promotes the public image of the National Commission at home and abroad;
- keeps correspondence with the National Anti-Drug Commission through its President;
- organises meetings of the National Anti-Drug Commission;

Law No. 382-XIV of 6 May 1999 on the circulation of narcotic and psychotropic substances and precursors

The Law No. 382-XIV of 6 May 1999 "On the circulation of narcotic and psychotropic substances and precursors" is the main law that promotes the state policy in the field of drugs and aims at promoting state policy on the circulation of narcotic and psychotropic substances and precursors, protecting human health, ensuring social and state security. It was amended and supplemented by Law 246 of 27.11.2008. According to the amendments and additions, the law establishes additional conditions for granting, suspending or withdrawing the authorization/license for persons, institutions, pharmaceutical companies carrying out activities related to the circulation of narcotic substances. The term "narcotic substance (narcotic drug), psychotropic substance", the words ", as well as a preparation containing such a substance," are excluded from Article 1. It also supplements and modifies the conditions of circulation of narcotic and psychotropic substances and precursors. This law together with the amendments and additions remains in force until today-

Law No. 713 of 6 December 2001 on the control and prevention of alcohol abuse, illicit use of drugs and other psychotropic substances

The law establishes the state policy on the control and prevention of alcohol abuse, illicit use of drugs and other psychotropic substances, the reduction and exclusion of such uses, the education of the population in the spirit of abstinence and a healthy lifestyle, and the removal of the consequences of physical and/or mental dependence on them. Objectives and scope of the law:

1. This law expresses the public health priority in the state policy, is oriented at creating conditions for the implementation in society of ethical principles, goals and action strategies on reducing alcohol consumption, eradicating illicit use of drugs and other psychotropic substances.
2. The State guarantees health care and social support to people with drug addiction problems, provided on the principles of legality, humanism and respect for human rights.

To improve the preventive legal framework, this Law was subject to amendments and additions, adopted in December 2008, Law No. 260 of 05.12.2008, published in the Official Gazette of 10.02.2009. The amendments improve the terminology used in the law to avoid loopholes and eliminate misinterpretations with some modifications:

"narcological assistance" - comprehensive medical examination. as provided for the this Law and other legislative acts, diagnosis of narcological diseases, treatment, care, medical-social rehabilitation and medical supervision through dispensary care, and, if necessary, enrollment of sick persons, whose disease continuously evolves, into informational, educational, prophylactic and treatment programmes

"inebriated state" - a state of intoxication resulting from the use of alcohol, drugs, psychotropic substances and/or other substances causing intoxication, resulting in psycho-functional dysregulation of the body;

"medical examination" - to determine intoxication and its nature - a complex of medical actions and procedures aimed at determining and confirming the state of intoxication and the substance used;

"control of soberness" - actions and procedures of a medical nature carried out to prevent and avoid driving the transport means by drivers in inebriated state or whose health has deteriorated;

"soberness control inspector" - a person trained in and empowered to carry out control of soberness;

"alcoholscopic test" - actions by the police officer or other duly trained authorized person aimed at determining the breath alcohol concentration of the person tested, carried out using approved and metrologically verified technical means".

Over-the-counter drug use will be determined based on the results of medical exams and examination of biological fluids. Other amendments refer to the procedure for the provision of medical services (responsible specialists, rules to be followed, appeal procedure, dispute settlement, etc.) and narcological medical care (types of narcological medical care, responsible specialists, cases in which it occurs, termination of care, etc.). In accordance with the provisions of the Law no.713-XV of 6 December 2001 on the control and prevention of alcohol abuse, illicit use of drugs and other psychotropic substances and the Law no.131-XVI of 7 June 2007 on road traffic safety, to establish the order of collection and analysis of biological samples for the determination of alcohol, drugs and other psychotropic substances, medicines with similar effects, the Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection drafted and approved the Order no.30 of 11.01.2019 "On the collection and analysis of biological samples for the determination of the use of alcohol, drugs and other psychotropic substances, use of medicines similar to them".

Government Decision No. 79/2006 approving the list of narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and plants containing such substances detected in illicit trafficking, as well as their quantities

To regulate certain issues related to the dismembering of illicit trafficking in narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and plants containing narcotic or psychotropic substances, pursuant to paragraphs (4) and (5) of Article 134¹ of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Moldova No. 985 of 18 April 2002, the "List of narcotic and psychotropic substances and plants containing such substances detected in illicit trafficking and their quantities" was approved by Government Decision No.79 of 23 January 2006 .

The list is used by law enforcement authorities in the process of qualifying a drug-related action/inaction as an administrative offence or contravention, depending on the quantity identified which must be adjusted to the realities of drug use, but also to European recommendations and the substance under control. The list defines small, large and particularly large quantities for each narcotic substance, psychotropic substance or plants containing such substances.

According to the provisions of the Contravention Code of the Republic of Moldova, illegal actions/actions with small quantities of narcotic substances, psychotropic substances or plants containing such substances are punishable. The same actions/inactions with large and particularly large quantities are punishable under the Criminal Code of the Republic of Moldova. Quantities include mixtures of narcotic and/or psychotropic substances with precursors, additives (medicinal preparations, acids, glucose, amidon, flour, etc.) at any state of aggregation. Small, large or particularly large quantities of analogs of narcotic drugs or psychotropic substances correspond to the calculated quantities of the listed narcotic or psychotropic substances.

The small quantity of narcotic substances, psychotropic substances or plants containing such substances is less than the large quantity defined in the List. Large quantities of narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and precursors, which have been detected in illegal circulation, are the quantities exceeding the small quantities up to the maximum quantities indicated in the table of large quantities. Particularly large quantities of narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and precursors that have been detected in illegal circulation are the quantities exceeding large quantities.

It has been found that lately in the Republic of Moldova there are serious abuses of new substances, which are used as narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and precursors. Thus, in order to undertake measures to combat the supply of drugs, experts have looked at the problem of the emergence of these new preparations and found that new substances used for narcotic and psychotropic sensations have been identified in the illicit circulation. These new substances are not under state

control in accordance with the legislation in force, and their circulation among the population of the Republic of Moldova presents a serious threat to health and an increase in drug-related crimes.

Government Decision No. 1088/2004 approving the tables and lists of narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and precursors thereof, subject to control

To regulate certain issues related to the dismembering of illicit trafficking in narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and plants containing narcotic or psychotropic substances, pursuant to paragraphs (4) and (5) of Article 134¹ of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Moldova No. 985 of 18 April 2002, the "List of narcotic and psychotropic substances and plants containing such substances detected in illicit trafficking and their quantities" was approved by Government Decision No.79 of 23 January 2006 . The list is used by law enforcement authorities in the process of qualifying a drug-related action/inaction as an administrative offence or contravention, depending on the quantity identified which must be adjusted to the realities of drug use, but also to European recommendations and the substance under control. The list defines small, large and particularly large quantities for each narcotic substance, psychotropic substance or plants containing such substances. It has been found that lately in the Republic of Moldova there are serious abuses of new substances, which are used as narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and precursors. Thus, in order to undertake measures to combat the supply of drugs, experts have looked at the problem of the emergence of these new preparations and found that new substances used for narcotic and psychotropic sensations have been identified in the illicit circulation. These new substances are not under state control in accordance with the legislation in force, and their circulation among the population of the Republic of Moldova presents a serious threat to health and an increase in drug-related crimes.

Table 2. Quantities of drugs stipulated in the tables and lists of narcotic and psychotropic substances and precursors subject to control, Republic of Moldova

Position	Small quantities (up to indicated quantity)	Large quantities (from - to)
Heroin	0.01-1 gr	0.01-2.5 gr
Opium (raw opium)	0.01-1 gr	0,1-25 gr
Cocaine	0.15 gr	0.15-5 gr
LSD	1 stamp (dose)	2-10 stamps (doses)
Dried poppy straw	10 gr	10.0-500 gr
Green poppy straw	70.0 gr	70.0-1000 gr
Poppy extract	0.5 gr	0.5 gr-5 gr
Cannabis plants etc...	5 plants	6-50 plants

Source: <https://www.legis.md>

MINISTRY OF JUSTICE OF THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

PROBATION SERVICE

The Probation Law was adopted by the Parliament in 2008 (Law No. 8 of 14.02.2008) and entered into force on 13 September 2008. The enforcement of the law facilitates the individualization of sentences, contributing to relapse prevention and ensuring the re-socialization of offenders. Probation appears as an important step in the context of bringing national legislation in line with international standards, with the aim of creating an intermediate zone in the punishment system, a re-evaluation of the repressive concept and a change in its direction towards a curative concept. Probation is a set of activities aimed at assessing, providing assistance, psychosocial counselling and supervision in the community of a person in conflict with the law (accused, defendant, convicted) with the aim of reintegrating him/her into society and protecting the community from the risk of relapse. Probation service plays an important role in the social reintegration of former prisoners facing complex drug issues. To ensure adherence to treatment in the community, the National Probation Inspectorate collaborated with several public institutions and non-governmental organizations, based on partnerships and collaboration with available community institutions, the National Probation Inspectorate carried out the following activities and provided services, according to the individual activity plan:

1. *Specialized and probation assistance to drug users in order to prevent criminal relapse.*

To prevent relapses and rehabilitate substance abusers, an effective cooperation mechanism with community organizations providing integrated assistance to drug users, such as public associations, has been implemented. Initiativa Pozitiva, Uniunea pentru Echitate si Sanatate, have provided a broad range of integrated services to probation subjects, such as:

- on-site peer-to-peer activities, counselling activities (social assistant, psychologist, paralegal);
- running of psychosocial programmes;
- running of the "Psychosocial programme for overcoming addictions to psychoactive substances and criminal lifestyle".

During the reporting period, 66 people were referred and assisted, with the involvement of 20 specialised organisations. At the same time, during the reporting period 81 beneficiaries benefited from medical, psychological, psychiatric services, being referred to several healthcare facilities: youth-friendly health centre PRO-Salva, Mental health centre, Family Doctors Centres.

Probation counsellors also ran the Substance Abuse Reduction Programme (SARP) involving 125 people.

2. *Ensuring access for injecting drug users to testing and treatment services for HIV, hepatitis, TB and other drug-related diseases.*

With the support of the community entities in charge, as well as on the basis of partnerships, 15 subjects were tested and 8 started treatment. Within the framework of the AFI project, probation subjects can benefit from tuberculosis screening, chest radiography (fluorography) within the framework of the Project "Detecting tuberculosis among at-risk population and increased TB vigilance through non-governmental organizations". RCTV Memoria, the Rehabilitation Centre for Torture Victims, offers comprehensive rehabilitation services to those who have experienced prison. With the support of the public association *Initiativa Pozitiva*, 13 people were included in the risk reduction programme. 4 persons have completed the rehab programme. Antiretroviral treatment - 2 persons. Pharmacotherapy - 3 persons. 44 persons were tested for HIV. 2 persons received antiviral treatment for hepatitis C. 18 persons from the TB risk group were referred for digital lung X-ray.

3. *Training of specialists to provide integrated services to drug users and former drug users.*

The training of specialists in order to provide integrated services to drug users and former drug users was carried out in accordance with Order No. 10/2022, "On participation in training", where 25 people were delegated to participate in the seminar organized jointly with the National Institute of Justice, entitled "Psychosocial rehabilitation of persons addicted to alcohol and drugs". During 11 to 13 May 2022, upon the invitation of the Union for Equity and Health, 22 participants were also delegated to participate in the workshop on "Alternative measures to deprivation of liberty associated with drug use", in accordance with Order No. 45/2022 "On participation in the workshop".

On 20 September 2022, according to Order No. 175/2022, "On delegating to the training course", 25 probation counsellors were delegated to participate in the seminar organized jointly with the National Institute of Justice, entitled "Psychosocial rehabilitation of persons addicted to alcohol and drugs".

4. *Promoting probation work among the general public, law enforcement agencies and public administration representatives.*

To promote the prevention of drug use and its negative consequences, 20 newsletters were posted on the NPI Facebook page. These newsletters addressed topics such as how the addiction forms, the negative consequences of drug use, and the punishments provided for by criminal and contraventional legislation. The aim was to raise awareness of the major problem that drugs represent for the society and the individual. In addition, the territorial probation offices organised several awareness-raising and information activities during January through December 2022 to combat harmful behaviour, as follows:

- Information campaigns on the following topics : *Drugs - an attack on health, Combating drug abuse and illicit trafficking, Addictions are our invisible enemies, Say no to drugs*. More than 1400 leaflets were disseminated.
- Information lessons on: Promoting health among young people.
- Working sessions: Prevention of the use of narcotic substances.

Campaigns, flash mobs, information lessons/activities and meetings/debates at probation offices in Glodeni, Dubasari, Hincesti and Bender were run in the context of the "International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking". TV stations Teleradio Moldova, Libertatea Ro, Digi24 and Jumal TV broadcast video reports on the anti-drug/anti-alcohol probation programme „Drink&Drive", the terms of the programme and how to participate. At the same time, within the framework of the events held at local level, on 11 May 2022, the director of the NPI together with the representatives of the structural and territorial subdivisions participated in the workshop on "Alternative measures to deprivation of liberty associated with drug use", organized by the Union for Equity and Health within the project "Humanization of anti-drug policies in the Republic of Moldova, by promoting alternative measures to punishment (including arrest) for drug offenders". An objective

of the workshop was to familiarise participants with the issue of drug use from a human rights perspective and the problematic aspects of the process of decriminalisation of drug use. The National Probation Inspectorate, with the support of the PA "Union for HIV Prevention and Harm Reduction" and the Soros Foundation, has developed a concept on the application of alternative sanctions to imprisonment in drug-related cases. Guidelines for practitioners to provide for the drafting of the initial report at the pre-trial detention stage, to be promoted among practitioners (judges, prosecutors, prosecution officers) have also been developed. In 2021 the National Probation Inspectorate concluded an outsourcing services contract with PA "Iniciativa Pozitiva". Thus, specialised rehabilitation assistance services for drug users on probation were purchased. As a result, 16 people were assisted with the following types of services: psychological assistance, group therapy, detoxification course, rehabilitation, etc.

NATIONAL PRISON ADMINISTRATION

To develop cooperation with the civil society in the context of the implementation of drug supply reduction programmes, various activities are carried out in penitentiary institutions aimed at familiarising convicts with the negative effects of drug use. During 2022, the "Psycho-social rehabilitation program for persons addicted to drugs" was carried out in penitentiary institutions, involving 212 inmates. The group psychological intervention is a component of the psychological pathway, just like the individual psychological intervention, which unlike individual psychological intervention allows for the observation of interpersonal behaviour directly in the situation, where the social reality of the individual can be better understood. During 2022, 4 psychosocial behavioural change programmes were reviewed and approved.

The Therapeutic Community of the Penitentiary No. 9-Puncul, is active since 30.07.2018, the aim being to support the participation of the resident in the process of recovery and acquisition of a correct living style, behavioral change, development and formation of new skills and social responsibilities. As of 31.12.2022, there were 10 residents in the therapeutic community sector, selected by the decision of the multidisciplinary team during the operation of the community. In 2022, the multidisciplinary team convened in 16 meetings, where several issues were addressed, resident selection, CT expansion, post-rehabilitation program development. The basic programs that are implemented in the community are carried out by specialists from the social reintegration section of the institution and representatives of the PA "Iniciativa Pozitiva". At the same time, there were 416 group activities, including 140 sessions conducted by employees of the social reintegration section of Penitentiary No. 9-Pruncul and 276 sessions conducted by the PA "Iniciativa Pozitiva" (compared to the same period of 2021 when 320 group activities were conducted). The above shows a 23% increase in group activities within the programmes. Compared to the previous year, the number of group meetings has tripled in 2022. To provide psycho-social support and assistance in the process of development and integration of the residents' personality, 1525 individual counselling sessions were conducted by the psychologist, social worker and peer counsellor, of which 403 sessions were conducted by NPA employees and 1122 by representatives of the PA "Iniciativa Pozitiva" (compared to the same period of 2021, 904 counselling sessions).

A primary objective is the identification of detainees who are at increased risk of dangerousness, vulnerability or addiction to illegal substances with their registration and inclusion in the "Risk Group", in accordance with the provisions of the Instruction on the risk group (DIP order no. 466 of 29 December 2015), and they will be provided with psychological assistance according to the issues and needs identified. During 2022 psychologists included 691 inmates in the risk group, compared to the same period in 2021 when 1002 were included.

There exists also cooperation with probation bodies, the Employment Agency, LPAs, etc., with a view to training people to be released from detention and encouraging their employment after detention, as well as granting one-off allowance upon release from detention. In order to ensure access to psychosocial rehabilitation services, the National Prison Administration has issued orders, dispositions, instructions for the execution by the penitentiary institutions to take the necessary measures to counteract the entry of prohibited objects into the territory of prisons, including the involvement of joint detachments, DDS "Pantera" and colleagues from the Ministry of Interior structures to carry out joint patrols and organize ambushes.

The consequences of the illicit circulation of narcotic substances, as well as drug consumption at national level remain in the area of concern and priority objectives of the SIS. In the field of "supply reduction" of drugs, which refers to international drug trafficking, as well as the circulation of narcotic substances on the territory of the country, for the reference period 2022, SIS, in accordance with the provisions of the Law No. 753/1999, carries out a complex of measures aimed at detecting, preventing and fighting against actions which, according to the legislation in force, jeopardize state security. A "vulnerability" aspect identified during 2022 was the negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and Russia's military aggression against Ukraine. Among the listed tasks, the aspect of countering international drug trafficking is exhaustively highlighted. The overall picture of the referred to criminal phenomenon which derives from operational practice reveals that specialized transnational criminal networks continue to use the territory of the Republic of Moldova for illicit drug transit. Thus, the negative effects have driven people to resort to drug use, including encouraging some citizens to engage in activities such as illicit drug trafficking, which has led to the modification of drug trafficking routes to the European Union by changing the modus operandi for the production/distribution/trading of prohibited substances with the use of encrypted "Darknet" apps. At the same time, "non-contact methods" such as cost-effective delivery services are used, which minimises the risk of tracking goods in the large flow of deliveries. There has been a considerable increase in sales of high-risk drugs via the internet, including cannabis cultivation systems and other components for the production of prohibited substances. The Republic of Moldova continues to be an attractive territory for drug transit (involving both foreign and Moldovan citizens), which carries out schemes/mechanisms to camouflage criminal activity. For instance, the use of warehouses in the country for the storage of narcotic substances.

During 2022 the following cases were documented:

- ✓ 18.06.2021 - deconspiracy of the international drug trafficking ring (heroin) using the territory of the Republic of Moldova as a transit area on the Balkan route. 230 kg of heroin were seized.
- ✓ 11.11.2022 - Azerbaijani law enforcement authorities seized about 620 kg of heroin in trucks heading to the Republic of Moldova under the pretext of delivering food products.

Virtually every grouping formed in the Internet space uses an individual list of software (VPN technology, proxy server system ensuring anonymous network connections; direct/prompt messaging systems; photo hosting service allowing uploading of photos; online service for exchanging digital currencies and bitcoin mixer; software for determining geographic coordinates; online car rental services, etc.).

The institution submitted information during 2022 to the Prosecutor's Office (in particular PCCOCS) on the operation of cross-border criminal groups specializing in smuggling narcotic substances. The consequences of the illicit circulation of narcotic substances, as well as the consumption of drugs at national level remain in the area of concerns and priority objectives of the SIS, information is constantly exchanged with national partners aimed at preventing the circulation and proliferation of drugs and precursors.

MINISTRY OF INTERIOR OF THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

ANTI-DRUGS DIRECTORATE (DA)

As regards the DRUG RISK AND DRUG DEMAND REDUCTION, the following actions have been taken by the Anti-Drugs Directorate during 2022:

1. Working video-conference on 28 March 2022, with the participation of the Anti-Drugs Directorate, DPPCC and DMP with representatives of the Romanian National Anti-Drugs Agency. So, joint efforts to develop a TAIEX fiche, as well as considerations on the development of a TWINING project to achieve the proposed objectives of creating in the Republic of Moldova an Agency similar to that in Romania were discussed. Stages in achieving progress indicators:

- According to the Mol order no. 27 of 21.01.2022 on the unitary coordination of the process of drafting of sectoral development programmes within Mol, a working group was set up for the drafting of the 2022-2025 Crime Prevention and Control Programme. The working group decided to ask for the State Chancellery's view on the action.
- In this context, on 02.02.2022 letter no.38/476 was sent to the State Chancellery.

- On 08.02.2022, the State Chancellery, by its reply no.29-06-1326, expressed its support for the establishment of the National Anti-Drugs Agency, with the remark that some essential aspects of the current regulatory framework should be revised.
- By Mol Order no.27 of 21.01.2022 on the unitary coordination of the process of drafting of sectoral development programmes within Mol, the list of sectoral development programmes was approved.
- This action has been included in the draft 2022-2025 Action Plan of the 2022-2025 Programme for Preventing and Combating Crime.
- The Anti-Drugs Directorate drafted the Regulatory Impact Assessment in the process of substantiating the draft legislation.
- On May 10, 2022, the Anti-Drugs Directorate, together with the DMP of the GPI, has elaborated and placed the TAIEX fiche with a view to organizing a series of events oriented towards the creation/establishment of the National Anti-Drugs Agency in the Republic of Moldova, similar to the National Anti-Drugs Agency in Romania.
- The Anti-Drugs Directorate has drafted the Government Decision "establishing the National Anti-Drugs Agency", including the "Rules of procedure of the National Anti-Drugs Agency".
- On 2 June 2022 by the cover letter no. 34/18/4-6509, the draft (on 26 sheets) was submitted to the DPPCC of the Mol.
- On 3 June 2022 by the cover letter no. 34/18/4-6581, the draft (on 26 sheets) was submitted to the GPI of the Mol (for the Project Management Directorate). This action had not progressed.

2. In accordance with the GPI Order No. 201 of 16 May 2022 on delegating of police employees to (online) training on the topic "Prevention of HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and other communicable diseases among law enforcement employees, including mental health and occupational safety in the performance of duties", training was organized for employees of various units during 16 - 19 May 2022, 23 - 26 May 2022 and 30 May 2022 - 02 June 2022. A total of 3 trainings were organised. Trained employees - 125. 117 sets were purchased and distributed to employees attending the courses. Following the training, the Anti-Drugs Directorate has been equipped with an individual protection kit.

3. Marking the International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking. The Anti-Drugs Directorate received the invitation and participated at the event organized by UNODC Moldova, together with the Chisinau Municipal Police and the non-governmental organizations Initiativa Pozitiva, AFI, GDM, marking the International Day against Drug Use and Illicit Trafficking, which is marked annually on June 26. The theme of this year's international day was "Support in Crisis" and highlighted the importance of strengthening cooperation and the need for solidarity among all decision-makers to identify appropriate solutions to fight and reduce drug use at a time when we are affected by humanitarian crises, such as the war in Ukraine and the COVID-19 pandemic. The event took place on 27 June 2022, in the Public Garden "Stefan cel Mare" in Chisinau (Bonjour Caffe) where the results of the collaboration between NGOs and the Police during 2021-2022 in the field of assistance and referral of drug users to medical-social services were shared.

4. On 12 October 2022, the Head of Section No. 1 of the Anti-Drugs Directorate participated in the Broadcast: Exclusivmedia - "Față în față cu reporterul" on NTV Moldova.

With regard to "Drug supply reduction" in 2022 the Anti-Drugs Directorate participated in meetings, working groups, seminars, national and international assemblies:

- ✓ On 14.06.2022, the Head of Section No. 1 of the DIILD together with the INI management, in the INI headquarters hosted a visit of the Delegation of the Central Directorate of the Anti-Drugs Services of the Italian Ministry of Interior.
- ✓ On 12-15 September 2022, the Head of Section No. 1 of the Anti-Drugs Directorate participated in the 14th assembly of the Heads of Law Enforcement Agencies (HONLEA) for the Europe Region, organized by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC).
- ✓ On 11-12 October 2022, the Anti-Drugs Directorate employee participated in the online consultation meeting on "Illicit Drug Manufacturing Equipment" and Article 13 of the 1988 Convention, organised by the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB).

- ✓ On 18-19 October 2022, the Anti-Drugs Directorate employee participated in an online format in the Informal Meeting on "The role of law enforcement in public health response" (HIV), UNODC. The event was organised by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC).
- ✓ On 15 November 2022, the Head of the Anti-Drugs Directorate attended the meeting in the context of the working visit of INTERPOL experts to assess the needs for operational assistance in fighting cross-border organized crime and improving national and cross-border cooperation with non-governmental organizations and agencies. The visit took place in the INI headquarters.
- ✓ At the request of the International Cooperation Directorate of the MoI, the Anti-Drugs Directorate employee participated in the Paris Pact Consultative Group Meeting (PCGM) on combating illicit trafficking of opiate drugs originating in Afghanistan, held in hybrid format from 5-6 December 2022 in Vienna, Austria. Conferences - 3 events.
- ✓ On 07.06.2022, in online format, the Directorate employee participated in the 4th INTERPOL Global Conference in the field of combating trafficking in drugs and illicit substances.
- ✓ On 2-3 December 2022, in the EUROPOL headquarters in the Hague, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the Anti-Drugs Directorate employee participated in the 6th "ANNUAL DRUGS CONFERENCE" on preventing, combating the production and trafficking of drugs. The purpose of the event was to raise awareness of the threats posed by criminal organisations focused on drug trafficking.
- ✓ From 21.02.2022 to 11.03.2022, an employee of the Drug Crimes Investigation Directorate participated in the online training course "Online Investigations on Crypto currency and DarkWeb-eCDWI".
- ✓ From 26.06.2022 to 02.07.2022, in Bucharest, Romania, 3 employees of the Directorate participated in the sub-regional course "Drug Trafficking - Synthetic Drugs", an event organized within the framework of the Training and Operational Partnership to Combat Organized Crime in the Eastern Partnership Region (TOPCOP) project implemented by the European Police College (CEPOL) and the European Union Agency for Cooperation and Training in Law Enforcement (EUROPOL).
- ✓ The participation in the online course which covered topics on types of synthetic drugs, new psychoactive substances, precursors and production equipment, safety measures when capturing synthetic drug production sites, criminal groups and international cooperation, was initiated and organised in 4 stages within the framework of the EU4MD project, by the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA) jointly with the European Union Agency for Training in Law Enforcement (CEPOL).
- ✓ On 8-9 December 2022, the Anti-Drugs Directorate employee participated in the 65th session of the United Nations Commission on Narcotic Drugs, organized under the auspices of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), in a hybrid format, in Vienna, Austria.
- ✓ On 06.04.2022, in online format, 4 employees of the Directorate participated in the webinar "Methods of investigating drug trafficking", an event organized by CEPOL in the context of the implementation of the TOPCOP project (Training and Operational Partnership to Combat Organized Crime in the Eastern Partnership Region) with the participation of experts from EUROPOL, CEPOL and EUROJUST.
- ✓ On 12 October 2022, in an online format, 8 employees of the Anti-Drugs Directorate participated in the Webinar "Crypto currencies and Drugs: Analysis of crypto currency use on darknet markets in the EU and neighbouring countries". The event was organised by the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA).
- ✓ On 19.09.2022, 23.09.2022, 27.09.2022, 29.09.2022 (and there will be a follow-up), an employee of the Anti-Drugs Directorate attended online meetings with representatives of the National Anti-Drugs Agency of Romania, county level police inspectorates from Vrancea, Buzău and the GPI of the RM. The meetings were held with a view to strengthening a possible partnership on the implementation of programs and exchange of best practices between the Ministry of Interior of Moldova and the National Anti-Drugs Agency of Romania.
- ✓ On 24 June 2022, in the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova, the head of the Anti-Drugs Directorate participated in the public hearings to address the topic "State response to the needs of drug users", an event organized by the Committee on Social Protection, Health and Family.
- ✓ On 10 November 2022, at the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industry of the Republic of Moldova, the Head of the Anti-drugs Directorate attended the working meeting on the amendment of the regulatory framework related to the needs of cultivation of hemp plant on the territory of the Republic of Moldova. The event was organized at the initiative of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industry of the Republic of Moldova and representatives of the Association of "Hemp growers" of the Republic of Moldova. etc.....

CUSTOMS SERVICE

As regards the "supply reduction and efficiency of specific activities to combat drug supply", in 2022 the Customs Service's criminal prosecution body started 30 criminal cases on smuggling of narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and analogs thereof, which involved the following substances and quantities:

- ✓ Alprazolam: 490 pills + 0.0259 (substance);
- ✓ Tramadol: 58 pills
- ✓ Clonazepam: 180 pills;
- ✓ Lorivan: 330 pills;
- ✓ Codeine: 20 pills + 1.05g. (substance);
- ✓ Triazolam: 20 pills + 0.0149. (substance);
- ✓ Bondormin: 190 pills;
- ✓ Clonidine: 16 pills;
- ✓ Clonazepam: 0.469 (substance);
- ✓ Diazepam: 0.5 g (substance);
- ✓ Midozolam: 0.21g (substance);
- ✓ Oxazepam: 0.9 g (substance);
- ✓ Brotizolam: 10.0125 g (substance);
- ✓ Lorazepam: 0.049 (substance) + 20 pills;
- ✓ Prozepam: 0.2 g (substance);
- ✓ Phenobarbital: 20 pills;
- ✓ Lisdexamfetamines: 30 pills
- ✓ Methylfenidate: 90 capsules.

During 2022, the staff of the anti-drugs service participated in various joint operations organized by Moldova's development partners:

- JAD Finestra - VIII, organised under the aegis of FRONTEX, CELEC, INTERPOL, OLAF, EUROPOL on tackling cross-border crime with a focus on illegal migration, drugs, firearms, human trafficking, smuggling.
- PYTHIA II , organised in cooperation with EUBAM with the aim of identifying the main threats and risks associated with international mail deliveries and express parcels.
- EMPACT, organised by EUROPOL on the basis of the EU/Western Balkans EMPACT Operational Action Plan.

GENERAL BORDER POLICE INSPECTORATE (GBPI)

Drug production, smuggling and distribution are highly profitable criminal activities, generating significant gains for criminal organisations that can adapt to change by exploiting opportunities to increase profits. The rapid advancement of technology and innovation in retail drug distribution is extremely dynamic and uses all available tools. Although there are various movement restrictions, alternative options for transporting drugs can be used, such as mixing drugs with other substances to conceal them and performing the chemical extraction after transporting them closer to the buyer. The international nature of drug-related crimes has required the cooperation of the GBPI's specialized subdivisions with European and international structures with a mandate in this field (Europol, Eurojust, Eurocustoms, Interpol, United Nations Agency for Combating Drugs and Crime, etc.), this segment being constantly improved through close communication and response to requests. The GBPI's cooperation with foreign authorities translates into the use of existing police and judicial cooperation mechanisms (including judicial information cooperation, exchange of information, controlled deliveries). Systematic involvement of liaison officers in the exchange of operational data and information between the GBPI and foreign subdivisions.

For the field of "supply reduction" of drugs in 2022, the General Border Police Inspectorate (GBPI) reported the statistical data on illicit drug trafficking, which reflects the following situation by initiated criminal cases, of which cases forwarded according to jurisdiction or to the courts: 17- criminal cases, 6 - sent to court, 1- stopped, 10 - in procedure.

With regard to the "demand reduction" of drugs during 2022, the Ministry of Education has carried out the following interventions both in primary and general secondary education, promoting Education for health through all school subjects. In primary and general secondary schools, the prevention of drug, alcohol and tobacco use is continuously implemented through the Curriculum, both in compulsory subjects (biology, chemistry, personal development, education for society) and in the optional subject "Education for Health".

The curriculum area Counselling and Personal Development, includes the compulsory subject Personal Development, one hour per week in primary, secondary and high school. The subject was implemented in accordance with the provisions of the Curriculum developed and built on the basis of educational research and personality development theory. This is the concept for developing the necessary competences for students' self-awareness, healthy and independent living, becoming informed, active and upright citizens, who could relate openly and freely, demonstrating responsibility in making career decisions and personal development throughout life, forming responsible behaviour for their own life and health and those of others.

The compulsory subject *Personal Development* is structured in 5 modules, one of which is: Healthy lifestyle, which guides students in aspects related to physical health, emotional health, healthy eating, fighting vices: drugs, alcohol, smoking, influences of different kinds, etc. which includes such content units as: *Say NO to drugs and other dangerous substances, The danger of drug use, Risk situations, How consumer are recruited, The impact of drug use on physical, mental and emotional health in adolescence, Drug addiction, Preventing drug use, Social consequences.*

In primary and general secondary schools - an important role in raising public awareness about activities to prevent drug, alcohol and tobacco use is played by parents' associations, which were involved during the reporting period in both the organisation of thematic meetings with parents and activities with pupils.

During 2022, pupils in primary and general secondary education were included in curricular and extracurricular activities on the prevention of drug, alcohol and tobacco use. One of the priority areas of the optional subject is *Education for Health and Quality Life.*

Thus, in the 2022-2023 academic year, the optional subject was studied in 471 primary and general secondary schools by 21441 pupils in:

- Primary cycle - 5497 pupils
- Gymnasium cycle - 14114 pupils
- High school - 1830 pupils

An important role in raising society's awareness about drug, alcohol and tobacco prevention activities is played by parents' associations in organising thematic meetings with parents and activities with pupils. At the request of the Ministry, the Continuous Professional Training Centres provide in-service training for teachers every three years in school subjects, in particular HIV/AIDS prevention and health risk reduction associated with drug, alcohol and tobacco use. Youth Friendly Health Centres organised peer-to-peer outreach activities. The Ministry of Education and Research together with the Ministry of Health have carried out information campaigns on health topics (STI, HIV, alcohol, tobacco and drug abuse prevention) in Preventive Medicine Centres, high schools, vocational schools by distributing information materials and offering free consultations to young people.

With reference to the implementation of the individual action plan, in 2022 the Ministry of Education and Research has achieved the following:

- 5 (online) methodological assistance sessions for teachers, participation in the project "Protection of children from violence and its prevention, implemented with the support of the Council of Europe.
- Standards for the online protection and safety of children/pupils have been developed and approved (MEC Order no. 985/2022)
- Guidelines for the implementation of the Standards for the online protection and safety of children/pupils have been developed.

With regard to *Primary Prevention* of drug use, refresher courses for doctors and nurses were organised during 2022. Continuous training for psychiatrists-narcologists, staff working in treatment, rehabilitation, harm reduction are organized at the Department of Psychiatry, Narcology and Medical Psychology of USMF "Nicolae Testemitanu". Another training mechanism for health personnel is medical education courses organised by other institutions active in the field, non-governmental organisations and international institutions interested in the drugs area.

Awareness raising campaigns are activities organised to inform young people about the health consequences of illicit substance abuse. Drug prevention plays an important role in the work of the Ministry of Health. IMSP RND is directly involved in carrying out activities related to the promotion of healthy lifestyles.

RND representatives organized and participated in:

- ✓ Awareness raising and education campaigns to prevent drug and alcohol abuse.
- ✓ TV and radio shows.
- ✓ Posted various information on social media about harmful impact of drug use.
- ✓ Distributed information materials to the media (3 information materials).
- ✓ Health promotion events were held (International Day against Drug Use and Illicit Trafficking, National No Alcohol Day, World Mental Health Day, International HIV/AIDS Day)
- ✓ The Republican Narcological Dispensary (RND) hosted a meeting of the technical working group for the development of the application for video-guided assistance to patients in methadone and buprenorphine treatment was held in collaboration with UNAIDS, UNDP, PAS Centre;
- ✓ 1 December 2022 - International HIV/AIDS Day, with the mottoes "For you, for them, for everyone!" and "It is important for everyone. Everyone is important!". In this context, the population was urged to get free of charge HIV tests at the mobile points.
- ✓ On 8.12.2022 UNODC, UNAIDS, PAS organized a training workshop for RND staff to use the digital solution Support-OST to support video-assisted pharmacological treatment of opioid dependence.
- ✓ Participation in the "Just test yourself!" social campaign , launched by the Ministry of Health with the support of the National Public Health Agency, the Public Association "Initiativa Pozitiva", UNAIDS Moldova and local authorities. Till 21 December, RND staff informed the population about HIV/AIDS, promoted HIV testing.

With reference to the regulatory framework, the National Clinical Protocol on "*Disorders related to the use of new substances with psychoactive and stimulant properties (adults and adolescents)* " was developed and approved by MS Order no.314 of 31.03.2022 in cooperation with international institutions,.

In order to ensure transparency and good communication with the community in 2022, the RND participated in: 21 radio and TV broadcasts, 86 pieces of information were distributed online, etc.

CIVIL SOCIETY

In 2022, the public association Intiativa Pozitiva carried out actions and sub-actions with regard to the following:

Area: Drug demand reduction:

- ✓ Psycho-social support programmes for persons deprived of their liberty were carried out (836 persons benefited from the programmes).
- ✓ Programmes to change deviant and criminal behaviour were carried out (304 inmates participated in cognitive-behavioural change programmes and 400 inmates participated in information sessions on risky behaviour).
- ✓ In the rehabilitation program based on the Therapeutic Community of the Penitentiary No. 9 Pruncul - 14 inmates were included in the program, 23 inmates were in the program during the year, 3 inmates were released. Since the Therapeutic Community began operating, of the 31 residents released, none has been re-incarcerated.
- ✓ The half-way house service was strengthened, 16 beneficiaries benefited from the half-way house service, 59 beneficiaries benefited from the integration of the assisted employment concept.

- ✓ National awareness raising campaigns were organised on the occasion of the International Day against Drug Use and Illicit Drug Trafficking on 26 June
- ✓ Sports activities, round tables were organised with wide media coverage and involvement of well-known personalities and the drug users community. During 26 June - 31 August 2022, a large-scale information and prevention campaign on drug use was conducted in the Republic of Moldova under the name "Crisis Support". The aim of this campaign is to strengthen the interaction between policy makers and to draw the attention of the general public to the solutions needed to combat drug use.

Activities and events:

- Promote information materials among the general public.
- Conduct public information activities in crowded places.
- Organise educational activities in children's summer camps.
- Organise flash mobs during the campaign period.
- Organise free film screenings in cinemas.
- Media and online news portals reports on campaign activities.

Area: Risk reduction:

- ✓ Peer counselling training for inmates. In 2022 the target for inmates' employment was not achieved. On the other hand, a regulation on the status of peer counsellors and how their activities would be integrated into the operation of the prison has been developed by the NPA.
- ✓ Ensuring access to the expanded package of services for drug users for a more effective reintegration (Ensuring access to medicines, disinfectants and health maintenance products/ Pre and post HIV exposure prophylaxis/ Distribution of information and education materials/ Referral/accompanying to various necessary health and social care services/ Provision of legal, psychological and social assistance and representation of drug users' interests/ Sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services/ Violence prevention and security services) - 3859 beneficiaries covered by the expanded package of services.

BUDGET ALLOCATIONS AND FINANCING

At the proposal of the National Anti-Drug Commission, the Government will co-finance multidisciplinary programmes in the framework of the policy in this field, implemented at local level. It is not possible to measure/estimate the national budget expenditure on drug prevention and other measures to combat illicit drug trafficking. At the moment, disaggregation for calculating the total expenditure is not possible.

PREVALENCE AND TRENDS IN DRUG USE

POPULATION-BASED DRUG USE PREVALENCE SURVEYS

Drug use and drug use patterns and trends among the general population are measured in population-based surveys on a national representative sample. Surveys provide estimates of the proportion of people who report having used specific drugs over a certain time period. The questionnaires also provide useful contextual information on current or past patterns of use, socio-demographic characteristics of users, risk perceptions, availability and attitudes towards drugs (as recommended by the EMCDDA).

In the Republic of Moldova 3 standard indicators are applied to assess drug use:

- lifetime prevalence (drug use at any time of life),
- prevalence in the last year,
- prevalence in the last month.

Of the three standard measures, lifetime prevalence is less sensitive for reflecting the current situation. This measure does not reflect the current state of drug use, but can be useful for understanding patterns of use and incidence of first use. The focus is on use occurrence over the past year and month.

Drug use among the general population

Specific data on drug use were collected in the survey "KAP 2010 15-64 years old" yrs 2005, 2008, 2010. The results in trends are included in the annual report "Illicit drug use and trafficking in the Republic of Moldova", 2013

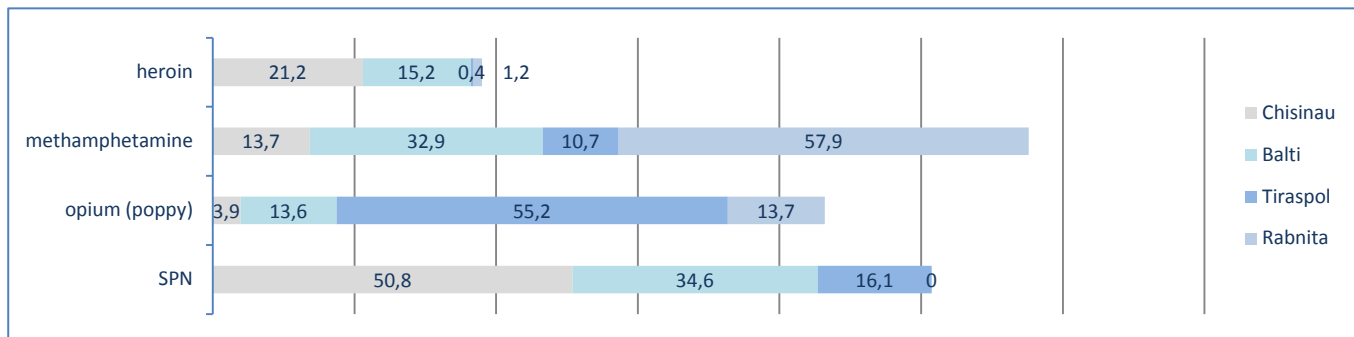
Drug use among young people

Data specific to drug use were collected in the study "Knowledge, attitudes and practices of young people aged 15-24 years old with reference to HIV/AIDS", 2006, 2008, 2010, 2012. The results in trends are included in the annual report "Illicit drug use and trafficking in the Republic of Moldova", 2013. The European Project on a School Research on Alcohol and Other Drugs Use, commonly identified by the abbreviation ESPAD, was initiated in 1993 by the Swedish Information Council on Alcohol and Other Drugs and the Council of Europe. The aim of the study is to obtain comparable data at European level on the knowledge, attitudes and practices of 16 year olds with regard to drug use, thus making it possible to draw up trends in the characteristics of drug use in this age group at national and European level. Surveys are repeated every four years, with the first survey in 26 countries being conducted in 1995 as the starting point. The Republic of Moldova has implemented three rounds of the ESPAD survey. According to the methodology, all students in classes with a high proportion of pupils aged 16 years old (in the case of the Republic of Moldova these are 8th and 9th grades) are surveyed, but for comparability between countries in the final stage of the survey at the European level, only students within the target group remain (in ESPAD 2015 these are students born in 1999). The results in trends are included in the annual report "Illicit drug use and trafficking in the Republic of Moldova", 2015.

Civil sector injecting drug users

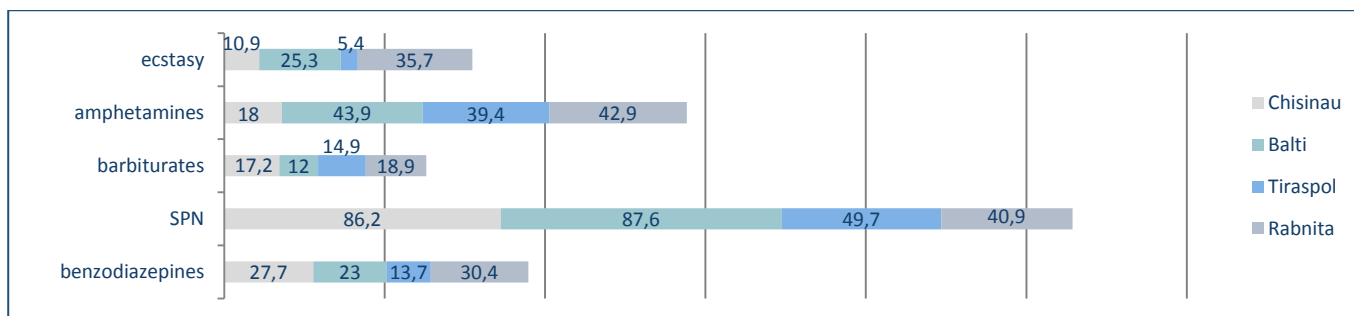
In the 2020 IBBS integrated bio-behavioural survey, carried out among IDUs (injecting drug users), the main drug injected during the last month varies, depending on the location of the survey. Figure 1 shows the most consumed types of drugs by locality. In Chisinau and Balti the most frequently used drug type during the last month are new psychoactive substances (NPS) 50.8% and 34.6% respectively, 55.2% opium extract (poppy) in Tiraspol and 57.9% methamphetamines in Ribnita.

Figure 1. Most injecting drugs during the last month, %, IBBS 2020



The most commonly non-injecting drug used over the past month reported in IBBS 2022 is new psychoactive substances (NPS), with the highest proportion on the right side of Nistru river. The same high figures are recorded for other types of drugs: amphetamines, benzodiazepines, ecstasy.(Figure 2)

Figure 2. Type of non-injecting drug used during the last month, %, IBBS 2022



Departmental/prison sector injecting drug users

In the 2020 IBBS survey, the PICID subgroup in the prison sector did not participate. According to the results of the 2015/2016 IBBS survey, among the inmates on the right bank of Nistru River, 14.9% have injected drugs at least once, the average age being of 36.2 years. Of these, 17.6% are HIV positive, 40.5% are HVC positive, 4.1% are HVB positive and 5.4% are Treponema Pallidum positive. Of the sample, 4.2% (21 respondents out of 495) reported injecting drugs during the past 12 months. The average age of respondents who have injected drugs in the past 12 months is 33.6 years, respondents who have injected drugs in the past 12 months reported an average of 11.1 years of drug injecting experience. The types of drugs injected among respondents who have injected drugs in the last 12 months are: methamphetamines, heroin, "shirka" (local product), subutex, poppy.

OPERATIONAL ESTIMATION RESEARCH

CIVIL SECTOR INJECTING DRUG USERS

In 2020 the exercise to estimate the size of the groups of injecting drug users, sex workers and men who have sex with men was repeated, being underpinned by the latest recommendations of the WHO Guidelines for biobehavioural surveillance in populations at higher risk of HIV infection. Estimates were made separately for the municipalities of Chisinau and Balti on the right bank of the Dniester River and for the municipality of Tiraspol and town of Rabnitsa on the left bank of Nistru river. The estimated size of the IDU group in the Republic of Moldova in 2020 was 27.5 thousand, with 22.78 thousand for the right bank and 4.72 thousand for the left bank of Nistru River. The estimated number of injecting opiate users is about 47% of the estimated number of injecting drug users, which is about 12,920 persons. It is worth noting that opioid injections among PCIDs differs essentially from one territory to another, the most prevalent being on the left bank (about 54.8%). The estimated number of non-injecting drug users (PCD) obtained from the group size estimation exercise carried out in 2022 is 50,000 nationally with about 8,500 on the left bank and 42,300 - on the right bank.

MAIN TRENDS

Since the data on drug use patterns over the years are consistent, it is not possible to track trends in drug use. Information from various data sources currently available in the Republic of Moldova differs and in many cases is hardly comparable. Because of lack of consistency over time, the available data reduce the possibility of analysing trends in drug use. The main sources of information for this sub-chapter are:

- ✧ Survey results among the general population (KAP adults, 16-64 years old)
- ✧ Survey results among young people (KAP youth, 15-24 years old)
- ✧ Student Survey Results (ESPAD)
- ✧ Results of bio-behavioural surveys among IDUs (IBBS)
- ✧ Routine RND statistics profiling new registered drug use cases;

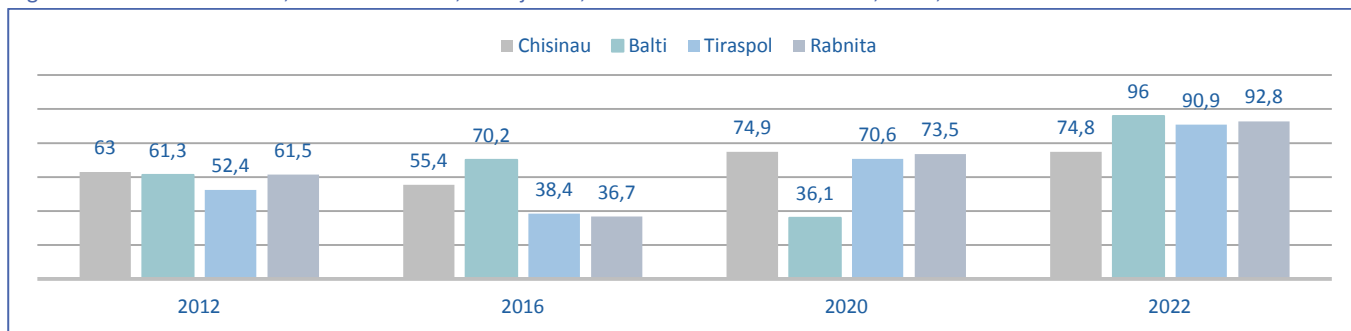
CANNABIS

Cannabis is the most commonly used illegal drug in the Republic of Moldova. In 2010 on the right bank of Nistru River the lifetime prevalence of cannabis use in the general population aged 15-64 (KAP study) is 3.9%, while in 2008 it was 3.4%. The prevalence of cannabis use is the highest compared to other illegal drugs. Cannabis use is more common in urban areas and among men.

The KAP survey conducted in 2012 among 15-24 year old youth on the right bank of Nistru river records a lifelong prevalence of cannabis use of 3.5%, which is the highest among illegal drugs (4.9% in 2010). The prevalence of cannabis use over the last year was 2.3% in 2010 and 1.2% in 2012. In the 2015 ESPAD study, the lifetime prevalence of cannabis use was 4.0%, in 2008 - 5 %.

According to the trend data presented in the IBBS survey on non-injecting drugs, the most commonly used drugs in the last month and in the last 6 months were cannabis/marijuana/hashish/cannabis resin in all four surveyed communities.

Figure 3. Use of cannabis, cannabis resin, marijuana, hashish in the last month, IBBS, %

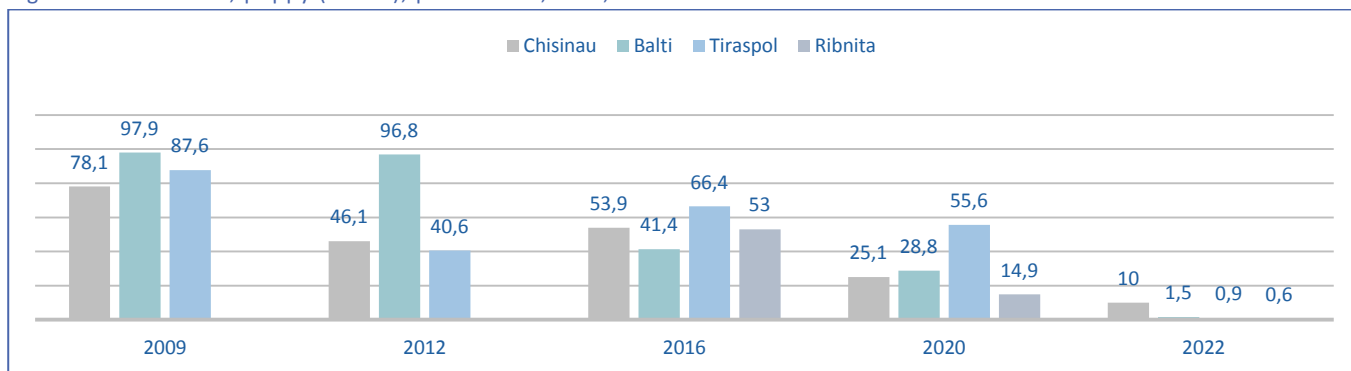


According to the RND data, of the new cases of non-addictive drug use registered in 2022, at the time of registration the majority were marijuana users, administered via smoking 82.1% and predominantly by males 94.9%.

OPIATES/HEROIN

In 2010, the lifelong prevalence of opioid use among the general population aged 15-64 years old was 0.4%. Lifelong experience of heroin use was reported by 0.1% of the respondents. According to the study, conducted among the 15-24 years old age group, the lifelong prevalence of opioid use in 2012 was 0.5%. According to the 2020 IBBS survey, there is a decrease in opioid use for all communities surveyed compared to previous years. This may be conditioned by the availability of new psychoactive substances on the drug market.

Figure 4. Heroin use, poppy (shirca), past month, IBBS, %

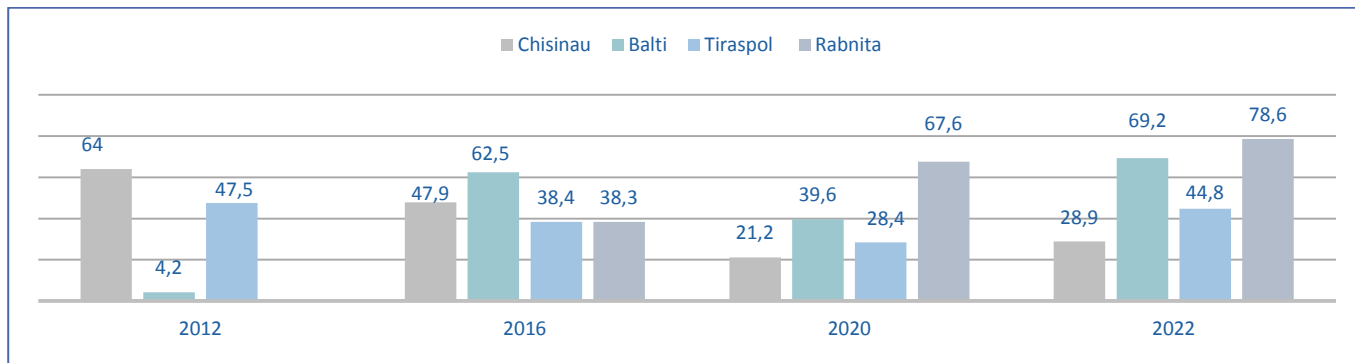


According to the RND data, in 2022 opioid use was: 77.3% in new cases of addicted use and 1.3% without addiction. Injection is the main route of opioid administration in new cases of addictive drug use 77.6%.

STIMULATING DRUGS

According to the 2010 KAP survey among the general population aged 15-64 years old, the lifelong prevalence of amphetamine use was 0.1% and the lifelong prevalence of ecstasy use - 0.5%. The lifelong prevalence of amphetamine use according to the 2012 KAP survey was 0.1% and the lifelong prevalence of ecstasy use among 15-24 year old youth was 1.2%. According to ESPAD the lifelong prevalence of ecstasy use among students in 2008 was 1.6%, in 2011 - 2% and in 2015 - 1%. The trend is towards lower values for synthetic drug use in most locations in the 2020 IBBS survey, except for the town of Rabnitsa, where this type of drug is the main 67.6% and consumption is 1.7 times higher compared to the previous round of the survey. The 2022 IBBS survey showed increasing synthetic drug use compared to the previous round, both for every type of substance and for every community included in the survey, except for Chisinau, where values go down.

Figure 5. Use of amphetamine, methamphetamine, ecstasy, past month, IBBS, %



Amphetamine use in new non-addictive drug use cases recorded for 2022 by the RND is 2.8% and is almost double the number in the previous reporting year.

HALLUCINOGENIC SUBSTANCES

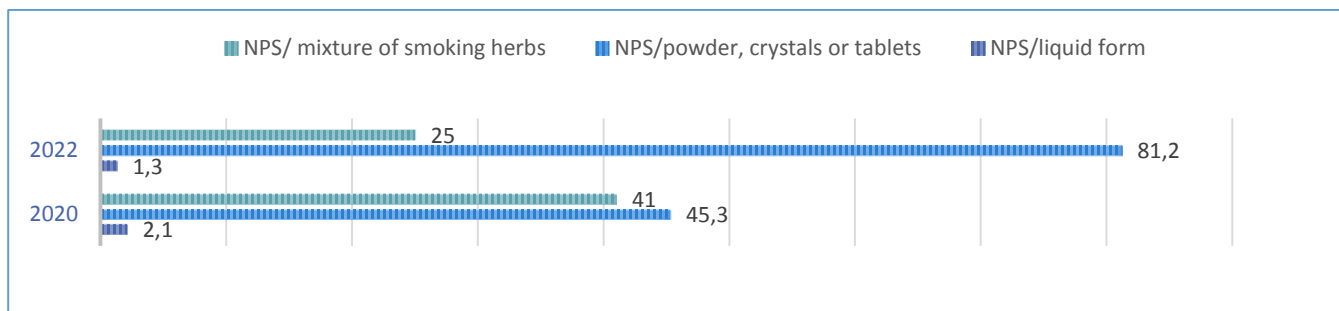
According to the 2012 KAP among 15-24 years old youth, the lifelong prevalence of LSD use is 0.1%. Last month use of hallucinogenic drugs (LSD, hallucinogenic mushrooms, mescaline) reported in IBBS 2020 is 5.5%. LSD is very rarely found in new cases of drug use recorded by the healthcare system (RND). In the case of hallucinogenic drugs seized by the Mol in 2022 (946 LSD stamps) the number recorded was almost half that of 2021 (1479 LSD stamps).

NPS (NEW PSYCHOACTIVE SUBSTANCES)

The use of new psychoactive substances (NPS) reported in the 2020 IBBS shows that this type of drug is very popular and shows higher values than the data reported in the previous round of IBBS in 2016. The trend of NPS use, according to the data from the survey, shows higher values per community (e.g. in Chisinau, non-injecting consumption in the last month was 35.8% in 2016 compared to 55.4% in 2020) and predominates on the right bank of the Nistru (with 55.4% in Chisinau in 2020 and 16.4% in Tiraspol in 2020). In the 2022 round of the IBBS survey the values of new psychoactive substances (NPS) almost double for all forms of use.

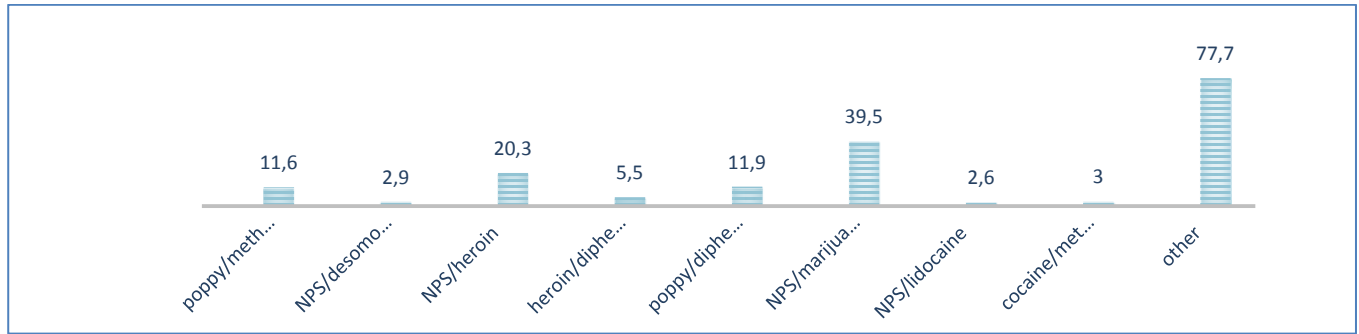
NPS use in new cases of non-addictive drug use reported by the RND for 2022 is 8% and is up from 7.8% in 2021.

Figure 6. Non-injecting NPS use, last month, all communities, 2020, 2022 IBBS, %



The 2020 survey included questions about polydrug usage use of drugs. According to the survey data the most common mix of substances used (of those specified) are marijuana and NPS - 39.5% and in the category other (of those not specified) the value is higher - 77.7%.

Figure 7. Polydrug usage (a mix of substances) during the last 6 months, all communities, 2020 IBBS, %



DRUG ADDICTION TREATMENT

COORDINATION AND AVAILABLE SERVICES

When addressing the issue of drug use, the Republic of Moldova bases on the World Health Organization's concept of "Health for All in the 21st Century", according to which drug use is a problem that jeopardizes public health and could hinder the healthy development of citizens and society in the wider context.

By order of the Ministry of Health, the IMSP Republican Narcology Dispensary (RND) was nominated the coordinating entity of the narcology system in the Republic of Moldova.

The services provided by the institution are: outpatient, inpatient and supportive care; individual and group counselling; psychological testing by different methods; HIV and drug testing; information and education activities in special target groups on the risks related to psychoactive substance use, the development of "harmless" behaviour; primary prevention activities, based on the concepts of informed decision-making, in secondary and high schools of the Republic of Moldova; information and education of the population on the prevention of psychoactive substance use.

The RND provides advisory and inpatient care to patients from all over the Republic of Moldova within the subdivisions of the inpatient and day outpatient (anonymous) units, who are facing problems related to the use of alcohol, narcotic substances and psychotropic substances.

These goals are achieved thanks to a complex approach in the treatment of drug addiction. Treatment in the rehabilitation process is provided by a specialised psychotherapeutic team of doctors, psychologists, social workers and volunteers (former drug users).

The Law no. 263 of 27.10.2005 "On the rights and responsibilities of the patient" reads that a patient may not be admitted to a hospital without his/her consent, except in cases of advanced deterioration of personality or in cases when the person poses public threats. Thus, the person can voluntarily seek specialised help in public and private healthcare facilities. In private healthcare facilities, the offer does not differ from that of the public system. Detoxification is included in the minimum package of medical services covered by the compulsory health care insurance policy, which is available only to insured persons (those formally employed, who have purchased an insurance policy or are insured from the state budget, such as students, pupils, pensioners and persons with disabilities, and since 2007 - unemployed persons officially registered with employment agencies). For persons who are not in the insured categories and have not purchased a compulsory health insurance policy, detoxification is covered by compulsory health insurance funds and is classified as a major medical emergency.

Drug users who do not have a compulsory health care insurance policy are provided with specialized emergency outpatient and hospital care, covered by compulsory health care insurance funds according to the Single Programme of Compulsory Healthcare Insurance and Methodological Standards. For insured persons who do not wish to disclose their identity, detoxification is paid, as the use of the health insurance policy excludes anonymity.

DETOXIFICATION TREATMENT

A person can benefit from detoxification treatment according to the following criteria:

- anamnesticly, clinically, paraclinically confirmed clinical signs of drug dependence;
- withdrawal syndrome of varying severity;
- identification of drugs in biological fluids.

The Regulation on detecting, registering and keeping record of persons using drugs and other psychotropic substances is approved by the Order of the Ministry of Health No. 1043 of 18.10.2012.

To prevent alcohol abuse, illicit use of drugs and other psychotropic substances, and to ensure the quality of medical services provided to the population, Medical Standards for diagnosis and treatment have been developed. These standards describe the algorithm for diagnosing, providing care and treatment to alcohol and drug users. The updated version was approved by the Order of the Ministry of Health No.314 of 31.03.2022 approving the National Clinical Protocol "Disorders related to the use of new psychoactive and stimulating substances in adults and adolescents".

REHABILITATION AND REINTEGRATION

According to the provisions of the Order of the Ministry of Health No. 365 of 26.09.2007, the Centre for Rehabilitation and Re-socialization of Drug Addicted Persons operates within the RND, which continues providing treatment to persons addicted to drugs after their detoxification. All services provided by the centre are free of charge outpatient care services. Social-medical rehabilitation is one of the analyses that are done at the time of admission, such as the patient's personality, its physical and psychological conditions, social and family status, that are conclusive in determining the person's ability to engage in treatment. The start of the rehabilitation implies certain criteria for admission to treatment, as well as contraindications. Thus, persons who are addicted drug users; wish to get treatment; have a referral from a psychiatrist or narcologist; and have the mental capacity to engage in rehabilitation programs are admitted. Once discharged from the hospital after detoxification, patients who for various reasons do not make it to the Centre for the Rehabilitation and Re-Socialization of Drug Addicted Persons can, if they wish so, continue treatment within rehabilitation and reintegration programmes offered by local NGOs or go abroad for residential treatment (those better off), or discontinue treatment, stopping at the detoxification stage. The advantage of local NGOs is that they provide free anonymous services. According to the Standard for Psychological Assistance to Drug Users, rehabilitation in day centres and therapeutic communities is based on a comprehensive and regular initial assessment of existing problems, personal characteristics, existing psychosocial support, stress factors, carried out by competent, specially trained staff. Based on this assessment, several goals are set in the person's care and progress is monitored throughout the care-giving process. Part of this type of assistance is the relationship with other services in the field and the referral of beneficiaries.

METHADONE OR BUPRENORPHINE PHARMACOTHERAPY PROGRAMME

The methadone substitution treatment programme in the Republic of Moldova was approved by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection by Order No. 159 of 20 May 2003.

According to the Government Decision No.166 of 15 February 2005, methadone substitution treatment was established in penitentiary institutions, thus the Republic of Moldova became the first country in the Commonwealth of Independent States to introduce methadone substitution treatment in prisons.

The Ministry of Health Order No.283 of 12.07.2007 "On the improvement of the forms and methods of applying substitution therapy to drug addicted patients" excluded some restrictive criteria for enrolment (record of addictive use kept by the narcologist), thus increasing access to substitution therapy.

To prevent illicit drug use by ensuring the provision of quality healthcare services to the population, the Ministry of Health has approved the Order No. 702 of 18.06.2022 approving the National Clinical Protocol "Pharmacological treatment of opiate addiction". The national protocol is developed in accordance with current international guidelines on opioid dependence in adults, which serve as a basis for the development of institutional protocols according to the actual possibilities of each institution. Upon the recommendation of the Ministry of Health, additional template forms not included in the National Clinical Protocol may be used for monitoring institutional protocols. At the same time, the nominated Protocol was reviewed by the WHO and UNODC experts.

Starting 2002 pharmacological treatment of opiate addiction with buprenorphine has been implemented in a project in the IMSP Republican Narcology Dispensary, and starting 2004 methadone pharmacological treatment has been implemented in the IMSP Republican Narcology Dispensary, subsequently in IMSP Municipal Clinical Hospital Balti, IMSP District Hospitals in Cahul, Comrat, Edinet, Ungheni, Falesti and Orhei, Department of Penitentiary Institutions (13 penitentiary institutions, including 4 pre-trial detention facilities). Pharmacological treatment of opioid dependence with methadone and/or buprenorphine has been recognised as a cost-effective tool in addressing health problems, preventing the spread of HIV and viral hepatitis and increasing adherence of HIV-positive people to ARV therapy. At the same time, methadone and/or buprenorphine pharmacological treatment contributes both to the prevention of overdose and illicit drug use and to the

reduction of crime among this contingent. Methadone or buprenorphine OST aims at enrolling the patient in treatment, at alleviating withdrawal syndrome and at ensuring safety (avoiding overdose and death). The duration of treatment depends on the patient's health and social situation.

The treatment demand indicator is one of the five key indicators in the field of drug epidemiology that estimate the number and characteristics of people seeking treatment for drug use, substances used, types of treatment offered. The estimate is based on the EMCDDA Pompidou Group Joint Treatment Demand Indicator Protocol.

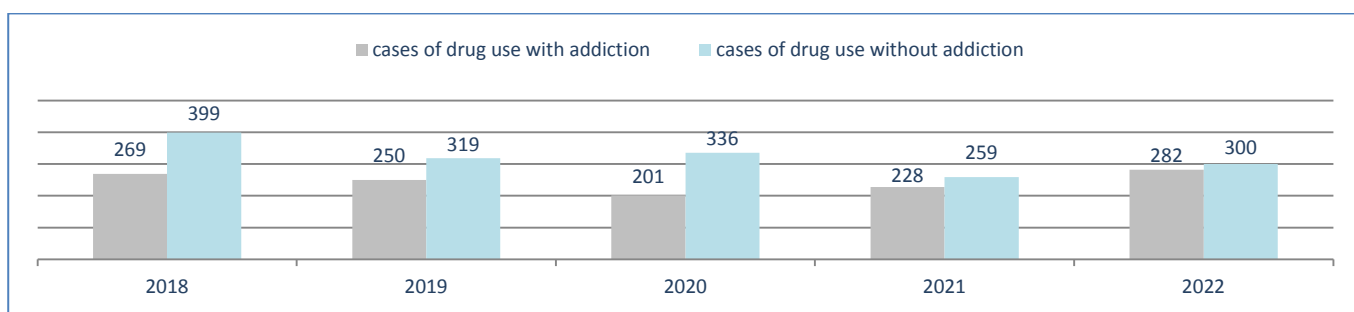
Currently, the Republic of Moldova does not have a data collection system to measure the treatment demand indicator. The potential components of a future data collection system for the treatment demand indicator in the Republic of Moldova, in line with the recommendations of international experts, are:

- Institution authorized to officially register cases;
- Units responsible for methadone pharmacotherapy;
- Public and private healthcare facilities;
- Department of Penitentiary Institutions of the Ministry of Justice;
- Risk Reduction Programmes;
- Rehabilitation and re-socialisation service providers;
- General Police Inspectorate of the Ministry of Interior;
- Probation Service of the Ministry of Justice.

DATA COLLECTION SYSTEM FOR OFFICIALLY REGISTERED DRUG USERS

In the data collection system for drug users, the official registration of cases is the responsibility of the RND, which enters all new cases officially registered in the database and ensures its maintenance. The case is considered officially registered when the (paper) notification form is filled out and sent to the RND, where the information is entered into the database. The main source of detection of new cases of drug use are the healthcare facilities (voluntary referral for treatment or accidental detection during prophylactic check-ups²) and the police (who refer to the narcological service for expertise of persons apprehended for various reasons). The regulation of the detection, registration and reporting of drug users provides for a number of scenarios, therefore people receiving treatment anonymously are not registered in the RND database, therefore, the below information does not include these patients. By clinical form, all new cases are divided into two broad categories: non-addictive drug use and addictive drug use.

Figure 8. Distribution of new registered drug use cases, Republic of Moldova (right bank of Nistru River), 2018-2022



Source: Republican Narcology Dispensary

For 2022, the two groups of newly registered drug use cases can be described as follows:

1. The group of newly registered cases of non-addictive drug use:
 - the average age at the time of registration is 23.2 years old;
 - the drug used at the time of registration in most cases is marijuana (82.1%);
 - route of administration at the time of registration, in most cases, is smoking (82.1%);
 - males constitute the majority (94.9%).

2. The group of newly registered cases of addictive drug use:
 - the average age at the time of registration is 25.8 years old;

² E.g.: examination of health condition upon enrolment in military service

- the most used drugs are from the opiate group (77.3%);
- the route of administration at the time of registration is injecting (77.6%);
- males constitute the majority (98.1%).

The analysis of the characteristics of newly registered drug use cases could only to some extent reflect drug use trends in the country. At the end of the reporting year, the cumulative number of officially registered drug users in the database of the Republican Narcology Dispensary was 11870 cases and 582 new cases.

Table 3 . Number of newly registered cases of drug use in the Republic of Moldova, according to the RND database

Years	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Number of new cases on medical record	668	569	537	487	582
Per 100 thousand inhabitants	18.8	21.53	20.63	18.73	23.1
Number of cases on medical record	11805	11924	11586*	11707	11870
Per 100 thousand inhabitants	332.2	451.53	446.13	449.63	472.4

*The total number of cases on the medical record dropped in 2020 as a result of updating information on the status of persons on the medical record.

Of the total new cases reported, disaggregated by substance used, the majority cases are marijuana 288 or (49%), followed by 207 cases (35%) opiates, 62 cases or (10.6%) NPS, 14 cases or 2.4% barbiturates and 8 cases or (1.3%) amphetamines, 2 cases or 0.3% cocaine. Compared to 2021, in the total number of new cases there is a one fold decrease in marijuana/opiate use and a two fold decrease in amphetamine/barbiturate/cocaine use, but an increase of 1.9 times in NPS use. At the same time, the difference among years in the type of substances used in new drug use cases, both addictive and non-addictive, is also being investigated.

Table 4. Share of type of drug used, new addictive and non-addictive drug use cases, RND, 2021/2022

Substance	2021		2022	
	addictive	non-addictive	addictive	non-addictive
Marijuana	13.5%	85.2%	22.4%	82.1%
Opiates	85.7%	4.1%	77.3%	1.3%
Amphetamine	0.2%	1.7%	0.3%	2.8%
NPS	0	7.8%	0	8.0%
Barbiturate	0	1.2%	0	5.1%
Cocaine	0	0	0	0.7%

Comparing the years, the increase in the use of marijuana and amphetamines among addicted persons and in the use of NPS among non-addicted persons stands out, while the use of opiates goes down compared to 2021. At the same time in new cases, the drug use by injecting decreases among non-addicted persons 2.4% (3.9%) and among addicted persons 77.6% (81.6%) compared to 2021. In the gender distribution of new cases disaggregated by addicted and non-addicted use, there is a year on year increase among female users. By level of education, the majority share for 2022 and the previous reporting year is in the group of persons with secondary/special education 96.4% (96.6%).

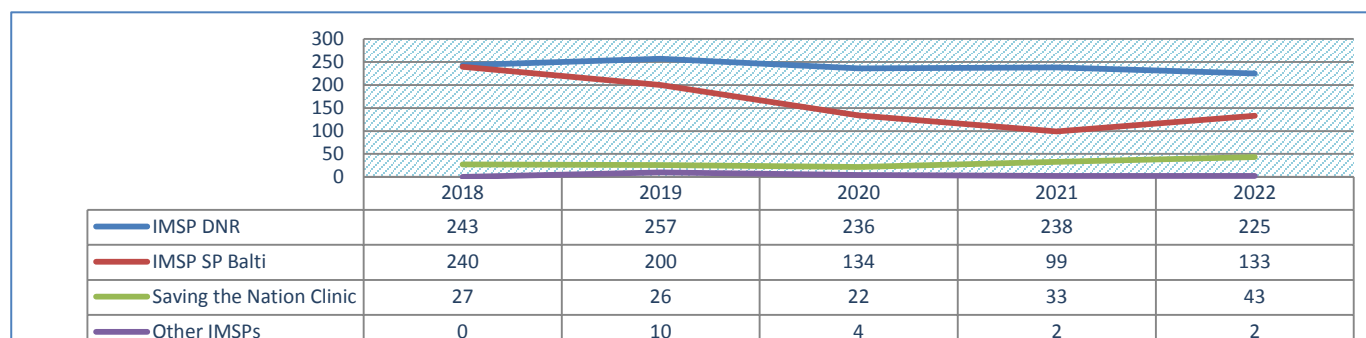
DETOXIFICATION TREATMENT, HEALTHCARE AND PSYCHOLOGICAL REHABILITATION

The main service available to drug users within the national healthcare system is detoxification, inpatient and outpatient healthcare and psychological rehabilitation. Detoxification treatment is free of charge for insured persons (employed, students, pupils and pensioners, which have a compulsory health insurance policy) who go to public health institutions, provided that the patient's name and other personal data are disclosed, followed by registration in the RND database. Drug users who do not have a compulsory health care insurance policy are provided with specialized emergency outpatient and hospital care, covered by compulsory health care insurance funds according to the Single Programme of Compulsory Healthcare Insurance and Methodological Standards. Detoxification is also offered by an accredited private medical entity "Salvarea Natiunii". In this

³ Incidence calculated on the basis of the indicator "usual resident population". The indicator "stable population" is not officially published on statistics.gov.md.

facility the service is provided for a fee and patients are not officially registered in any database. The distribution of the number of patients who received detoxification for the first time during the reporting year, by healthcare facility mandated to provide this service is shown in (Figure 9).

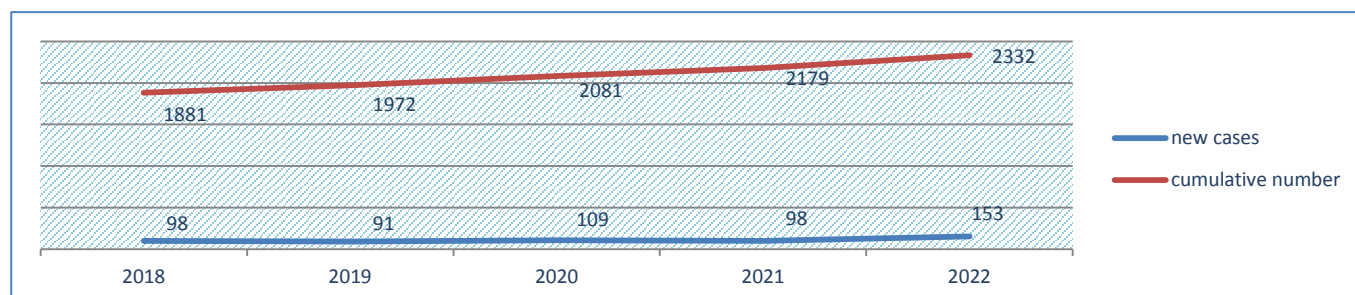
Figure 9. Number of persons, new case in inpatient detoxification treatment, Republic of Moldova (right bank of Nistru River), 2018-2022



OPIOID SUBSTITUTION TREATMENT (OST)

The OST programme is implemented by a collaborative synergy between the governmental and non-governmental sectors. The Republican Narcology Dispensary, together with other healthcare facilities, ensures the implementation of the medical component, and the NGOs involved complement it with psycho-social and support services to increase adherence to treatment. OST services are provided in nine sites through the Republican Narcology Dispensary (in two OST locations: Chisinau), Balti Municipal Hospital (in one OST point), Comrat District Hospital (in one OST point), Cahul District Hospital (in one OST point), Edinet District Hospital (in one OST point), Ungheni District Hospital (in one OST point), Falesti District Hospital (in one OST point) Orhei District Hospital (in one OST point) and the National Prison Administration (in 13 prisons: Taraclia, Leova, Cricova, Cahul, Soroca, Rusca, Pruncul, Balti, Cricova, Pruncul, Rezina, Branesti, Chisinau). According to the data of the Republican Narcology Dispensary, in 2022 the opioid substitution treatment (OST) services were decentralized in 9 communities in the country and in 13 prisons, including 4 IUP. The cumulative number for the year 2022 in the Opioid Substitution Therapy Program was 2332 beneficiaries. The number of new cases for the reporting period has been going up compared to the previous reporting year and is 153 persons (98 cases).

Figure 10 Number of new/ additional people in substitution treatment, Republic of Moldova (right bank of Nistru River), 2018-2022



REHABILITATION SERVICES FOR DRUGS ADDICTED PERSONS

Within the Republican Narcology Dispensary there is a Psycho-social Rehabilitation Centre for drugs addicted persons. The implementation of the programme includes several strategic objectives:

- Psychological and social support.
- Getting well and maintaining long-term abstinence (giving up drugs).
- Social and professional integration.
- Improving relationships with others and family integration.
- Developing interests that contribute to healthy living.
- Accessibility of programmes for beneficiaries

During 2022, 214 persons were included in the rehabilitation treatment and the number of females is expected to increase compared to the previous reporting year (174 men and 40 women; average age at the time of setting it up - 37-50 years old). Of the total number of persons who started the rehabilitation course in 2022, 211 (98.5%) persons successfully completed and this number went up compared to 2021 (92%).

Table 5. Number of drugs addicted persons in rehabilitation treatment, right bank of Nistru River, 2018-2022

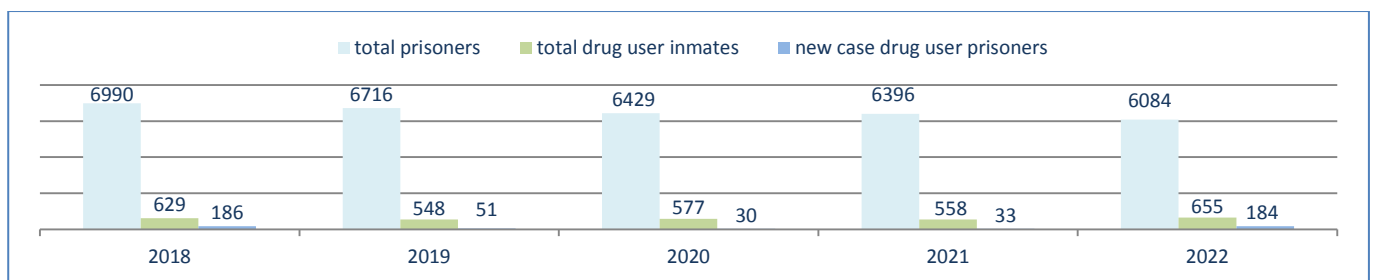
	Have started their rehabilitation course					Successfully completed their rehabilitation course					Dropped out from their rehabilitation course				
	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Total	246	241	237	227	214	215	223	211	211	211	22	23	10	8	11
Women	40	24	30	35	40	24	25	26	33	35	3	1	0	1	2
Men	206	217	207	192	174	191	198	185	178	176	19	22	10	7	9

The Government Decision no.232 of 18.04.17 approved the Framework Regulation on the organization and functioning of the Integrated social service for psychoactive substance users and substitution therapy patients and the Minimum Quality Standards. The integrated social service for psychoactive substance users and substitution therapy patients comprises a complex platform in the context of addressing the needs of beneficiaries and service delivery. The multidisciplinary and inter-sectoral approach to the problems faced by psycho-active substances users and substitution therapy patients is ensured through the involvement of the *multidisciplinary team*, which is the group of specialists (social worker, peer counselling specialist, psychologist, if necessary psychiatrist, narcologist and/or other relevant specialists) who collaborate in the assessment and planning of interventions to achieve the aim of the Integrated Service, according to the provisions of the Case Management. The Ministry of Health is a member of the National Coordinating Council for National HIV/AIDS, STI and TB Prevention and Control Programmes. Thus, the Ministry cooperates with the civil society - social service providers for the target group, including in technical working groups on the social assistance and protection, treatment, care and support component.

TREATMENT IN PRISONS

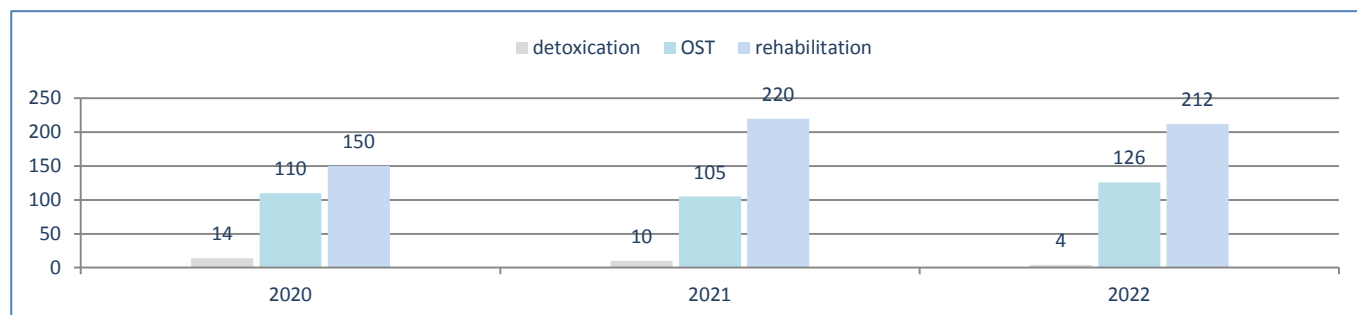
According to the data of the National Prison Administration, in 2022 in the penitentiary system of the Republic of Moldova (right bank of Nistru River) the total number of registered drug users was 655 persons, of which 184 registered new drug users and this number grew compared to 2021 (558 cases/33 new registered persons). In the context of healthcare, the NPA medical service can provide detoxification treatment in the case of withdrawal syndrome, 4 persons were included in this service during the reporting period. The severity of the withdrawal syndrome also determines where detoxification is provided (at the detention facility or by going to the Republican Prison Hospital No. 16, Pruncul). According to the NPA data during 2022, 126 beneficiaries (118 men and 8 women) were included in pharmacotherapy, of which 64 (63 men and 1 woman) are new cases. Compared to the previous reporting period (2021 - 105 cases) there is a decrease in new cases among drug users included in the OST. The criteria for admission to methadone pharmacotherapy for drug-dependent prisoners are identical to those in the civilian sector. Starting with 2009, patients undergoing pharmacotherapy receive a signed statement upon release from prison, indicating the duration of participation in the programme, the daily dose and the date of administration of the last dose. With this statement, the patient is transferred for further pharmacotherapy in the civilian sector.

Figure 11. Total number of prisoners, drug users, Republic of Moldova (right bank of Nistru River), 2018-2022



Prisons are an excellent opportunity for drug addiction treatment. It is essential that efforts are undertaken by government and prison authorities to diversify and expand addiction treatment options for prisoners with problematic drug use. The share of drug users included in treatment is increasing for 2022 10.7%; 2021-8.7%; 2020-8.9%.

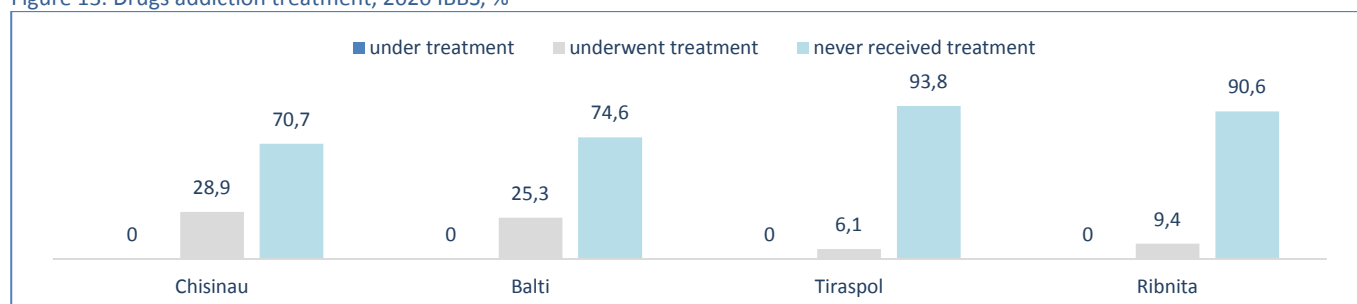
Figure 12. Number of drug users in treatment in prison, Republic of Moldova (right bank of Nistru river), 2020-2022



DRUGS ADDICTION TREATMENT - IBBS STUDY, 2020

According to the 2020 IBBS survey data the percentage of IDUs (injecting drug users) who have never undergone drugs addiction treatment is high for all communities included in the survey. Based on the results of the 2022 IBBS survey, 84.2% answered "no" to the question "ever sought treatment for drug addiction".

Figure 13. Drugs addiction treatment, 2020 IBBS, %



INJECTING DRUG USERS - BENEFICIARIES OF HARM REDUCTION PROGRAMMES

Prevention programmes for IDUs are implemented in the civil and penitentiary sectors, including the Transnistrian region in 29 administrative territorial units. In the penitentiary sector HIV, hepatitis and STI prophylaxis activities for IDUs are implemented in 18 penitentiary institutions in the country including 3 in the Transnistrian region.

During 2022, 16,963 IDUs (62% of the estimated population) (2021-16,285) received services (needle exchange being a core service). The consumables distributed in the IDUs group by the harm reduction programme in 2022 are shown in (Table 6).

Table 6. Number of condoms and syringes distributed to groups at higher risk of HIV infection (IDUs, IDUs/Detainees), Republic of Moldova 2018-2022

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Condoms (total)	1,347,886*	411,515	468,650	581,927	593,136
Syringes (total)	2,902,391	2,279,009	2,243,154	2,750,015	2,381,541
Vials of naloxone	n/a	3,736	2,430	3,807	4,536

* number of condoms distributed for the whole GRSI group (IDUs, LSC, MSM)

In 2022, 400 people from the targeted group benefited from harm reduction services for populations at high risk of infection provided by NGOs, being funded from CNAM sources. At the same time, three mobile clinics continued to operate, providing prevention services for all key populations including IDUs.

HEALTH CONSEQUENCES / DRUG-RELATED MORTALITY

The Republic of Moldova does not have reporting data according to the standard definition of a drug-related death (DRD). In 2020, on the right bank of Nistru river of the Republic of Moldova no progress has been made in standardizing the definition of a drug-related death. Data for the key indicator of drug epidemiology were collected from three sources:

1. Forensic Medicine Centre of the Ministry of Health;
2. General mortality register held by the National Public Health Agency
3. IMSP Republican Narcology Dispensary of the Ministry of Health;

There are no other available sources on DRD in the Republic of Moldova.

FORENSIC MEDICINE CENTRE

The Forensic Medicine Centre (CML) is the only public forensic expertise institution specialized in forensic medicine, forensic psychiatry, including forensic toxicology expertise in the Republic of Moldova. The CML organisational structure comprises 23 territorial subdivisions (municipal and district) and 5 subdivisions with republican status. In the republican laboratory subdivisions all biological samples (dead body material - biological fluids, tissues, viscera) from the whole territory of the Republic of Moldova, except the left bank of Nistru River are concentrated and investigated. In the case of deaths occurring outside medical institutions, the bodies are examined at the place of death by an operational investigation group with the participation of the coroner, who performs an external examination of the body and surrounding objects. After examination at the scene of the discovery, the bodies are dispatched by the law enforcement authorities (criminal investigation officer, investigating officer, etc.) for forensic examination in order to establish: the cause, estimated age and circumstances of death; the age of the injuries; the mechanism of the injuries and their causal relationship to death; the degree of bodily injury; the presence of alcohol, drugs (if applicable) or other toxic substances, other problems related to the body; interpretation of the results of forensic and medical laboratory investigations. The decision to carry out a forensic expert/medical examination is taken by the representative of the law enforcement agency, following the presence of suspicions of violent death. Toxicological examination for the presence of drugs in biological fluids and other biological material is carried out at the request of the law enforcement representative or the forensic doctor. The effective legislation does not oblige the coroner to carry out a toxicological analysis on all bodies subject to forensic examination (as is the case for the determination of blood alcohol level, which is carried out on all dead bodies subject to forensic examination). During 2022, 724 forensic toxicological investigations (human biological material belonging to persons or dead bodies) were carried out to determine the presence of illegal drugs and showed a slight increase compared to 2021 (711 cases). Of the total toxicological investigations, (18.2%) or in 132 cases (73 persons and 59 dead bodies) positive results for the presence of illegal drugs were recorded and increased compared to the previous reporting year (2021 15.8%). The low number of toxicological investigations for the identification of illegal drugs in the samples examined by the CML can be explained by the following:

- in the absence of well-established legislation in this area, the decision is currently taken at the request of the prosecuting authorities or by the coroner following suspicions raised during the examination of the body;
- lack of modern machines, insufficient equipment in the Forensic Toxicology Laboratory;
- limited capacity of the Forensic Toxicology Laboratory due to increased need of human resources;
- insufficient cooperation between the Ministry of Interior, the General Prosecutor's Office and sector forensic experts, including in the area of evidence packaging, temporary storage and transport of dead body material within the prescribed terms.

Table 7. Number of cases of toxicological investigations according to CML, Republic of Moldova (right bank of Nistru River), 2018-2022

Years	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Deaths investigated by the CML	7823	7936	7881	4836	4424
Suspected violent deaths	2536	2308	2096	2040	1845
Number of toxicological investigations for the presence of illegal drugs	221	260	478	711	724
Positive results of toxicological investigations, total	72	50	65	113	132
Positive results of toxicological investigations, dead bodies	22	16	20	58	59

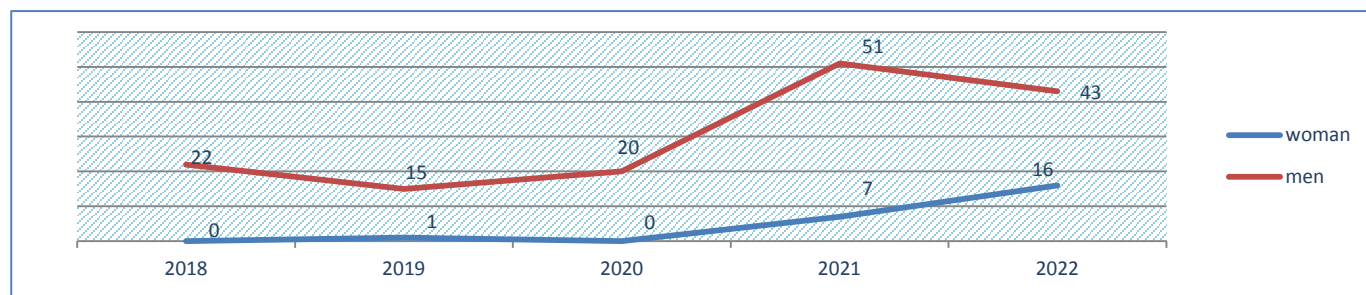
For the year 2022, there were 59 cases of deceased persons, who, following forensic examination, were identified with the presence of narcotic substances. Of these, 44.6% of the positive results of toxicological investigations showed a decrease compared to 2021 (51.3%).

Table 8. Distribution by age and sex of DAD positive cases according to CML, Republic of Moldova (right bank of Nistru river), year 2022

Dead bodies	20 years old or younger	21-24 years old	25-30 years old	31-40 years old	41-45 years old	46 years old and over
Men	0	2	4	16	10	11
Women	1	0	1	8	1	5
Type of identified drug						
opium	0	0	1	2	0	1
meconin	0	0	0	1	0	0
alpha-PVP	0	1	2	5	2	1
benzodiazepine	0	1	1	8	4	4
cannabis	0	0	0	0	1	0
der.barbituric acid	0	1	0	1	2	5
methadone	0	0	2	7	4	1
der.amphetamine	0	0	0	1	0	0
tramadol	0	0	0	3	0	1
heroin	0	0	0	0	0	0
tricyclic antidepressant	0	0	0	2	0	0
der.phenothiazine	0	0	0	3	0	0
dimedrol	0	0	1	3	2	1
carbamazepine	0	0	0	1	1	4
pregabalin	1	0	0	0	0	0
venfalaxine	0	0	0	0	0	1
pheniramine	0	0	0	1	0	0
doxylamine	0	0	0	1	0	0

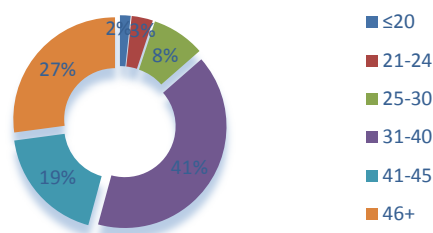
The majority of deceased persons with positive toxicological investigations are in the age segment of 31-40 years old, followed by 46 years old and older. In the context of gender, there is a decrease in the number of males 43 cases (2021-51 cases) and an increase in the number of females 16 cases (2021-7 cases) in the reporting year.

Figure 14. Gender distribution of cases of deceased persons with positive toxicological investigations, 2018 – 2022



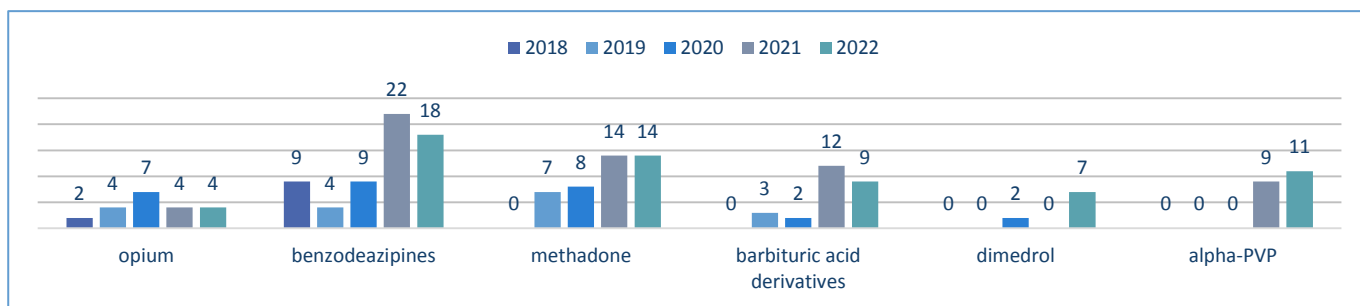
As regards the age of the deceased persons identified with the presence of narcotic substances, it is observed that out of the total cases for the reported year, the majority, 34 cases (41%), are in the age range 31-40 years old and 16 cases (26%) fall under the segment of 46 y.o.+.

Figure 15. Distribution of DAD by age group (number of cases), 2022



For the year 2022, the statistical table of the toxicological investigation of the type of drug used in cases of death reveals that, as in the previous year, the most consumed substance remains benzodiazepine (18 cases), followed by methadone (14 cases), alpha-PVP (11 cases), barbiturates (9 cases) (Figure 16).

Figure 16. Distribution of deaths by substance detected in toxicological tests, 2018-2022



From 2021, the Centre for Forensic Medicine (CML) and the General Mortality Registry, administered by the National Public Health Agency (ANSP), which reports on drug related deaths, nominally validate the cases. Following the validation process, out of the total number of cases of deceased persons with positive results of toxicological investigations in 2022, 15 persons passed away because of narcotic substance intoxication, which is a decrease compared to the 2021 reporting year - 22 persons. At the same time CML reports detection by toxicological investigation of poly-drug use in 17 combinations, which is an increase compared to 2021 (14 cases). The variations of the combined substances detected were: methadone+dimedrol; methadone+dimedrol+opium (morphine+codeine); alpha-PVP+benzodiazepines; alpha-PVP+methadone; methadone+benzodiazepines; tramadol+dimedrol; benzodiazepines+antidepressants; opium (codeine) +meconine+benzodiazepines; benzodiazepines+carbamazepine; benzodiazepines+methadone+dimedrol; dimedrol+barbiturates; barbiturates+methadone; benzodiazepines+barbiturates+tramadol+phenothiazines; benzodiazepines+methadone+dimedrol; benzodiazepines+phenothiazines.

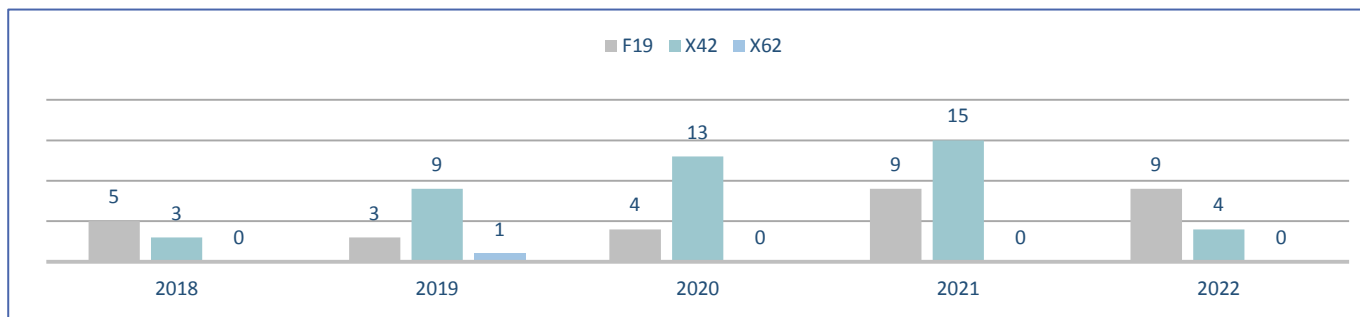
GENERAL MORTALITY REGISTER

DAD cases are not recorded in a separate database, but they can be pulled from the General Mortality Register (GMR). Medical certificates of death are checked, coded and processed in the General Mortality Register of the National Agency for Public Health (ANSP).

In the reporting year, 13 DAD cases (12 males and 1 female) were recorded in the General Mortality Register according to the International Classification of Diseases, revision X (ICD X), Figure 17. The data show a decrease in cases compared to the previous year (24 cases). The age segment of DAD cases is between 25 and 82 years old.

The number of DAD cases can be defined as uncertain by the fact that death certificates must be issued, by law, before the burial of the body (i.e. within a few days of finding the body) and the results of the toxicological investigation are available much later (in 3-4 months), therefore, doctors do not change the cause of death in the death certificates later.

Figure 17. Distribution of the number of registered DADs by cause of death in the death certificates, GMR, Republic of Moldova (right bank of Nistru River), 2018-2022



Source: ANSP

SF11- opiate use

F19 - use of multiple drugs and other psychoactive substances

X42 - Accidental poisoning by or exposure to narcotics and psychodysleptics (hallucinogens)

X62 - Accidental poisoning by and exposure to organic solvents and halogenated hydrocarbons and their fumes

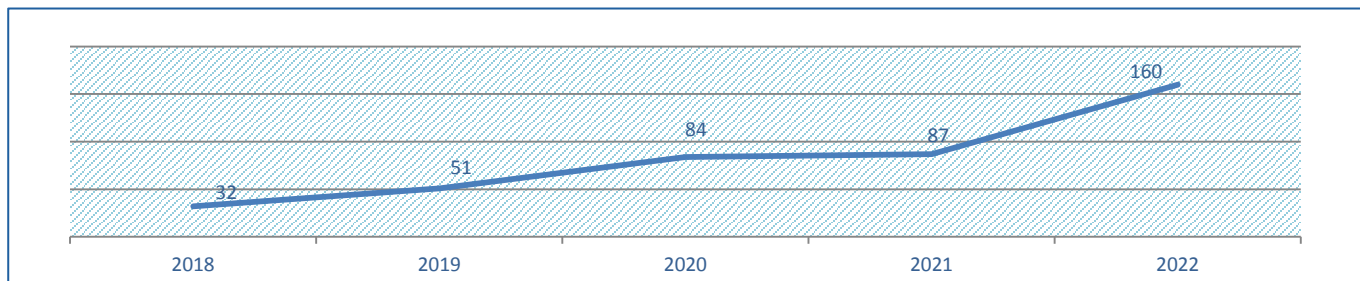
REPUBLICAN NARCOLOGY DISPENSARY

Narcology physicians report to the IMSP Republican Narcology Dispensary on the deaths of drug users or former registered users once these become known. In European Union terms, this data illustrates, to some extent, the "overall mortality" of

officially registered drug users in the Republic of Moldova. Starting 2011, overdose deaths among officially registered drug users are not reported. It is difficult to interpret the trends due to the unknown consistency of the data collected from this source (completeness of the reports at district level).

During 2022, 160 death cases (84 cases in 2021) were registered among known drug users (with clinical/necropsy elements - eloquent medical history and investigation data), whose cause of death was related to pathologies associated with or consecutive to chronic drug use (so-called indirect causality cases).

Figure 18. Number of deaths among officially registered drug use cases, Moldova (right bank of Nistru River), 2018-2022



Source: Republican Narcology Dispensary

OVERDOSE AMONG DRUG USERS, IBBS STUDY

According to the results of the 2020 IBBS survey, overdose in the last 12 months has higher values in the communities on the right side of the Republic of Moldova (Chisinau 14.6%, Balti 16.3%) and is increasing compared to the 2016 round for all cities included in the survey. The increasing trends are also followed in the 2022 IBBS round for all communities, the predominant higher figure is on the right side of Nistru River. Similarly in the final round of the survey, overdose figures show that out of over 80% of PCD who have ever used synthetic drugs, 40% have overdosed.

Figure 19. Share of IDU respondents reporting overdose in the last 12 months %, Republic of Moldova, 2016, 2020, 2022 IBBS

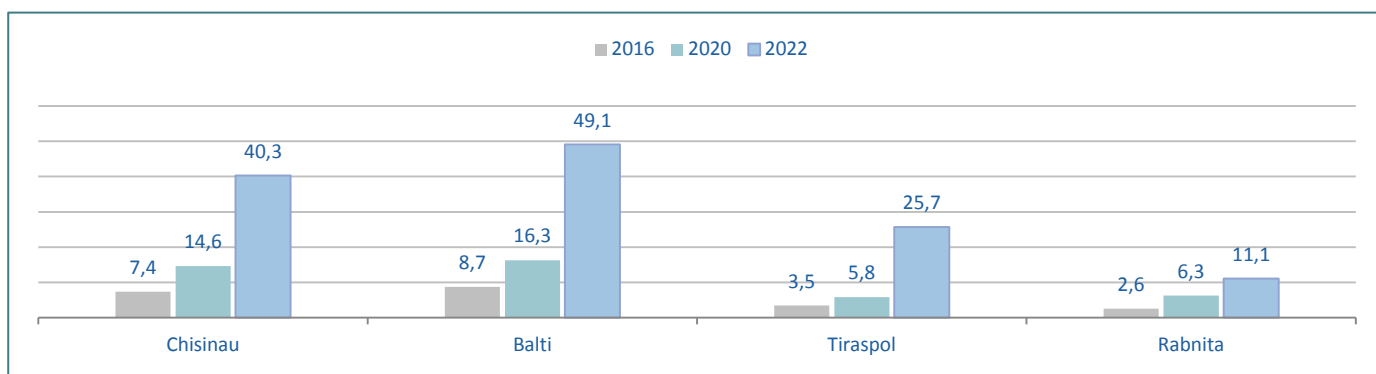
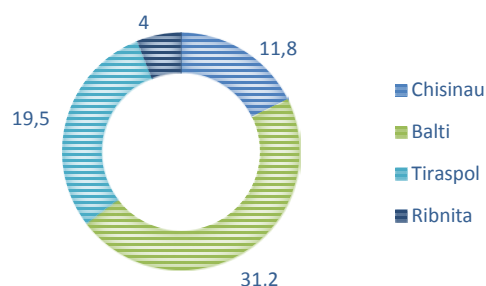


Figure 20. Share of IDU respondents who used naloxone for self or for other users %, Republic of Moldova, 2020 IBBS

The availability and use of naloxone, by the IDU group, through harm reduction programs indicates that this service is needed. The highest values of naloxone use are in Balti 31.2%, Tiraspol 19.5% followed by Chisinau 11.8% and the lowest is in Ribnita 4%.



DATA INCONSISTENCY

The variable number of DAD cases between sources could be explained by social stigma, the complexity of the procedures involved in confirming a DAD case under current legislation and the fact that the results of toxicological investigations become available later (3-4 months after death). In the latter case, doctors do not always change the cause of death in the medical certificate of death. Data collected from different sources was not cross-checked. Starting 2020, two institutions that manage DAD data check the overlap of cases.

The inconsistency of data from the sources presented above confirms that the reality of DAD and fatal overdoses with drugs and other psychotropic substances remain poorly known in the Republic of Moldova.

In the context of the above, the shortcomings of the DAD investigation and registration system are evident. Toxicological investigations for the presence of illegal drugs in the biological samples of the examined dead bodies are not mandatory and are carried out for a fee, which increases the risk of losing sight of DAD cases. Conducting forensics only in cases of suspicion, such as bodily injuries (injection sites), syringes found at the scene, powders, etc., actually rules out other cases of DAD where external signs of drug use are missing. The technical capabilities of the CML toxicological laboratory and the CML's territorial structures only offer the possibility of qualitative analysis of the main groups of illegal drugs. Thus, there is no reliable support for a correct diagnosis. The long delay between the collection of biological samples and the availability of the results (3-4 months) means that the death record stays under a different Code of International Classification of Diseases than the cause established by the coroner. Social stigma and the complexity of the related legal procedure force the relatives of the deceased to resort to hiding the real cause of the drug-related death.

DRUG-RELATED COMMUNICABLE DISEASES

HIV infection in the Republic of Moldova continues to be a priority health problem; the HIV epidemic is considered to be concentrated in groups at higher risk of infection, especially among injecting drug users. The first case of HIV in the Republic of Moldova was detected in 1987. In the Republic of Moldova, the minimum set of communicable diseases of interest for this indicator includes HIV/AIDS and viral hepatitis B and C. Also sexually transmitted diseases, syphilis and tuberculosis are part of the monitoring.

HIV

SURVEYS AND RESEARCH

HIV infection in the Republic of Moldova is concentrated within vulnerable groups, including the IDU population. Starting 2001, six surveys on prevalence of serum antibodies to HIV have been conducted among IDUs. In the last five rounds, the same method of analysis (RDS) was applied, which gives the possibility to observe the trend of the prevalence (Table 9).

Of those testing positive for HIV, about 72% had ever injected drugs (IBBS22). Comorbidity of HIV-positive people with viral hepatitis is 4.4% HVB and 13% HVC.

Table 9. Prevalence % HIV in IDUs group, Republic of Moldova, IBBS 2012, 2016, 2020, 2022

Place where where data had been collected	2012		2016		2020		2022	
	Sample	HIV prevalence	Sample	HIV prevalence	Sample	HIV prevalence	Sample	HIV prevalence
Chişinău	339	8.5	362	13.9	365	8.1	300	7.3
Bălţi	362	41.8	342	17.0	357	14.9	250	8.3
Tiraspol	297	23.9	334	29.1	333	23.5	250	4.7
Rîbniţa	97	43.7	300	22.2	322	14.5	200	6.7

The HIV prevalence surveys conducted in 2001 and 2003/2004 applied the method of time-location sampling with needle-stick testing of used syringes of the harm reduction programme beneficiaries. The survey on the prevalence of serum antibodies to HIV, conducted in 2007, applied the probability sampling of harm reduction programme beneficiaries with blood sample testing. Since the 2009 round, the respondent-driven sampling (RDS) with qualitative testing of blood samples has been applied.

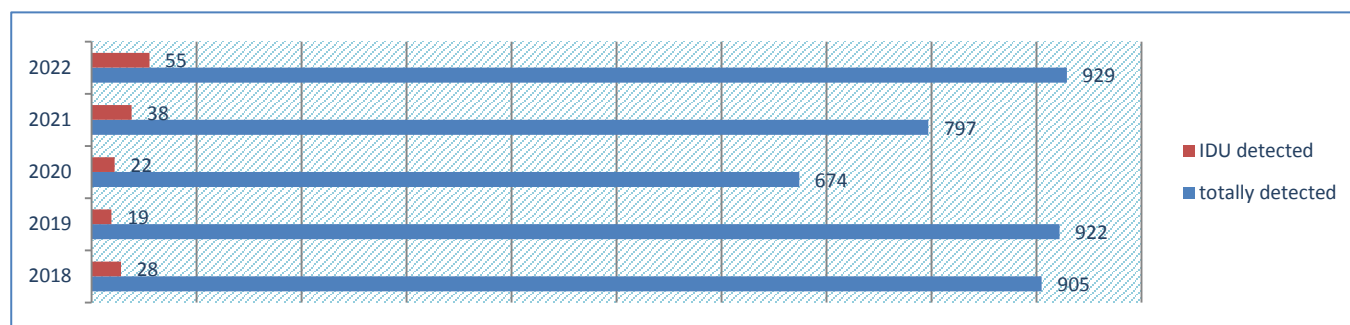
ROUTINE STATISTICS

The incidence of HIV infection in 2022 was 29.78 cases (2021 - 25.55 cases) per 100 thousand population. In the data disaggregated by the territories of the country, for the right bank of Nistru River there were 27.8 cases (a.2010 25.5) and in the East - 35.5 (a.2021 23.2) thus there is an increasing trend compared to the previous reporting year. There was an increase in incidence by gender in both men 36.7 cases (2021: 24.1) and women 24.3 cases (2021: 15.9). The heterosexual transmission route remains the highest 88.5% cases (2021: 88.1%) followed by drug use 5.5% cases (2021: 3.7%), then homosexual transmission 4.1% (2021: 3.2%), then mother-to-child transmission 1.7% (2021: 2.6%).

Of all HIV tests in 2022, 6.2%, (3.7% a.2021) were done in the group of drug users and their sex partners. Of this group in 2022, 55 people were confirmed and registered, which is an increase compared to the previous year 2021 - 38. Following the

trend of newly detected cases among drug users, there is an increase by the year 2022 - 5.9% (2021 - 4.7%; 2020 -3.2%; 2019 - 2.0%).

Figure 21. Number of HIV cases detected, Republic of Moldova (right bank of Nistru River), 2018-2022



As regards HIV testing in the prison system, in the reporting year 2022 out of 5586 HIV rapid tests done, 86 were positive. According to data from the Medical Directorate of the National Prison Administration, at the end of 2022 there were 196 HIV patients in the prison system, including 26 new cases.

VIRAL HEPATITIS

SURVEYS AND RESEARCH

For the first time, a survey on the prevalence of serum antibodies to hepatitis C virus (HVC) and hepatitis B virus (HVB) among IDUs (injecting drug users) was conducted in 2007 among IDUs benefiting from harm reduction programmes, using probability sampling with HIV, HVC, HVB blood sample testing. Subsequent rounds of the 2009 IBBS were conducted using the RDS method (guided respondent sampling with qualitative testing of blood samples). According to the 2022 IBBS results, the prevalence of hepatitis C virus among drug users, aggregated by locations, is 44.2%, with higher values on the right bank of Nistru River (Table 10). Among the 56% of cases who tested positive for HVC, 69% had ever injected drugs (IBBS22). The Republic of Moldova is considered an endemic region for viral hepatitis B and C. General immunisation of newborns against viral hepatitis B started in 1995.

Table 10. Prevalence % HVC and HVB among IDUs, IBBS 2016, 2020, 2022 Republic of Moldova

Place where data had been collected	2016		2020		2022	
	HVC prevalence	HVB prevalence	HVC prevalence	HVB prevalence	HVC prevalence	HVB prevalence
Chişinău	60.4	4,9%	49.2	3.6	50.7	0.1
Bălţi	41.8%	5.4%	49.1	1.2	33.6	1.4
Tiraspol	62.1%	4.0%	42.1	1.7	25.0	1.8
Rîbnîţa	32.7%	1.0%	63.1	10.8	27.2	11.2

ROUTINE STATISTICS

For the year 2022, the incidence of 0.16 cases (2021 - 0.27 cases) per 100 thousand population by acute viral hepatitis B and 0.49 cases (2021 - 0.30 cases) acute viral hepatitis C. Relevant to the demographic characteristics according to the epidemiological record, viral hepatitis B and C were predominantly diagnosed in rural communities (as opposed to the previous year's data when they were in urban ones), predominantly in the group of adults.

In order to increase early diagnosis and access to treatment of viral hepatitis among groups at high risk of infection, marker testing for hepatitis has been introduced (objective of the National Programme to combat viral hepatitis B, C and D) covered by CNAS funds. Screening tests for viral hepatitis B and C are carried out in the country with rapid diagnostic tests, thus increasing the accessibility of the population to testing. In 2022, 55688 persons were tested for HVB, of which 3.58% tested positive and 49554 people were tested for HVC, of which 4.42% tested positive. In accordance with the National Programme to combat viral hepatitis B, C and D and the Vaccination Plan, immunisation against viral hepatitis B was carried out for people in groups at high risk of infection. The vaccination coverage against viral hepatitis B of groups at high risk of infection in 2022 showed an increasing trend, 97.7% compared to 2021 - 80.5%.

OTHER DRUG USE RELATED COMORBIDITIES

Data on cases of TB on both banks of Nistru River are stored in an electronic database (SIME TB) at the Institute of Ftziopneumology. Starting 2006, a question on drug use has been added to the TB data collection template. Drug use is a highly stigmatised and concealed practice in Moldova. Thus, TB patients prefer not to provide information on this topic. This could account for the low number of TB patients who reported using drugs.

Table 11. Reported TB comorbidity, Republic of Moldova, 2018-2022

Years		2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Number of TB patients new cases and relapses		3020	2879	2253	2067	2120
TB patients new cases and relapses who reported using drugs	Number	29	26	27	21	24
	Share	0.96	0.90	1.19	1.01	1.13

Source: SIME TB, IFP

In 2022, out of 2120 new TB patients (1667) and relapses (453), 24 patients reported drug use and thus the trend is increasing from the previous reporting year. The TB REACH/PAS funded project "Expanding access to the rapid TB diagnostic method (GeneXpert) in vulnerable groups (injecting drug users and homeless persons)" started in Moldova on 1 October 2014. 24 persons from the group of injecting drug users took the Xpert screening in 2022.

In the prison administration system (NPA), mandatory prophylactic radiological examinations are carried out on all prisoners on entry into the prison and every 6 months thereafter. During 2022, 9,146 chest X-rays, 3,584 TB microscopy (BAAR) samples and 860 GeneXpert investigations were performed. Thus, 41 new cases and 14 relapses of tuberculosis were detected.

SOCIAL CORRELATIONS AND LEGAL CONSEQUENCES

SOCIAL ISSUES

According to the EMCDDA, the concept of drug use related social exclusion - a concept developed for European Union countries - is multidimensional. It implies exclusion practices, such as economic deprivation or poverty and their consequences; social and political discrimination; layoffs and limited access to healthcare, education and qualification development services. Social exclusion has emerged as a topic in the research in recent years on the characteristics of drug use and its social, legal and health consequences. The available information includes social-economic factors associated with drug use and, in particular, problematic drug use, concentrated in population groups that are subject to multiple exclusionary processes, such as belonging to minority, drug use and bearing the consequences of social and economic exclusion. The prevention of discrimination against drug users is underpinned by the Law no. 121 on ensuring equality of 25.05.2012, the Law on protection of health no. 411-XII of 28.03.1995, the Law no. 263- XVI of 27.10.2005 on patient's rights and responsibilities, as well as other laws and government decisions. The non-discrimination of drug users in the field of public health is expressly provided for in paragraph (1) of Article 17 of the Law on protection of health no. 411-XII of 28.03.1995⁴, as well as in the Law no. 263-XVI of 27.10.2005 on the rights and responsibilities of the patient.⁵

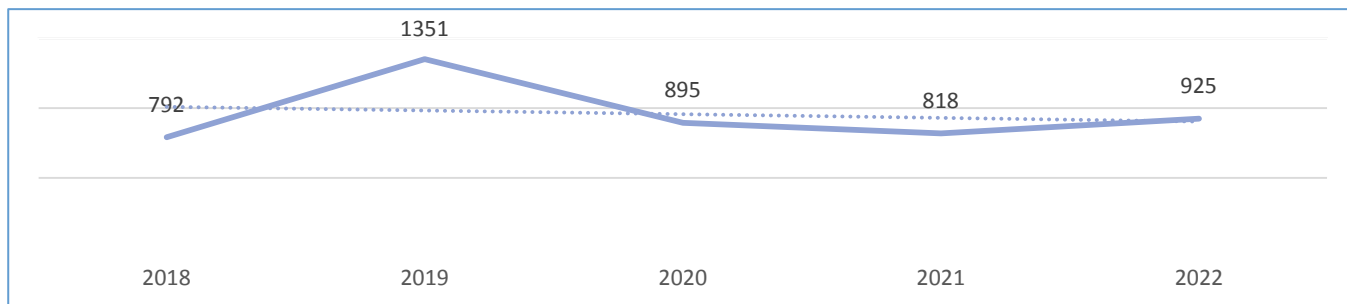
DRUG TRAFFICKING OFFENCES

During 2022, 925 crimes related to drug trafficking were recorded on the right bank of Nistru River (Figure 19) showing an increasing trend of 13.08% compared to 2021 .

⁴ <http://www.amed.md/legea411.pdf>

⁵ http://www.sibm.md/uploads/files/lege_263-XVI.pdf

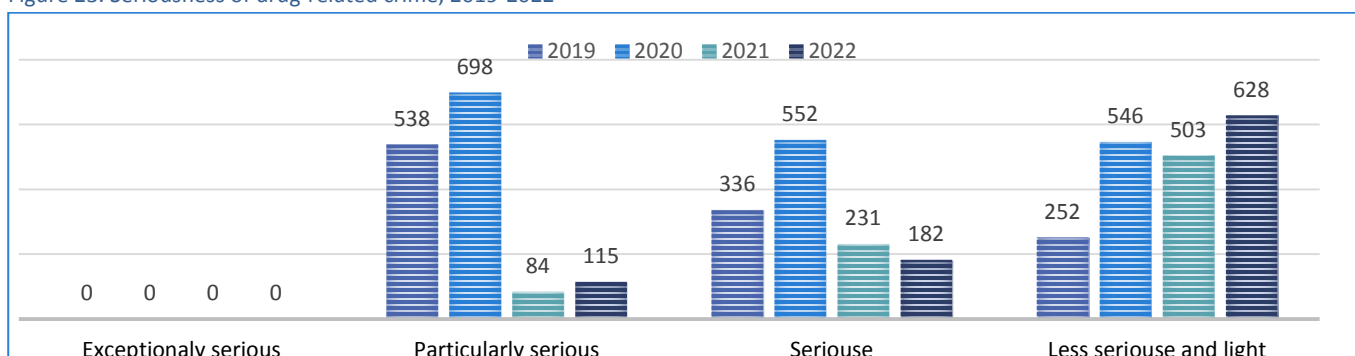
Figure 22. Number of drug trafficking related crimes, Republic of Moldova (right bank of Nistru River), 2018-2022



Analysis of drug-related crime data in relation to the seriousness of the offences reveals that the majority of drug-related offences fall into the less serious and mild category.

During 2022, the number of crimes related to illicit drug trafficking and use, the number of particularly serious cases were - 115 crimes, serious - 182 crimes and less serious and petty offences - 628.

Figure 23. Seriousness of drug-related crime, 2019-2022

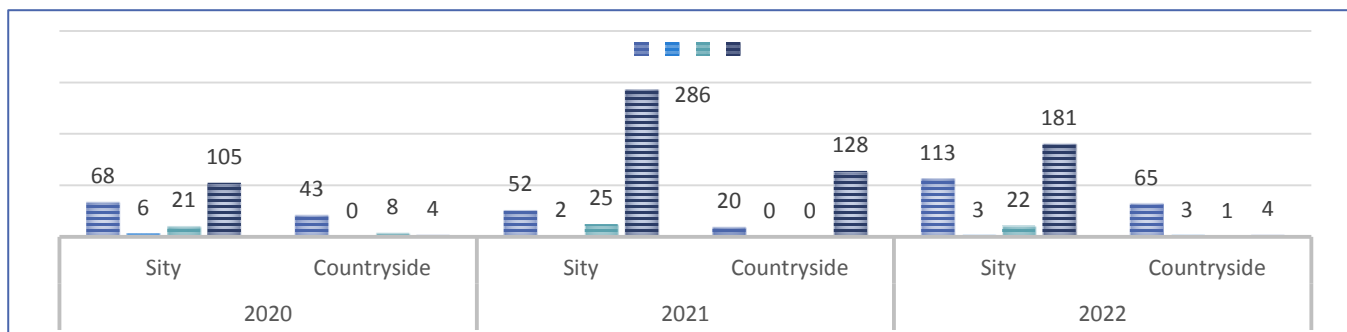


The number of criminal investigation files for drug trafficking and drug use offences during 2022, started - 925 files, sent to court - 573 files, terminated - 67 files, closed - 27 files. An analysis of the work carried out by the prosecution bodies in cooperation with the prosecution offices shows a stable annual trend in criminal prosecution. Criminal cases started by drug type for 2022:

- Ethnobotanicals ± 185 files, Cannabis plants ± 33 files
- Marijuana ± 178 files, Amphetamines ± 23 files,
- Medicine drugs ± 43 files, MDMA ± 12 files
- Heroin ± 6 files, PVP ± 55 files,
- Hashish ± 2 files Poppy plants ± 6 files,
- Other ± 382 files

The analysed data shows that in most cases the most trafficked substances are ethnobotanicals, followed by marijuana, amphetamines, most cases being recorded in urban areas (Figure 22).

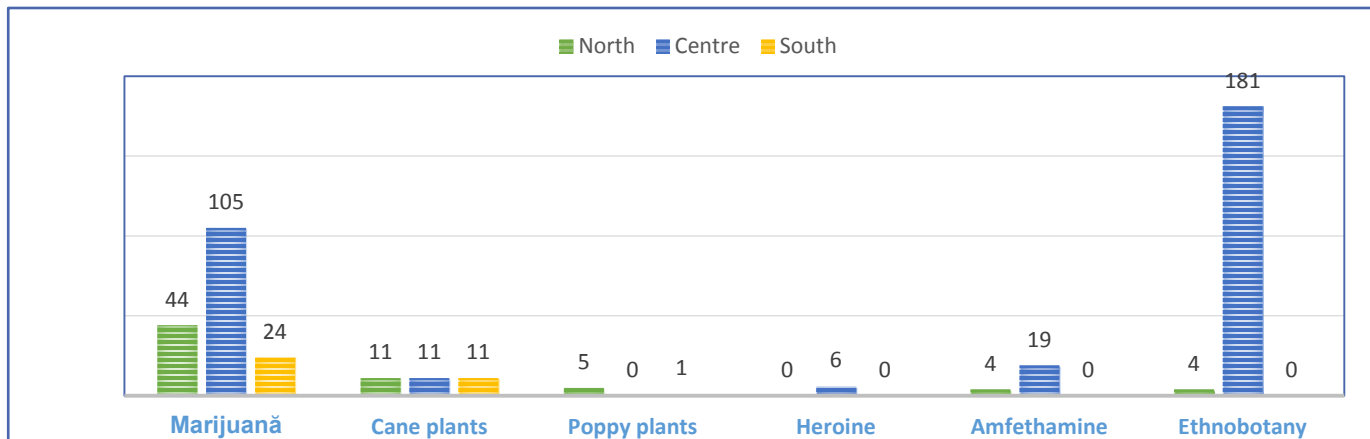
Figure 24. Share of drug type for 2020- 2022



The analysis of the zonal distribution of trafficked drugs shows that in the districts of the Central area of the country, increased trafficking of ethnobotanicals, marijuana, amphetamines has been documented. The Central area ranks first in

terms of trafficking in ethnobotanicals and marijuana, followed by the Northern area, while the Southern area is dominated by marijuana and cannabis plants. (Figure 23)

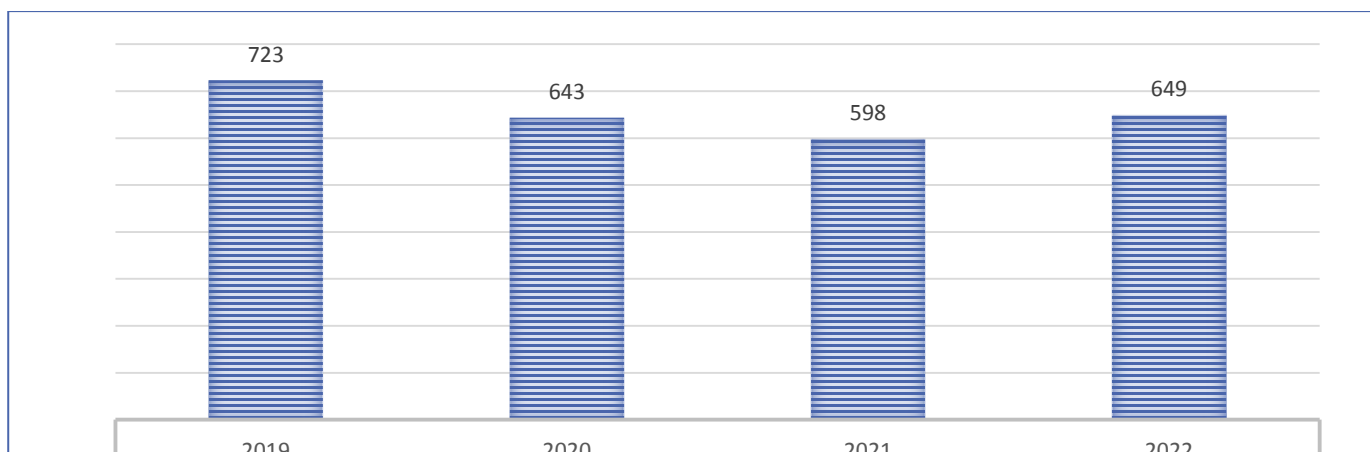
Figure 25. Zonal (territorial) breakdown of trafficked drugs, 2022



There were 63 cases of keeping narcotic substances for the purpose of passing them on to the inmates in prisons in 2022 which is an increasing number compared to 2021.

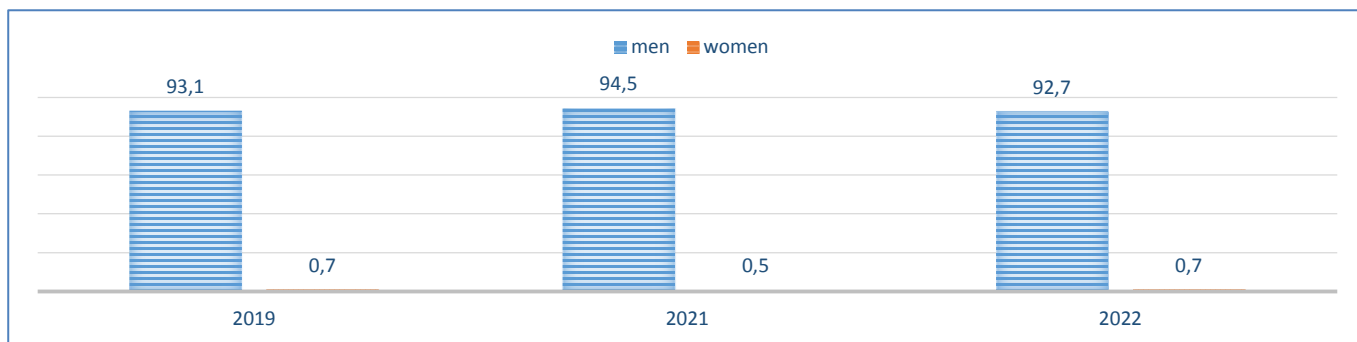
According to statistical data, during 2022, 649 persons were sent to trial for involvement in drug trafficking offences, which shows an insignificant increase compared to 2021.

Figure 26. Number of persons under investigation for drug trafficking prosecuted Republic of Moldova (right bank of Nistru River), 2019-2022



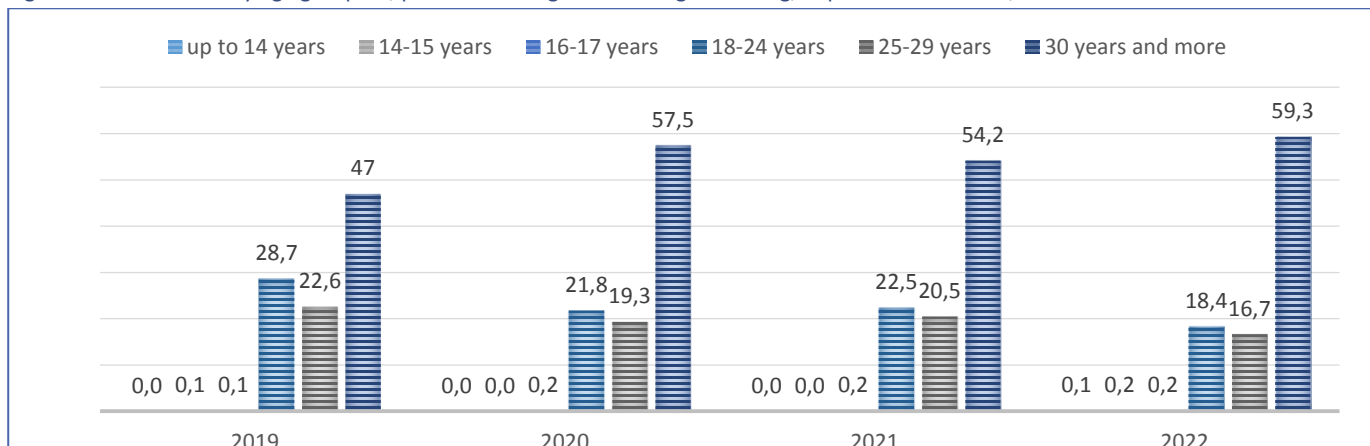
The total number of persons investigated for drug offences in 2022 - 733. Of which women - 53, men - 680. In terms of the gender distribution of persons under criminal investigation for drug trafficking compared to 2021, there is a decrease in the proportion of men and an increase in the proportion of women (Figure 25).

Figure 27. Number of persons under investigation for drug trafficking %, disaggregated by sex RM (right bank of Nistru river), 2019-2022



Looking at the circumstances of the commission of drug offences, we see that the majority of offences are committed by first-time offenders, unemployed and those with a criminal record at the time of the offence. In the age distribution of persons involved in drug trafficking offences, the group of persons aged 30 years old and over and 18-24 years old. Suspected drug offenders are mostly male (Figure 26)

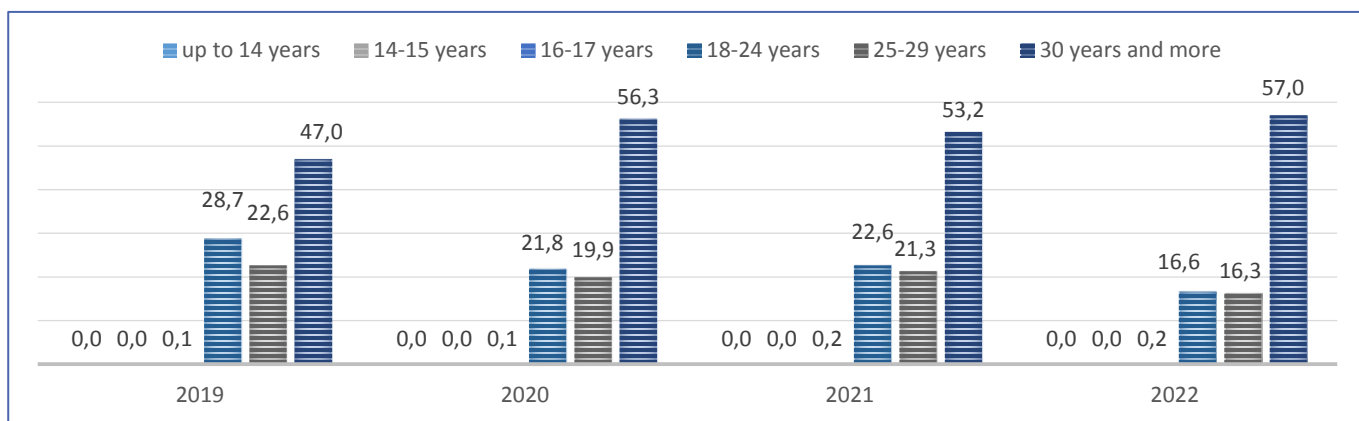
Figure 28. Distribution by age groups %, persons investigated for drug trafficking, Republic of Moldova , 2019-2022



Source: Mol

According to the official data of the Information Technology Service of the Ministry of Interior, it was found that the number of male persons involved in drug trafficking offences in the age groups of 30 years old and older has the highest share during 2019-2022 (Figure 27).

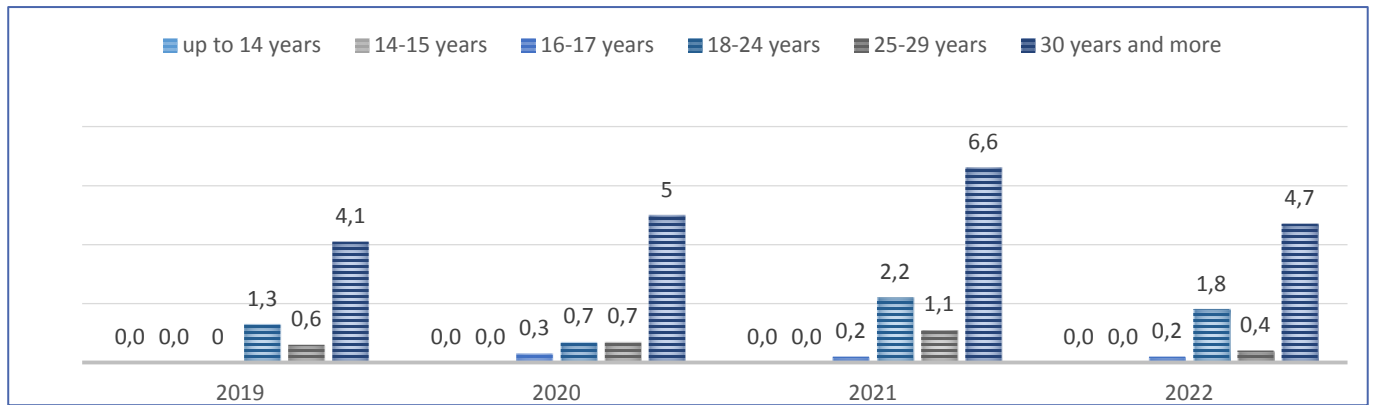
Figure 29. Distribution by age groups %, men investigated for drug trafficking, Republic of Moldova (right bank of Nistru River), 2019-2022.



Source: Mol

In the case of women involved in drug trafficking offences, the age group of 30 years old and older has the highest share compared to 2021, while the group 18-24 years old shows a decrease compared to 2022.

Figure 30. Distribution by age groups %, women investigated for drug trafficking, Republic of Moldova (right bank of Nistru River), 2019-2022



In the case of persons under criminal investigation for cultivating narcotic plants, according to Articles 217(1) and 217¹(1), the majority of persons are male

Table 12. Distribution by sex of persons under criminal investigation for cultivating narcotic plants, Republic of Moldova (right bank of Nistru River), 2022

	Men		Women		Total	
	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%
For the purpose of alienation (art. 217 ¹ para.1)	2	0.29	-	-	2	0.27
Not for the purpose of alienation (art. 217 para.1)	23	3.39	11	20.75	34	4.63
Total (Articles 217 para. 1 and 217 ¹ para. 1)	25	3.67	11	20.75	36	4.91
Total persons held criminally liable for drug related offences	680	100.0	53	100.0	733	100.0

Source: Mol

The majority of persons (men and women) under criminal investigation for cultivating narcotic plants not for the purpose of alienation (Art. 217 para.1) are aged 30 years old or older.

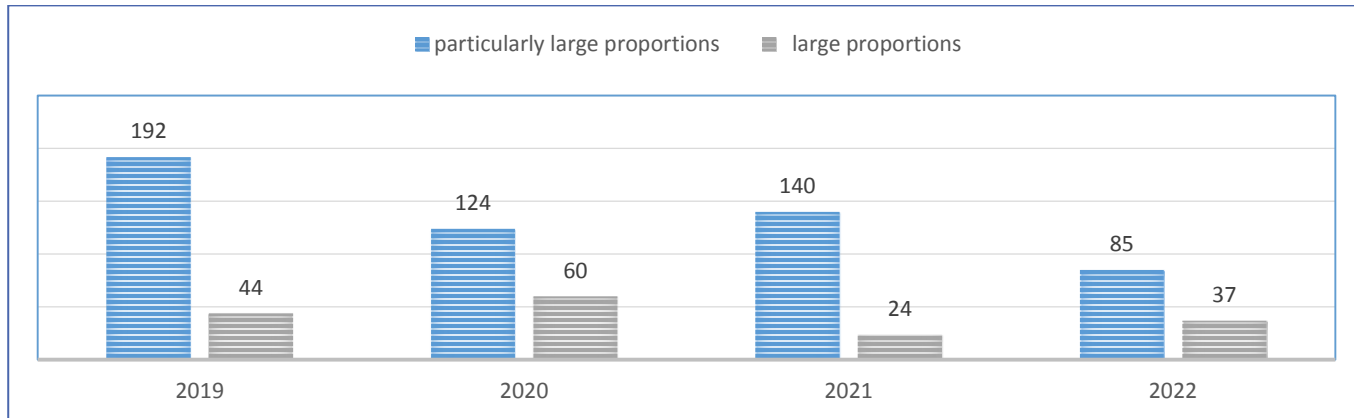
Table 13: Distribution by age and sex, persons investigated for cultivating narcotic plants, Republic of Moldova (right bank of Nistru River), 2022

	Men		Women		Total	
	For the purpose of alienation (art. 217 ¹ para.1)	Not for the purpose of alienation (art. 217 para.1)	For the purpose of alienation (art. 217 ¹ para.1)	Not for the purpose of alienation (art. 217 para.1)	For the purpose of alienation (art. 217 ¹ para.1)	Not for the purpose of alienation (art. 217 para.1)
14-15 years old	-	-	-	-	-	-
16-17 years old	-	-	-	-	-	-
18-24 years old	-	1	-	-	-	1
25-29 years old	1	1	-	-	1	2
30 years old and older	1	21	-	11	1	32
Total	2	23	-	11	2	34

DRUG SEIZURES

According to the Mol report, a priority objective is to reveal the smuggling and circulation of illicit drugs. Drug seizures are described by experts less as an indicator of drug supply, perhaps more as a direct indicator of drug law enforcement activities, while reflecting the vulnerabilities of traffickers. Also, in terms of detecting large quantities of drugs, Art. 217 para. 4(b) (particularly large quantities), during 2022 there were 85 cases and under Art. 217(1) para. 3 (f) (large proportions), 37 cases were registered. (Figure29)

Figure 31. Number of drug seizure cases, 2019-2022



Drug trafficking and use as a phenomenon remains concentrated in urban areas. The data provided by the Anti-Drugs Directorate on the quantities of illegal drugs seized on the territory of the right bank of Nistru River during 2017-2021 are presented in (Table 14).

Table 14. Quantities of seized illegal drugs, Republic of Moldova (right bank of Nistru River), 2018-2022

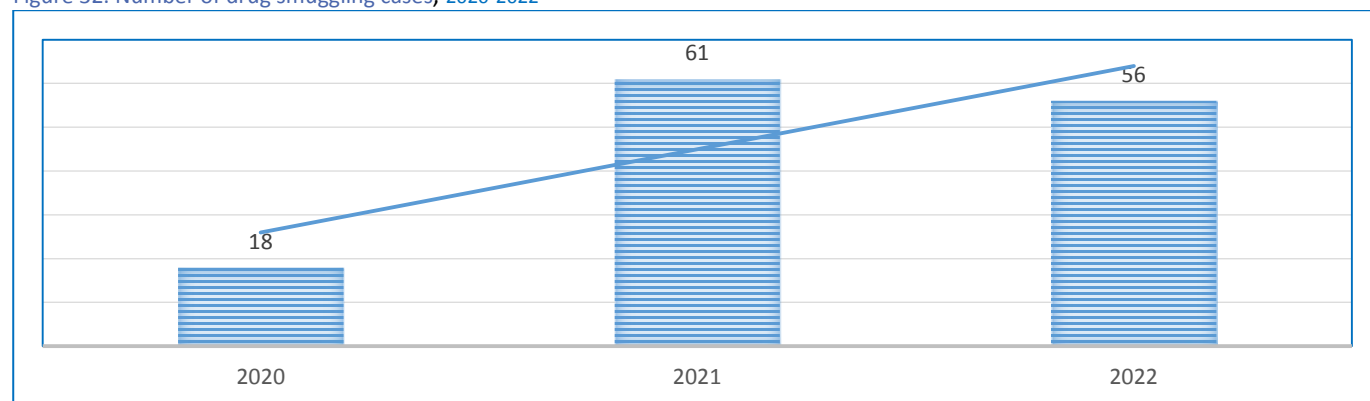
	Quantities seized				
	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Poppy straw	6kg 167g	1kg 633g	1kg 329g	1kg 197g	2kg 512g
Marijuana	44kg 718g	188kg 477g	81kg 969g	104kg 336g	90kg 693g
Opium	3.94g	1.6g	148g	-	0.06g
Ecstasy (MDMA)	3385 pills 6kg 938g	9939 pills/6kg 720g	7941 pills/5kg 747g MDMA	-	2kg 879g
Ephedrine/Pseudoephedrine	59.6g	-	-	0.82g	0.367g
Tramadol	7 vials/98 pills	-	-	122 pills	-
Amphetamine	209g	70.5g	295g	1kg 282g	1kg 153g
Methamphetamine	106g (dry matter) 136ml (liquid matter)	16.65g 3.2ml	1.49g, 7ml	306g	25,42g
Methamphetamine racenate					0,202g
Poppy plant	5381 plants	3939 plants	4397 plants	7984 plants	3885 plants
Cannabis plants	32474 plants	24109 plants	23886 plants	9391 plants	19994 plants
Heroin	79 kg 412g/78kg 938g	1kg 515g	322.7g	218kg 493g	2kg 0.31g
Cocaine	5.75g	39g + 200g	374.1g	553.8g	414.34g
Hashish	29kg 900 g	3kg 299g	1kg 579 g	2kg 958 g	774.95g
LSD/LSD-25	6 stamps	4 stamps	238 stamps	1479 stamps	946 stamps

PVP	1kg 353g	8kg 582g	15kg 367g	24kg 275g	37kg 615g
Ethnobotanicals	2kg 355g	647g	63g	1kg 98g	5kg 379g
Methadone	18.2g	13.9g/15ml	33.4g	7.49g	47.179g
Medicine drugs	1037 pills 17 vials	1123 pills	1037 pills, 3 vials	5573 pills	218.8g
Morphine	-	-	-	-	0.56g
Codeine	-	-	-	-	1.455g
Cannabis resin	-	-	-	-	1kg 488g
Cannabis oil	-	-	-	-	40.39g
DMT	--	-	-	-	1.81g
Methylphenidate	-	-	-	-	1.611g
Ketamine	-	-	-	-	0.139g
Psilocin	-	-	-	-	122.7g
Potassium permanganate (precursor)	-	-	-	-	2kg 098g

Source: Mol

Another drug crime related phenomenon that puts pressure on state security is drug smuggling. Thus, during 2021 there were 67 cases of drug smuggling, in 2022 there were 56 cases of drug smuggling, which shows an insignificant decrease.

Figure 32. Number of drug smuggling cases, 2020-2022



Analysis of data on the circulation of new psychoactive substances, which have become available to the general public, highlights a security threat. These substances are more readily available and affordable compared to other narcotic substances. The data on the circulation of new psychoactive substances show the effort made by the drug supply control institutions to detect and bring under control the new substances detected in the illicit circulation. But the long-term result will be visible down the road. Following the analysis of all types of NPS seized in the illegal circulation, the share of cases is 71.4% of all drug-related offences.

Drugs removed from the illegal circulation: Marijuana - 5 kg 720 gr, Cannabis oil - 12 mg, LSD stamps - 788 doses, Hashish - 601 gr, PVP - 15 kg 912 gr, Mephedrone - 2 kg 167 gr, Methadone - 202 gr, Amphetamine - 2 kg 043 gr, Extasy pills - 5 497 pills, MDMA powder - 176 gr, Heroin - 1 gr, Cocaine - 611 gr, SUBUTEX 306 pills, Fluoxetine 11 pills, Mushrooms with narcotic effect - 155 gr, Mushrooms with narcotic effect - 2 497 gr, Mushrooms with narcotic effect - in chocolate 1200 gr, Tetrahydrocannabinol in electronic cigarettes 45 pieces.

PRICES, PURITY OF DRUGS

Recently in the Republic of Moldova there has been a change in the method of drug dealing and payments for purchased drugs. Their illegal circulation and payment for them has moved online. Thus, the phenomenon of online drug dealing started with the use of VIBER and TELEGRAM apps installed on mobile phones and the payment for the drugs used to be made

through QIWI and B PAY electronic payment terminals. As a result of the development of this scourge, in 2020 the organizers have taken new measures to improve and secure illegal activities by transferring illegal activities from the open online environment (LEGALIZER platform) to the DARKNET environment, and more recently, by transferring illegal activities to the encrypted HYDRA platform, and payments for drugs are done using virtual currencies (BITCOIN, LITECOIN, ETHERIUM, etc.). Information on the price of illegal drugs is obtained by the MoI from confidential whistleblowers' reports, from knowledge gained during operational actions, as well as from personal observations during undercover activities. Prices of illegal drugs on the market of the Republic of Moldova did not show any essential changes in 2020. With reference to 2022, the given phenomenon has continued, the number of cases and the number of seizures of drugs traded online via various apps and information systems has increased. In 2022 activities focused mainly on early detection, liquidation of online shops and apprehension of the involved individuals (Figure 31)

Figure 33. Combating online drug trade, 2021-2022

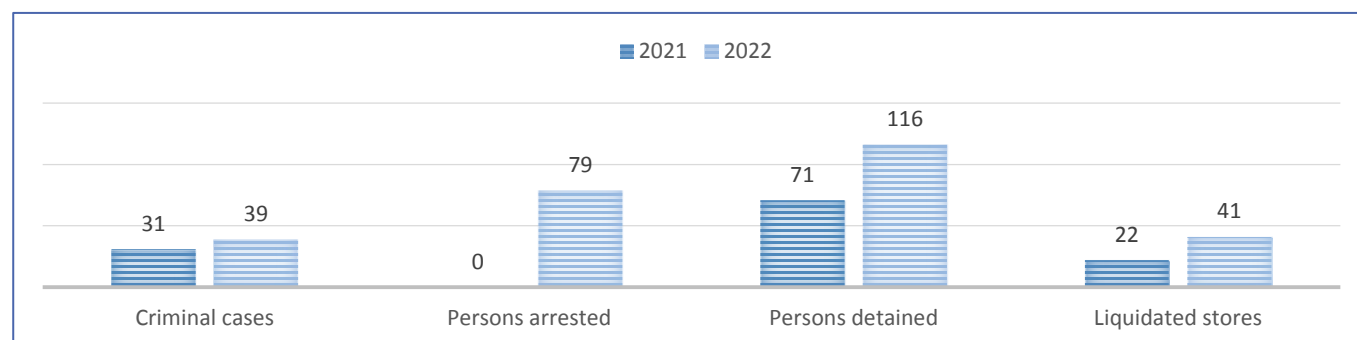


Table 15. Changes in distribution prices in the illegal drugs market, Republic of Moldova 2020-2022

Type of drug	Average price		
	2020	2021	2022
1ml opium extract	-	-	-
100g of marijuana	MDL 1000	MDL 2200	MDL 2200
1 pill of Ecstasy (MDMA)	MDL 240-400	MDL 300-500	MDL 300-500
1 g of heroin	MDL 4000	MDL 4000	MDL 4000
1 gram of cocaine	MDL 2400	MDL 3000	MDL 3000
1 g of hashish	MDL 200	MDL 300	MDL 300
100g of poppy straw	MDL 500	-	-
1 LSD stamp	MDL 250	MDL 250	MDL 250
1 g of amphetamine	MDL 600-800	MDL 600-800	MDL 600-800
1 g of methamphetamine	MDL 600	MDL 600	MDL 600
1 medicine drug pill	≈ MDL 20	≈ MDL 20	≈ MDL 20
1 g of PVP	MDL 500-600	MDL 500-600	MDL 500-600
1 subutex pill	MDL 500-800	MDL 500-800	MDL 500-800
100g of ethnobotanicals	MDL 700	MDL 700	MDL 700
20ml of methadone	MDL 250	MDL 250	MDL 250

Source: MoI

SCHOOL AND AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMMES

Measures aimed at the preventing drug use among pupils and extracurricular education are provided for in the Law of the Republic of Moldova No. 713 of 6 December 2001 "On the control and prevention of alcohol abuse, illicit use of drugs and other psychotropic substances".

The practical actions are set out in the National Action Plan which is part of the National Anti-Drugs Strategy. Their main priority is to stop the increase/decrease of drug use in society, especially among minors, and to help stop the increase/decrease of illegal injecting drug use. In order to raise awareness, educate and prevent drug use, national campaigns, a series of educational, informational and collaborative activities are launched: lectures in schools and higher education institutions, training seminars, informational seminars held in schools, higher education institutions on topics of interest related to the prevention of drug trafficking and use or related topics. In primary and general secondary schools, the prevention of drug, alcohol and tobacco use is done continuously, through the curriculum, as well as in compulsory and optional subjects.

The concept of the subjects aim at developing the necessary competences for pupils' self-awareness, healthy and independent living, becoming informed, active and upright citizens, who could relate openly and freely, demonstrating responsibility in making career decisions and personal development throughout life, forming responsible behaviour for their own life and health and those of others.

The Ministry of Education and Research together with the Ministry of Health carries out information campaigns on health topics (prevention of STIs, HIV, alcohol, tobacco and drug abuse) in Preventive Medicine Centres, Youth Friendly Clinics, high schools, vocational schools by distributing information materials and offering free consultations to children and young people in high schools, vocational schools.

REDUCING THE RISK ASSOCIATED WITH DRUG USE

The "International Harm Reduction Programme" sees harm reduction as a "pragmatic and humanistic approach to reducing the negative individual and social consequences associated with drug use, in particular the risk of HIV infection. It seeks to alleviate the problems associated with drug use in ways that protect the dignity, humanity and human rights of persons who use drugs. Harm reduction programmes provide a range of services to achieve its objectives. Needle exchange and substitution treatment are the most effective interventions to reduce the risks of drug use. Since 2018, a project for distribution of consumables (syringes, condoms, etc.) through pharmacy networks, which consumers can access through a magnetic card, is being implemented. Other support services for drug users, such as health education, information about the risks of drug use, HIV testing and sexually transmitted infection screening, psychological counselling and referral to medical services are also provided through the mobile clinic service. By providing accessible services that meet the needs of drug users, harm reduction programs often serve as a significant point of contact that can connect drug users with another community, health and social service resources". The implementation of harm reduction programmes, have become important links in preventing the spread of HIV, other blood-borne and sexually transmitted infections and other harms associated with injecting drug use, referral to other specialised services, etc. These programmes provide drug users with sterile equipment, personal protective equipment and safe disposal of used injecting equipment. In the Republic of Moldova, harm reduction programmes started in 1997 and are still active today.

DESCRIPTION OF INTERVENTIONS

Harm Reduction or needle exchange programmes are implemented on both banks of Nistru and in all penitentiary institutions on the right and left bank. The package of services provided also includes gender-specific services for women and adolescents, overdose management, Naloxone dispensing, and diversification of the delivery of prevention services: at the syringe exchange point, through field workers, through the pharmacy network, through mobile units. These services were provided exclusively from Global Fund sources.

Services rendered within the project

- ✓ syringe exchange (at the syringe exchange point, through field workers, pharmacies, mobile units);
- ✓ condom distribution (at needle exchange points, through field workers, pharmacies, mobile units);

- ✓ peer-to-peer information, education and counselling (at the needle exchange point, through field workers, pharmacies, mobile units);
- ✓ distribution of information materials;
- ✓ organisation of mutual support groups;
- ✓ counselling and referral to VCT for HIV and hepatitis;
- ✓ community testing using rapid HIV tests and follow-up at the specialized medical institutions for confirmation of diagnosis and treatment, as needed;
- ✓ counselling, referral and accompaniment to opioid substitution treatment;
- ✓ counselling, referral and accompaniment to specific medical services for hepatitis, TB, STI, ARV;
- ✓ training activities to reduce the risks for injecting drug users and their sexual partners to adopt safe behaviours - use of sterile injecting equipment and condoms;
- ✓ overdose prophylaxis;
- ✓ Naloxone release;
- ✓ gender-specific services, including medical consultations, investigations and treatment;
- ✓ legal, psychological and social welfare counselling;

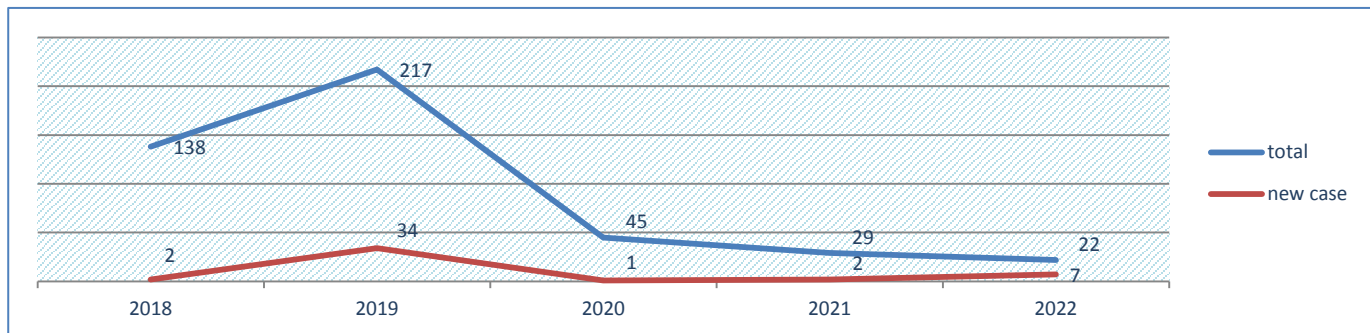
All activities are implemented in the civil sector and in penitentiary institutions.

INTERVENTIONS IN PRISONS

ASSISTANCE FOR DRUG USERS IN PRISONS

In the medical service of the National Prison Administration (NPA), in 2022, according to Article 103 of the Criminal Code, a total of 22 prisoners were registered, of which 7 new cases (in 2021 - 29 prisoners).

Figure 34. Number of cases of convicted persons, cumulative and new, under Art.103, 2018-2022, RM

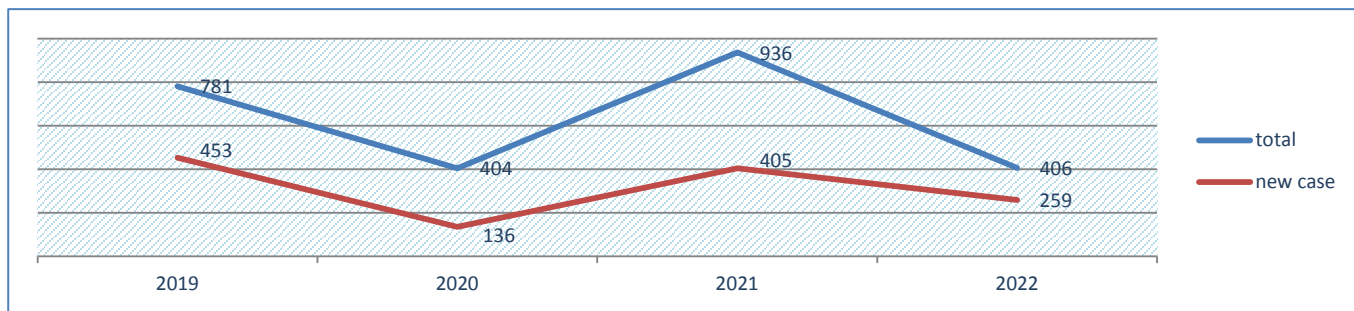


The activity in this field is in accordance with the Regulation on the alcohol testing and medical examination for determining the state of intoxication and its nature, approved by GD no.296 of 16.04.2009. The examination of the prisoner suspected of drug consumption is done at the request of the representatives of the security, regime and supervision service addressed to the doctor of the medical service of the penitentiary institution. Due to the lack of paraclinical tests to identify drugs in biological fluids, the determination of intoxication can only be made on the basis of clinical signs without assessing its nature. Therefore, frequently the detainee is accompanied to the civil narcological institutions to ascertain the state of narcological intoxication.

The offences set out in Article 217 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Moldova No. 985/2002 are part of the category of "offences against public health and social life" and require a medical approach, and not a criminal one in the case of drug users.

The number of those convicted under Article 217-219 CC in 2022 is 406 (936 cases in 2020) in total, of which 259 new cases (405 cases in 2021).

Figure 35. Number of cases of convicted persons, total and new, under art.217-219 CC, 2019-2022, RM



During 2022, the services in the field carried out a number of interventions including: searches, investigative activities and preventive actions. Thus, 15102 searches were carried out (2021-12107 searches), of which: 7291 planned and 7811 unannounced. Regime measures were carried out at the crossing and control points as well as at the guard buildings of penitentiary institutions, as a result of which civilians were detained who tried to introduce objects and substances prohibited to be used by the convicts. Thus, the number of cases of illegal drug circulation (art.322 CC) in the reporting period was 142 cases in total (86 cases in 2021), of which 64 cases in the penitentiary (39 cases in 2021) and 78 cases through checkpoints (47 cases in 2021). The number of cases of transmission or attempted transmission of prohibited substances (art.342, 354 CC) through the security building was 7 cases (77 cases in 2021).

Of the 6 suspicion cases (2021-65 cases) of drug use in the prison, no cases (2021-7 cases) were confirmed. In the context of healthcare, the NPA medical service can provide detoxification treatment in the case of withdrawal syndrome. The severity of the withdrawal syndrome and the place where detoxification is provided (at the detention facility or by going to the Republican Prison Hospital No. 16, Pruncul).

According to the NPA data, 126 new beneficiaries (118 men and 8 women) were included in pharmacotherapy, of which 63 new men and 1 new woman, in 2022. The criteria for OST admission of drug-addicted prisoners are identical to those in the civilian sector. Starting with 2009, patients undergoing pharmacotherapy receive a signed statement upon release from prison, indicating the duration of participation in the programme, the daily dose and the date of administration of the last dose. With this statement, the patient is transferred for further pharmacotherapy in the civilian sector. To optimise and increase the efficiency of the process of preparation for release from detention, the Programme on the preparation of convicts for release from detention at the end of their term and on parole before the end of their term was launched. In 2022, 242 detainees (2021-381 detainees) participated in the End of Term Release Preparation Program and 361 detainees (2021-521 participants) participated in the Pre-term Parole Release Preparation Program. The aim of the programme is to inform and teach convicts how to deal with the problems they face following release from prison and how to successfully reintegrate into society by demonstrating pro-social behaviour.

The Psychosocial Program for overcoming psychoactive substance addiction and criminal way of life was implemented where 161 participants were included and the Psychosocial Rehabilitation Program for drug users with 212 participants had been implemented during 2022 in the penitentiary institutions. In accordance with the provisions of the Instruction on the risk group (DIP order no. 466 of 29 December 2015), psychological assistance was provided to detainees who were at high risk of dangerousness, vulnerability or addiction. 691 detainees, including 229 persons that benefited from drug addiction related assistance, were included by psychologists in the "risk group", according to the identified problems and needs.

STANDARDS

The Standard for Psychosocial Assistance for Drug Users provides for equity, continuity of care for drug users and is based on experience. The care system of users of psychoactive substances includes several components or areas of intervention, related to the distinct stages of addiction, such as in case of emergencies or the need for immediate care, treatment and care of the addiction itself or social reintegration. In all cases, therapeutic interventions are carried out in a specific unit, operationally integrated with other units where general, specialist and specific interventions are carried out, possibly also with social or community services.

The national clinical protocol **"Mental and behavioural disorders related to opioid use"** contains methodological recommendations for health workers on substitution therapy with the aim of improving public health, abandoning

intravenous drug use among young people, reducing the risk of viral hepatitis and HIV/AIDS among drug users, preventing infection. For the operational integration of specific interventions

the "Standard on injecting drug use harm reduction and psychosocial support for drug users" had been approved and is being reviewed every two years, being a system of care that represents a combination of therapeutic interventions, in the form of content, covering the whole spectrum of services (centres, programmes, services, types of support...) available to the user of psychoactive substances in accordance with his/her needs and within a given period of time; as well as the totality of services offered subsequently during the course of the disorder related to substance use. Since 2007, the Voluntary Counselling and Testing Service for the whole population, including at-risk groups, started its activity throughout the Republic of Moldova and in 2013 it was approved by the order of the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Moldova no.1162 of 18.10.2013 "approving **the Standard "HIV counselling and testing of vulnerable groups with the use of rapid tests in non-governmental organizations"**.

The purpose of the standard: to assist CTV service providers in the development and expansion of CTV for populations at higher risk of infection by describing and defining the CTV algorithm, principles and requirements for these services.

The standard for the organisation and operation of HIV prevention services among key populations, including young people in these groups, hereinafter referred to as the organisation and operation standard, is a component that ensures the quality of a public health service provided and includes all the quality standards in the provision of public utility services, established by normative acts.

In 2022, the National Clinical Protocol "New substance use disorders with psychoactive and stimulant properties in adults and adolescents" was approved .

ALTERNATIVES TO IMPRISONMENT FOR DRUGS ADDICTED PERSONS WHO HAVE COMMITTED CRIMES

Drug-related crime, through its social, economic, medical, cultural and political consequences, causes considerable damage not only to the interests of the state, but also to those of society and many private individuals, it attacks the life and health of citizens, and has a demoralising influence on people's conscience and behaviour.

The Criminal Code of the Republic of Moldova has a separate chapter entitled: "Offences against public health and social harmony", which has articles providing for the punishment by a fine, unpaid community service, imprisonment and deprivation of the right to hold certain positions or to exercise a certain activity for a term determined by the court. Thus, the categories of offences provided for in Articles 217-219 provide for the penalties described above according to the extent of their seriousness, as determined by the court. The criminal procedural legislation of the Republic of Moldova provides for the possibility of applying a wide range of preventive measures, which constitute alternatives to detention in the case of serious, particularly serious crimes, etc. In view of the reluctance to apply non-custodial measures, further study of the cases is required, as well as the identification of solutions that would fully ensure the principle of investigating the suspect primarily in conditions of freedom, especially in the case of more vulnerable categories of subjects. To facilitate the social reintegration of persons in conflict with the law, electronic monitoring has been introduced in the Republic of Moldova and is regulated by Law no.138 of 03.12.2015. Drugs addicted persons, who have committed offences, may be sent for compulsory detoxification treatment following a court decision. The state should develop a series of alternatives, starting with a total reduction of the criminal penalty for drug use and the application of more contraventional or non-custodial penalties, such as: unpaid community work, certain voluntary actions, house arrest, treatment and rehabilitation programmes. Moldovan specialized organisations propose a different approach to the drug problem:

1. legislative change and 2. referral schemes involving local police by informing them about the existence of rehabilitation services and by giving them a choice. In practical terms, today the state pays far more to incarcerate a drug user than it would to place them in rehabilitation services.

In 2022, the drafting of a law amending some normative acts (amendment of the Criminal Procedure Code and the Contravention Code) started. In the process of drafting and promoting the draft law, contributions received from several authorities and civil society were analysed and several public consultations were carried out, involving an expert in the field, thus ensuring the conceptual consistency of the changes made, including in terms of European standards in the field.

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