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DIPARTIMENTO DELLA PUBBLICA SICUREZZA
DIREZIONE CENTRALE PER I SERVIZI ANTIDROGA

ANNUAL

CANABIS AMFETAMINA
SPEED ANALISI HASHISH ROTTE
ERONA LSD
DARKWEB MARIJUANA
PRECURSORE MDMA RACCOLTA DATA
SMART DRUGS
COORDINAMENTI
2023
OPERAZIONI
SPECIALI
ABUSO FORMAZIONE
FENTANYL
ACCORDI BILATERALI
NPS SMART SHOPS COCAINA LSD
OPPIO SUPPORTO LOGISTICO OPERAZIONI
DCSA

REPORT



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CONTENTS

— •	Introduction	4
— •	First Part	17
— •	Second Part	197



INTRODUCTION

Every year the Central Directorate for Antidrug Services publishes its usual “Annual Report”, which provides a summary of the activities carried out and the results achieved by our country in the fight against drug trafficking in the preceding year.

The emerging picture shows some peculiar features differing from the situation of previous years.

In 2022, the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic ceased, and this led to a strong restart in drug trafficking. The easing of the restrictions introduced by health authorities to curb the spread of the virus entailed a significant rise in drug smuggling into Italy from source countries. Drug trafficking cartels are selling off the surplus product stockpiled during the most aggressive pandemic phases. During this period heavy restrictions were imposed on the movement of people and goods that slowed down commercial transactions at global level.

The gradual return to normality along with the substantial lifting of the restrictions imposed

both in border areas and within the countries’ territory fully reactivated the mechanisms of drug trafficking. Criminal organizations, drawing lessons from the experience gained during the pandemic, which became a breeding ground for singling out new ways of running drug-trafficking operations more efficiently, are now combining traditional operational schemes with the innovative solutions developed during the health crisis. Beside the “well-established” logistics in use over the years, drug trafficking and sale methods more based on the use of the Internet, postal and courier services and encrypted platforms are being adopted.

In 2022, after the pandemic crisis was de facto over, there was a substantial upswing in drug imports which involved quantities of drugs comparable to the pre-pandemic periods to meet an increasing demand triggered by the return to a more intense social life.

The overview of seizures outlines a scenario substantially comparable with that of 2021. Based on national statistics, the final figures are in line with the previous period, except for a constant increase in cocaine seizures, which however shows a slight reduction in percentage.

At national level, the results achieved by law enforcement activities are still not fully in line with those achieved in pre-pandemic periods.

Antidrug operations (-10.54%) and reports to the Judicial Authorities (-12.12%) decreased in comparison to 2021, although in absolute terms, antidrug operations reached the outstanding threshold of 19,198 and the reports to the Judicial Authority amounted to 26,685. In both cases, statistics show a decrease in the average figures of the last ten years reaching the number of 22,619 antidrug operations and 32,119 reports to the Judiciary.

The overall volume of drug-seizures dropped by 19.17%, i.e. from 92.79 tons in 2021 to 75.01 tons in 2022. However, data split by single substances show a significant increase in the seizures of cocaine. The total figure is the sixth highest result in a decade. If we exclude the five-year period from 2014 to 2018 and the

year 2021, which were characterised by particular and contingent elements, such a remarkable result had never been achieved in the last 40 years.

The comparative analysis of the last two years shows a drop of 17 tons. This is not so much due to a diminished focus of or a drop in police activities in 2022, but to contingent circumstances relating to five extraordinary seizures, i.e.: two of cocaine and three of cannabis (the total amount of seized cannabis was 13 tons) made in 2021.

Net of the above-mentioned exceptional seizures, the volumes of seized drug pertaining to the last two years seem to match and mark a gradual increase registered over the last four-year term. This is corroborated by the fact that, in 2022, the largest seizures involving the three mostly seized narcotic substances, i.e.: marijuana, cocaine and hashish,) ranked just fourth as regards hashish and cocaine and third as regards marijuana, when compared with the 10 most significant seizures made in 2021. The analysis of this statistical figure appears to indicate a change in the strategy adopted by criminal organizations. Last year, they seemed to have drastically reduced the quantity of the single drug lot to be dispatched to consumer markets. This is due both to the gradual depletion of the drug stocked during the pandemic and the downsizing of drug consignments, with the purpose to increase imports of smaller drug quantities so as to curb possible financial losses due to drug seizing. By way of example, the data on the average quantity of cocaine seized in the first months of the current year seem to corroborate this trend. Comparison data on seizures carried out over a decade show a sharp decrease in weight, around a third less, of each detected drug lot.

As to the single substances, the flow of cocaine arriving from South American producing countries, more specifically Ecuador (61,74%), Brazil (10,85%) and Guatemala (8,21%) continues its gradual rise. Cocaine seizures marked a further record increase after the outstanding performances of 2020 and 2021, when 13.6 and 21.39 tons had respectively been seized, reaching the unprecedented amount of 26.10 tons in 2022. The percentage increase is 22.03% compared to the previous year, which had already marked a huge increase with respect to 2020 (+57.29%), 2019 (+64,26) and 2018 (+127.76%). The seizures trend is in line with this steady rise. The drug volumes removed from the illicit market indicate a constant escalation marking an exponential trend, i.e.: from 3.63 tons in 2018 to 8,28 tons in 2019, to 13.60 tons in 2020 to 21.39 tons in 2021 and to 26.10 tons in 2022. In short, this uninterrupted five-year term of continuous growth represents a consolidated trend outlining a well-defined feature. An in-depth analysis reveals that in 2022 the seizures of cocaine made at borders represented 78.28% of the total intercepted in Italy, that is 20.43 tons out of a total of 26.10 tons. This highly significant figure is even more so, when considering that in the period from 2014 to 2018, the average value of seizures made at maritime borders hardly reached 1.8 tons, thus further corroborating the assumption, made for the first time in the previous year, about a new cocaine trafficking Mediterranean route. In actual facts, after stopping over at national ports, ethnic criminal gangs, particularly Albanian and Serbian-Montenegrin, transfer cocaine to ports in the Balkan area, the Black Sea or the Aegean Sea, as proved by different operations carried out in 2022, which led to further investigations conducted through international controlled deliveries from Italy to the above areas.

Data gathered in 2022 confirm that our country is a gateway used for transferring significant quantities of cocaine to other European markets controlled by Balkan criminal organizations, which are increasingly becoming the leaders of the criminal scene and are capable of closely cooperating with the criminal cartels based in the producing countries as well as with the more structured local criminal syndicates.

In this operational scene, an utterly central role is played by the national port of Gioia Tauro where 80.35% of the cocaine seizures at maritime borders are carried out, with an incidence of 61.73% on the national total. In 2022, a large-scale police operation led by the Reggio Calabria Judicial Authority with the involvement of major European and International agencies fighting transnational crime resulted in the dismantlement of a fierce criminal organization, which with the connivance of dock workers in the Gioia Tauro port, recovered and sneaked out huge consignments of cocaine arriving from South America on board of cargo ships. The flattering results obtained through counteraction activities at borders are the outcome of successful strategies developed by Police Forces and designed to detect the consignments intended for Italy, along

with an increasingly advanced and incisive risk analysis regarding the movement of commercial containers. The threat level has prompted a more enhanced ability to monitor trading routes and the complex container handling system, in order to discern in advance what “targets” are to be subjected to controls. In this respect, DCSPA has developed a thorough analysis by processing the available findings on drug seizures at international level, on the routes mostly used in the trafficking of cocaine from South America to Italian and European ports, and on the most recurring methods of concealing the drug inside containers shipped by sea. For this purpose, information published in reports issued by international bodies and foreign antidrug agencies as well as domestic and foreign statistical data gathered by Law Enforcement Attachés based in Central and South America have been exploited.

The outcome of this overview has been summarized in an appendix to the Annual Report (Italian version), which is meant to provide an overall insight into the dynamics of cocaine trafficking via sea trading routes.

The number of heroin seizures is substantially comparable with the 2021 one. The seizures recorded in 2022, amounting to kg 548.08, are in line with the average of the last four years. As of 2016, the trend of this figure has been constant and solidly set at half a ton approximately, with the exception of 2018, when a particularly large seizure had been made.

The situation overview maintains overall coherence and confirms, on one hand, that seizures of this substance show a tendency to slight fluctuations over time and, on the other hand, the “sclerotizing process” affecting this kind of crime due, probably, to the peculiar characteristics of demand, which concerns a stable number of consumers/drug addicts.

However, the figure concerning the heroin flows into Italy and the consequent law enforcement counteraction, particularly at borders, are worth mentioning. Two figures pertaining to seizures at sea and land borders stand out. In the case of seizures at maritime borders, there is a percentage increase by 961.19% with respect to the previous year, which seems to suggest a resurgence of heroin imports by sea. In actual facts, the figure, once put in context, shows a less alarming picture in terms of absolute weight data, as it concerns a single large seizure of approximately 23 Kg carried out at the port of Ancona in comparison with the total quantity of 2.46 kg detected at sea border in 2021. No heroin seizures have been recorded at land borders across which the so-called “Balkan route” runs. Such route is traditionally used to smuggle heroin into Europe. In this respect, an obvious question arises about the situation in Afghanistan, the world-wide leading producer of opium, after the withdrawal of U.S. troops and the coming to power of the Taliban. As mentioned in last year’s report, there are no sufficient elements to carry out a thorough assessment, going beyond the official statements made by the Taliban Authorities, who have forbidden any drug productions, and establishing whether the production of opium poppies is actually going to be brought to a standstill. However, seizures in Asian countries neighbouring or bordering on Afghanistan do not show any changes when compared to the past.

According to the data on border seizures, 72.41% of heroin was seized at airports. 68.48 Kg out of the overall 94.56 Kg of heroine were seized at three domestic airports, i.e.: Malpensa, Fiumicino and Cagliari-Elmas and in 85,71% of the cases heroine had been smuggled into Italy from Nigeria, South-Africa, Senegal, and Cameroun. Even though this figure does not appear to be too significant in terms of quantity, it corroborates an investigative theory illustrated in the latest report, according to which a new route for smuggling heroin from Afghanistan to European consumption markets goes across some African countries. To face this threat, since 2020 the “Southern Route” project is being developed to strengthen police cooperation with the South-East African countries most affected by this problem. It is a multilateral project in agreement with Interpol Lyon aimed at increasing the exchange of information and good practices with a specific focus on the traffic flows of interest.

As far as cannabis is concerned, there is a decrease in the overall figure concerning the seizures of cannabis plants (-31.51%) as well as the two substances derived from cannabis, i.e.: hashish (-33.79%) and marijuana (-29.59%). In 2021, the detected quantity, nearly 68 tons, offset the negative trend observed in 2019-2020, when volumes had reached 44.77 tons and 30.03 tons respectively. In 2022, the seized quantity, when compared to the previous year, dropped to 47.02 tons; such figure is below the average (77 tons) of the

last decade. It should be highlighted that this average is heavily influenced by the results achieved in 2014 (148.92 tons), in 2017 (112.16 tons) and in 2018 (120.03 tons) due to events of extraordinary occurrence in decades, which led to huge seizures at sea carried out by the aero-naval forces of the Guardia di Finanza. If we do not consider such seizures the average figure would drop to 56 tons, which is a quantity closer to that of last year.

Despite the drop in seizures, the overall results achieved in 2022 confirm that cannabis remains the most widely seized drug in our country, accounting for 60% (47.02 tons) of all drugs detected by the Law Enforcement Agencies (75.01 tons) demonstrating a remarkably high level of demand.

In line with the principles of law established in the ruling of the Court of Cassation - United Sections/May 2019, an amount of 9.43 tons of inflorescences and derivatives with low THC content is to be included in the overall volume of cannabis products seized. With respect to the overall value of cannabis seizures, the incidence of this specific drug accounts for one fifth (20.05%), which is below the one recorded in 2021, when seizures of light cannabis amounted to 20.93 tons and accounted for slightly less than one third of the overall quantity (30.73%) of cannabis seizures.

A more detailed analysis on the cannabis derivatives highlights that in the reporting year seizures on the Italian soil were predominant with respect to border seizures. Unlike with cocaine, the quantities of hashish and marijuana detected at land, air and sea borders bore little significance, if compared to the total. In 2022, the quantity of cannabis resin seized at borders amounted to approximately 1.4 tons out of the overall amount of 13.92 tons, and as regards marijuana, the border seizures amounted to a modest 1.64 tons out of the 33.11 tons seized nation-wide.

The figure of sea border seizures of cannabis derivatives is negligible. As to the ports on the Italian Adriatic coastline, the hypothesis outlined last year about a reshaping of the operational scenario is confirmed. With the exception of a large marijuana seizure amounting to 990 Kg in Apulia, which proved to come from Albania, marijuana seizures in the Adriatic regions, where traditionally border seizures of substances from the Balkan region occur, drastically decreased in comparison to 2021 (Abruzzi: -73.08%, Apulia: -41.05%, Basilicata: -51.36%, Marche: -37.4%, Molise: -99.69%).

A renewed focus on counteraction activities by Albanian law enforcement authorities, with the support of aircrafts of the Italian Guardia di Finanza flying over Albania to spot and report cannabis plantations (mission based on an operational protocol signed by the Italian and Albanian Chiefs of Police, which was renewed on 16th February 2021), has most likely reduced the marijuana imports via sea between the Italian and Albanian coastlines. However, the future trend of these specific seizures will clarify whether we are facing an actual change in the operational strategies of the criminal organizations, or a reshaping of the routes for this specific drug.

The figure on seizures of cannabis plants corroborates the consolidation of an Italian outdoor production, mainly in the Southern regions, according to the percentage incidence on the total amounts. Although in the Northern regions (8.15%) and in the Central regions (15.04%) this threat is still under control, over the years in the Southern regions there has been a strong increase in the number of seizures of small plantations meant to meet the local demand. This production is mainly concentrated in Calabria (46.33%), Sicily and Sardinia, where 140,000 plants were seized in 2022, although in the case of the last two regions, the percentage indices show a decrease, respectively in the order of 13.87% and 62.44% in comparison to 2021. Although it is not a well-structured phenomenon but the average figures on a ten-year basis pertaining to these three regions, respectively 70,550, 44,657 and 29,472 plants, are higher than the national average in the last decade.

As to synthetic drugs, the statistic trend of seizures shows a marked decrease in the weight (-25.41%) and in the doses (-33.18%) seized. In absolute terms, the quantity of synthetic drugs intercepted in 2022 (102.95 kg) represents the third highest figure in the ten-year period after the ones recorded in 2017 (167.48 kg) and in 2021 (138.03 kg). However, this ranking does not include the unprecedented seizure made in the port of Salerno in 2020, when 14 tons of amphetamines presumably intended for foreign markets were seized.

The quantity of drugs in doses seized last year (10,530 pills or tablets) is one of the lowest in a decade. Among the substances falling under this generic definition, which includes all the drugs of synthetic origin, methamphetamine has a predominant role in terms of weight and by itself accounts for the most substantial volume of synthetic drug seizures (approximately 43.11% of the total). In 2022, 44.38 Kg of methamphetamine were seized, with a 71.11% increase, if compared to the previous year. The amount has almost doubled in comparison with the 10-year average (24.66 Kg) and has reached the highest level in the ten-year period except for 2017, when more than 56 Kg of methamphetamine were seized. These quantities appear low, but the resurgence of methamphetamine as the most appealing among synthetic stimulants points towards a consumer market, which is constantly looking for low-cost adrenergic substances, powerful enough to have the same effects of cocaine on the nervous system. In January 2022, Law Enforcement Agencies disclosed and seized a “kitchen” (a small and illegal laboratory) set up in a Gorizia-based house, which had specifically been fitted with equipment and stocked with precursors to start the production of methamphetamines. It is a sporadic episode, which however marks the renewed interest in this stimulating substance also employed for doping.

To explain the significant percentage increase by 93.04% in comparison with the previous year, among other synthetic drugs in doses, we underline the seizure of well over 3,380 tablets of nandrolone, an anabolic substance included in the tables of narcotic substances.

In 2022, data on seizures of GBL and GHB, two powerful dissociative sedatives for recreational use as “chemical sex”, remain high. 37.5 and 0.68 litres in the liquid form as well as 9.01 and 4.03 Kg in other forms were seized respectively. The figure pertaining to GBL has nearly doubled in comparison with the ten-year average (20.8 litres and 4.39 kg). The quantities are lower with respect to the ones recorded in 2020-2021, when seizures skyrocketed as a result of a significant police operation concluded in 2022, which had disclosed a huge drug dealing activity carried out through online selling websites. Considering that these substances are employed as Drugs Facilitating Sexual Assault (DFSA), the amount seized in the reporting year highlights the increased attention paid by law enforcement agencies to this particular form of drug abuse, which is causing public concern.

A realistic analysis of the data on synthetic drug seizures suggests that the use of these drugs in our country is still limited, after all. There is, however, a clear need to keep the focus on this type of drugs, used mainly by young people in social contexts, in view of their enormous health risk, also due to an underestimation of the damage caused by their use.

The threat posed by synthetic drugs is not apparently comparable to the levels of other most commonly used substances. However, it can be expected that soon in the nearest future law enforcement anti-drug action will have to tackle this new and insidious type of drug abuse in the fight against organised crime, which is showing a progressively increasing interest in the expanding demand for these substances as well as in the corresponding illegal market share and resulting profits.

The data referring to 2022 confirm that synthetic drugs are frequently placed on the market through Dark Web sites, accessible only through encryption systems, which are not only safe but also make the identification of the individuals involved and the tracing of payments extremely difficult. By surreptitiously exploiting the web potential, which is too often seen as a “free zone” in terms of easy access and “anonymity”, the purchaser can order the drug online and have it delivered at home by postal consignments. The law enforcement specialized units have, over time, increased their skills to operate in the web virtual space. They are engaged in investigations into the marketplaces operating both in the surface and the deep web and are increasingly effective in confronting this insidious modus operandi, which makes use of hardly traceable anonymization and delocalization software as well as cryptocurrencies, in order to identify the drug suppliers. This year the report includes a special mention of social networks. Many instant messaging applications allow face-to-face anonymous encrypted and self-deleting communications. For this reason, they are increasingly used in drug dealing, especially inside peer groups, and structurally operate side by side the open-web drug transactions taking place on encrypted platforms and peer-to-peer networks.

The phenomenon of the so-called New Psychoactive Substances is very similar to that of synthetic drugs. The NPS are mostly of synthetic origin and are obtained from the manipulation of the basic chemical structures of controlled psychotropic substances. They are produced with the intent to introduce new substances on the illicit market, which cannot be controlled since they are not included in the international Tables.

As is the case of all synthetic drugs, NPS pose a growing threat, not only because they generate illegal profits for transnational crime but also due to the damage to health caused by their use. Health care professionals are not familiar with these substances and are therefore at a loss in the diagnosis or pharmacological treatment stages, especially in the acute phase of intoxication, since the symptoms of many such molecules are still not recognisable nor are their action mechanisms and adverse reactions.

In the reporting year, during seizure operations, police forces identified 70 new substances out of the total 76 ever detected in Italy, 29 of which had never been identified before. They have been mainly classified as synthetic cathinones (19.7%) and synthetic cannabinoids (15.8%) and their identification was reported to the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA) and to the National Early Warning System (SNAP). Following these reports the SNAP issued two alerts – one regarding the increase in seizures of the newly detected cannabinoid hexahydrocannabinol and one concerning the identification of the synthetic opioid etonitazepipne contained in substances seized following a case of death.

For this reason, in 2022 the Ministry of Health issued 7 decrees signed by the Minister including 39 new psychoactive substances in Table I and 4 in Table IV, annexed to the Consolidated Act on narcotic substances approved by Presidential Decree No. 309/90.

Although according to the present data NPS are not a widespread phenomenon in our country, it is necessary to carefully monitor system indicators to avoid being taken by surprise by this new type of abuse, which in some countries of the American continent is a real public health emergency, causing tens of thousands of overdose deaths.

The number of foreigners involved in drug-trafficking and dealing has decreased also in the year 2022, thus continuing the downward trend of previous years (-2.38%).

This figure is the lowest in the decade, i.e. 9105 individuals involved, over 5743 of whom were arrested. However, it still represents approximately one third (34.12%) of all the suspects reported to the Judicial Authority for this type of offences (26,685). They are mainly non-EU labourers - as in the previous years, mostly of Moroccan, Albanian, Tunisian, Nigerian and Gambian origin - who are employed in street-level dealing on the domestic drug market. Whereas in the case drug trafficking organized crime groups, the number of foreigners reported to the Judicial Authority has increased (+5.72%) when compared to 2021, reaching the figure of 462 individuals.

Another figure deserving attention is the number of minors charged with drug offences. Bucking the downward trend of the individuals reported to the Judicial Authority, which, as said, has decreased with respect to the previous year (-12.12%), the number of minors reported to the Judicial Authority has increased by 14.78%, when compared with the year 2021. This figure confirms a trend, which, in absolute terms, has been growing steadily over the last three years, from 926 individuals in 2020 to 981 in 2021 to 1126 in 2022. This increase is most significant among 14-year old minors (+55.26%), although appreciable percentage increases have been registered in all age groups without exception. Similarly, the number of arrested minors has increased accounting for 33.39% of the total number of those reported to the Judiciary (376 out of 1126).

In most cases, this figure concerns male adolescents of Italian nationality (77.26%), even though the number of foreign minors has nearly doubled when compared to the preceding year (+46.29%), i.e.: from 175 in 2021 to 256 in 2022.

The year 2022 seems to confirm the trend in overdose deaths, which after growing over the three-year period 2017-2019, decreased significantly in 2020 (-65 individuals with respect to 2019) and in 2021 (-13 when compared with 2020). In 2022 the number of deaths, amounting to 298 cases, although showing an increase of 2 cases (+0.68), seems substantially equal to the number of the previous year, when deaths caused by drug abuse amounted to 296.

The analysis of the data does not reveal significant differences when considering the single substances causing death, also with respect to the preceding year. The number of deaths caused by heroin overdose decreased by 10 cases, and was partially offset by 2 deaths from buprenorphine and 1 from methadone, while the number of deaths from substances not yet identified increased by 7 cases. The number of deaths due to cocaine overdoses increased (2 cases), in particular for crack abuse and there were two more cases for ketamine intoxication.

The substantially stable 2022 figure does not allow for statistically reliable projections for the future. What is true is that since 1973, i.e. the year when surveys on drug abuse deaths started in Italy, the number of such deaths has reached 26,749 cases.

In the reporting year, as far as the drug smuggling routes are concerned, no element points to a remarkable change in the known flows. Mention has already been made of the drug flow that frequently crosses the Mediterranean Sea towards the ports of the Balkan region and the Black Sea, transporting cocaine, mainly by sea, from South America to Central and Eastern Europe, reaching storage centres in Greece, Bulgaria and Romania. The number of seizures carried out in the transit regions and in national airports confirms the existence of a heroin-smuggling route, known as the “Southern route”, where Italy is among the European destinations for opiate cargos coming from the traditional production areas in Asia. In this respect, in the reporting year, the DCSA, as previously mentioned, started the implementation phase of a project involving the States crossed by the new route (Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius, Mozambique, Somalia, South Africa, Tanzania and Uganda), along with the Interpol Secretariat based in Lyon, to the purpose of investigating and effectively address this threat and strengthen prevention and law enforcement measures along said route.

As highlighted last year, the complex links between the criminal groups involved, cooperating synergically with a view to manage logistics and maximize profits, are likely to favour some kind of ramification of the main drug-trafficking routes. This recent element is most likely to meet the need of organized crime groups for safer routes in order to exploit their collusive contacts in the departure and arrival seaports as well as avail themselves of storage areas in the vicinity of landing places.

An analysis of drug-trafficking criminal associations confirms that the production and marketing of narcotic substances has been and still is one of the most interesting sectors for organized crime. It has a transnational dimension and operates on a global market, fostered above all by an ever-growing demand from a consumer base that shows no signs of reduction.

The drug market has become increasingly extended, complex and multifaceted, not only due to the growing number of new illegal psychoactive substances or the opening of new markets, but above all because of the variety of relational networks linking the criminal groups engaged in drug trafficking, constantly seeking solid alliances, valuable assets for logistics and new opportunities to increase their profits.

In this framework, a remarkable number of investigations have gathered evidence of the activity of mixed criminal groups, with members of different ethnic origins, according to their respective interests. Similarly, other investigation results proved the interaction between foreign and Italian criminal groups.

The observation of the various drug-trafficking aspects and the analysis of the indicators provided by the antidrug activities concluded in 2022 by Law Enforcement Agencies coordinated by the DCSA reveal two new elements with respect to previous reports: an increasing use of cryptographic technology, which hinders the investigations into drug trafficking, and the support of accomplices based mainly in seaport areas, to facilitate the movement of containers where the drug is concealed. This year’s report has specially focused on the latter aspect, more precisely the methods adopted to transfer the drug out of the ports. In the nearest future, the ability to monitor and control ports and harbours, a skilful risk analysis aimed at spotting the contaminated containers and the monitoring of computerised platforms for container handling within hubs are going to become “the red line”, i.e. the priorities, for anti-drug law enforcement activity in national seaports, and even more so in the large European harbours.

As far as the former aspect is concerned, the recent developments in telephone technology and an increasingly complex IT environment are powerful instruments, which criminal organizations use to carry out their criminal

plans. In the present time, the communications by which the illicit agreements between the various transactors are finalised run on cryptophony systems and cyber platforms, making law enforcement action more difficult. In this respect, an upgrading of law enforcement instruments, both from the point of view of legal provisions and technology, is imperative to take an effective action against the use of networks and encrypted platforms for telephone communications and relevant texting.

In this complex scenario an increasingly leading role is played by the Calabrian 'Ndrangheta, which is the most insidious and pervasive Italian Mafia-type organization, characterized by a strong tendency to expand both nationally and internationally and one of the most powerful and dangerous criminal organizations in the world. Thanks to the presence of its own members and brokers, based in production sites and temporary drug storage areas, not only in the national territory, but also at European level, it represents the most influential organisation in the trafficking of cocaine from South America. The availability of large amounts of funds of illicit origin and the strong ability to manage the various steps and hubs of drug-trafficking have enabled 'Ndrangheta over time to consolidate its significant role in the international drug-trafficking business, with which other criminal organizations have to deal for the supply of drug destined for the consumer markets.

As far as the Mafia-type organization "Cosa Nostra" is concerned, the investigations coordinated by DCSA in the reporting year reveal its persistent vitality, a reiterated interest in the drug-trafficking business, a considerable ability to adapt to the context changes and a pragmatic approach to the lucrative drug-trafficking business, yielding enormous profits while facing less risks when compared to other typical mafia crimes (such as extorsions, for instance). Drug-trafficking is again a key source of income for this powerful organized crime group. It has been the effective Law Enforcement action itself against the extortion business that has driven the main families to regain a prominent role in drug-trafficking, though in a position of subordination to other mafia-type groups from Calabria and Campania, as regards both the supply from producing countries and the importation and distribution in Italy. However, the results of the most recent investigations suggest the beginning of a new phase with respect to drug supply channels, with a view to their spotting and autonomous management of logistics. Furthermore, the scale of this problem gives rise to concern. It has been ascertained that, in the organization ranks, a very large number of members are involved in the various stages of the drug business cycle, from the supply from drug providers to street level pushing.

In the reporting year, Camorra as well continued the drug smuggling activity, above all hashish and cocaine, by exploiting its operational branches in Spain, South America, Africa and in the Arabic peninsula on the one hand and the close cooperation with the Calabrian clans on the other hand. Recent investigations have uncovered agreements and intertwined alliances both with South American drug traffickers and with the Dutch ones of Moroccan origin operating in the ports of Rotterdam (Holland) and Antwerp (Belgium).

The concept of "criminal fluidity" is certainly a typical aspect of Camorra gangs, a universe of clans and groups, often in conflict with each other for the management of illicit activities in their areas, where they compete for drug markets. The coexistence in the same region of criminal groups with different backgrounds, structures and operational approaches often gives rise to unexpected, yet fragile, alliances for the control of their areas of influence. The result is a precarious balance, where the leaders of some clans are in almost perpetual conflict for the total supremacy in their territories. The activity of street-level drug-dealing is carried out by several members, both men and women, playing different roles, such as "capi piazza" area chief drug pushers, pushers, look-outs, who allow the clans to have a multi-million dollar turnover by working in regular shifts so as to ensure the round-the-clock sale of every kind of narcotic substance.

Apulian organized crime groups can be distinguished on the basis of their geographical areas of influence, i.e. the "mafia foggiana" based in Foggia - with its three different subgroups "società foggiana", "mafia garganica" and "malavita cerignolana" - the "criminalità barese", based in the regional capital Bari, and the "Sacra Corona Unita" based in Salento. These groups form a multifaceted and heterogeneous universe very complex to classify, which is characterised by the absence of a leadership. For the above reasons these groups are characterised by a fragmented and changing structure, made up of factions whose members are bound by close family ties. Investigation results point to the increasingly important role played by women, who hold superior positions with respect to the other members of the criminal group.

Over the year 2022 also ethnic criminal structures have continued their tendency to become increasingly dangerous and their operational independence in running the drug trafficking and dealing business has kept growing. Their logistic capacity and ability to establish contacts and relations enabled them to conduct the various stages of the illegal transactions from drug purchase from big cartels based in the production and storage areas to retail distribution in many Italian regions.

2022 investigation results confirm the emerging role of Albanian organizations, which have spread across most of Italy and may now be considered among the most active and fully established foreign criminal organizations on the national drug trafficking scene. It is a real consecration within the criminal network. Albanian drug-traffickers are rapidly becoming one of the most aggressive and powerful organizations involved in drug trafficking, as evidenced by the large number of Albanian affiliates reported to the Judicial Authority for drug distribution last year (1562 out of 9105 individuals, accounting for 17.1% of all the foreigners reported to the Judicial Authority).

Albanian organised crime operates either in small groups, sometimes multi-ethnic ones, engaged mainly in drug distribution, or, in different contexts, their methods are similar to those adopted by Mafia-type organised groups, characterised by the intimidating power of the associative bond and the availability of enormous resources to be spent in drug trafficking. In this sector the Albanian gangs are considered very reliable interlocutors for the criminal network involved in the drug business, especially because of their ability to move large quantities of cocaine and heroin across Europe. As far as cocaine is concerned, they are engaged in every stage of the supply and distribution chain, from drug purchase in the production areas, to drug collection at the Dutch and Belgian ports, from the transport to the intended destination by means of specially modified vehicles to the subsequent distribution on the Italian territory.

Having direct supply channels in the production areas, they are increasingly doing business, as reliable intermediaries, with the mafia-type organizations based in Calabria, Campania and Sicily or other criminal groups.

As far as heroin is concerned, Albanian criminal groups are still successfully managing the last part of the Balkan route, through which Afghan heroin is transported from Turkey to the various national and European consumer markets.

Among the other foreign criminal groups, the Nigerian mafia- type OCGs are progressively on the rise. Although they are engaged in a wide range of criminal activities, they have by now strengthened their role in financing and managing international drug trafficking.

Nigerian mafia is organised in cults or criminal confraternities, which operate in almost all Italian regions, but especially in Lombardy, Veneto, Piedmont, Emilia Romagna, Lazio, Umbria, Campania and Sicily. Formed by increasingly young and aggressive associates, these groups are among the most active in drug-dealing, although not affecting the criminal balances in the various areas, where they are rapidly taking root.

Law enforcement investigations have brought to light their methods to transfer the proceeds of this criminal activity to Nigeria, through what may be considered “parallel” financial circuits, consisting in illegal rapid and anonymous money transfer systems, which are located inside “front” businesses such as shops.

Also North African crime syndicates mainly from the Maghreb region, are at present generally settled and well-established almost all over Italy. Thanks to their successful integration into the urban socio-criminal fabric, even in areas where local organized crime is traditionally active, these criminal groups run the street-level dealing business of various kinds of narcotic substances in large areas, cooperating with other ethnic or Italian criminal groups, as well as mafia-type criminal groups. Investigation results evidence an alarming leap forward in the criminal projections of these groups, which now appear to be able to independently run the smuggling business, importing large quantities of drug, especially cocaine, from northern Europe into Italy by means of couriers and vehicles with double-bottoms.

In terms of international relations development, the reporting year again marked important achievements in the strengthening of police cooperation, which is becoming increasingly important in the globalisation age and is now the backbone of national security systems as well as an indispensable requirement for them.

Also in the drug-trafficking sector, which is a transnational crime by definition, there is a need for promoting international cooperation in order to achieve an actual interaction between the various law enforcement and investigation agencies. This could lead to effective initiatives such as the exchange of information, special operations and training, all instruments which, when integrated, are an important way to improve law enforcement action.

In 2022 DCSA launched an initiative in this respect, shared with the Department of Public Security, which aimed at further increasing the already excellent cooperation with the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) unit at the US Embassy in Rome by setting up a DEA logistical workstation directly at the DCSA headquarters. The intended target was greater continuity in relations and an even closer synergy in the exchange of intelligence and joint operational activities.

The initiatives aiming at promoting international police cooperation mainly rely on Law Enforcement Attachés at the diplomatic missions located in the countries most affected by the major drug trafficking routes. The intelligence gathering capacity of DCSA abroad increasingly relies on their activity in gathering the information necessary to start an investigation and, in the operational stage, in tracking the drug loads by means of special investigation methods designed to identify the final recipient of the drug and therefore the criminal organizations importing, transporting and distributing the drug.

In the year 2022, two Law Enforcement Attaché Offices were opened at the Italian Embassy in Nairobi (Kenya) and at the one in Pretoria (South Africa). This is an important step forward in the efficient reorganisation of these DCSA offices, which takes into account the need for adjusting strategic and investigative response capacity to the scope of drug-trafficking in some production and transit areas or in areas of renewed operational interest.

As usual DCSA took part in the 65th Session of the UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) held in Vienna from 14th to 18th March 2022 (Ordinary Session), where a number of resolutions were adopted, the aims of which included the promotion of early prevention through a comprehensive and scientific approach and the intensification of efforts to tackle the spreading of non-controlled chemical substances as well as the proliferation of synthetic precursors.

The Assembly also approved a number of INCB recommendations to place three new precursors of the notorious fentanyl under control and identified seven new narcotic drugs, that are substances of major drug-abuse.

In the reporting year the DCSA continued to participate as well in the COPOLAD III programme for the prevention and fight against drug trafficking through a “mid-term expert” specifically designated for this activity and giving a further contribution through its Law Enforcement Attachés based in Latin America and the Caribbean. This initiative is part of a series of legal diplomacy and technical assistance programmes handled by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, in agreement with the Department of Public Security for the area of police cooperation, and it is entrusted to the International Italo-Latin American Organisation (IILA) with the aim of enhancing cooperation between the EU and the mentioned countries in the fight against drug trafficking.

DCSA delegates also took part in the regular meeting of the Dublin Group, where the 2022 activity of the 13 Mini-Dublin Groups with territorial competence was discussed. During the said plenary session the UNODC (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime) highlighted a recent increase in the opium production in Afghanistan, above all in the Southwestern region of the country. As afore mentioned, these are only initial indications and considerations resulting from the analysis of the present situation in the country after the Taliban went to power. However, the ban of Afghan authorities on opium production caused a remarkable increase in the prices of this substance extracted from the poppy flower, which is the most profitable agricultural produce of that country and the main source of livelihood for the rural population in the poorest areas of Afghanistan.

In the reporting year the DCSA started bilateral negotiations with Ecuador, Gambia, Honduras, Malta, Paraguay, Poland and Senegal aimed at signing agreements in the form of Anti-drug Operational Memoranda focusing on the exchange of police information and the promotion of joint investigation initiatives against the trafficking of drugs and their precursors. In connection with the above-mentioned operational memoranda,

specific negotiations have been promoted or further developed with Albania, Austria, Bulgaria, Ivory Coast, France, Georgia, Greece, Israel, Morocco, Moldova, Montenegro, Panama, Romania, Serbia, Spain, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Finally, the said technical arrangements were signed by the Italian Chief of Police – General Director of Public Security, and his counterparts from North Macedonia (Rome, May 2022) and Croatia (Dubrovnik, July 2022).

Furthermore, the activities in connection with the “ICARUS” and “Hermes” projects have continued. The projects are carried out by DCSA following protocols signed with the Department for Antidrug Policies of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers. They aim at enhancing the possible synergies between the two Offices and increasing their effectiveness within their common institutional tasks.

In the framework of the former project, which is at an advanced implementation stage, several initiatives have been developed to increase the level of efficiency of the activities countering narcotic trafficking as well as process the useful data for a more comprehensive analysis of the related aspects.

In particular, in 2022 the activities for the implementation of the “Southern Route” project have continued. Such project aims at strengthening police cooperation with the countries of South-East Africa, through which the heroin coming from Afghanistan is smuggled into Italy and Europe.

In this framework a meeting took place in October 2022 at the Multiagency College of Advanced Studies for Law Enforcement Officers, attended by high-profile representatives of Anti-drug Offices and the Interpol National Central Bureaus of Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Madagascar, Mauritius, South Africa and Mozambique. The meeting was concluded with the drafting of a good practices document, where each country would specify its contribution in case of special operations in the framework of international cooperation. Between November and December the first internship training took place for the Mauritius police officers, i.e. two days of mentoring activities and three operational days at the passenger and commercial port and Mauritius International Airport, Port Louis, in which DCSA officials and Guardia di Finanza specialists took part.

Within the same project, thanks to the gradual reduction of the limitations imposed by the health crisis, which in the previous year had only allowed online and distance learning, the programme of activities for the student population, called ‘HUGS NOT DRUGS’, got into full swing. This programme, which was entrusted to an external body accredited for this kind of initiatives, aims at raising students’ awareness of the risks of drug abuse.

In 2022, in particular, training events took place such as open days, meetings and webinars intended for a large public of students from 243 lower and upper secondary schools located in 18 Italian regions, 85 provinces and 188 towns. Overall, a total number of 13,200 young students and 26,400 parents were involved in these initiatives.

The second project, developed with the Department for Antidrug Policies of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers and signed in November 2019, aims at countering the threat posed by the spreading of synthetic drugs and new psychoactive substances by means of operational methods monitoring and checking mail or courier deliveries (so-called ‘parcels’) transported by public and private operators. Further goals of the project are training for law enforcement officers in this specific area and the enhancement of the National Early Warning System report procedure.

In 2022, during the operational stage, law enforcement units of Guardia di Finanza, Arma dei Carabinieri and State Police carried out specific controls in some mail handling centers, which resulted in the seizure of 700 packages, i.e. postal consignments and parcels, containing significant quantities of synthetic drugs (methamphetamine, synthetic cannabinoids, ketamine, ecstasy, GHB etc.). During their inspections law enforcement officers were equipped with portable devices using Raman technology. The devices, which allow the immediate detection, analysis and identification of narcotic substances with a high degree of certainty, were purchased within the framework of the project. The control operations led in 13 cases to reports to the National Early Warning System, 2 cases out of which were first detections of active principles in Italy. Furthermore, seminars were held at law enforcement training institutes on the specific subject of synthetic drugs and new psychoactive substances. They were attended by over two thousand police officers, who were

going to be assigned to field operational tasks. Finally, a residential course was held at DCSA for the officers managing anti-drug units.

As for several years now, also in 2023 the Annual Report is not printed on paper but published electronically and translated into English and Spanish to facilitate its dissemination abroad. 2023 Annual Report is also available on the DCSA website, where data, information and reports on law enforcement anti-drug activities can be found.

IL DIRETTORE CENTRALE

Antonio Magliere

FIRST PART

- | | |
|---|----|
| • The role and tasks of the Central Directorate for Antidrug Services | 19 |
| • Drug trafficking in italy: current status and trends | 49 |



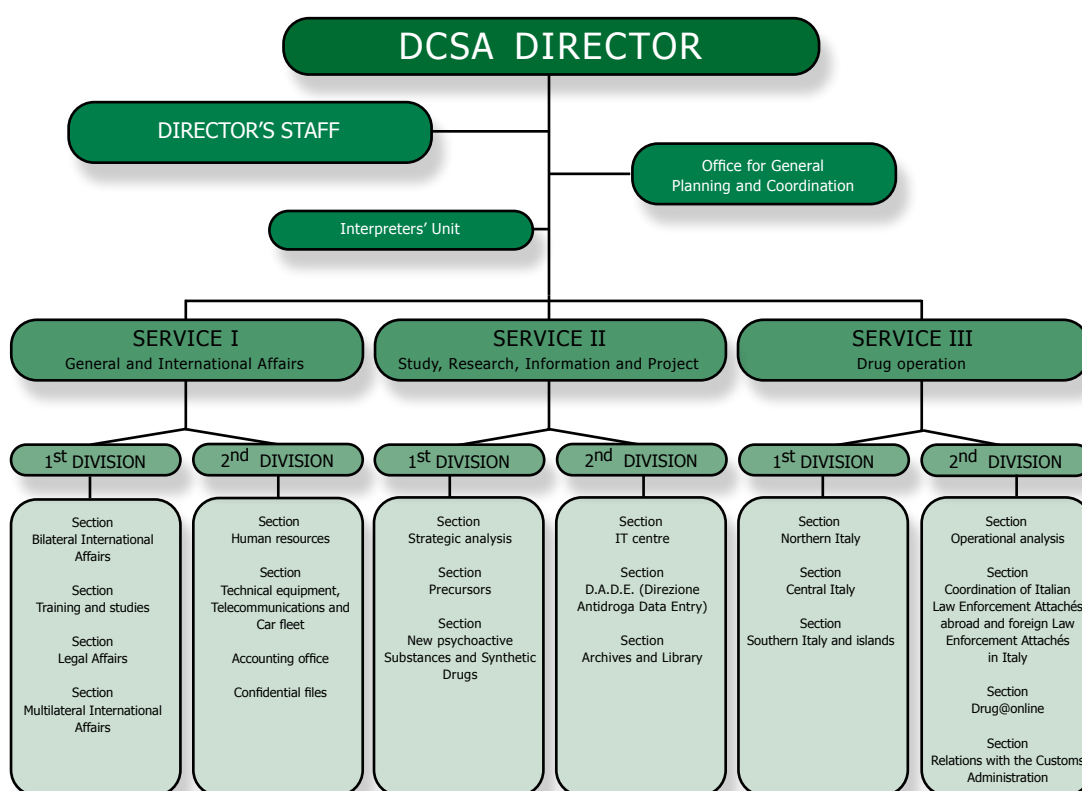
THE ROLE AND TASKS OF THE CENTRAL DIRECTORATE FOR ANTIDRUG SERVICES

● DCSA Structure	20
● International cooperation	21
● Coordination and operational support activities	28
● Analysis activities	29
● Training activities	30
● Technological and logistic support to judicial police investigations	31
● Legislative activity	31
● Activities on national and international projects	32
● Activities of the General planning and coordination office	35
● The documentary heritage	36
● Activities concerning participation in the national early warning system and other platforms for precursors control	37

DCSA STRUCTURE

Established by Law No. 16 of 15 January 1991, the Central Directorate for Anti-Drug Services (DCSA) is composed in equal numbers of officers from the State Police, Carabinieri and Guardia di Finanza. DCSA has replaced the Central Antidrug Service, set up in 1981, which in turn had taken the place of the Central Office for the direction and coordination of law enforcement activities for the prevention and suppression of illicit drug trade, created in 1976.

DCSA's main tasks include the overall coordination of drug-related investigative activities both domestically and internationally, the development of international relations, as well as the conduct of strategic and operational analysis. Its organizational structure comprises three Services (General and International Affairs; Studies, Research, Information and Projects; Drug Operations). A fourth unit, the General Planning and Coordination Office, closely cooperates with the Department for Antidrug Policies of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers as well as with other public and private entities involved in the prevention of drug addiction, while also coordinating police initiatives in this field.



INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

Multilateral activities

During 2022 DCSA has continued to pursue the numerous multilateral initiatives primarily developed with the relevant offices of the United Nations, the European Union and with other International Organizations and Regional Platforms, also with the support of its network of Law Enforcement Attachés posted to different foreign countries.

Among the key activities involving DCSA at UN level, mention should be made of the work carried out by the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND)¹ - of which our country is a member - which is the body providing UNODC with administrative and strategic policy guidance in relation to global supply and demand reduction.

The 65th regular session of the CND was held in Vienna on 14-18 March, 2022, in a mixed format, following the usual procedure envisaging: an operational segment including discussion on administrative and budgetary questions, working methods of the Commission and issues concerning UNODC staff; a normative segment, including discussions on the implementation of international treaties on the control of the illicit drug market. The event was certainly influenced by the current political context and the complex humanitarian situation in Ukraine, mentioned by the Executive Director of UNODC and the Director-General of the World Health Organization in their opening speeches.

During the works, seven additional substances were identified for consideration and new resolutions were adopted, in particular to:

- promote alternative development as a development-oriented drug control strategy, including environmental protection measures²;
- promote early prevention through a comprehensive and scientific approach³;
- strengthen international cooperation for the analysis of possible connections between drug trafficking and the illicit trade in firearms⁴;
- intensify efforts to tackle the spread of non-controlled chemicals and the proliferation of synthetic precursors⁵.

Lastly, some INCB recommendations⁶ for the control of three new fentanyl precursors were adopted.

Various decisions and specific initiatives taken within CND are shared in advance within the activities of its subsidiary bodies - Head of National Law Enforcement Agency (HONLEA)⁷- operating in different areas (Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia Pacific and Africa). These structures, having a technical-operational nature, also meet annually and carry out preparatory activities for the CND. DCSA represents Italy at the European Working Group and is also an observer at the Latin America - Caribbean and the Africa Working Groups.

During the annual meeting of **HONLEA Europe**, held in Valletta (Malta) from 12 to 15 September 2022, the recommendations adopted at the 13th HONLEA meeting were discussed in depth, and, in particular, the following points were debated by the national delegates attending the meeting:

- *new trends, drug concealment methods and intelligence in international cooperation.* To this end, the many expedients adopted by drug traffickers for the transport and concealment of illicit substances were shared, in addition to the already known concealment methods used in cargo containers. On this occasion, unusual means of transport and concealment were reported, such as semi-submersible boats and remotely piloted aircraft - duly modified for transporting drugs - or postal services. In this latter context, the Italian contribution was very important, with reference to law enforcement methodologies concerning the

1 CND is the central policy-making body for the UN drug control system.

2 Presented, also this year by Peru, Thailand and Germany and sponsored by the EU on behalf of the Member States.

3 Presented by Slovenia, France and sponsored by the EU on behalf of the Member States.

4 Presented by Mexico.

5 Presented by the United States and sponsored by the EU on behalf of the Member States.

6 Upon request of the USA.

7 Established in 1973, HONLEA is a subsidiary body of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, designed to strengthen police cooperation in combating drug trafficking at regional level and organised on the basis of specific geographical areas of influence.

ongoing testing of mass spectrometers with *Raman* technology, used at national level for the detection of synthetic drugs which might be concealed in postal packages. This initiative is being developed as part of the 'HERMES' project, which DCSA is carrying out in agreement with the Department for Anti-Drug Policies of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers;

- *production of and trafficking in synthetic drugs and their chemical precursors*. Participants agreed on the importance of training activities for police officers, including joint activities, aiming at harmonizing training at the global level as much as possible;
- *measures alternative to detention for drug offences*. An integrated approach to the drug problem was urged by the delegates. In this perspective, the law enforcement agencies are only one part of the network, which must develop not only repressive methodologies: when dealing with the critical issues related to drug addiction, a careful evaluation of the individual, aimed at his/ her social rehabilitation, should be considered;
- *information exchange in the framework of international cooperation*. Countries should expand the network of Liaison Officers and Law Enforcement Attachés abroad in order to ensure sufficient information exchange, as well as encourage the use of communication platforms utilized by regional and international cooperation agencies (Europol, INTERPOL, CARICC and others).

In relation to the **HONLEA Latin America and the Caribbean** meeting, held in Guatemala City, Guatemala, from 3 to 7 October 2022, the Colombian delegation outlined some of the most widespread concerns at regional level arising from chemicals arriving from Europe for drug production in clandestine laboratories. Among the methods of concealment, mention was also made of the transport of scrap cargoes, which are allegedly another effective expedient for the concealment of drugs, in particular cocaine.

The Spanish delegation also reported a greater diffusion of "secondary extraction" drug laboratories. Specifically, it was observed that some criminal organizations prefer to process the coca paste directly in the destination countries, probably for economic reasons, i.e. to find more easily the chemicals needed for processing.

During the **HONLEA Africa** meeting, held in Nairobi, Kenya, from 8 to 11 November 2022, it was emphasized that, despite the pandemic crisis (COVID-19), drug trafficking has increased. In particular, cocaine, heroin, synthetic drugs, methamphetamines and precursor chemicals continue to be transported in large quantities along the so-called "Southern Route" to major destinations, including Europe, while only a minor part of the trafficked illicit substances is destined for local consumption.

Organized crime groups are increasingly exploiting concealment methods involving the use of small boats, containers, lorries, travel luggage, postal parcels and/or letters, as well as body packers on intercontinental flights. The so-called Rip-on/Rip-off method is confirmed as a widely preferred method to conceal illicit substances. The exploitation of new technologies, information exchange and the strengthening of the capacity building between countries and organizations at regional level, such as UNODC, are crucial factors for an effective counter-narcotics strategy.

Moreover, in the field of multilateral international relations, DCSA contributed, as a national contact point, to the initiative called "**OPERATION ANUBIS**" - organized by the Secretariat of the Alliance for International Security (ISA)⁸, based in the United Arab Emirates in collaboration with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) - aimed at combating drug trafficking. The proposed 3-month exercise (from October to December 2022) involved the participating countries through the monitoring of the canine units employed in law enforcement activities in the field of narcotics, and the exchange of experiences and best practices.

In the context of the usual annual meetings with the competent bodies of the European Union, DCSA supported the Department for Anti-Drug Policies in the various meetings of the **Horizontal Drug Group (HDG)**, a forum aimed at promoting the activities of the Council of the European Union on drugs by developing strategic initiatives of a general and legislative nature in the areas of supply and demand reduction through the representatives of the Member States.

⁸ This Alliance is aimed at fighting transnational terrorism and organized crime through the exchange of experiences/knowledge and the diffusion of good practices. It includes the Ministries of the Interior of Bahrain, France, Israel, Italy, Morocco, Senegal, Singapore, Slovakia, Spain and United Arab Emirates (the latter hold secretariat functions).

These meetings highlighted the orientation of some Member States to overcome the sanctions profile linked to drug use, by fostering approaches based on treatment, detoxification and social recovery, progressively eliminating the stigma for vulnerable groups of users. In this regard, according to their reports, the adoption of human rights-oriented programmes in drug policies would not represent a ‘legalization’ of drug use, but rather an opportunity to reduce its consumption and avoid the perpetration of crimes related to addiction. On this point, the French and Italian delegations highlighted the need to identify the right balance between respect for the person and methods discouraging drug use, which, in any case, creates serious social damage.

DCSA also participates in the **Dublin Group**, that meets every six months in Brussels. This informal group was established in 1990, under the Irish presidency of CELAD (European Committee to Combat Drugs), the predecessor of the current **Horizontal Drugs Group**. The task of the forum is to assess, in a coordinated manner, regional cooperation policies in favour of drug producing and/or transit countries. Within its framework, 13 mini-groups have been set up, each with specific territorial competence, directly reporting to the Central Dublin Group in Brussels. Three of these groups operate in Africa, 3 in America, 4 in Asia, 1 in the Middle East and 2 in Europe. These mini-groups are attended by delegates of the Member States’ Embassies, their liaison officers and representatives of the governmental authorities of the host countries. These territorial branches ensure an effective regional exchange of information and the coordination of support activities in favour of the countries, which fall within their areas of competence.

The “mini-Dublin group” for Central Asia is chaired by Italy through the DCSA Law Enforcement Attaché in Tashkent (Uzbekistan). In the latter city, a periodic meeting was held on 28 October 2022 concerning the intensification of drug trafficking in that region, especially in Tajikistan where the complex Afghan situation seems to have a greater impact⁹.

Specifically, according to the representative of the Tajik Police authorities, in 2021, the quantities seized by the law enforcement agencies increased by 68.4% with respect to the previous year. More than half of all drug seizures were made on the border with Afghanistan.

The increase in seizures involved not only heroin but also synthetic drugs, in particular methamphetamines. For these reasons, a series of countermeasures, summarized in a policy document for the period 2021-2030, were issued by Tajik authorities. Such measures are aimed at preserving the security of the Republic of Tajikistan from the threats posed by drug trafficking and its negative impact, by strengthening the activities to combat drug trafficking, considered a flywheel for the financing of terrorism.

Similar concerns and dynamics were also reported by the Uzbek delegate, who warned of growing opium production in Afghanistan, with a further risk that the countries in that area would be involved in the drug trafficking routes.

The regular meeting of the Dublin Group, which summarizes the annual activities carried out, was held in Brussels on 25 November 2022. During the meeting, UNODC referred that opium production in Afghanistan has recently increased, especially in the south-west of the country. On this occasion, it was also pointed out that the Taliban ‘ban’ on opium production has, by contrast, led to a significant increase in its price. Currently, opium is the most profitable agricultural product in the country and is the main source of livelihood for the rural population in its poorest areas.

Within the context of the European Union initiatives, mention must be made of the participation of DCSA in the programme¹⁰ aimed at intensifying the fight against drug trafficking in the framework of a special “Programme Board” of EUROPOL. Such programme is focused on the analysis of trends in the illicit marketing of narcotic substances and information sharing. Through the aforementioned initiative, an Action Plan is drawn up and approved during the Annual Conference, that is also attended by the Member States’ Antidrug Agencies, identifying the priorities of the coordinated response of law enforcement agencies to drug supply.

⁹ Tajikistan shares with Afghanistan a border line of about 1,300 km.

¹⁰ Since its start in 2017.

In this regard, DCSA delegates participated in the 6th Annual EUROPOL Conference on Drugs, held on 2 December, 2022 in The Hague, the Netherlands. During this event, several aspects of the drug trafficking phenomenon in Europe were analyzed, namely, the policies to combat drug trafficking and the new trends in this field. In particular, it was pointed out that the *Calabrian 'Ndrangheta* currently plays an important role in drug trafficking between South America and Europe, by directly managing illicit trafficking through its emissaries. The infiltration of Mexican cartels into the European drug trafficking market was also reported, as well as the increased use of small commercial ports for such illicit trafficking and the threat posed by digital platforms (e-commerce) and cryptocurrencies (bitcoin) in the drug trafficking chain.

Moreover, at the EU level, a DCSA delegate supporting the Department for Anti-Drug Policies participated in the works of the EU National Coordinators' meeting on the drug phenomenon, held in Prague (Czech Republic) in September 2022. On this occasion, the discussion focused on the topic "*Cannabis policy: from prohibition to legal regulation*".

We would also like to highlight the participation of DCSA officers in the projects promoted by the EU Agency CEPOL, responsible for the development, implementation and coordination of the training of law enforcement officers of the Member States. The aforementioned body promotes, in particular, the **CEPOL Exchange Programme** initiative, which constitutes an important part of the training initiatives in favour of the operators of the European law enforcement system.

In detail, the Exchange Programme guarantees police officers the opportunity to participate in a series of exchanges aimed at developing knowledge and long-term trust between the respective law enforcement agencies and other institutional actors within the European Union. In particular, police officers are hosted by their counterparts not only in other European countries, but also in some non-European ones, and thus have the opportunity to share best practices, exchange views, initiate cooperation projects and promote networking opportunities. Within this specific programme, internships between DCSA officers and their Jordanian and Bulgarian counterparts took place in 2022.

In the context of the growing cooperation between the EU and the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean in the fight against drug trafficking¹¹, a series of technical assistance and legal diplomacy¹² - programmes have been developed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation in agreement with the Department of Public Security, whose implementation is entrusted to the International Italo-Latin American Organization (IILA)¹³. DCSA cooperates¹⁴, in the COPOLAD III programme, aimed at preventing and combating drug trafficking, through its own mid-term *expert*¹⁵ and ensuring, at the same time, the contribution of its network of Law Enforcement Attachés operating in that area.

With reference to the relations with other international bodies and regional platforms, it is worth mentioning the participation, together with other experts from the Department of Public Security and the national law enforcement agencies, in the Rome/Lyon G7 Group, which includes, in addition to Italy, government officials from Canada, France, Germany, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States of America, as well as representatives of the European Union and other international bodies. In particular, DCSA delegates took part in the meeting, held in October, within the LEPSG (Law Enforcement Projects Sub-Group). During the meeting, issues concerning, inter alia, the new scenarios following the geopolitical evolutions involving Afghanistan and Ukraine were discussed.

The Central Directorate for Antidrug Services is also a member of the MAOC(N)-Maritime Analysis and Operation Centre (Narcotics)¹⁶, a multilateral body based in Lisbon (Portugal). The Centre was established

¹¹ This is a key instrument for the European support to overall stability in the region, as well as to the protection and consolidation of the rule of law.

¹² The cooperation mainly concerns the FALCONE-BORSELLINO programme (improvement of the capacity to fight transnational organized crime, through the fight against corruption in public works and public tenders, cybercrime and the strengthening of the asset-related fight against organised crime). The other EU-funded programmes are EL PaCTO (police, judicial and penitentiary cooperation), EUROFRONT (border management), COPOLAD III (prevention of and fight against drug trafficking) and EUROsocial+ (support to reforms and social policies)

¹³ On 16 November 2020, IILA signed a technical agreement with the Department of Public Security.

¹⁴ Within the framework of the main initiatives supported by the Department of Public Security.

¹⁵ Since its launch in 2017.

¹⁶ Multilateral cooperation operational platform to combat illicit drug trafficking by sea and air, established by an international agreement signed by the Ministers of the Interior of 7 European countries (France, Ireland, Italy, Spain, the Netherlands, Portugal and the United Kingdom).

through an intergovernmental agreement, signed in Lisbon on 30 September 2007, between France, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and the United Kingdom. The body provides a multilateral cooperation forum aimed at combating the illicit drug trafficking carried out through sea and air routes. Italy is represented at MAOC-N by a DCSA officer, who is member of the MAOC-N Board of Directors, the body defining MAOC-N strategic guidelines - and by a DCSA Liaison Officer, who ensures the exchange of information and coordination of anti-drug operations.

The activities concerning the development of the Southern Route Project continued during the reporting period. This project is aimed at preventing and combating heroin trafficking from the traditional Asian production sites (the so-called 'Golden Crescent'), which, after passing through the ports of neighbouring countries, in particular Iran and Pakistan, reaches the coasts and territories of south-east Africa. This initiative is promoted by DCSA in cooperation with the General Secretariat of Interpol Lyon and in agreement with the Central Directorate of the Criminal Police. It involves the following countries in the African area of interest: Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius, Mozambique, South Africa, Tanzania and Uganda.

A working group, made up of delegates from the countries and Organizations joining the initiative, intends to fully analyze and address the threat, in order to strengthen prevention and countermeasures along the aforementioned route. The initiative is strongly oriented towards mechanisms aimed at preventing trafficking and the phenomena linked to the spread of drugs in the African transit region¹⁷.

From a tactical point of view, the direct and joint involvement of the States crossed by the offshoots of this import route could lead to an overall strengthening of the repressive action and, above all, of the capacity to interdict cargoes by the law enforcement agencies of the countries.

The constant geolocalization of the traffic routes, monitored on the basis of seizure reports, the early identification of new alternative or side routes, the analysis of the operational *modi operandi* of drug imports (body packers or hand luggage, vehicles with cover loads, commercial traffic and postal consignments), consolidated relations with the countries concerned and enhanced investigative and interdiction capabilities towards the drug flows in transit in the same states, can become instruments of crucial importance also for the law enforcement agencies of our country, in order to set up additional measures to protect the national territory.

In concrete terms, during this year, a series of joint initiatives, that should be concluded over the next 10 months, were carried out. Such initiatives are aimed at supporting: the investigative efforts and counteraction activities carried out by the law enforcement agencies of the adhering countries, through specific training activities; the exchange of information and best practices; the technical support and coordination of international police operations undertaken in the respective areas.

In particular, on 26 and 27 October 2022, a meeting was held at the Multiagency College of Advanced Studies for Law Enforcement Officers, attended by high-profile representatives of the Anti-Drug Offices and the Interpol National Central Bureaus of Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Madagascar, Mauritius, South Africa and Mozambique, one delegate from each of the Interpol Regional Bureaus in Harare (Zimbabwe) and Nairobi (Kenya), 2 representatives from the Interpol Lyon Secretariat, as well as an official from the *Trilateral Planning Cell*¹⁸ and qualified officers/officials from the National Central Bureaus of the national law enforcement agencies.

On that occasion, participants highlighted their interest in creating a document of best practices aimed at profiling the couriers and the shipments "at risk" and another document of good practices in which each country could specify the contributions to be made during special operations, in the context of international cooperation. Finally, the delegates of the countries and Interpol Lyon convened on the possibility of sharing detailed information on operations and seizures carried out on the mentioned route, as well as on the relevant *modi operandi*.

¹⁷ In particular, meetings were planned in Italy, both at the start of the initiative and at final debriefing; mentoring activities in the single states with the help of a team of Italian (DCSA) and Interpol experts; study visits to national law enforcement offices or infrastructures and the DPA, and, finally, 'operation days' during which the skills acquired could be tested 'in the field' at the ports and airports of the single states.

¹⁸ Inter-governmental body between Mozambique, South Africa and Tanzania, aimed at promoting the fight against heroin trafficking.

Visit of a delegation of top-level law enforcement officers of some West African Countries - December 2022



It should also be highlighted that, as part of the project, from 28 November to 2 December 2022, two days of mentoring activities and three operational days were held at the commercial-passenger port and at the international airport of the capital of Mauritius, Port Louis, attended by officials of DCSA, together with specialists from the Guardia di Finanza, who worked in synergy with the Mauritius law enforcement agencies. Moreover, in the context of multilateral cooperation, it should be mentioned that, on 12 December 2022, a delegation of top-level law enforcement officers of some West African Countries - Senegal, Gambia and Guinea Bissau - led by the representative of the UNODC Regional Office for Western and Central Africa¹⁹, visited the Central Directorate for Antidrug Services. On that occasion, the initiative “Operation Open Roads III”²⁰, which UNODC is conducting together with the General Secretariat of Interpol Lyon, was illustrated. During this event, DCSA, which can draw on the experience gained in Eastern Africa, was asked to cooperate with UNODC in the mentoring initiatives in favour of the aforementioned countries.

Bilateral activities

The international bilateral cooperation activity undoubtedly represents one of the topics of DCSA anti-drug policy and is developed, essentially, through the following guidelines:

- in-depth examination and evaluation of antidrug aspects in inter-governmental agreements on security and/or international police cooperation, whose strategic management is entrusted to the Office for the Coordination and Planning of the law enforcement agencies, with which the DCSA collaborates closely. During the year under review, numerous assessments²¹, were provided in the framework of bilateral international agreements under negotiation;
- co-participation in the planning, organization²² and implementation of institutional visits and meetings, as well as in the framework of strategic working groups developed at departmental, ministerial and inter-ministerial level²³. During the period under review, DCSA was involved in drawing up 97 “Situation Reports”²⁴, that assisted in defining police cooperation aspects in the drug field. On the other hand, with regard to institutional visits and meetings, several meetings were held with the foreign counterparts from

¹⁹ It is seated in Dakar (Senegal).

²⁰ This project foresees a close cooperation between participating countries and law enforcement agencies through different activities, including, in the operational phase, active surveillance at major border posts and coordinated exercise on controlled deliveries.

²¹ Reference is made to Slovakia, Peru, Croatia, Uzbekistan, Albania, Algeria, Paraguay, Bangladesh, Ivory Coast, Senegal, Azerbaijan, Singapore, Chile, Turkmenistan.

²² By contributing to draw up situation reports on the topic of drug trafficking which falls under its jurisdiction, providing information to the ministerial leadership and the Chief of Police – Director General of Public Security.

²³ DCSA delegates participated in interministerial meetings on security and international cooperation matters, both in presence and online, with Switzerland, The Netherlands, Colombia, Ivory Coast, India, Malta, Romania, Montenegro and China.

²⁴ Afghanistan (2), Albania (2), Algeria, Argentina (2), Australia, Austria (3), Belgium, Brazil (2), Burkina Faso, Canada (2), Chad, Cyprus, Colombia (2), Ivory Coast, Croatia, Ecuador, United Arab Emirates, Eritrea, France (3), Gambia, Georgia, Germany (3), Japan, Jordan, Greece(2), Guinea Bissau, India, Indonesia, Israel (3), Kenya, Libya (2), North Macedonia, Madagascar, Mali, Malta (2), Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico (3), Moldova, Montenegro, Mozambique, Niger, The Netherlands (5), Paraguay, Peru (3), United Kingdom (3), Dominican Republic, Romania, Senegal, Serbia, Slovakia, Spain, South Africa, Sudan, Switzerland (3), Tanzania, Tunisia, Turkey (4), Ukraine, Uganda, USA (3), Zimbabwe.

the following countries, some of which were directly managed by DCSA²⁵ and others by the relevant Offices of the Department of Public Security: **Israel** (Israeli Police Attaché, in Rome and Naples, 2-4 March 2022); **Malta**, at the Central Directorate of Criminal Police (11 May 2022); **Australia** (Deputy Commissioner of the Australian Federal Police, assisted by three collaborators of the same body, 19 May 2022); **the Netherlands** (Minister of Justice and Security of the Netherlands, accompanied by his collaborators and representatives of the Embassy of the Netherlands in Italy, 14 June 2022); **Colombia** (22 June 2022); **Libya** (Libyan delegation led by the Head of the Anti-Drug Office, accompanied by some collaborators, 25 September 2022); **Indonesia** (Study visit to Italy of a delegation of police officers from the Republic of Indonesia, 6 September 2022); **Peru** (Visit to Italy of a delegation from the Peruvian Police Professional Training School, 29 September 2022); **Ecuador** (Officers of the National Police of Ecuador, attending the 47th Course of the Academy of Strategic Studies, 21 October 2022); **Turkey** (Director of the Anti-Drug Department of the Turkish National Police, accompanied by the Deputy Director of the Anti-Drug Department and the Director of the Division for Countering the Laundering of Drug Trafficking Proceeds, 10 November 2022);

- planning and working out of Operational Anti-Drug Memoranda (MOA), which are technical documents defining and streamlining the operational initiatives to be developed with the foreign counterparts. These MOA establish the procedures for the technical-operational activities, such as special operations, direct exchange of information and mutual training of the police operators, as well as gathering of data on demand prevention. In the year under review, the negotiation of the relevant technical agreements with the following counterparts went on: Albania, Austria, Bulgaria, Ivory Coast, France, Georgia, Greece, Israel, Morocco, Moldova, Montenegro, Panama, Romania, Serbia, Spain, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan. In the same period, negotiations were started with the counterparts of the following countries: Ecuador, Gambia, Honduras, Malta, Paraguay, Poland, Senegal. Finally, the Chief of Police - Director General of Public Security - signed the aforementioned technical agreements with the counterparts of North Macedonia - in Rome, on 25 May 2022 - and Croatia - in Dubrovnik, on 25 July 2022.

Visit of a delegation of Turkey - November 2022



²⁵ In general, with antidrug counterparts

With a view to constantly update the network of the Law Enforcement Attachés of the Department of Public Security working at DCSA, according to the constantly changing drug trafficking international scenarios, two new Law Enforcement Attachés offices were set up²⁶ in Nairobi (Kenya) and Pretoria (South Africa), due to the strategic importance of this part of Africa in illicit trafficking, not only of heroin²⁷ but also of methamphetamines. Moreover, such countries are also a crossroads for cocaine flows from South America.

Last but not least, within its policy and operational activities at bilateral level, DCSA developed during the period under review an intense interaction with the **Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA)**²⁸ at the American Embassy in Rome that led to the creation of a DEA logistical work station at DCSA, aimed at further cementing the already excellent relations, allowing more frequent relations and creating an even closer synergy in the exchange of information and in the joint activity against drug trafficking.

COORDINATION AND OPERATIONAL SUPPORT ACTIVITIES

The III Service – Antidrug Operations – is constantly engaged in the information and investigative coordination of antidrug activities conducted by law enforcement agencies in Italy and abroad.

It supports investigations on the territory, through intelligence activities, both at strategic and operational levels, identifying investigative matches between the ongoing anti-drug operations and promoting investigations within and outside the national territory.

It provides its expertise in the process of initiating and integrating investigations, providing the operational units with technical, logistical-operational and financial support to investigations.

Its constant activity of processing and analyzing relevant information is aimed at reporting possible matches in the operations to the investigative and judicial bodies.

In such cases, it plans and convenes info-operational meetings between offices/departments, in order to examine information more in-depth and avoid overlaps at operational level. It provides technical-logistical support to the investigations carried out by local units with resources and technical instruments. It provides information support to the most complex investigations, drawing up operational analysis useful to steer activities and develop investigations.

The III Service is also the point of reference for authorization and operational coordination of the so-called “special operations” (undercover operations and controlled deliveries, including those at international level) and for the requests to board vessels suspected of carrying drugs in international waters.

The undercover investigations have a paramount importance because, through the infiltration of skilled police officers, it is possible to trace back the criminal chain, attacking criminal organizations at a higher level.

Through the **Drug@Online** section, it monitors the web to prevent and counter the illegal drug trade and coordinate law enforcement activities throughout the country.

Furthermore, the III Service promotes anti-drug activities at international level. In case the investigations are to be further studied and developed in cooperation with the law enforcement agencies of other countries, it organizes operational coordination meetings, both in Italy and abroad, in order to initiate fruitful cooperation with foreign counterparts, especially through joint investigations. In this context, the internationalization of investigations, through the network of Law Enforcement Attachés abroad, is one of the elements characterizing the action against large criminal organizations operating at transnational level. The ability to establish relationships and cooperate with the Law enforcement agencies of the States affected by drug trafficking is a fundamental factor for the effectiveness of police action. In the field of international cooperation, the Italian Law Enforcement Agencies, through the Central Directorate for Anti-Drug Services, avail themselves of the

²⁶ Following a proposal developed and shared at departmental and interministerial levels, within the Committee for Strategic Planning and International Police Cooperation (COPSCIP)

²⁷ The so-called “Southern Route” of such drug.

²⁸ Cooperation between the Italian Law enforcement agencies and DEA started in 1951, when the Country Antidrug Office (the DEA forerunner) set up its first international headquarters in Rome. Since its establishment in 1973, DEA has been the main USA antidrug agency, working in close contact with several partners in all continents

support of the counterparts of the main countries of production and transit of narcotic substances, including Colombia, Brazil, Argentina, Ecuador, Chile, Peru, Dominican Republic, Mexico, United States, Spain, Holland, France, Belgium, Morocco, Iran and Turkey.

ANALYSIS ACTIVITIES

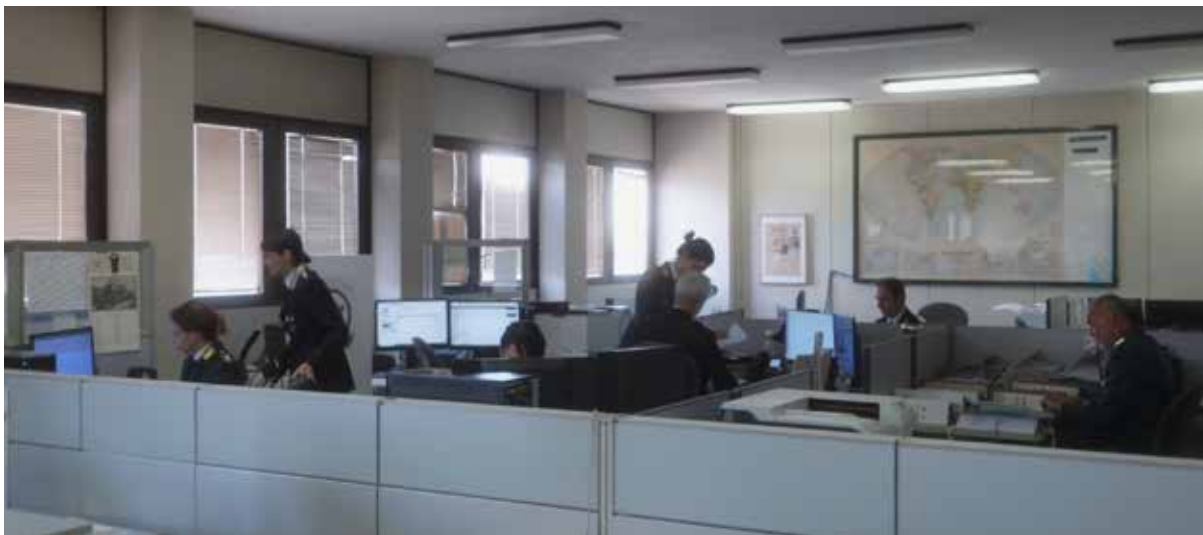
The II Service “Studies, Research, Information and Projects” deals with study activities, operational analysis and anti-drug intelligence, regarded as important tools for preventing and combating drug trafficking, as well as for the collection and storage of relevant data acquired in accordance with the law²⁹.

The II service includes the Anti-drug Directorate Data Entry section (DADE)³⁰, which feeds, with the available information, the database known as the Anti-Drug Directorate Integrated Statistical System (DASIS). This database allows the processing of data and their release, which is done, inter alia, through the DCSA annual report, in the part devoted to the drug phenomenon at the national level.

The intelligence mission, designed to support the fight against criminal phenomena related to drug trafficking, is instead assigned to the analysis section of the II Service, which develops studies, research and reports on the national and regional situation, on internal routes and the criminal organizations most involved in drug trafficking, as well as - at the international level - on production and origin areas, destination markets, concealment methods, borders of entry and external routes used by traffickers.

Furthermore, the same Analysis Section performs a series of tasks in support of DCSA institutional commitments and, in particular, prepares analytical documents in response to the State Central Bodies’ questions, hearings and enquiries. Finally, it draws up situation reports on bilateral and multilateral cooperation, reports for the participation in national and international initiatives and projects, and carries out teaching activities as part of the internal and external training.

Anti-drug Directorate Data Entry section (DADE)



29 Art. 87 of the Consolidating Act on drugs approved by D.P.R. No. 309/90, established that all drug seizures carried out by law enforcement agencies shall be immediately communicated to DCSA.





30 Since 1992 the DADE Section (Direzione Antidroga Data Entry) has been a member of SISTAN (i.e. the National Statistical System under the authority of ISTAT and, pursuant to Legislative Decree No. 322 of 6.9.1989, responsible for producing official statistical information).

TRAINING ACTIVITIES

Also in 2022 DCSA promoted courses and training initiatives for qualification and updating in anti-drug matters for the officers of the law enforcement agencies, both at national and international level, thus creating a virtuous circle distributing and sharing skills and know-how among national and foreign officers. Such initiatives contribute to creating a real networking between the various specialists, which goes beyond the single course, fostering further contacts between participants.

In 2022, the Central Directorate for Anti-Drug Services provided **49** training days, which were attended by **487** participants belonging to national and foreign law enforcement agencies, as well as national and international governmental agencies.

In particular, there were **260** participants from national law enforcement agencies and **226** officers from foreign law enforcement agencies of **26** different countries as well as from one International Agency:

			
73	70	68	49

								
ARGENTINA 20	BOSNIA/HERZEGOVINA 7	BRAZIL 47	CANADA 18	CARICC 1	CHINA 7	COLOMBIA 13	EL SALVADOR 1	HONDURAS 1
								
HONG KONG 1	KAZAKHSTAN 1	KENYA 2	NORTH MACEDONIA 14	MOROCCO 8	MEXICO 12	PANAMA 10	POLAND 1	PERU 21
								
PORTUGAL 1	DOMINICAN REP. 6	SENEGAL 1	SERBIA 10	SPAIN 4	TAJKISTAN 2	TURKEY 4	URUGUAY 5	UZBEKISTAN 8

In particular, the following residential or distance learning activities have been undertaken:

- training Course on the Interpol Database “RELIEF”, from 27 to 28 January 2022, attended by 13 officers of the Italian law enforcement agencies, involved in the fight against the illicit trafficking in narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances;
- 11th Course “Drug on line”, organized from 21 to 24 March 2022, attended by 69 officers of the Italian law enforcement agencies;
- 6th Course “Clandestine Laboratories and New Psychoactive Substances”, from 16 to 20 May 2022, attended by 45 officers of the Italian law enforcement agencies and 176 officers of foreign counterparts, all working in the field of the fight against illicit trafficking in narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances;
- 3rd Course “Synthetic Drugs and NPS - Project HERMES”, which involved 16 officers of the National law enforcement agencies from 14 to 17 June 2022;
- 6th Course “Law Enforcement Attachés” (DCSA module), which took place from 7 to 13 July 2022, for 11 Officials and Officers of the Italian law enforcement agencies to be posted to National Diplomatic Missions abroad, for international police cooperation purposes;

- 23rd Course “Heads of Specialized Anti-Drug Units”, which was attended, from 26 to 30 September 2022, by 22 Officers and Officials of the National law enforcement agencies responsible for specialized anti-drug operational units;
- 31st Anti-Drugs Course for “Undercover Agents”, from 17 to 28 October 2022, attended by 38 non-commissioned officers of the law enforcement agencies;
- 13th Seminar for “Undercover Agents”, from 28 to 29 November 2022, attended by 46 non-commissioned officers of the National law enforcement agencies, who already attended one of the previous editions of the Anti-Drug Course for “Undercover Agents”;
- 5th Workshop “The fight against drug trafficking”, from 12 to 16 December 2022, for 19 Officials and Officers of foreign law enforcement agencies.

The training modules are aimed at fostering experience-based training approach and envisage the participation of experts, academics and qualified operators of national and foreign law enforcement agencies, as well as the sharing of the expertise and know-how acquired.

In the framework of the training programmes of all national law enforcement agencies, numerous teaching collaborations were provided by qualified DCSA Officials and Officers, on issues of institutional interest as well as on specific topics related to the fight against drug trafficking, including those suggested by operational units.

Furthermore, it is important to highlight that thanks to the experience gained over the years in the training sector and its ability to implement initiatives acknowledged as very effective and efficient by a performance evaluation system, DCSA continues to be involved by various national and international stakeholders, including UNODC³¹, in the implementation of mentoring and training activities in general. Within the activities aimed at improving the expertise of the law enforcement agencies of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia and North Macedonia, the UNODC South-Eastern Europe Regional Coordinator asked DCSA specialists to participate³², in 2022 in the workshop “Illicit production and trafficking of synthetic drugs”, held in Belgrade from 9 to 13 May 2022, which was attended by 31 Officers/Officials from the aforementioned States.

TECHNOLOGICAL AND LOGISTICAL SUPPORT TO JUDICIAL POLICE INVESTIGATIONS

In its activity aimed at coordinating the Police Offices involved in combating drug trafficking, DCSA is committed to ensuring that its operational and technical specialists fulfill the requests by the investigators of the local units to obtain technical equipment for telecommunication, audio, video and GPS surveillance as well as the rental of cars.

DCSA is constantly engaged in updating and upgrading all the equipment at its disposal, and in ensuring that its specialists update their skills and knowledge in the field of ‘investigative technology’. In 2022, this complex operational module supported 80 operations through 116 actions throughout Italy.

LEGISLATION ACTIVITY

Moreover, DCSA is called upon to provide specific legal opinions on anti-drugs matters in response to the requests from the various Department’s offices.

In 2022, it provided opinions on 22 draft laws/bills under consideration by the national Parliament, and also provided its contribution to 4 regional bills and 10 cases in which the Ministry of the Interior joined criminal proceedings for drugs as a civil party.

³¹ Also due to the excellent result achieved by the AIRCOP course, organized by UNODC in Rome from 29 November to 3 December 2021, with the contribution of teachers from DCSA.

³² With the relevant contribution of an officer of the Carabinieri RACIS expert in chemistry.

In the same period, DCSA provided its expert opinion on several Protocols of Understanding signed at local and national level with the aim of preventing and combating the consumption, dissemination and supply of drugs, including online.

Furthermore, it provided answer to parliamentary inspection acts, such as questions (including those with immediate answers - also known as question time) enquiries and motions. In this regard, in the year under review, answers were provided to 12 policy and control documents.

Additional technical documents were drawn up in the framework of the Hearing of the Minister of the Interior before the Constitutional Affairs Commission of the Chamber of Deputies, concerning the policy guidelines of the Ministry in reference.

DCSA activities also include legal advice to national, EU and international bodies. At the same time, adequate information support is provided to Foreign Liaison Officers in Italy in the field of narcotics and to Law Enforcement Attachés posted in different continents.

In particular, after the publication of the Court of Cassation's United Sections ruling No. 12348/2020 of 19 December 2019, filed on 16 April 2020, legal advice was provided to the request for clarifications made by the INCB (i.e. the International Narcotics Control Board) on the sanctions regime in force in Italy for certain conducts related to cannabis cultivation.

The Central Directorate also participated in meetings with the Customs and Monopolies Agency relating to controls on 'cannabis shops' and in the Inter-Ministerial Conference of Services, for the extension of national production of cannabis-based medicines of plant origin.

ACTIVITIES ON NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL PROJECTS

By Ministerial Decree of 6 February 2020, regulating the internal organization of the Department of Public Security, the II Service of the DCSA took on the denomination "Studies, Research, Information and Projects".

Its 1st Division has been assigned the tasks of planning, implementing and managing project initiatives to be financed by national, EU and international funds.

In this context, initiatives for the implementation of the 'HERMES' Project continued to be carried out. The project is aimed at combating the threat of the drug spreading, with particular reference to synthetic drugs and NPS.

This activity has several objectives:

- monitoring and controlling postal consignments and parcels delivered by private couriers;
- enhancing the professional training of police staff in this specific sector;
- increasing the alerts sent to the National Early Warning System (SNAP) for health protection.

In this regard, in 2022, the Guardia di Finanza, the State Police and the Carabinieri carried out targeted inspections in some mail handling centers. Such checks led to the seizure of more than 700 parcels - including postal shipments and courier parcels - containing: methamphetamine, synthetic cannabinoids, ketamine, ecstasy, GHB and other substances.

Police activity is supported by portable equipment, such as a mass spectrometer with Raman technology, purchased as part of the project, which can analyze an unknown substance (pills, liquids and powders) in a few seconds with an extremely high degree of reliability.

From 14 to 17 June 2022, the 3rd Course "Synthetic Drugs and New Psychoactive Substances - characteristics and classification, relevant legislation and counteraction methods" was held at the headquarters of the Central Directorate for Anti-Drug Services. Officials and Officers of the State Police, the Carabinieri, the Guardia di Finanza and the Penitentiary Police took part in the course; in addition, a number of one-day seminars were held at the training institutes of the law enforcement agencies, which were attended by approximately 2,000 police officers of different ranks.

In 2022, 13 alerts were sent to the National Early Warning System, involving a total of 11 New Psychoactive Substances, 4 traditional drugs and methylphenidate (1 alert).

The 11 NPSs belonged to the synthetic cathinones (No.4), synthetic cannabinoids (No.2) phenethylamines (No.2), indolalkylamines (No.1), arylalkylamines (No.1) and others (No.1). As to the two reports concerning synthetic cannabinoids, it was the first detection in Italy.

The ICARUS Project, initially launched on 13 February 2019 for a three-year period, but extended until 13 February 2024, originates from the assumption that the results achieved by the Department for Anti-Drug Policies and the Central Directorate for Anti-Drug Services can be exponentially increased in operational contexts within their common institutional tasks.

The project initiatives, aimed at an overall enhancement of anti-drug system and policies, are divided into three specific areas:

- information support;
- prevention activities in favour of the youth population;
- knowledge-sharing initiatives and cooperation activities in the regulatory, research and training fields.

With regard to the above-mentioned first area, in the course of 2022, the analysis of the IT needs related to the information duties of the project was completed.

DCSA is taking care of the migration of data from the computerized system for recording and managing documents, called “Giada”, currently in use, to another dedicated programme, already in use at the Department of Public Security (MipgWeb).

In December 2022, the operational test phase of the new programme S.I.D.A.P. (*Sistema Integrato Direzione Antidroga Precursori*) was concluded with the release of a new version. Such system operates on the G.A.Do.P. archive (*Gestione Archivio Documentale Precursori*), controlling lawful precursors transactions between operating companies (Article 70, paragraph 15, of Presidential Decree 309/1990).

Once completed, this improved version will allow a greater control of the entered information and make it possible to perform analytical statistics and foresee the risk of diversion better than the previous version.

With regard to the development of new skills in Digital Forensics and investigations on the web, a specific course was organized with qualified lecturers from the University of Foggia under the title “Digital Investigation and Intelligence”, which was completed on 11 October 2022 with a final examination.

In 2022, within the second subject area of the project, the study of initiatives to prevent drug use among lower and upper secondary school students was carried out. It aimed to provide young people and their teachers with reliable information on the dangers of drugs and the consequences of their use, thus spreading the culture of legality among young people.

In particular, mention must be made of the success of the feasibility study for the “Hugs not Drugs” app, launched in collaboration with the Italian Parents Movement (MOIGE).

Another project implemented by DCSA within the ICARUS Project in agreement with the Secretariat of Interpol Lyon was launched with some African countries (Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius, Mozambique, Somalia, South Africa, Tanzania and Uganda). Such project is aimed at improving the information exchange and the fight against heroin trafficking along the so-called ‘Southern Route’, where our country is one of the points of arrival in Europe of the heroin passing through the mentioned African countries.

The initiative is strongly oriented towards prevention mechanisms concerning trafficking and drug-related phenomena in certain transit regions.

From a tactical perspective, the direct and joint involvement of the States crossed by the ramifications of the new importation route of the heroin coming from the traditional Asian producing countries could

lead to an overall strengthening of counteraction and, above all, of the capacity of law enforcement systems in the countries affected by this phenomenon to intercept the loads. More specifically, a first high-level meeting³³ was held in presence and, in the executive phase of the aforementioned project, specific activities were carried out at the commercial-passenger port and at the international airport of the Mauritius capital, Port Louis³⁴.

With regard to the third subject area of the project, consisting in consulting activities for the DPA, organization of domestic regulatory initiatives and evaluation of the legislative procedures and proposals coming from the EU institutions, the DCSA carried out an in-depth analysis of some relevant topics, answering parliamentary questions and queries.

The “Crystal Palace” Project is another major initiative carried out within the Internal Security Fund - Empact 2022+. It is aimed at coordinating, at the international level, the fight against the production and trafficking in synthetic drugs by identifying and dismantling organized crime groups and facilitators involved in this phenomenon.

The trade in synthetic drugs in the EU is unique, if compared to other substances, since the production of these drugs takes place, in most cases, within the EU borders, and such drugs are then distributed on the European and global markets. The project is focused on strengthening the capacity to implement EU regulations in different areas, including operational activities, exchange of experience and knowledge, development of operational skills and strategic cooperation.

The project will support actions (Operational Actions) in the following areas:

- trafficking in chemicals (precursors) used for the production of synthetic drugs and new psychoactive substances (NPS) in the European Union;
- production of and trafficking in methamphetamines (with a special focus on the role of Mexican/South American criminal networks);
- criminal use of the dark web and encrypted communications;
- mislabeling (false labeling of chemicals);
- prevention campaigns and training of trainers in order to dismantle clandestine laboratories.

The project foresees the purchase of equipment and software to support new and ongoing investigations. Mention must also be made of the “White Snow” Project: in 2021, EPIC MOIA (European Project Implementation Centre of the Ministry of the Interior and Administration of Poland) as Applicant, together with the Central Directorate for Anti-Drug Services and the Polish Police Central Bureau of Investigation Organized Drug Crime Department (PCBI) as co-Applicants obtained funding for the above-mentioned project from the EU. Besides Poland and Italy participants (Consortium) are: Sweden, Spain, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Colombia and Interpol.

The project aims to improve law enforcement response to organized crime in the field of drug trafficking, with a particular focus on cocaine and synthetic drugs. The overall objective of the project is to support the strengthening of EU law enforcement agencies in the area of active exchange of experience, knowledge and intelligence, in particular regarding cocaine and synthetic drugs.

The duration of the Project is 24 months (15/10/2021 - 15/10/2023); the budget is € 739,576.51 (90% to be borne by the EU; 10% by Poland and Italy).

The most important events of the “White Snow” Project in 2022 are summarized below:

- 28 March/1 April 2022 - Legionowo (Poland) – Course on Dismantling of Clandestine Laboratories;
- 11/12 May 2022 - Krakow (Poland) - 1st High Level Meeting;
- 7/8 June 2022 - Krakow - 1st Steering Committee Meeting;

³³ The meeting was held at the Multiagency College of Advanced Studies for Law Enforcement Officials ((Rome, 26-27 October), with the participation of high-profile representatives from the Antidrug Agencies and the Interpol National Central Bureaus of Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Madagascar, Mauritius, South Africa and Mozambique, one delegate from each of the Interpol Regional Bureaus in Harare (Zimbabwe) and Nairobi (Kenya), two representatives from the Interpol Lyon Secretariat, as well as one official from the Trilateral Planning Cell and qualified officers/officials from the National Central Bureaus of the national law enforcement agency.

³⁴ From 28 November to 2 December 2022.

- 22/25 August 2022 - Warsaw - 1st Crypto Currency Course;
- 19/24 September 2022 - Rome/Gioia Tauro - Training Course on Cocaine Smuggling;
- 11/12 October 2022 - Brussels - Interim Conference.



Finally, it is worth mentioning the role played in 2022 by the Central Directorate for Antidrug Services in EMPACT (European Multidisciplinary Platform Against Criminal Threats), i.e., the key instrument of the European Union to identify, define and tackle the main threats posed by organized and international crime.

Italy participates as a leader, together with Poland as a driver, in the project called OA 2.4 MONITOR, aimed at tackling the dangerous phenomenon of NPS trafficking and distribution. The project is focused on:

- detecting and mapping new substances (both synthetic and natural);
- carrying out seizures and detecting underground laboratories;
- tracing international distribution routes and modes/channels, focusing the attention on the web;
- conducting coordinated actions and investigations;
- conducting chemical analyses and monitoring damage to human health;
- collecting/exchanging information and good practices with other LEAs;
- involving all relevant actors and institutions (for example, in updating the database/list of substances of the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction), thus developing a common approach, raising public awareness and encouraging the necessary steps to harmonize national legislations.

In 2023, the Central Directorate for Antidrug Services, together with the Carabinieri Health Protection Command, will be the Action Leader in the Operational Action Plan 2.4 NPS (Synthetic Drugs-NPS priority), reconfirming Italy's important role in this area.

ACTIVITIES OF THE GENERAL PLANNING AND COORDINATION OFFICE

Within DCSA, the General Planning and Coordination Office is in charge of cooperation and liaison with the relevant Offices of the Department of Public Security and of the other Departments of the Ministry of the Interior in establishing common guidelines in the fight against drugs and the prevention of drug addiction.

The functions assigned to this Office include supporting the Director General in defining the strategic (Operational Objectives), management (Management Objectives) planning and programming processes.

It is also responsible for liaising with the Department for Anti-Drug Policies of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, with the aim of planning prevention initiatives and preparing programmes and projects of common interest.

In this context, the office participated also in 2022 in various initiatives aimed at implementing forms of 'integrated' or 'participatory' prevention, in order to create and strengthen synergies between the law enforcement agencies, the bodies and the various institutional actors involved, in different capacities, in the fight against the diffusion of narcotic substances among the youth population.

These projects developed events involving about 400 students aimed at informing and raising awareness of the harms caused by drug use among students in lower and upper secondary schools and encouraging protection factors. Training initiatives were also organized for key educational figures (schools on the one hand and families on the other).

As part of the collaboration with the aforementioned Department for Anti-Drug Policies, in 2022, DCSA continued to actively participate in the implementation of the multiannual project “Hugs not Drugs”, in collaboration with MOIGE - *Movimento Italiano Genitori* (Italian Parents Movement). At the end of 2022, this activity had involved **243** schools, equally distributed in **18** regions, **85** provinces and **188** cities, selected on the basis of the analysis of the most “at risk” contexts, as well as of the requests made by individual schools. In particular, within this initiative **21** open days were scheduled, with **4** meetings held in Alessandria, Genoa, Naples and Brindisi. Such meetings were attended by the Minister for Youth Policies, responsible for Antidrug Policies, the Head of the Antidrug Policies Department, the Director of DCSA, the President of MOIGE and a “Testimonial”.

In the framework of the aforementioned project, further **17** meetings with young students were held, including online, with the help of an expert psychologist, in order to reflect on the relevant aspects related to drug abuse, as well as the prevention of drug use.

On the whole, the project reached about **4,000** students through in-presence and online learning activities, and more than **13,200** young people and **26,400** parents, if we consider the awareness-raising work on the issue carried out through the distribution of *ad hoc* information kits³⁵.

School open days



THE DOCUMENTARY HERITAGE

DCSA's tasks include research, analysis and study of documents of various types produced by specialized bodies, including international ones, involved in the fight against illicit drug trafficking and, more generally, drug addictions. The documents thus acquired are managed and stored by the Documentation Centre within the II Service and shared with the other offices of the Directorate.

The Documentation Centre, within the II Service, is responsible for the collection of these information assets and for the internal circulation of DCSA publications and documentary material on the drug phenomenon.

The Centre is involved in the management and constant updating of the website <https://antidroga.interno.gov>.

³⁵ These data have been provided by MOIGE Onlus.

it/, created with the aim of disseminating and promoting the DCSA institutional activities. This site provides information on the various activities carried out by DCSA at national and international levels, and the results achieved in the fight against drug trafficking in synergy with the various law enforcement agencies working on our territory. In addition, users have access to a wide range of information on the different drugs on the market, with detailed information on their specific characteristics and health effects.

Lastly, the Documentation Centre fulfills requests for bibliographical assistance in the specific field, made by the academic and research world and guarantees the consultation of the volumes stored in the well-stocked DCSA library.

ACTIVITIES CONCERNING THE PARTICIPATION IN THE NATIONAL EARLY WARNING SYSTEM AND OTHER PLATFORMS FOR PRECURSOR CONTROL

In 2009 the Department for Anti-Drug Policies (DPA) of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers set up the National Drug Early Warning and Rapid Response System (SNAP), with the aim of early identifying phenomena potentially dangerous to public health, connected to the emergence of NPS on the market.

The abuse of New Psychoactive Substances (NPS) has caused serious repercussions on society and public health. In Italy this phenomenon appeared in the 1990s. The Italian legislation is aimed, in line with European legislation, at countering the spread of NPSs in our country through various strategies. This activity has been developed and strengthened based on health and social needs arising from the illegal production of and international trafficking in synthetic psychostimulant and/or hallucinogenic synthetic substances, whose effects are unknown from a toxicological point of view and not under legal control. SNAP was set up with the aim of providing up-to-date information on all new drugs, potentially dangerous to public health circulating on the territory (at national, European and international levels) to the network of centres cooperating with it. SNAP also informs about new consumption methods for scheduled drugs; on the presence of adulterants, dangerous additives or other psychoactive or pharmacologically active substances combined with psychotropic substances - often hidden in various types of new products on sale on the web or in so-called “smart-shops” - or high concentrations of active ingredients of scheduled substances. SNAP is part of a network including all EU Member States, coordinated by the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction³⁶, based in Lisbon (Portugal).

Currently, the SNAP, led by DPA, consists of six Operational Units working in specific areas:

- the National Centre for Addiction and Doping of the Italian National Institute of Health – in charge of the national coordination and operational management;
- the Central Directorate for Anti-Drug Services – in charge of the coordination of the Law enforcement agencies in the antidrug sector;
- Forensic Toxicology Research Unit of Anatomical, Histological, Medico-Legal and Locomotor Apparatus Sciences of La Sapienza University of Rome;
- Poison Control Centre, Maugeri Scientific Clinical Institutes of Pavia;
- Department of Biomedical Sciences and Public Health, Marche Polytechnic University;
- Regional Quality Control Laboratories of the Department for Health Activities and Epidemiological Observatory of the Department of Health of Sicily.

In 2022, on the basis of seizures made during anti-drug activities by the law enforcement agencies and the Customs and Monopolies Agency, 29 NPS were detected for the first time on the national territory and

³⁶ The EMCDDA (European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction) provides the EU and its Member States with factual, objective, reliable and comparable information at European level on drugs and drug addiction and their consequences, with the aim of informing policy-making and guiding action to tackle the drug problem. https://european-union.europa.eu/institutions-law-budget/institutions-and-bodies/institutions-and-bodies-profiles/emcdda_it.

were reported by the SNAP to the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction. Such NPS belonged to synthetic cannabinoids (8), synthetic cathinones (5), synthetic opioids (3), indolalkylamines (3), arylcyclohexylamines (2), phenethylamines (2), benzodiazepines (1), arylalkylamines (1), piperidines (1), aminoidanes (1) and other types (2). In addition, the alerts enabled SNAP to process and transmit to the collaborating centres 16 seizure reports also containing information on seizures of traditional substances of abuse of particular importance (e.g., GBL), with four Level 1 alerts and three Level 3 alerts related to public health risk communications.

Focus

NEW PSYCHOACTIVE SUBSTANCES (NPS)

The illicit market of New Psychoactive Substances is an emerging worldwide phenomenon, fostered by globalization and by the new opportunities offered by the use of virtual space, such as, for example, the removal of trade borders, as well as the easy and anonymous communications and economic transactions.

In order to explain what a New Psychoactive Substance is, it is necessary to separate the scientific aspect - relating to the effects determined on the human body by its active ingredients - from the legal aspect, which is focused on counteracting its spread through appropriate public health protection laws.

In this perspective, NPS pose a serious threat, not only because they are likely to generate huge profits for transnational crime, but also because their pharmacological and toxicological characteristics make them particularly insidious, exposing consumers to a high risk of intoxication. We should consider that, in case users - mostly unaware of what they have actually been using - need emergency treatment, they risk not receiving adequate treatment. Indeed, it should be considered that, unlike traditional drugs of abuse, there is very limited information on their effects, toxicity and long-term clinical effects, and that laboratory analysis of biological fluids, aimed at identifying the active ingredients contained in the specific substance is particularly complex. With reference to the social aspect, their presence in the online marketplace - an easy accessible virtual place - is an additional risk for the youth population.

In legal terms, the definition of New Psychoactive Substance at European level is outlined in Article 1 of Council Framework Decision 2004/757/JHA of the Council of October 25, 2004, as amended by Directive (EU) 2017/2103 of the European Parliament and of the Council of November 15, 2017: "a substance in pure form or in a preparation that is not covered by the 1961 United Nations Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, as amended by the 1972 Protocol, or by the 1971 United Nations Convention on Psychotropic Substances but may pose health or social risks similar to those posed by the substances covered by those Conventions". NPS are not controlled under international drug conventions; their legal status differs, sometimes widely, from nation to nation.

In order to cope with a complex and evolving threat such as that of NPS, characterized by the continuous updating of new molecules, individual countries have extended or adapted their national drug laws so that they can include NPS by using a generic approach, based on the chemical similarity of a substance to an already banned and controlled narcotic drug.

Italy - where the legislation on narcotic and psychoactive substances is based on tables - has adopted the

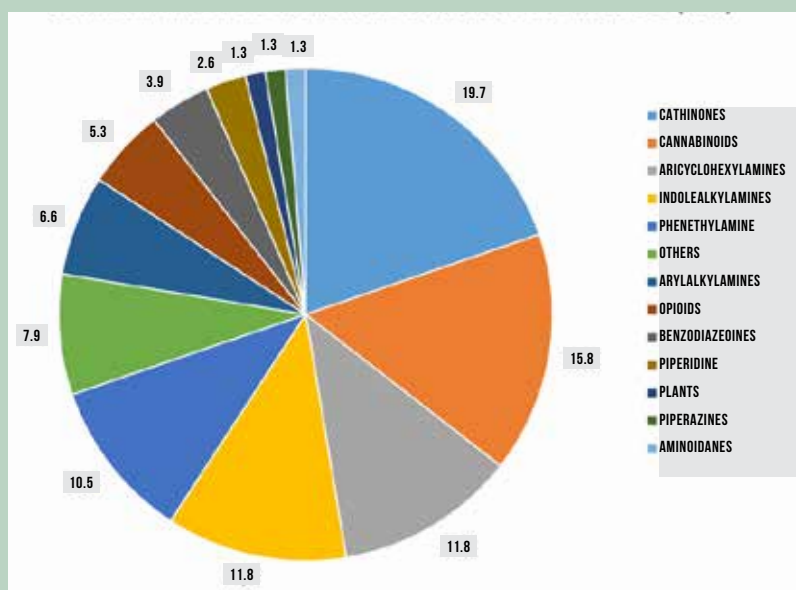


NPS

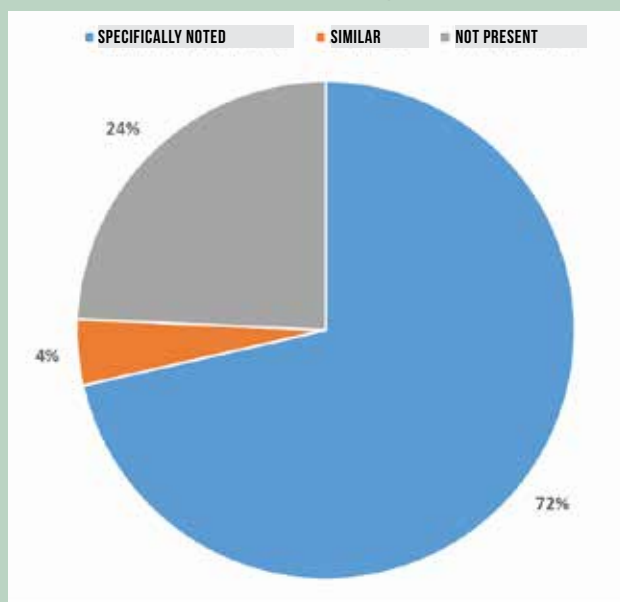
definition of structure analogue. Once a class of molecules has been included in the table, it is possible to consider banned any other substance having similar chemical characteristics.

Considering the statistical data, during 2022 no.76 NPS were identified on the national territory, mainly belonging to the class of synthetic cathinones (19.7%) and synthetic cannabinoids (15.8%), of which about 92% (no.70) were identified after being detected and seized by the law enforcement Agencies. The remaining 8% was reported by the Centers collaborating with the National Early Warning System¹ (Poison Control Centers, Forensic Toxicology Units, Universities, etc.).

NPS classes identified in Italy in 2022 (in %)



Presence in Tables DPR 309/90 at the time of reporting



The figure relating to 2022 showed an increase of 24% compared to 2020 and 7% as compared to the results achieved in 2021.

In this context, in 2022, the Ministry of Health issued 7 decrees to include 39 new psychoactive substances in Table I and another 4 in Table IV of the aforementioned Presidential Decree No. 309 of 1990.

Furthermore, the reports sent to the EMCDDA², by the National Early Warning System, regarding the first identification in our country of 29 NPS, are also based on the activities of the law enforcement agencies. These new NPS belong to the following classes:

synthetic cannabinoids (no.8), synthetic cathinones (no.5), synthetic opioids (no.3), indolalkylamines (no.3), arylcyclohexylamines (no.2), phenethylamines (no.2), benzodiazepines (no.1), arylalkylamines (no.1), piperidines (no.1), aminoidanes (no.1) and others (no.2). 5 of these molecules were identified within the Hermes project³.

On the basis of the aforementioned reports, the National Early Warning System - in which the DCSA participates as an operational unit coordinating law enforcement agencies in the drug supply reduction sector - has prepared and forwarded to the collaborating centers No. 18 documents, 16 of which are information regarding seizures made on the national territory and 2 are alerts⁴.

Recent investigations by the law enforcement

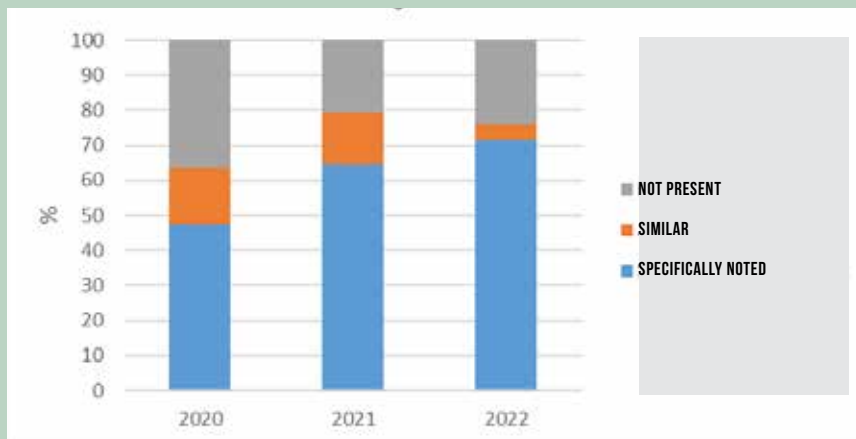
¹ In accordance with the relevant European provisions, the Department of Anti-Drug Policies of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers set up the National Early Warning System (SNAP) and Rapid Response for Drugs - National Early Warning System (NEWS) in our country at the end of 2008. The System was created with the aim, on the one hand, of early detection of potentially dangerous phenomena for public health related to the emergence of new substances and new modes of consumption, and on the other hand, of activating pre-alert or alert reports that promptly involve the structures entrusted with health protection and responsible for the implementation of measures in response to emergencies (www.politicheantidroga.gov.it).

² European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction based in Lisbon, Portugal.

³ These are molecules belonging to the class of synthetic cannabinoids (No. 3), phenethylamines (No. 1) and indolalkylamines (No. 1). For more details related to the Hermes project see p. 32.

⁴ One concerned increased seizures of the cannabinoid hexahydrocannabinol and the other concerned the identification of the synthetic opioid etonitazepine in material seized following a case of death.

Presence in Tables DPR 309/90 at the time of reporting



agencies revealed that said substances come both from the EU and overseas countries. Behind the business of such an illicit market there are organizations carrying out illegal production using legal marketing methods. In particular, the number of people working in an illegal production site varies according to its size, with each person performing a

different task: some are in charge of precursors supply; some are often improvised chemists with basic notions of drug synthesis processes; some are in charge of shipping the drugs, using both traditional commercial channels and new technologies.

Therefore, law enforcement activities require constant international information exchange. In this specific area, the DCSA, among other things, actively participates in the EMPACT platform⁵ - priority synthetic drugs and New Psychoactive Substances - and is the focal point for the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB.) of the United Nations. In this regard, the DCSA constantly feeds the IONICS⁶, platform dedicated to receiving/transmitting information on seizures and operations conducted by national law enforcement agencies in the New Psychoactive Substances area. In 2022 the DCSA entered 125 incidents into the system.

Focus

Controlled Chemicals - Drug Precursors

Activities carried out in the framework of national and international projects

In the framework of the national project "Hermes" - supported with funds from the Department of Anti-Drug Policies of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers - the Precursors Section assisted in carrying out information and training activities on synthetic drugs and their manufacture in clandestine laboratories by using drug precursors. In particular, the above mentioned Section organized educational seminars addressed to the training institutes of the national law enforcement Agencies: the Carabinieri Non-commissioned Officers' School and Officers' School (in Florence and Rome, March 22 and April 20, 2022, respectively); and the Guardia di Finanza Academy and Non-commissioned Officers' School (in Bergamo and L'Aquila, April 28 and April 5, 2022, respectively).

In addition, as part of the courses held at the DCSA headquarters, the Precursors Section provided a specific teaching session during the 3rd Synthetic Drugs & New Psychoactive Substances Course, funded by the aforementioned Project (Rome, June 15, 2022).

During 2022, as part of the national project "Icarus" - also financed with funds allocated by the Department of Anti-Drug Policies- the Precursors Section completed the procedures to renew its IT analysis system.

In particular, in December 2022, the "operational test" phase of the new S.I.D.A.P. (Sistema Integrato Direzione Antidroga Precursori) program - which operates on the G.A.Do.P. (Gestione Archivio Documentale Precursori)

⁵ EMPACT (European Multidisciplinary Platform Against Criminal Threats) is a security initiative promoted by EU member states to counter threats posed by international crime on: organized crime, cyber attacks, human trafficking, child sexual exploitation, migrant smuggling, drug trafficking, EU fraud, economic and financial crimes, property crimes, environmental crime, and firearms trafficking. It is a multidisciplinary cooperation platform of member states, supported by all EU institutions, bodies and agencies (such as Europol, Frontex, Eurojust, CEPOL, OLAF, EU-LISA, EFCA and others). Third countries, international organizations and other public and private partners are also associated (https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies/law-enforcement-cooperation/operational-cooperation/empact-fighting-crime-together_en).

⁶ International Operation on NPS Incident Communication System.

archive, used for the control of lawful transactions of precursors between operating firms (under article 70 paragraph 15 of Presidential Decree No. 309 of 1990)- was completed with the release of a new version. Once the implementation is completed with data the precursors' control system will provide more performing statistics and risk analyses.

The Section actively participated in the management of the activities related to the "White Snow" project - carried out in partnership with Poland with funds from the European Commission (ISF Internal Security Fund) - and lectures in the specific area, particularly in the training course on combating cocaine trafficking, where held in Rome from September 19 to 23.

Activities carried out in the framework of precursors control platforms

INCB (International Narcotics Control Board), a Vienna -based UN Office, is one of the key players in the global strategy against drugs and precursors trafficking monitoring the compliance with the 1988 Vienna Convention. Within this framework, INCB manages several IT projects/platforms:

- PRISM, set up in 2003, which monitors legal chemicals that can be used as precursors of ATS (Amphetamine-type stimulants);
- COHESION, launched in 2006, which monitors legal chemicals that can be used as precursors of heroin and cocaine;
- GRIDS, (Global Rapid Interdiction of Dangerous Substances), which aims to measurably reduce the trafficking in dangerous substances globally, with a focus on emerging new psychoactive substances (NPS), including non-medical synthetic opioids as well as relevant chemicals and equipment, to reduce supply in the markets;
- PEN-Online (Pre-Export Notification), a key tool to prevent diversion of licitly traded precursors among the Convention's signatory countries. Up to November 1, 2022 - after Zambia joined the system (June 2022) - 117 States and Territories formally require pre-export notification under Article 12 sub. 10 (a) of the 1988 Convention, and 168 States or Territories already joined the UN system, while the other 29 (13 in Africa, 10 in Oceania, 4 in Europe, and 2 in Asia) are constantly encouraged to join it. Every month approximately 2,900 notifications are sent worldwide through the PEN online system;
- PEN-Online Light (Pre-Export Notification Light), launched to respond to the emergency generated by non-scheduled chemicals and designer precursors, and assist Governments in addressing the issue of chemicals that are not under international control but may be controlled nationally in one or more countries. INCB launched the PEN-Online Light system in October 2022. Analogous to the PEN-Online system, this is a tool that exporting governments can use to notify importing countries, on a voluntary basis, about planned shipments of non scheduled chemicals that can be used for illegal drug production;
- PICS (Precursors Incident Communication System), launched to enable and promote information sharing among countries on precursors diversions and seizures. In 2022, over 300 international police and customs agencies were participating in the system, with about 600 registered users from 124 adhering countries. From 2012 to October 2022, participating countries communicated more than 3,700 incident, with over 250 entries made in the last year (Nov. 1, 2021-22)⁷.

The tools listed above provide a global overview of licit trade and illicit events involving precursors, which are extremely useful to develop targeted law enforcement strategies and analyses.

In this particular sector, under the provisions of the Consolidated Act on Narcotic Drugs (Presidential Decree No. 309/90), the Central Directorate for Antidrug Services has the following tasks:

- to control (Article 70), based on the obligation for commercial operators to communicate all transactions involving mentioned substances, including those from and towards foreign countries;
- to coordinate (Article 97 and Article 9 of the Law No. 146 of 16 March, 2006) the activities of the law enforcement agencies carrying out investigations involving special operations (undercover operations and controlled deliveries), also in the drug precursors area.

⁷ "Precursors and chemicals frequently used in the illicit manufacture of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances 2022" published by UN-INCB).

As to its control functions, DCSA cooperates with the Ministry of Health and the Customs and Monopoly Agency, through its computerized archive of precursors transactions G.A.Do.P. (*Gestione Archivio Documentale Precursori* – Management of the Precursors Documentary Archive) by coordinating law enforcement Units that carry out inspections at the firms involved.

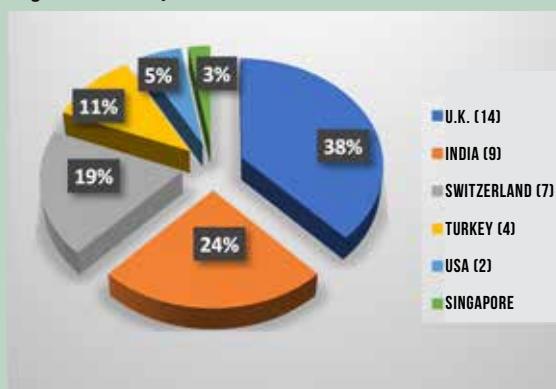
At international level, DCSA maintains contacts with foreign countries and its representatives participate in the works of the European Commission, the European Council and other European Bodies, such as the Council of Europe and the United Nations; furthermore it is the national focal point for the mentioned projects and IT platforms.

As regards PEN (Pre-Export Notification) Online, Article 12 paragraphs 10 and 11 of the “United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances,” adopted by the UN Conference at its 6th Plenary Session in Vienna (AT) on December 20, 1988, provides that the signatory states are obliged to communicate, prior to the export of drug precursors, information about the transaction and the firms involved, so that this information is provided by the competent Authorities of the country of departure to those of the country of destination. The same provision is contained in EU Council Regulation, No. 111/2005 of December 22, 2004 laying down: “rules for the monitoring of trade between the European Community and third countries in drug precursors”. In Article 11 (pre-export notification) the described obligations imposed by the 1988 UN Convention are recalled. Italian legislation on this topic, summarized in Article 70 of Presidential Decree no. 309 of 1990, provides that “exports of substances listed in Category 1 ... in Categories 2 and 3 ... shall be preceded by a pre-export notification, to be transmitted to the competent authorities of the country of destination, in accordance with and within the limits of the provisions of Regulations (EC) no. 111/2005 and no. 1277/2005.”

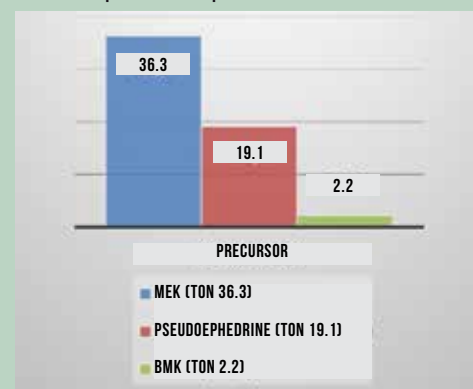
The aforementioned obligations are currently fulfilled by 168 Signatory States to the 1988 UN Convention through PEN (Pre-Export Notification), a tool managed by INCB on an online platform, but there is hope that the remaining 29 Non-signatory States will join the others as soon as possible. This system, made available by the UN, allows the Authorities of the country where the exporting firm is based to notify in advance the Authorities of the country where the importing firm is established. The country of destination can either: accept the request or ask for additional investigation, in case of insufficient documentation, or deny authorization and reject the shipment.

As regards the European Union, PEN (Pre-Export Notification) applies only to exports to certain non-EU countries, i.e. those subject to the rules of customs law. Through its Drug Precursors Unit within Service II, DCSA analyses applications for authorization and promptly notifies the Ministry of Health of any information precluding the issue of export authorizations for scheduled chemicals. In 2022 the Drug Precursor Unit handled 37 PENs bound for Italy from UK (14), India (9), Switzerland (7), Turkey (4), USA (2) and Singapore (1) for substances used in pharmaceuticals, research laboratories and certain industrial processes, such as: MEK (methyl ethyl ketone) (36.3 tonnes); pseudoephedrine hydrochloride (19.1 tonnes); potassium permanganate (18 tonnes); BMK (1 phenyl- 2 propanone) (2.2 tonnes); sulphuric acid (6,000 tonnes); acetone (350.4 tonnes) and acetic anhydride (500,000 litres).

Origin of PEN to Italy



Main Cat. 1 precursors imported with PEN



Precursors

Controlled chemicals, generically referred to as “Drug Precursors,” are chemicals necessary for the manufacture of narcotic and psychotropic substances. They are mainly used for a wide range of legitimate purposes, as for example to produce plastic materials, medicines, cosmetics, detergents and perfumes. For instance, acetic anhydride or potassium permanganate are both used in the chemical industry as bleaches. Moreover, acetic anhydride is needed to transform morphine into heroin while potassium permanganate to transform cocaine paste into cocaine. The trade in drug precursors cannot be banned but it is necessary to monitor their licit trade in order to prevent diversion. The prevention of drug precursors diversion has proven to be an effective strategy to curb the illicit drug production and supply and it is fostered by the international organizations to counteract drug trafficking.

In particular, the world drug control legislation is based on Article 12 of the “UN Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances,” signed in Vienna on December 20, 1988, and INCB (International Narcotics Control Board) is responsible for its implementation.

The EU legislation on drug precursors is based on two fundamental Regulations: Council Regulation EC No. 111/2005 on the monitoring of trade between the EU and third countries in drug precursors; Regulation (EC) No. 273/2004 on drug precursors trade within EU.

Both regulations contain Schedules/Categories of controlled chemicals (precursors), that can be produced and traded only under certain rules, which are aimed at fostering control by the Authorities.

At national level, Article 70 of the Presidential Decree No. 309 of 9 October, 1990 defines all the obligations of the firms that intend to produce/trade in precursors and the penalties/sanctions provided for those who do not comply with them. The above mentioned Decree also identifies two main Authorities in charge of the control: the Ministry of Health, through the Ufficio Centrale Stupefacenti (Central Drugs Office) is the Authority issuing licenses/registrations and having power of control over the “operators”, i.e. the firms involved; the Ministry of the Interior, through DCSA, that gathers the data on transactions and coordinates Law Enforcement Agencies in the control/investigative activities to be carried out in this field.

Precursors are likewise subdivided by the Italian and EU laws into four categories, based on their dangerousness and substitutability and each of them is subject to a different authorization, control and sanctioning system. The above mentioned Article 70 of the Presidential Decree no. 309 of 1990 (Consolidated Act on Drugs), that consists of 21 paragraphs, outlines all types of offences regarding precursors, the penal and administrative sanctions. Moreover it adopts criminal conspiracy, like the one provided for in case of drug trafficking.

New Precursors in the European Union

Europe has a long tradition of clandestine production of synthetic drugs such as amphetamine, methamphetamine, and MDMA (ecstasy). Production techniques are constantly evolving, with changes including the use of non-scheduled substances to produce synthetic drugs and their precursors, thus circumventing regulations and sanctions. This has made it necessary to quickly identify new drugs and their related precursors and include them into the tables of scheduled substances. The phenomenon of designer drugs and, along with it, that of designer precursors has made it more urgent to speed up institutional processes to update the tables of drugs and precursors, in order to enable adequate law enforcement action, which is essential to properly combat this problem. European data on seizures of chemicals found in clandestine laboratories confirm that traditional “scheduled” precursors are used along with new chemical substitutes or adjuvants that are not yet listed as controlled substances. As regards amphetamines and methamphetamines, the scheduling of the precursor of BMK (benzyl methyl-ketone) or APAAN (alpha-phenylacetoacetonitrile) moved illicit production towards alternative, non-scheduled chemicals. At EU level, the international community responded to the challenge posed by designer precursors by scheduling ANPP and NPP as precursors of fentanyl in Category 1 (i.e. those substances which warrant the highest levels of control) in 2018, while in December 2020 six more chemicals were included in the Category 1.

Later, on 13 January 2021, red phosphorous (P), a catalyst in the illicit manufacture of methamphetamine was listed under subcategory 2A (substances subject to increased trade control). In the first two years since the introduction of control of the trade in red phosphorous, two Italian businesses were registered as “operators” and reported to DCSA (under Article 70 (15) of Presidential Decree No. 309 of 1990) 176 and 119 transactions respectively. A total of 312 intra and extra-EU lawful commercial transactions involving the movement of red phosphorus at national, EU and extra-EU levels, were reported to DCSA.

On October 3, 2022, the European Commission placed two additional synthetic drug precursors (amphetamine and methamphetamine) in Category 1: EAPA [Ethyl alpha -phenylacetoacetate] (CAS 5413-05-8) and MAMDPA [Methyl 3-oxo-2-(3,4-methylenedioxyphenyl) butanoate] (1369021-80-6), while five others were proposed for scheduling (DEPAPD, PMK ethylglycidate, 4-AP, 1-boc-4-AP and norfentanyl. This testified to the utmost attention paid to the sector by the EU institutions, as well as the constantly changing threat posed by the proliferation of clandestine laboratories employing these substances for the illicit production of drugs.

At the same time, the European Commission asked member states to focus greater attention on all substances with no known legitimate uses, urging them to consider ways to improve the present control system based on Tables and Categories, as recommended by an ad-hoc working group set up to explore alternative solutions.

In the “European Drug Report 2022: Trends and Developments,” published by EMCDDA (European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction) in Lisbon, EMCDDA Director highlighted that: “.. we are now facing a more complex drug situation, characterised by high availability and greater diversity in patterns of drug consumption. We see from our reporting on the new psychoactive substances phenomenon that almost anything that has psychoactive potential is now at risk of appearing on the market, often mislabelled, meaning that those consuming these substances may be unaware of what they are actually using. In this context, I am particularly worried by reports we are receiving about the adulteration of cannabis products with synthetic cannabinoids; just one example of the new drug-related threats we are now seeing. Another is the increasing production of synthetic drugs in Europe, with particular concerns over the scaling-up of methamphetamine production.”

DRUG TRAFFICKING IN ITALY: CURRENT STATUS AND TRENDS

- Criminal organizations and law enforcement activities 46
- Drug trafficking on the web. An overview of the activity carried out by the Drug@online Section 54

CRIMINAL ORGANIZATIONS AND LAW ENFORCEMENT ACTIVITIES

Drug trafficking: types of illicit trafficking and anti-narcotic action

In 2022 high-level investigations coordinated by the DCSA revealed that drug trafficking continues to be the key target crime for the most highly structured criminal organizations which often merge to create criminal cartels that cut across ethnic and geographical boundaries.

Drug trafficking still remains the most typical form of globalization of organized crime, in which groups and clans are characterized by their transnational dimension. Collaboration, synergies and interactions among different criminal groups are essential to “safely” deal with and overcome logistical difficulties posed by the concealment and transport of drugs from production to distribution areas.

The drugs trade has expanded, diversified and become more complex not only due to the proliferation of new illicit psychoactive substances and the opening of new markets and routes, but above all as a result of the interrelationships connecting the criminal groups involved, who join forces to maximize their profits.

A considerable number of investigations have shown both the existence of mixed groups composed of members with different ethnic origins who work side by side towards their respective goals and the interaction between foreign criminals and Italian groups.

The cocaine market still remains the main interest of criminal groups due to the high profit margins generated by an increasingly wide consumer base.

Synthetic drugs and new psychoactive substances¹ (NPS) are increasingly sold through sites operating on the dark web, accessible only through secure and efficient encryption systems, in ways that make it extremely difficult to identify those involved and to trace their payments².

The NPS that have appeared on the national market are produced in illegal laboratories by modifying the basic chemical structure of the synthetic drug (in order to circumvent antidrug legislation whereby these chemicals are identified by their specific names and listed in tables of controlled substances). This poses serious risks to the health of consumers, who are widely used as unwitting guinea pigs to test the effects of these substances; often they do not even know what they are taking.

Although few criminal organizations got involved in synthetic drug trafficking in the past, with time they have shown a growing interest in this business in the light of the market expansion and the expectations of high profits.

With regard to national data, it is interesting to note that, in January 2022, the Carabinieri Company in Gradisca d’Isonzo (GO) found and seized a “kitchen lab”³, with the necessary equipment and precursors to start methamphetamine production. Although this is an isolated case, it suggests an expansion of trafficking in synthetic drugs and a growing interest in these substances by criminal groups.

During the reporting period, it was documented that transnational criminal networks are highly active and manage drug production, transport and distribution through a “modular network” that differs from conventional criminal models and uses new methods by relying on real brokerage structures to organize their drug trafficking. The fight against drug trafficking during the reporting period showed the need to carry out special operations and, in particular, international controlled deliveries, as they allow the authorities to establish the final destinations of the drugs and to raise the level of investigations in order to dismantle criminal organizations. Undercover operations are equally productive and disruptive. These investigative and intelligence activities are conducted with the primary aim of outlining the entire criminal structure, identifying the members of the criminal groups involved, including their top bosses, and uncovering the channels used to launder illegal profits.

¹ The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) defines new psychoactive substances (NPS) as “substances of abuse, either in a pure form or a preparation, that are not controlled by the 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs or the 1971 Convention on Psychotropic Substances, but which may pose a public health threat” (<https://www.unodc.org/LSS/Page/NPS>). In Italy a psychoactive substance is defined as “new” when it is not included in the tables of controlled substances under the provisions of Article 13 ff. of Presidential Decree No. 309/1990.

² These payments are often made using digital currencies, such as bitcoin or other cryptocurrencies, and the drugs are delivered by post.

³ A primitive clandestine laboratory for producing synthetic drugs.

Recent developments in modern technology and an increasingly complex information environment will provide increasingly high-performance tools for criminals, who must be adequately countered by law enforcement globally.

The analysis carried out by the DCSA in the fight against drug trafficking and drug dealing has revealed a transformation of the threat. The criminal menace currently runs on encrypted networks and cyber platforms. These are tools that allow street dealers and customers to create contacts for the sale of drugs in virtual drug markets and communications among members of the criminal group to be secured and not easily accessible from the outside. This is a fast emerging phenomenon, which will also have to be addressed at regulatory level so that law enforcement will be able to fight it adequately and effectively. In this context, since drug trafficking is acquiring the characteristics of a “hybrid threat”, there is a need for a new operational paradigm based on a different framework and on a more technological approach to the fight against the underworld.

Cosa Nostra

Cosa Nostra is a tightly-knit, top-down criminal organization shaped around a hierarchical pyramid based on families, districts (*Mandamenti*) and provincial commissions. Its branches and internal balances are regularly affected not only by numerous arrests and seizures of mafia assets, but also by ex-members turning state witness or top-ranking members being released from prison, as well as by emerging new crime syndicates prompting the regeneration of *Cosa Nostra*'s operational skills and by relations with other Italian criminal organizations involved in illegal business together in areas of shared interest.

Cosa Nostra, and in particular its Palermo branch, is described as an organization which constantly needs a reorganizational effort to improve the interaction among its various clans since there is no liaison structure connecting top leaders⁴.

Investigations coordinated by the DCSA last year revealed once more a renewed interest by the clans in drug trafficking as well as in other typical Mafia-type crimes such as, for example, protection racketeering and infiltration of public administration and legitimate economic activities in order to influence public procurement procedures and launder proceeds of crime. In fact, it was effective law enforcement action against money-laundering that often sparked the interest of the main *Cosa Nostra* groups in drug trafficking as an area in which clans can have at their disposal huge amounts of money and, at the same time, exercise a strong influence on the territory.

Investigations also established⁵, that almost on a daily basis local criminal networks look out for and manage several drug supply channels, some of them outside Sicily, while constantly taking care of both “mid-level” and “retail” distribution of drugs within an operational area not limited to the city of Palermo but also extending to other parts of Sicily.

Sicilian Mafia families are likely to remain subordinate to ‘Ndrangheta or Camorra organizations in the area of import from producing countries and subsequent distribution in Italy. Moreover, the search for Calabrian and Campanian suppliers may leave room for the identification of new channels and “safe logistics”, which would guarantee the supply of large quantities of narcotics to be managed independently.

During the same investigations it emerged that, by using encrypted phones they considered “secure”, the suspects explored⁶ the possibility of opening thriving import channels through foreign brokers who had criminal contacts in South and Central America.

Suspects have become accustomed to using Campanian channels for the supply of drugs⁷, which confirms that they look for and maintain privileged relations with other criminal organizations in order to identify supply channels.

Evidence was also collected on the origin of the drugs: marijuana was supplied by Albanian criminal syndicates or imported directly from the Netherlands, whereas cocaine and heroin were purchased from several criminal groups operating in different Sicilian provinces.

4 Six-Month Report of the Anti-Mafia Investigation Directorate, 1st half of 2021, page 63.

5 Ibid., page 1110.

6 Ibid., page 1141.

7 Ibid., page 41.

Camorra

The *Camorra* continues to manifest itself as a very fragmented criminal network, characterized by fluid and unstable relationships and alliances between historical clans, minor syndicates and emerging criminal groups. The existence of real “armed wars” in some territories, with crimes occurring at short intervals from each other, shows that criminal groups are actually competing for control over parts of the territory. This is probably in order to conquer or maintain dominance in local drug marketplaces since street-level drug dealing generates large sums of money and therefore represents an inexhaustible source of illicit income for Camorra clans.

It is worth noting, in this respect, that clans consider acquiring undisputed control of drug marketplaces by posting their members at drug dealing places as an expansion of their criminal control over the territory and it allows them to accumulate huge amounts of money which is then used to pay the “salaries” of their affiliates, finance the “criminal welfare system” and buy weapons and explosives for purposes of defence and attack during clashes with rival clans.

In particular, the power of intimidation inherent in being linked to the organization is wielded, above all, through “*stese*”⁸ (shootings), and by planting and detonating bombs and explosive devices near the dwellings of associates of the rival clan. An armed war between clans obviously spreads terror and anguish among local populations, each shooting or IED attack causes people to subjugate themselves more and more and the instilled fear facilitates predatory crimes, such as extortion or other violent events.

Definable as “drug enterprises”, clans also have a role in making money to cater for the needs of their members. Dozens of men and women are involved in the running of drug dealing at street level, be it as market overseers, pushers and dealers, or street-level and high-level lookouts. They work in regular shifts and ensure that all types of drugs are available for sale 24 hours a day, thereby generating millions in profits.

The fact that clan members, including very young ones, are in contact with certain singers of Neapolitan songs and “Trap” musicians, as shown by messages exchanged publicly, is their way to showcase the opportunities and wealth offered by the drug dealing business. It cannot be ruled out that this ever-pressing and worrying invitation to enter the business is also intended to attract new customers to street drug markets in the hands of the various clans.

The theatrical celebration of the criminal underworld has proliferated in recent years even in roadside memorials and murals which have shifted from popular traditional forms of devotion to leading criminal figures to acts of defiance against the State⁹. This phenomenon was also addressed at a meeting of the Committee for Order and Public Safety of the Metropolitan Area held on 4th March 2021 in Naples, which decided to launch operations aimed at “restoring respect for the law by gradually removing artifacts and other symbols displayed without permission in public on streets, independently of the prosecution for the eventual commission of other crimes”¹⁰. The clans also attempted to create and run real drug dealing rings inside jails.

‘Ndrangheta

The *‘Ndrangheta* is considered to be Italy’s most insidious and pervasive Mafia organization and shows a marked tendency to expand both nationally and internationally. Its solid roots in the region of origin, the weaponry displayed over the years, its financial solidity and the scarcity of ex members who turn state witness are the factors which have enabled it to diversify its interests so that typical Mafia-type criminal activities are combined with infiltration of formally legitimate economic sectors.

The *‘Ndrine* still keep a close watch on maritime commercial trade and national seaports, especially the port of Gioia Tauro which plays a strategic role due to its geographical position and to the large volumes of goods in transit. In 2022 the Gioia Tauro port was shown to play a central role.

8 Preventive custody order No. 151/22, No. 36277/17 RGNR and No. 6464/2019 RGGIP issued by the Judge for Preliminary Investigations of the Court in Naples, page 255: “... the latter (the *stesa* or shooting) can be defined as a demonstrative or intimidatory act in which the members of a Camorra syndicate drive in cars or on scooters through a neighbourhood, an area or a certain territory randomly firing shots in the air or at the shutters of stores to show off the firepower they have at their disposal and readiness to commit any sort of crime because they have “command” over the territory. At the same time, they aim to scare local residents in order that they comply with extortion demands and any other requests and be reduced to collective silence, thus ensuring their impunity.”

9 Six-Month Report of the Anti-Mafia Investigation Directorate, 2nd half of 2020.

10 Press release from the Naples Prefecture dated 10th March 2021.

In order to expand outside Calabria, the 'Ndrangheta resorted to the "colonization" of new territories by establishing stable bases in areas that had never previously attracted the attention of the criminal organization. These new branches were forged using the same structures and methods typical of traditional 'Ndrangheta patterns.

Focus

RECOVERY OF COCAINE IN SEAPORTS. THE EVOLUTION OF THE RIP-OFF METHOD USING A "TROJAN HORSE"

In the recent past, cargoes of cocaine arriving by sea from South America were taken outside seaport areas by dock workers colluding with criminal organizations for the recovery of drugs. These workers basically took all the risks associated with getting the drugs out of the port. The most widely used method was called rip-off where these colluding workers recovered large bags or cartons containing bricks of cocaine hidden inside containers. Sometimes these were containers in transshipment at an intermediate port of call waiting to be transferred to another ship bound for their scheduled destination.

Large bags of cocaine near the container doors



Cocaine hidden among legally sold goods inside containers



Cocaine hidden among legally sold goods inside containers

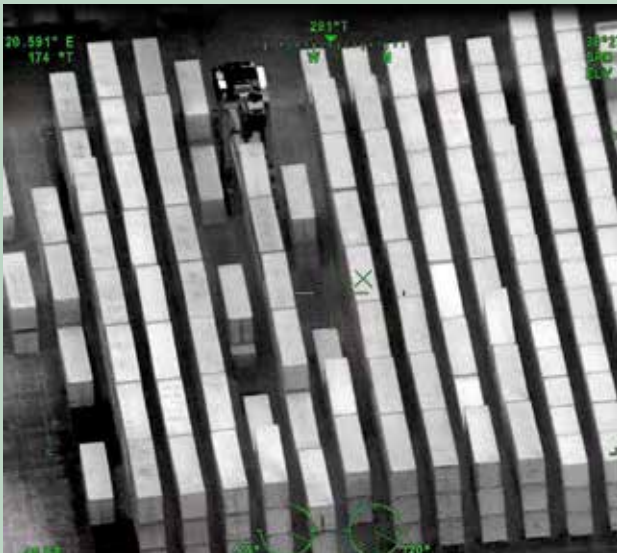
Following the numerous seizures made by law enforcement, criminal organizations have fine-tuned their activities over time, making the procedure for bringing cargoes of cocaine out of the port area much better organized and sophisticated. Investigations coordinated by the DCSA have revealed that importing criminal organizations are currently hiring criminal groups based in the port cities of their interest and rely on them to do the job of recovering the incoming cargo of cocaine. These criminal groups take care of the smallest details of the recovery operation and try to draw in both dock workers and companies picking up containers at ports.

In particular, colluding dock workers¹¹ who have to transload the drugs from the “sender’s” to the “exit” container actually plan a schedule of activities and identify the exact date when the “sender’s” container is unloaded and delivered to the container yard¹². After that, each step of the “operations”¹³, is carefully planned and each worker receives their individual task to complete according to the role that best suits the need of the criminal organization recovering the drugs.

The “team” members recovering the drugs generally communicate using a two-way radio system, usually alongside the company radio channel, in order to circumvent interception¹⁴.

For larger cargoes of cocaine at least five people are normally employed, two of them for driving straddle carriers which can move up to four containers. The first container carrying the hidden illegal drugs is identified by the criminal organization as the “sender’s” container with cocaine in transshipment at the designated seaport. The second container called “exit” and identified by the importing criminal organization has already passed customs checks successfully and is already “available” in the port yard¹⁵. The third container, randomly chosen among those lying in the port yard, is empty and serves as a “Trojan horse”, in other words it is simply used to transport the “team” members responsible for transferring¹⁶ the cocaine consignment. The fourth container, called “bridge”, is randomly chosen among those lying on the quayside and is used to hide transfer operations from sight.

Photo 1



Drivers of straddle carriers identify the designated containers and take them to a specific area of the port yard that must comply with certain requirements: free from concurrent movements of legal containers and located in a peripheral “corridor” area with no containers on one end and some containers at the opposite end (see photo 1).

After deciding the most suitable location, both the “sender’s” and the “exit” containers are placed in the same corridor with their respective doors facing each other, whereas the “bridge” container is lifted up in between the “sender’s” and the “exit” containers (photo 2 and 3).

11 The work of colluding dock workers is performed inside the port according to a well-organized schedule: who will be involved and what each will do is defined in advance and the number of people and company vehicles varies depending on the quantity of drugs to be recovered. The most frequently used terms in port jargon are: checker, a person working alongside ship to monitor procedures and time frames of the inflow and outflow of containers at the dock near cranes; deckman, a person working on the ship who has the unloading plan and works closely with the crane operator and the checker during vessel operations; planner, a person responsible for planning container loading and unloading and moving containers around the terminal; port operations coordinator, a person responsible for coordinating loading and unloading of containers on one or more vessels; straddle carrier operator, a person who drives a straddle carrier; straddle carrier, also known as SC or straddle truck, an operating machine used to move containers around the terminal; multi trailer, an operating machine used to move more containers at once around the terminal.

12 The recovery of drugs is usually scheduled in the first hours after container unloading and, in most cases, during evening hours.

13 These operations are usually performed in the days immediately before or after the scheduled date in order not to arouse precise suspicion and, in the event of unexpected events, further attempts can be made.

14 The nicknames used by team members are often identical with those of their encrypted electronic communications systems.

15 The choice falls on a container with a shipping route and cargo which are not usually subjected to particular drug detection checks during clearance operations.

16 Team members must not be seen walking around the port yard because this could arouse suspicion and lead to their being checked by the police or non-colluding company managers.

The last container to be placed is the “Trojan horse” containing the dock workers responsible for the actual transfer. This blocks the side view from the ground on one end, the other end being already closed off by other containers (photo 4). As soon as the dock workers get out of their container, they start transferring the cocaine from the “sender’s” to the “exit” container and when they are finished, they close the containers using counterfeit seals¹⁷. Upon completion of this process, the drivers of the straddle carriers reposition both containers – the sender’s one without cocaine and the exit one with the drugs inside – so that they can be processed through the port. The “Trojan horse” is instead taken to a place where dock workers can come out unnoticed, without arousing suspicion. Once the dock “team” have finished transloading the illegal drugs, the criminal group calls in a transport company - often complicit - to pick up the “exit” container, so that the cocaine can be unloaded once it is outside the harbour area.

Photo 2 and 3

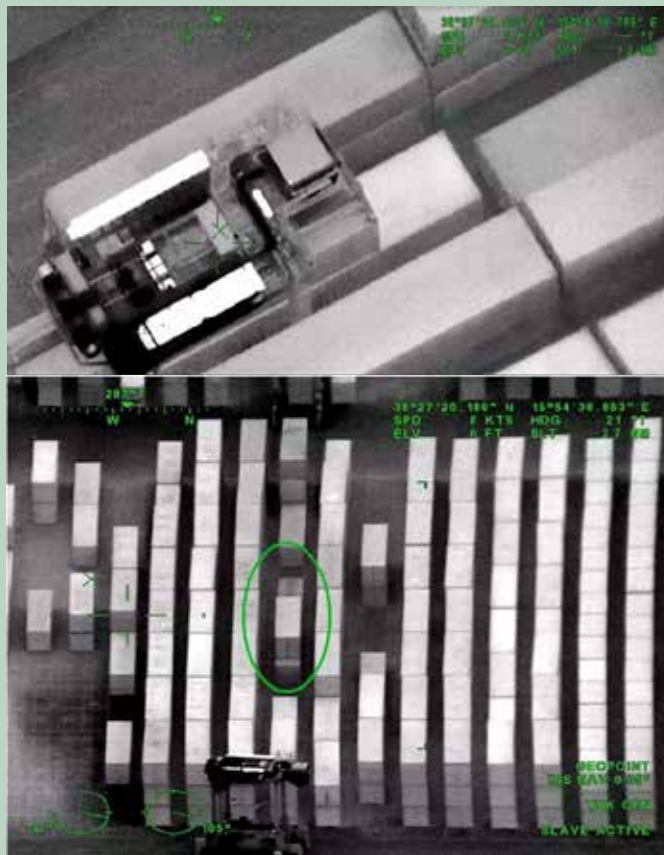


Photo 4



¹⁷ As for counterfeit seals, it is worth mentioning that the counterfeit seal for the “sender’s” container is usually provided by the criminal organization which hides it in one of the packages containing the drugs, whereas the counterfeit seal for the “exit” container is made available by the criminal group responsible for picking up the drugs from the port.

Apulian criminal organizations

Apulian organized crime is currently characterized by the fragmented structure of its branches and by intense competition among the various criminal groups who mainly engage in extortion, drug trafficking, usury and money-laundering by infiltrating local businesses.

“The situation is constantly evolving and gives cause for concern in the area of Foggia and Trani [...] where the forth Mafia decided to flex its muscles with nine bombings in early January 2022 to claim control over the territory in the face of law enforcement action leading to the seizure of large quantities of narcotics [...]”¹⁸.

In the province of Brindisi, the underworld is characterized by the presence of Mafia-type organizations. This pattern was recognized in numerous court judgments although their specific traits of have been changing over the years.

Currently, the organization known as “Sacra Corona Unita” shows signs of being fragmented into a number of criminal groups linked to the original association by the preservation of strong ties and most importantly the recognition of their common origin and the sharing of certain values.

It was established that a number of very active and dangerous syndicates were also present in other provinces in Puglia.

The role of foreign criminal organizations in drug trafficking

Drug trafficking and the control over local drug dealing areas generate huge profits and therefore play a key role for criminal organizations, irrespective of their level and make-up, in Italy and abroad. These illegal activities foster synergies and interactions with several foreign criminal groups which are instrumental in coping with and “safely” overcoming logistical difficulties associated with concealing and transporting drugs from production to distribution areas.

Police investigations have confirmed that foreign criminal organizations active in Italy are mostly ethnically-based and have a consolidated presence not only in the bigger cities in Northern and Central Italy, but also in extensive rural areas in Southern Italy, showing an uncanny ability to penetrate the national economic and social fabric due to their huge cash reserves derived from a wide range of illegal activities.

In particular, in addition to their “traditional” involvement in drug trafficking and smuggling of illegal migrants, foreign crime syndicates have demonstrated their ability to develop sophisticated schemes for money laundering and tax evasion as well as the transfer of capital abroad, also using fintech services¹⁹.

As previously mentioned, the drug trade has expanded, diversified and become more complex not only as a result of the proliferation of new illicit psychoactive substances and the opening of new markets and routes, but also - and above all - due to the interrelationships connecting the criminal groups involved, which join forces to maximize their profits.

The coordination activity of the information stream and investigative outcomes performed by the DCSA in 2022 focused on a number of ethnically-based criminal organizations actively involved in the management of drug trafficking in Italy, which came to the fore because they are becoming as dangerous as conventional Mafia-type organizations. The most hardened foreign criminal organizations with ongoing involvement in drug trafficking in Italy and on the European continent are:

- *Nigerian criminal groups* – by replicating the modus operandi of their mirror groups in Nigeria, they remain the best structured foreign criminal groups with branches all over Italy.
- *Albanian criminal groups* – they are often structurally organized in small groups based on family ties and replicate the typical patterns adopted in their country of origin.
- *Balkan criminal organizations* – among them especially the Serbian-Montenegrin organizations have become highly dangerous due to the considerable financial resources at their disposal and their paramilitary-style organization and structure and important connections with suppliers in South America.

¹⁸ Speech for the Inauguration of the Judicial Year 2022 held on 22 January 2022 by the Prosecutor General of the Court of Appeal in Bari.

¹⁹ Cf. “2021 Report on Security Intelligence Policy” edited by AISI (Internal Intelligence and Security Agency).

- *South-American criminal groups* – these are composed of young and very young Latin American members whose marked gangster-like attitude triggered intense internal disputes for control over distribution areas in major Italian cities, replicating the typical model of Salvadoran criminal gangs.
- *Chinese crime syndicates* – have maintained a significant presence in logistics, transport and street dealing of drugs within their communities.

Albanian criminality

The analysis of the investigative outcomes from inquiries into Albanian criminal groups coordinated by the DCSA confirmed that they are undoubtedly active and operating in Italy.

These groups are characterized by their ability to maintain ties with their country of origin and to forge international branches for the sale of drugs. In some cases, small, often multi-ethnic criminal groups were identified, in other cases larger crime syndicates were detected, who were organized according to the typical Mafia model and had considerable financial resources at their disposal and the ability to organize high-level drug trafficking internationally.

Over the years, the geographical proximity of Italy and Albania has facilitated the establishment of direct channels between Apulian and Albanian criminal groups, particularly for the supply, storage and sale of drugs.

North-African criminality

North-African criminal groups active in Italy mainly come from Morocco and typically from the Maghreb region and are generally settled thanks to their integration into Italian society and the underworld. They are well-established almost all over Italy, even in areas where local organized criminal groups are traditionally present, and they engage mainly in street-level dealing of a variety of drugs. It was established increasingly frequently that they have links with other ethnically-based clans or with Italian criminal organizations, including Mafia-type ones.

Nigerian criminality

Nigerian criminal syndicates are characterized by a strong ethnicity and association ties based on magical-religious traditions with traits of sectarianism, nurtured by common beliefs and strengthened by the intimidating power of collective silence on all the matters concerning the syndicates.

The most important groups active in Italy, mainly operating in Lombardy, Veneto, Piedmont, Emilia Romagna, Lazio, Umbria, Campania and Sicily, are the “Supreme Eye Confraternity or SEC”, the “Black Axe Confraternity”, the “Maphite” and the “Vikings”, a more recent confraternity composed of young and aggressive members. These syndicates stand out for the widespread presence of their cells, creating a vast criminal network organized around relatively autonomous local structures linked to the central headquarters in their country of origin and characterized by a marked international dimension with an ongoing quest to reach agreements with the aim of illegal trafficking.

Aware of the power of Italian Mafia-type organizations active in Italy, Nigerian criminality showed an advanced adaptability in organizing their illegal activities independently, paying particular attention not to undermine the territorial supremacy of Italian criminal organizations.

Nigerian criminal cults and confraternities operate autonomously and independently in Italy, acting as nodes within a vertical network which shapes the hierarchical structure.

Nigerian criminal syndicates use ethnic congregations to cover up their illegal activities, at times using the so-called “African shops” as meeting places. In this regard, an investigation conducted by the Investigative Unit of the Police Headquarters in Taranto revealed the *modus operandi* of a group of Nigerian nationals in the management of a sophisticated local structure engaged in street-level drug dealing. They used a number of businesses like African shops as their headquarters to meet with the Nigerian community and run illegal activities such as drug dealing, exploitation of prostitution and money laundering. The investigation outlined a picture of sometimes quite violent disputes between members of different confraternities fighting to gain control over the territory and, above all, to consolidate their power inside the criminal organization itself.

The investigation revealed that drug dealing proceeds were laundered through financial circuits such as money transfer agencies so as to illegally transfer money to Nigeria. This money-laundering method usually consisted of sending the money from an “unofficial counter” inside an African shop and withdrawing it very quickly, sometimes instantly, in Nigeria. These money transfers guaranteed customers’ anonymity because every transaction was assigned a code to be used to withdraw the money.

Asian criminality

The multifaceted and fragmented Asian underworld consists of micro-groups, composed mainly of Pakistani, Afghan and Indian nationals, who engage in transnational trafficking of drugs, mostly heroin and hashish, transported by air from producing countries using drug mules.

Members of criminal groups other than Mafia-type organizations

Drug trafficking is one of the main areas of interest for criminal organizations and remains a transnational phenomenon spreading over a worldwide market, fuelled by an ever-growing demand and by a large consumer base. The current market shows signs of constant expansion and is run by diverse criminal groups who pursue their illegal trade, breaking down geographical barriers and demonstrating that they can overcome any difficulty in communications, transport or drug concealment.

As already mentioned, the investigations coordinated by the DCSA documented the activity of mixed groups composed of Italian and foreign nationals engaged in drug trafficking. Significant, in this respect, are the results of some investigations showing, among other things, the ongoing interactions between Italian and foreign groups as well as between syndicates with different ethnic origins and between street gangs composed of young and very young members who obtain most of their incomes from drug dealing. These are at times individuals who, while not being permanent members of organized crime groups, have the necessary connections as well as logistical, financial and communications support typical of Mafia-type associations in order to maximize profits.

DRUG TRAFFICKING ON THE WEB, AN OVERVIEW OF THE ACTIVITY CARRIED OUT BY THE DRUG@ONLINE SECTION

The “ubiquity of the internet”²⁰ has impacted on our relationships and social life possibly more than any other invention ever has in the history of mankind. It has reduced distances and facilitated the exchange of goods and information, thus leading us into a “borderless” dimension. In this scenario, electronic financial transactions over e-commerce channels continue to grow, taking full advantage of the possibilities offered by the worldwide web. According to data provided by the B2C E-Commerce Observatory, online sales increased in 2021 all over the world and are expected to grow further in the future. In Italy, more than 630 million shipments were recorded in 2022, with an increase of 10% compared to the previous year. The huge flow of parcels, the opportunities offered by the web in terms of ease of access and anonymity, the possibility of making payments in so-called virtual currencies²¹ (Bitcoin or other kinds) and the technological innovation in logistics affecting shipments as well as the movement of goods also boost the development of new forms of criminal entrepreneurship.

These new businesspeople are not only “professional criminals” but sometimes also people with no criminal record who start a profitable drug dealing enterprise. As in the case of traditional trade, this criminal behaviour hides behind legitimate national and international trade which is closely linked to e-shopping. Online purchases

20 This is the phrase used by the European Commission in its proposal for a Regulation on preventing the dissemination of terrorist content online (Procedure 2018/0331/COD), which has yet to be approved.

21 These kinds of transactions ensure that buyers and sellers never come in contact with each other, neither during the negotiation phase nor during delivery or payment.

are fast, which is the main reason for choosing this specific type of commerce over the internet. With regard to the supply and demand of illegal drugs, e-commerce offers certain particularly attractive services that reduce the risks of detection, such as express deliveries (in 1-2 days), same-day deliveries or alternatives to home delivery (package lockers or third-party pick-up points in stores). Some delivery companies offer flexible and more convenient options, such as delivery on a specific day or time, or even on Saturday, which could be an incentive for illegal drug trade as is the case with sales of consumer goods.

In addition to the legitimate advantages offered by the legal market, the vast range of customized services offers drug traffickers and consumers countless opportunities to remain anonymous and gives them a perceived sense of impunity as they camouflage themselves in an online shopping system based on complex logistics whose outstanding characteristic is speed. It seems therefore increasingly essential to closely monitor this constantly evolving phenomenon so as to fully understand its developments and interpret its sophisticated dynamics correctly.

The illegal drug market is constantly expanding not only on the open web, but also and above all in that part of the web (the deep web and dark web) that can be accessed only by using special software (like Tor) to anonymize the identity and location of internet users. Starting from these theoretical considerations, the DCSA's Drug@online Section modelled its monitoring of the web and was able to consolidate and implement the acquired knowledge over the course of 2022. In short, the so-called darknet markets thrived during the pandemic and seem to keep or even increase their activity levels despite competition²² from social media. When buying and selling drugs online, vendors and buyers continue to use encrypted messaging services which make monitoring and interdiction more challenging. At the top of the list of the countries most frequently used as starting points for the illegal drug trade are Great Britain, Germany and the Netherlands, but countries outside Europe are gaining ground, first and foremost the United States.

Sellers often use the dynamics typical of legal trade, trying to gain consumers' trust and a high degree of reliability by offering potential customers discounts, special prices and/or the re-shipment of the purchased goods in the event of non-delivery. The seller may, on the one hand, rely on buyers leaving positive feedback as do buyers of legal goods. Narcotics on sale on the internet are mainly of synthetic origin (amphetamine, MDMA and ecstasy), but you can also find marijuana, hashish, heroin and cocaine, which are sent in postal parcels, often concealed in wrappings which, in turn, are hidden in a variety of ways. "Criminal creativity" has emerged in drug concealment methods, for example inside DVD or music CD cases or cosmetic packaging, sealed in silver vacuum bags to escape detection by x-ray machines and/or high-sensitivity spectrometers during law enforcement checks.

To keep up with constantly evolving criminal packaging methods for different narcotics, the DCSA, within the Hermes project, assigned portable devices with RAMAN technology²³ to the operating units of the State Police, Carabinieri and Guardia di Finanza. This equipment yielded evident positive results and, among other things, pointed to an increase in the sale of GBL (gamma butyrolactone), a substance intentionally used for recreational purposes since it is known to facilitate so-called "chemsex". It is otherwise known as a "date rape drug" because it is given unknowingly to intended victims.

The use of social networking and instant messaging apps continues to grow and is becoming increasingly popular for buying and selling illegal drugs especially among young people. These are high-performance tools due to their inherent capacity to provide instantly and anywhere easy access to a market of illegal services and products while ensuring a good degree of privacy and speed in both purchase and delivery of the ordered product. In short, similarly to what happens in the legal market of online services and products, these tools

22 The two sales systems are often complementary because traffickers exploit the peculiarities of each of them: social media are faster, easy to access and visible to all, whereas the darknet can provide anonymity.

23 Raman spectroscopy is a technique for analyzing materials based on the dispersion of monochromatic electromagnetic radiation by the analyzed sample. It is the most suitable instrument for drug testing, providing quick identification of unknown substances (usually 1 or 2 minutes). It allows to measure samples with different characteristics – liquids, gels, solids, and powders – without contact (e.g., through glass or packaging). Raman spectrometers require only small quantities of samples for analysis. As it is a non-destructive technology, the sample can be re-used after measurement. The spectral database generally contains thousands of parameters for thousands of different substances that can be added to the spectroscopy archive over time.

really facilitate purchases for everyone. To fully understand this phenomenon, it should be kept in mind that tools, logics and methods used in the illegal market completely overlap with those used in the legal market. This is the only perspective that can help us realize the real magnitude of this problem and the threats posed by drug trafficking as it insinuates itself into every aspect of daily life by using the same technological tools which have become widespread due to their potential in helping people to rapidly create, maintain and expand social contacts in every sphere of everyday life in a “boundaryless” space. There are countless websites and groups²⁴ on instant messaging apps (Instagram, Telegram, Snapchat, Wickr, Kik and others) where all types of narcotics are advertised and sold, complete with advice for a safe purchase as well as fast, discreet shipping, just like in any other store selling legal products. Communications within these apps are not only anonymous but can also self-destruct after a certain amount of time by simply choosing the auto-delete setting and screen-shotting is not permitted.

In the light of the overall picture, it is easy to understand the unique contribution given by the DCSA to the coordination of antidrug activities by relying on the skills of the Drug@online Section staff who patrol cyberspace and monitor the web in order to identify websites engaged in promoting, advertising and selling drugs and/or new psychoactive substances both on the darknet and on the open internet. Based on the alerts received from law enforcement agencies, the DCSA also draws up a list of websites used for the commission of online crimes covered by Presidential Decree No. 309/1990. After due verifications, this list is then sent to the Central Service of the Postal and Communications Police for it to request internet service providers to take down these websites²⁵. In 2022 the Drug@online Section coordinated several police investigations across Italy in which controlled purchases were made on the web also by employing online undercover agents to identify and track down sellers and receivers of illegal substances. Online investigators have a very difficult task to accomplish because tracking down online vendors entails conducting cross-border investigations in a potentially borderless cyberspace.

The above activities are in line with the strategic priorities of the EU Action Plan on Drugs 2021-2025 which aims, among other things, at tackling the exploitation of logistical and digital channels for medium- and small-volume illicit drug distribution and increasing seizures of illicit substances smuggled through these channels²⁶. The DCSA contributed to police investigations by providing a constant flow of information, coordinating the activities nationally and internationally and joining forces with foreign police counterparts affected by the traffic. The operational information pooled by foreign law enforcement agencies was key for Italian investigators. In this framework, the DCSA also looked in depth into the “GBL issue” and its regulatory classification. Being included in Table IV annexed to Presidential Decree No. 309/1990, GBL is classified in Italy as a controlled substance, but legislative frameworks for this substance are not uniform across European and non-European countries.

Finally, the DCSA demonstrated the importance it attaches to the issue of drug trafficking by organising a workshop on the new frontiers of the fight against this phenomenon. This event took place in the DCSA's headquarters on 14 December 2022 with valuable lectures by experts in drug trafficking not only from law enforcement, including Guardia di Finanza's NSTPFT (Special Unit for the Protection of Privacy and Technological Fraud), the Carabinieri's ROS (Special Operations Group) and the State Police SCO (Central Operations Service) within the DAC (Central Anticrime Directorate), but also by highly qualified professors from the University of Foggia with specialized expertise in this field. The training day was attended by 60 participants both from police departments across Italy and from the DCSA.

²⁴ These websites and groups have hundreds of registered users.

²⁵ Decree-Law No. 130 of 21 October 2020 recently introduced measures to support law enforcement action in the fight against drug-related crimes committed on the internet. In particular, Article 12 stipulates that access to websites used for selling illegal drugs should be blocked just as has been the case for years now with child pornography websites. This legal novelty reflects not only the intention to prevent access to website, but also, on the one hand, greater awareness that this is a growing phenomenon and, on the other, the urgent need for all national police authorities to adopt effective large-scale antidrug initiatives, thus broadening the scope of their action in areas assigned so far to specialized units only. These provisions allow to take down websites involved in illegal drug trade through servers often based in foreign countries after prior consultation with the Judicial Authority, even if no criminal proceedings are pending.

²⁶ Cf., in particular, Strategic Priority 3 of the EU Action Plan on Drugs 2021-2025, which includes four actions (from 17 to 20). Action 17 sets out as a priority to “Monitor internet and darknet marketplaces for drugs by implementing the preparatory action proposed by the European Parliament on 24/7 monitoring of the darknet to ensure comprehensive results.”

The lecturers discussed and provided hands-on sessions on many specific topics, including: shifting investigations from the real world to the virtual world; the Black Market and the online sale of drugs; the dark web; law enforcement counteraction and infiltration techniques (with a focus on closed police cases); the reconstruction of financial settlements through the drug payment network; digital and cloud forensics; the Trojan tool; digital investigations on big data; bots, cryptocurrencies and blockchain, and other related crimes. Considerable time was also spent on the new frontier of “Metaverse” and on future investigations in this virtual, augmented reality, which is still in the development stage but will eventually enable users to interact with each other just like they do in the physical world. The Metaverse will not only be an extraordinary technological milestone, but it will also allow access to new drug distribution channels created in private virtual spaces, the so-called *workrooms*, where users can engage in criminal activities and communicate with other criminals. The workshop also delved into the relationship between digital investigations and evidence gathering in criminal proceedings.

Workshop “Digital Investigation and Intelligence” – December 2022

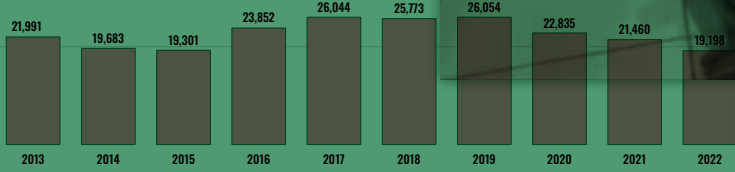
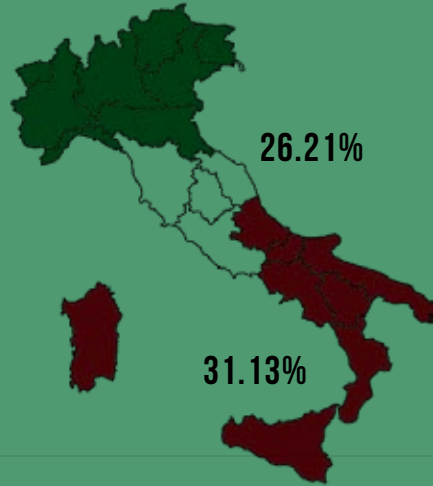


SECOND PART

• Law enforcement activities at national level

61

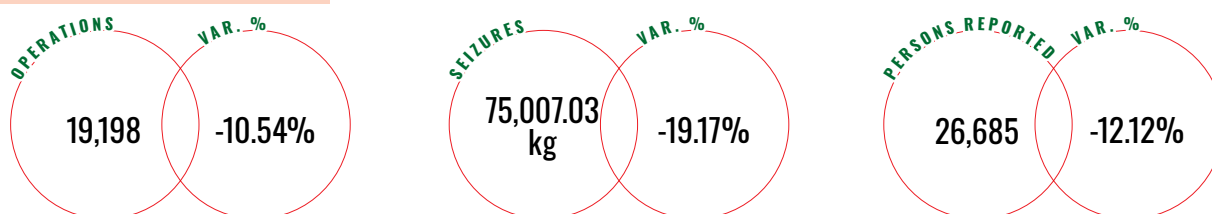
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LAW ENFORCEMENT ACTIVITIES AT NATIONAL LEVEL

● Introduction	62
● Drug trafficking towards Italy	66
● The fight against cocaine	68
● The fight against heroin	76
● The fight against cannabis	83
● The fight against synthetic drugs	97
● Persons reported to the Judicial Authorities	103
● Drug abuse deaths	111

INTRODUCTION



The following is an analysis of the data concerning antidrug operations, reports to the Judicial Authorities and drug seizures carried out in 2022, in the framework of the fight against the traffic in narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances. Such data concern the seizures carried out by the Italian law enforcement agencies within national territory, national territorial waters and in international waters.

Considering only the interventions for criminal acts, in 2022, 19,198 operations were conducted (-10.54% with respect to 2021). Such operations led to 26,685 persons being reported to the Judicial Authorities (-12.12%), of whom 9,105 foreign nationals (-2.38%) and 1,126 minors (+14.78%), as well as to the seizure of 75,007.03 kg (-19.17%) of drugs.

As to drug abuse deaths, an increase of 0.68% was registered.

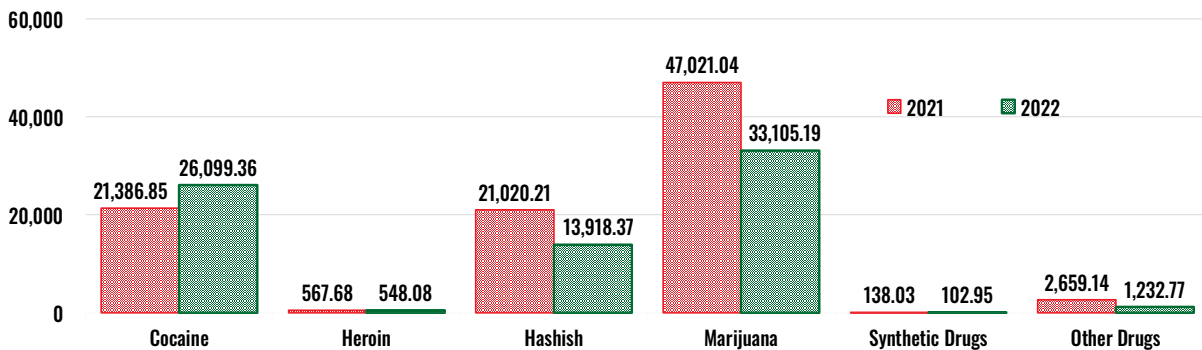
The most significant seizures were made:

- for cocaine, 1,515.40 kg in Gioia Tauro (RC);
- for heroin, 43.06 kg in Milan;
- for hashish, 628.10 kg in Pisa;
- for marijuana, 2,153.85 kg in Bedizzole (BS);
- for synthetic drugs, 3,977 doses in Rome.

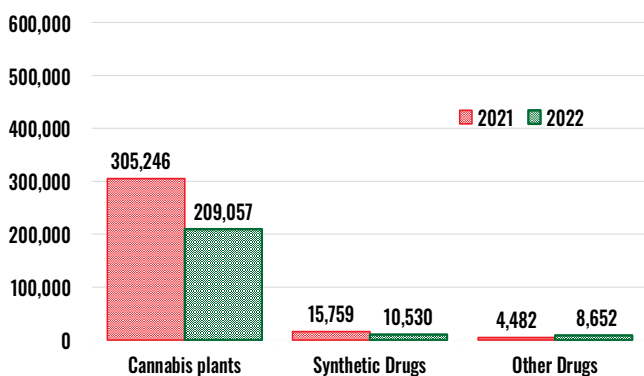
Mention must also be made of the data on major seizures of other psychoactive substances, whose consumption is not commonly widespread in our country: 979.50 kg of khat (or Qat), 68.25 kg of poppy bulbs and 3,380 doses/tablets of nandrolone. The table below shows in detail the quantities seized for each substance.

Drugs seized 2021/2022 with % variation			2021	2022	Var. %
	Cocaine	(kg)	21,386.85	26,099.36	22.03%
	Heroin	(kg)	567.68	548.08	-3.45%
Cannabis	Hashish	(kg)	21,020.21	13,918.37	-33.79%
	Marijuana	(kg)	47,021.04	33,105.49	-29.59%
	Cannabis plants	(no)	305,246	209,057	-31.51%
Synthetic Drugs	Tablets/doses	(no)	15,759	10,530	-33.18%
		(kg)	138.03	102.95	-25.41%
Other Drugs	In doses/tablets	(no)	4,482	8,652	93.04%
	In powder	(kg)	2,659.14	1,232.77	-53.64%
Total		(kg)	92,792.94	75,007.03	-19.17%
	tablets/doses	(no)	20,241	19,182	-5.23%
	Plants	(no)	305,246	209,057	-31.51%
Drug operations			21,460	19,198	-10.54%
Persons reported to the Judicial Authority			30,366	26,685	-12.12%
Drug abuse deaths			296	298	0.68%

Comparison of drugs seized (kg) 2021/2022



Comparison of drugs seized (doses) 2021/2022



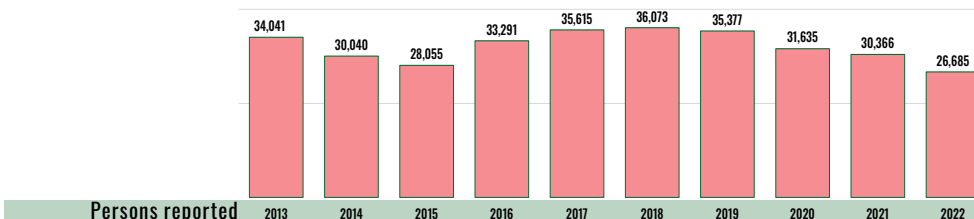
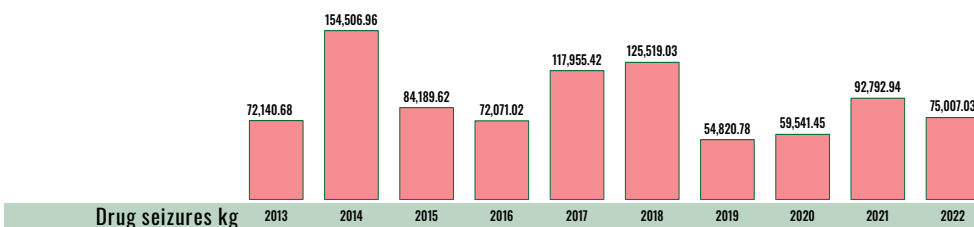
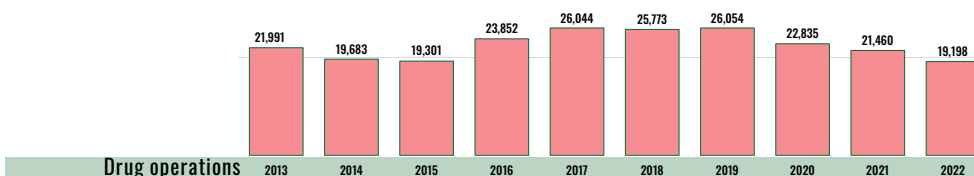
Ten-year trend

Since 2013, the average value regarding antidrug operations has always been around 22,500, with a peak of 26,054 in 2019 and the lowest level of 19,198 in the reporting year.

Since 2013, the total quantity of drug seizures has always been over 50 tons, with a peak of 154,507 kg in 2014, and the lowest level in 2019 with 54,821 kg. Such significant results are mainly due to the cannabis derivatives seizures, which, in the last decade, on average led to 38,967 kg seized. In the same period an average of 32,118 reports

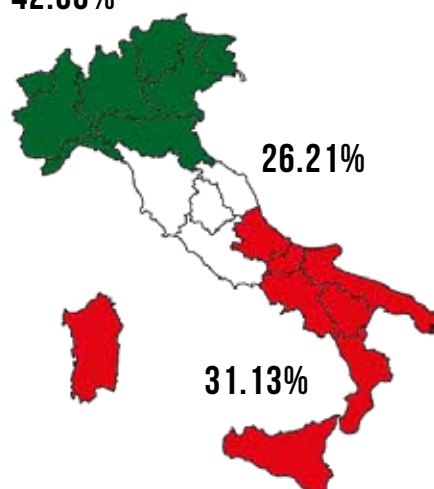
has been made to the Judicial Authorities. The peak was registered in 2018 (36,073), while the lowest level was reached in the reporting year (28,055).

Ten-year trend



Antidrug Operations - regional distribution

42.66%



The review of macro-areas revealed that, in 2022 the highest number of antidrug operations was carried out in Northern Italy, with 42.66%, followed by Southern Italy and islands with 31.13% and by Central Italy with 26.21%.

Lazio was the region with the highest number of operations (3,303), followed by Lombardy, Campania, Apulia, Veneto, Emilia Romagna and Sicily.

The lowest records were registered in Valle d'Aosta, Basilicata and Molise.

In comparison with 2021, police activities mainly increased in Trentino Alto Adige, Marche and Umbria, while the most significant percentage decreases were registered in Basilicata, Valle d'Aosta, Molise, Sicily, Friuli V.G., Piedmont and Sardinia.

Regional distribution - drug operations and incidence on total at regional level

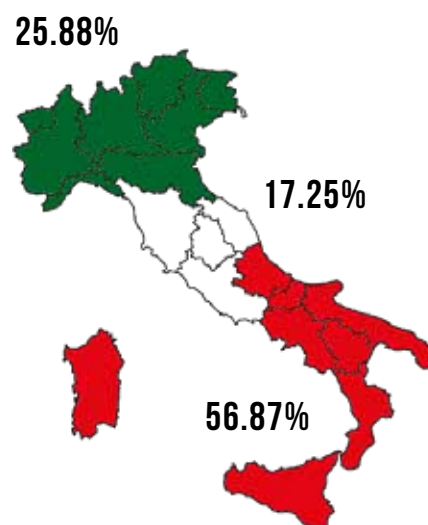
Regions	2021	2022	Var. %
Abruzzi	414	391	-5.56 %
Basilicata	162	103	-36.42 %
Calabria	688	623	-9.45 %
Campania	1,845	1,660	-10.03 %
Emilia Romagna	1,438	1,262	-12.24 %
Friuli V. G.	349	277	-20.63 %
Lazio	3,479	3,303	-5.06 %
Liguria	705	656	-6.95 %
Lombardy	3,786	3,220	-14.95 %
Marche	452	486	7.52 %
Molise	155	116	-25.16 %
Piedmont	1,200	1,001	-16.58 %
Apulia	1,481	1,325	-10.53 %
Sardinia	682	571	-16.28 %
Sicily	1,560	1,188	-23.85 %
Tuscany	1,045	965	-7.66 %
Trentino A. A.	431	470	9.05 %
Umbria	265	278	4.91 %
Valle d'Aosta	27	19	-29.63 %
Veneto	1,295	1,284	-0.85 %
Regional total	21,459	19,198	-10.54 %
International waters	1	-	-- %
Total	21,460	19,198	-10.54 %

Drug seizures – regional distribution

The review of the quantities seized in macro-areas revealed that, in 2022, the highest quantities of seizures were carried out in Southern Italy and Islands (56.87%), followed by Northern Italy (25.88%) and Central Italy (17.25%).

Calabria, with 19,459.72 kg of drugs, registered the highest amount of seizures with respect to the other regions. This figure is mainly due to cocaine seizures amounting to 16,110.38 kg occurred in the Port of Gioia Tauro. Calabria is followed by Sardinia, Lazio, Lombardy, Campania, Emilia Romagna, Liguria and Tuscany.

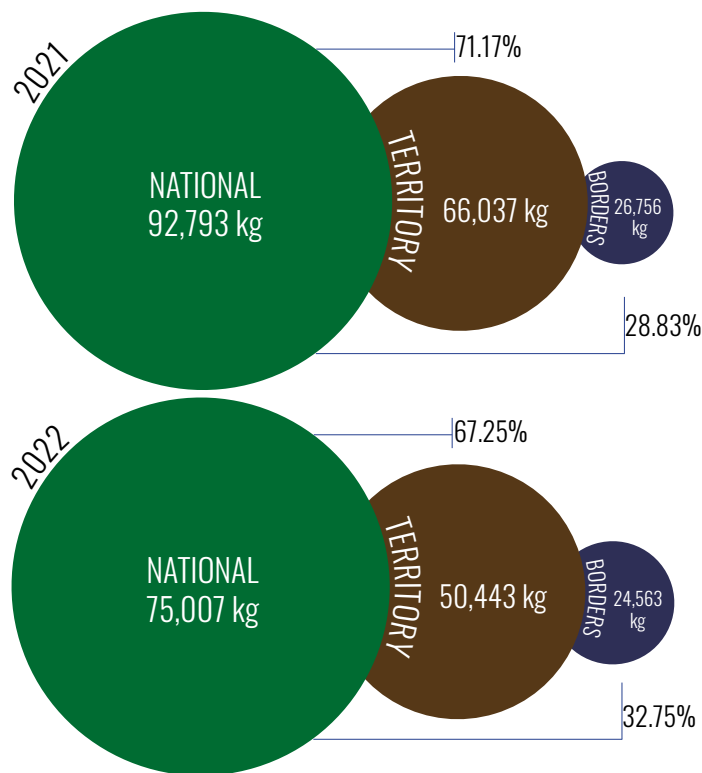
The lowest records were reached in Valle d'Aosta and Molise. With respect to 2021, drug seizures, in percentage, highly increased in Friuli V.G., Emilia Romagna, Campania, Trentino and Lazio, while the most considerable decreases were registered in Molise, Valle d'Aosta, Umbria and Sicily.



Regional distribution - drug seized (kg) and incidence on total at regional level

Regions	2021	2022	Var. %
Abruzzi	515.65	478.17	-7.27%
Basilicata	60.18	34.30	-43.01%
Calabria	16,952.93	19,459.72	14.79%
Campania	2,439.31	3,827.21	56.90%
Emilia Romagna	1,311.57	2,681.21	104.43%
Friuli V. G.	351.44	939.27	167.26%
Lazio	7,182.50	9,542.76	32.86%
Liguria	2,023.25	2,578.52	27.44%
Lombardy	12,646.44	8,812.36	-30.32%
Marche	853.24	640.00	-24.99%
Molise	288.19	11.24	-96.10%
Piedmont	3,106.60	1,961.40	-36.86%
Apulia	3,950.62	2,354.29	-40.41%
Sardinia	23,676.43	15,061.79	-36.38%
Sicily	5,531.44	1,427.08	-74.20%
Tuscany	2,561.71	2,522.21	-1.54%
Trentino A. A.	280.14	421.95	50.62%
Umbria	915.22	235.97	-74.22%
Valle d'Aosta	37.31	4.22	-88.69%
Veneto	2,108.77	2,013.39	-4.52%
Regional total	86,792.94	75,007.03	-13.58%
International waters	6,000	-	--%
Total	92,792.94	75,007.03	-19.17%

DRUG TRAFFICKING TOWARDS ITALY

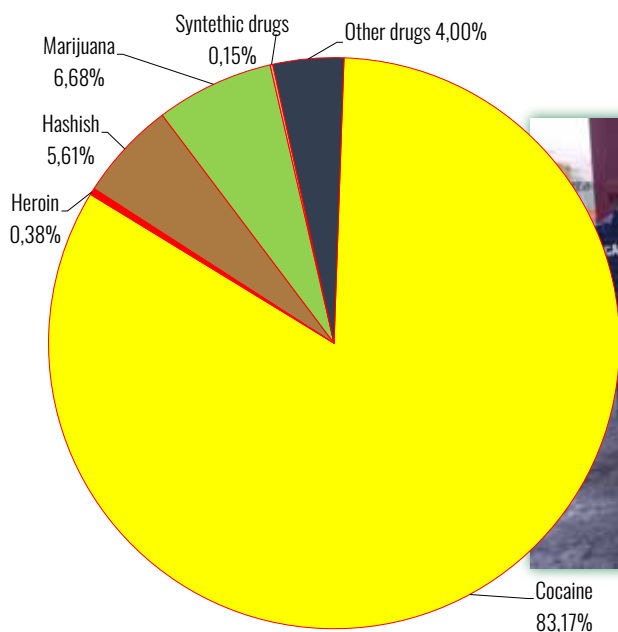


In 2022, 75,007.03 kg of drugs were seized in Italy, 24,563.40 kg of which (32.59%) at borders, compared to 92,792.94 kg seized in 2021, with 26,755.87 kg (28.83%) at borders. In 2022, the total amount of intercepted drugs at borders decreased by 8.19% with respect to 2021.

In 2022 cocaine, with 83.17% was the most seized drug at borders, followed by marijuana, hashish, by other drugs, heroin and synthetic drugs.

As indicated below in the charts devoted to each substance, the results achieved at borders in 2022, highlight that in 2022 only cocaine seizures at borders increased:

- cocaine, equal to 20,429.31 kg (of which 20,050.38 kg at sea borders) in 2022, increased by 35.05% with respect to 15,127.58 kg of 2021;
- heroin, 94.562 kg seized in 2022, 202.87 kg (-53.39%) in 2021;



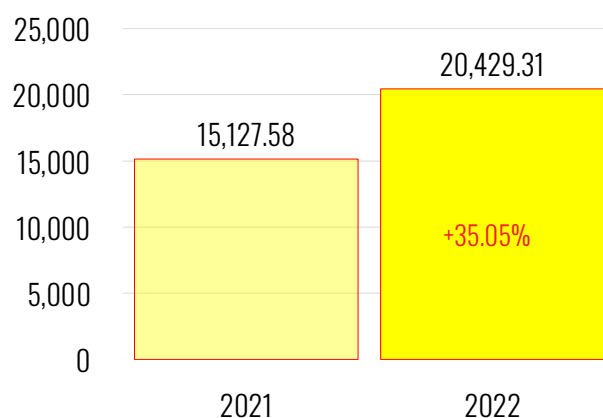
Port of La Spezia



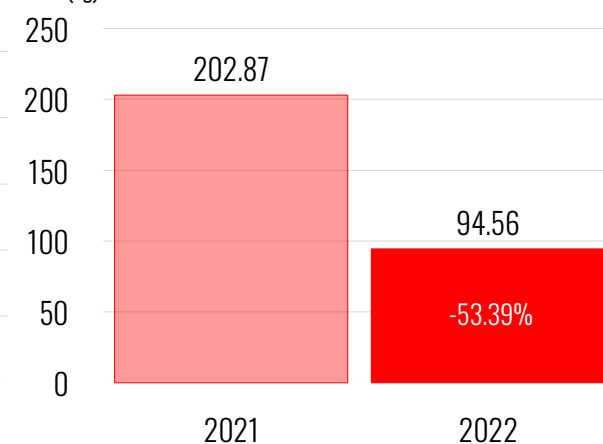
Seizure of 412.20 kg of cocaine - January 2022

- hashish, 1,378.87 kg seized in 2022, 6,994.74 kg in 2021 (- 80.29%);
- marijuana, 1,640.60 kg seized in 2022, 2,260.03 kg in 2021 (-27.41%);
- synthetic drugs 36.59 kg seized in 2022, 89.06 kg in 2021 (-58.92%);
- other drugs 983.47 kg seized in 2022, as compared to 2,081.57 kg seized in 2021 (-52.75%).

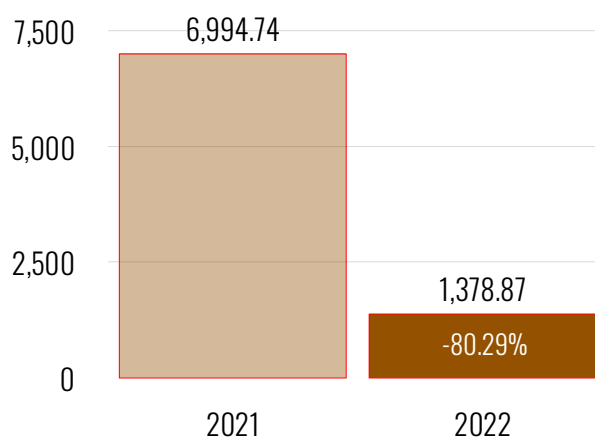
Cocaine (kg) seized at borders



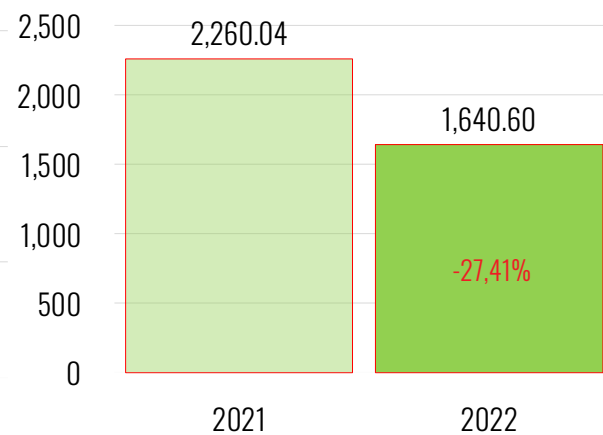
Heroin (kg) seized at borders



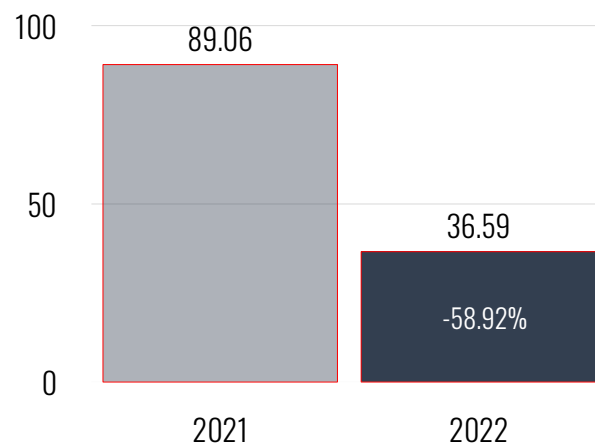
Hashish (kg) seized at borders



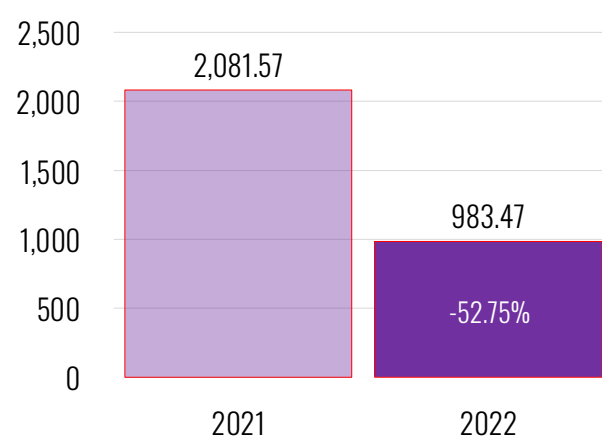
Marijuana (kg) seized at borders



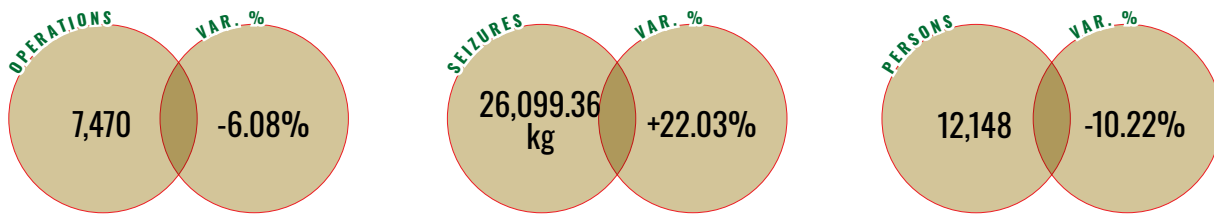
Synthetic drugs (kg) seized at borders



Synthetic drugs (dosis) seized at borders



THE FIGHT AGAINST COCAINE



In 2022, the operations against cocaine trade were 7,470 (-6.08% with respect to 2021), showing an increase in the quantities seized, from 21,386.85 kg in 2021 to 26,099.36 kg in 2022 (+22.03%). There was a decrease (-10.22%) in the number of persons reported (12,148), 8,857 of whom were arrested (-9.60%).

The most important seizures occurred in the port of Gioia Tauro (RC) in June (1,515.40 kg and 1,437.81 kg) and in January (1,181.60 kg and 1,123.42 kg) and in Rome in April (1,110.50 kg).

4,394 foreign nationals were reported to the judicial authorities, 3,028 of which were arrested.

The foreign nationals mostly involved in cocaine trafficking were those from Albania, Morocco, Tunisia, Senegal and Nigeria.

Among the persons reported for cocaine-related offences, 1,084 were women (8.92%) and 11,064 men (91.08%).

Among the 206 minors (1.70%) reported for cocaine-related offences, 94 (45.63%) were foreign nationals, in particular from Tunisia, Senegal, Morocco, Romania and Albania.

As to the type of offence, 84.79% of the reports concerned drug trafficking/pushing and 15.21% conspiracy to drug trafficking.

33.82% of the total number of persons reported to the Judicial Authorities for cocaine trafficking were in the 40/over age group, 16.58% in the 25-29 age group, 16.09% in the 30-34 age group, 15.61% in the age group 20-24, 12.62% in the age group 35-39, 5.20% were in the age group 15-19. Minors under the age of 15 were 0.07 percent of the total number of the persons reported at national level.

The cocaine seized was mainly concealed on the persons (1,896 cases), in houses (966 cases), in cars (520 cases) and in parcels or letters (50 cases).

Persons reported to the J.A. for cocaine

	2021	2022	var. %
Type of report			
Arrested	9,798	8,857	-9.60 %
Reported but not arrested	3,597	3,159	-12.18 %
At large	136	132	-2.94 %
Type of offence - (Law No. 309/90)			
Illicit trafficking (art. 73)	11,499	10,300	-10.43%
Conspiracy to traffic (art. 74)	2,031	1,848	-9.01%
Other offences	1		-100.00%
Gender			
Males	12,296	11,064	-10.02%
Females	1,235	1,084	-12.23%
Age			
Of age	13,352	11,942	-10.56%
Minors	179	206	15.08%
Total	13,531	12,148	-10.22%

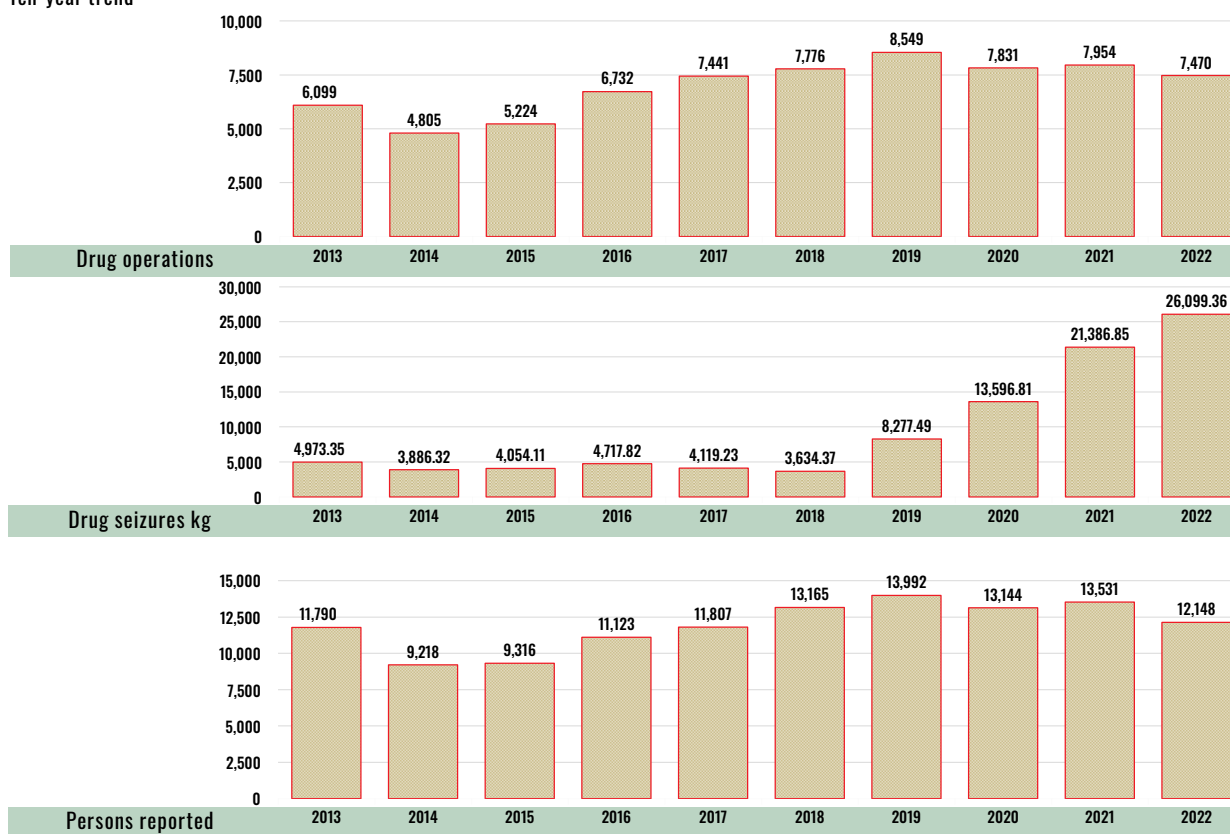
	2021	2022	var. %
Nationality			
Italian	9,079	7,754	-14.59%
Foreign	4,452	4,394	-1.30%
of which:			
Albanian	1,127	1,200	6.48%
Maroccan	1,235	1,146	-7.21%
Tunisian	514	629	22.37%
Senegalese	186	185	-0.54%
Nigerian	269	167	-37.92%
Age groups			
< 15	3	9	200.00%
15 ÷ 19	596	632	6.04%
20 ÷ 24	1,803	1,896	5.16%
25 ÷ 29	2,234	2,014	-9.85%
30 ÷ 34	2,320	1,955	-15.73%
35 ÷ 39	1,856	1,533	-17.40%
≥ 40	4,719	4,109	-12.93%

Ten-year trend

Since 2013, the average number of anti-drug operations, where cocaine was the most involved drug, has been around 7,000, reaching its highest peak in 2019, with 8,549, and its lowest in 2014, with 4,805.

Up to 2018, cocaine seizures recorded a uniform trend with an average of just over 4 tonnes. Since 2019, there has been a trend of steady growth which exceeded 26 tonnes in the reporting year. The 10-year average amount of reports was almost 12,000, with the lowest value in 2014 (9,218) and the highest in 2019 (13,992).

Ten-year trend

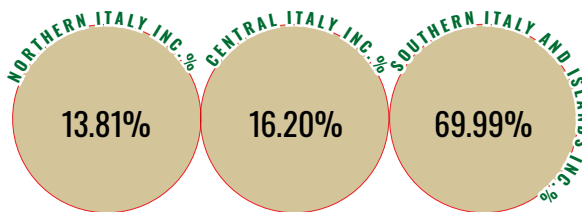


Nepi (VT)



Seizure
of 167 kg of cocaine
May 2022

Cocaine seizures – regional distribution



Considering the macro-areas, 69.99% of cocaine seizures occurred in Southern Italy and Islands, 16.20% in Central Italy and 13.81% in Northern Italy.

The regions where the largest quantities of cocaine were seized are Calabria, Lazio, Campania, Liguria, Friuli V.G., Tuscany, Veneto and Lombardy, while the lowest

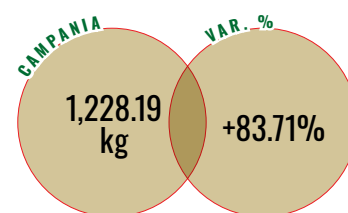
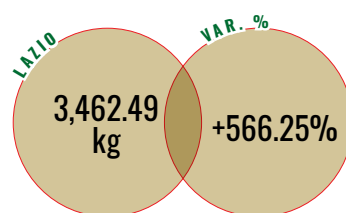
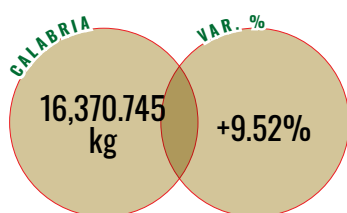
quantities were registered in Molise, Basilicata and Valle d'Aosta.

In comparison with 2021, significant percentage increases in the quantities seized were registered in Lazio, Liguria, Friuli V.G., Umbria, Abruzzi, Sardinia and Apulia.






Valle d'Aosta, Sicily, Basilicata and Veneto were the only regions where decreases were registered.

Regional distribution of cocaine seized and incidence on total at regional level

Regions	2021	2022	Var. %
Abruzzi	15.88	40.05	152.18%
Basilicata	5.27	0.89	-83.09%
Calabria	14,947.70	16,370.75	9.52%
Campania	668.56	1,228.19	83.71%
Emilia Romagna	129.24	247.23	91.30%
Friuli V. G.	162.06	844.95	421.37%
Lazio	519.70	3,462.49	566.25%
Liguria	197.78	1,158.71	485.85%
Lombardy	441.19	480.44	8.90%
Marche	34.92	56.85	62.79%
Molise	0.74	0.77	3.78%
Piedmont	143.34	201.12	40.31%
Apulia	80.41	168.25	109.23%
Sardinia	59.46	128.69	116.43%
Sicily	2,445.91	329.29	-86.54%
Tuscany	651.26	680.24	4.45%
Trentino A. A.	165.96	167.41	0.87%
Umbria	7.86	27.37	248.24%
Valle d'Aosta	36.45	1.73	-95.25%
Veneto	673.17	503.95	-25.14%
Regional total	21,386.85	26,099.36	+22.03%
International waters	-	-	--%
National Total	21,386.85	26,099.36	+22.03%



COCAINE - SUMMARY TABLE

	FIVE-YEAR TREND					Var % 21-22
	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	
Operations	7,776	8,549	7,831	7,954	7,470	-6.08
Seizures						
in doses	1,737	2,022	2,348	2,046	2,745	+34.16
by weight (kg)	3,634.37	8,277.49	13,596.81	21,386.85	26,099.36	+22.03
Persons reported to the J. A.	13,165	13,992	13,144	13,531	12,148	-10.22
Italians	8,313	8,546	8,514	9,079	7,754	-14.59
Foreigners	4,852	5,446	4,630	4,452	4,394	-1.30
of whom:						
 Albanians	1,295	1,458	1,333	1,127	1,200	+6.48
 Moroccans	1,450	1,472	1,349	1,235	1,146	-7.21
 Tunisians	470	455	445	514	629	+22.37
 Senegalese	209	347	236	186	185	-0.54
 Nigerians	257	371	277	269	167	-37.92
Males	12,023	12,845	11,957	12,296	11,064	-10.02
Females	1,142	1,147	1,187	1,235	1,084	-12.23
Of age	12,990	13,770	12,985	13,352	11,942	-10.56
Minors	175	222	159	179	206	+15.08
Illicit trafficking (Art.73)	11,190	11,980	11,549	11,499	10,300	-10.43
Conspiracy to traffic (Art.74)	1,973	2,011	1,594	2,031	1,848	-9.01
Other offences	2	1	1	1		-100.00
Type of report:						
Arrested	9,866	10,356	9,389	9,798	8,857	-9.60
Reported but not arrested	3,175	3,494	3,579	3,597	3,159	-12.18
At large	124	142	176	136	132	-2.94

Vipiteno (BZ)



Seizure of 46 kg of cocaine - December 2022

Cocaine flows towards Italy

Seizures (kg) and incidence on the total seized at borders - 2022



MARITIME BORDERS
20,050.38 kg (98.15%)



AIR BORDERS
307.21 kg (1.50%)

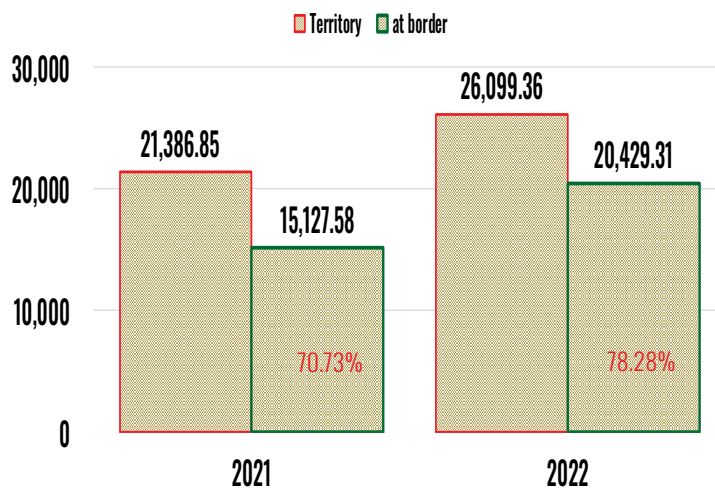


LAND BORDERS
71.72 kg (0.35%)

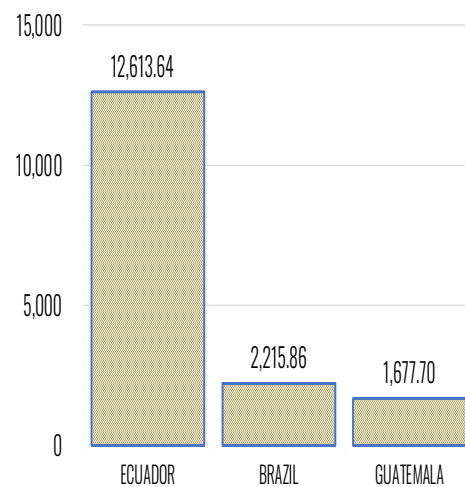
In the two-year period 2021/2022 the incidence of seizures at borders, with respect to the total seizures at national level, shifted from 70.73% to 78.28%.

In 2022, 26,099.36 kg of cocaine were seized at national level, with an increase of 22.03% in comparison with 21,386.85 kg in 2021. Cocaine seizures at borders amounted to 20,429.31 kg, with an increase of 35.05% in comparison with 15,127.58 kg in 2021.

Total of cocaine national seizures (kg) total of seizures at borders



Main cocaine origin countries (kg)



According to information available, in 2022 the countries of origin of the cocaine seized at borders were:

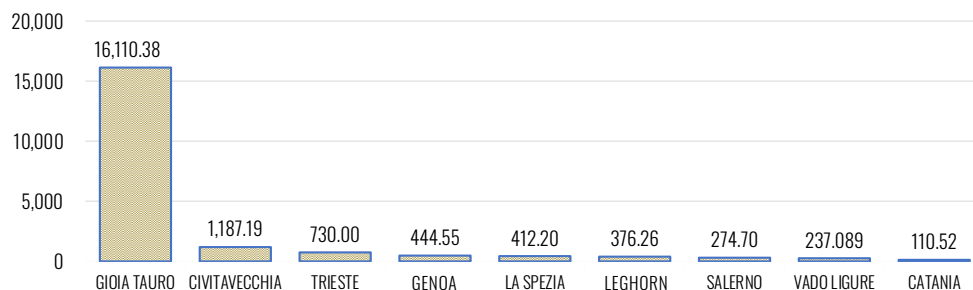
- Ecuador, 12,613.64 kg (61.74%);
- Brazil, 2,215.86 kg (10.85%);
- Guatemala, 1,677.70 kg (8.21%);
- Peru, 1,371.67 kg (6.71%);
- Mexico, 1,181.61 kg (5.78%).

The incidence of the cocaine seized at borders and coming from Ecuador represents 32.53% of the total quantity intercepted at sea borders.

The largest quantities of cocaine were seized at **maritime borders** (20,050.38 kg), showing a small decrease in the incidence in relation to the total quantities intercepted at borders, shifting from 98.88% in 2021 to 98.15% in 2022.

Most cocaine shipments (16,110.38 kg, representing 80.35%) were seized at Gioia Tauro port, followed by the ports of Civitavecchia (RM) with 1,187.19 kg and Trieste with 730 kg.

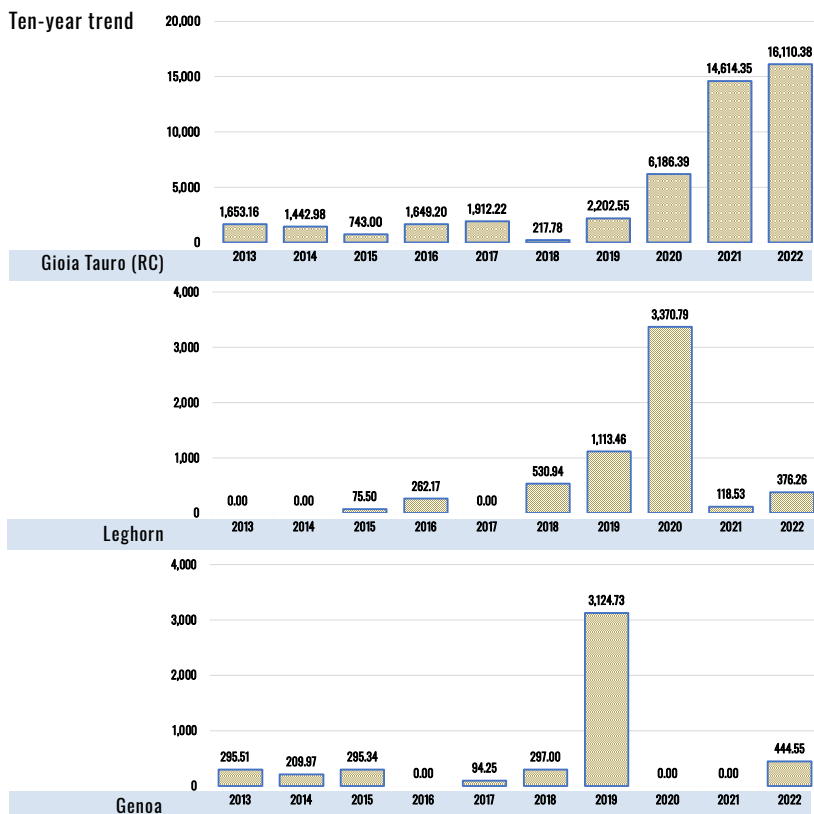
Seizures kg - 2022 - main ports



Cocaine enters almost exclusively from the ports of the west coast; in 2022 alone, the port of Trieste was involved in this traffic, ranking third in terms of quantity seized. The ten-year trend confirms the steady growth of the quantities seized in the port of Gioia Tauro where, in the last two years over 30 tonnes were seized. In 2022 the port of Civitavecchia reached its peak, with over one ton seized, the highest level reached earlier in the decade was 94.62 kg in 2019.

A total of 24 persons were reported to the Judicial Authorities for operations conducted in maritime areas, 14

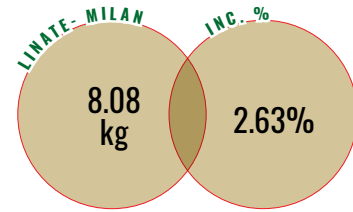
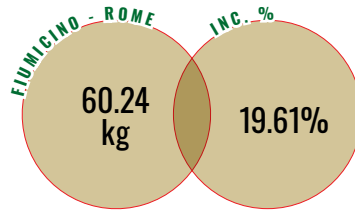
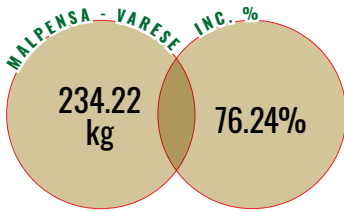
Ten-year trend



Port of Gioia Tauro



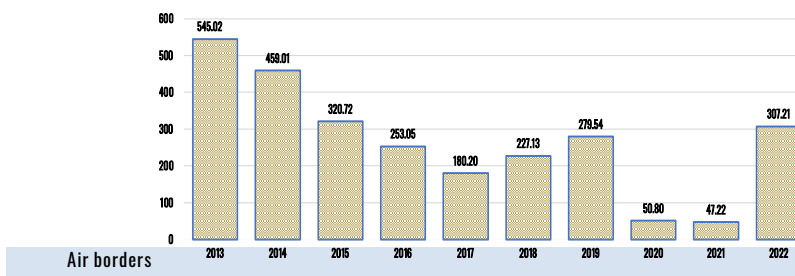
Seizure of 654.30 kg of cocaine - April 2022



of which were Italian nationals.

In 2022 the seizures at **air borders** were equal to 307.21 kg, with an increase of 550.61% in comparison with 47.22 kg seized in 2021. The graph below shows the seizure trend of cocaine transported by air carrier.

Ten-year trend - Cocaine seizures (kg)



The Italian airport where the largest quantities of cocaine were seized was Malpensa (VA), with 234.22 kg (76.24% of the total quantity seized at air borders), followed by Fiumicino (RM), with 60.24 kg (19.61%) and Linate (MI), with 8.08 kg (2.63%). These three airports have accounted for 98.48% of the total of cocaine seized at the Italian airports.

Among the main countries of origin of the cocaine transported by air Colombia and Peru are in the leading position. The quantities are the following:

- Colombia, 211.02 kg;
- Peru, 40.97 kg;
- Dominican Republic, 17.48 kg;
- Argentina, 12.52 kg.

Airport of Malpensa (VA)



Seizure of 7 kg of liquid cocaine concealed inside food beverage containers labelled "coconut oil and agave syrup".
June 2022

In the airport areas 38 subjects were reported. Most of them were Italians, while the other nationalities involved were: Peruvian (7), Spanish (5), Colombian and Brazilian (4).

In 2022, 71.72 kg of cocaine were seized at land borders, with a decrease of 41.16%, in comparison with 121.90 kg seized in 2021.

Major seizures were made at the motorway border of Vipiteno (BZ) with 46 kg, followed by Ventimiglia railway border crossing (IM) with 22 kg, the Brogeda border crossing (CO), with 1.88 kg and the Mont Blanc Tunnel border crossing (AO) with 1.66 kg.

7 persons were reported at the land borders: 3 Germans, 2 Nigerians, 1 Albanian and 1 Guinean. No Italian nationals were reported.

COCAINE MAIN CUSTOMS AREAS

IN TERMS OF DRUG SEIZURES/INCIDENCE OF SEIZURES MADE AT BORDERS

Area	Location	Weight (kg)	Percentage
MARITIME BORDERS 20,050.38 KG	Gioia Tauro (RC)	16,110.38	80.35%
	Civitavecchia (RM)	1,187.19	5.92%
	Trieste	730.00	3.64%
	Genoa	444.55	2.22%
	La Spezia	412.20	2.06%
AIR BORDERS 307.21 KG	Malpensa (VA)	234.22	76.24%
	Fiumicino (RM)	60.24	19.61%
	Linate (MI)	8.08	2.63%
	Ciampino (RM)	2.03	0.66%
	Galilei (PI)	1.30	0.42%
LAND BORDERS 71.72 KG	Crossing of Highway Vipiteno (BZ)	46.00	64.14%
	Crossing of Ventimiglia FFSS (IM)	22.00	30.67%
	Crossing of Brogeda (CO)	1.88	2.63%
	Tunnel of Monte Bianco (AO)	1.66	2.32%

COCAINE - PERSONS REPORTED TO THE J. A. AT BORDERS

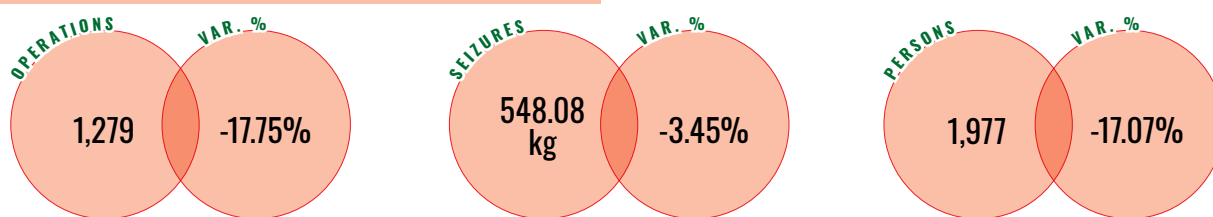
	Italian (21)
	Spanish (7)
	Nigerian (7)
	Peruvian (7)
	Brasilian (4)
	Colombian (4)
	Dominican (3)
	German (3)
	Venezuelan (2)
	French (2)
	Albanian (2)
	Dutch (2)
	Tunisian (1)
	Cuban (1)
	Ecuadorian (1)
	Bissau-Guinean (1)
	Portoguese (1)

Ventimiglia (IM)



Seizure of 22 kg of cocaine - November 2022

FIGHT AGAINST HEROIN



In 2022, the heroin seized in Italy decreased by 3.45%, shifting from 567.68 kg to 548.08 kg. The operations and the number of persons reported to the Judicial Authorities with regard to this drug also decreased, accounting for 1,279 (-17.75%) and 1,977 (-17.07%) respectively and resulting in the arrest of 1,408 individuals (-23.81%).

The foreign nationals reported were 1,012 which corresponds to 51.19% of the total persons reported for that substance, 752 of which were arrested.

The foreign nationals who were mainly involved in heroin trafficking were subjects from Nigeria, Morocco, Tunisia, The Gambia, Senegal and Albania. Among the persons reported for heroin-related offences, 205 (10.37%) were women and 1,772 (89.63%) men.

Among 22 (1.11%) minors reported for heroin-related offences, 11 (50%) were foreign nationals, in particular from Tunisia, Morocco, Egypt, Algeria and Pakistan.

As to the type of offence, 86.09% of subjects were reported for trafficking/pushing and 13.91% for conspiracy to drug trafficking.

Out of the total number of persons reported to the Judicial Authorities for heroin trafficking, 32.68% are in the 40/over age group, 19.07% in the 30-34 age group and 17.45% in the 25-29 age group. The youngest (<18) represent 1.11% of the total number of the persons reported for this substance at national level.

The most significant seizures were made in Milan in January (43.06 kg), in Ancona in September (36.24 kg), in Varese in October (29.35 kg) and in Adrara San Martino (BG) in July (24.2 kg).

Heroin seized during antidrug operations was mainly concealed on the person (415 cases), inside houses (157 cases), in cars (60 cases) and in body cavities (17 cases).

Persons reported to the J. A. for heroin

	2021	2022	var. %
Type of report			
Arrested	1,848	1,408	-23.81%
Reported but not arrested	521	550	5.57%
At large	15	19	26.67%
Type of offence - (Law No. 309/90)			
Illicit trafficking (Art. 73)	2,056	1,702	-17.22%
Conspiracy to traffic (Art.74)	327	275	-15.90%
Other offences	1		-100.00%
Gender			
Males	2,184	1,772	-18.86%
Females	200	205	2.50%
Age			
Of age	2,366	1,955	-17.37%
Minors	18	22	22.22%
Total	2,384	1,977	-17.07%

	2021	2022	var. %
Nationality			
Italian	1,222	965	-21.03%
Foreign	1,162	1,012	-12.91%
of which:			
Nigerian	320	281	-12.19%
Moroccan	173	183	5.78%
Tunisian	230	178	-22.61%
Gambian	46	58	26.09%
Albanian	88	56	-36.36%
Fasce di età			
< 15	1	3	200.00%
15 ÷ 19	72	58	-19.44%
20 ÷ 24	304	246	-19.08%
25 ÷ 29	431	345	-19.95%
30 ÷ 34	419	377	-10.02%
35 ÷ 39	368	302	-17.93%
≥ 40	789	646	-18.12%

Ten-year trend

Over the last ten years the operations and the number of persons reported to the Judicial Authority for heroin-related offences have declined, with an average of 2,043 operations and 3,351 persons reported. As to the heroin seizures data, the peak was reached in 2018, when 979.27 kg were seized, while the lowest record was in 2016, with 480.18 kg.

Ten-year trend

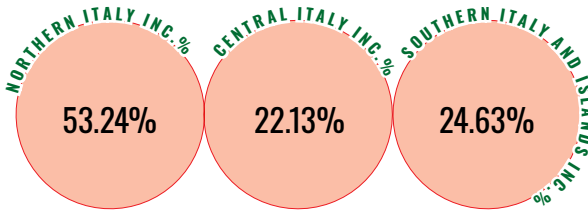


Perugia



Seizure of 9 kg of heroin - April 2022

Heroin seizures – regional distribution



Considering the macro-areas, 53.24% of heroin was seized in Northern Italy, 22.13% in Central Italy and 24.36% in Southern Italy and Islands.

The regions where the largest quantities of heroin were seized are Lombardy, Marche, Apulia, Veneto, Lazio, Campania and Abruzzi, while the lowest quantities were

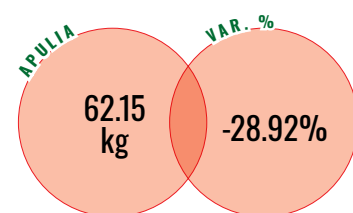
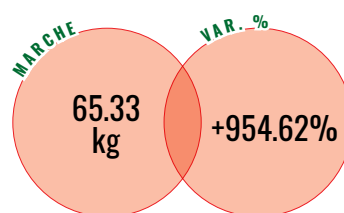
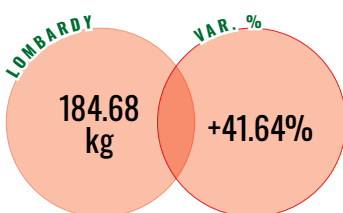
seized in Valle d'Aosta, Molise, Friuli V.G. and Basilicata, with less than 1 kg.

In comparison with 2021, significant percentage increases in the seized quantities were registered in Marche, Liguria, Abruzzi and Trentino A.A.






The most considerable decreases were registered in Val d'Aosta, Friuli V.G., Lazio and Emilia Romagna.

Regional distribution of heroin seized and incidence on total at regional level

Regions	2021	2022	Var. %
Abruzzi	4.02	26.21	551.54%
Basilicata	1.20	0.61	-48.66%
Calabria	5.74	7.42	29.27%
Campania	23.62	30.21	27.91%
Emilia Romagna	73.04	21.29	-70.85%
Friuli Venezia Giulia	8.04	0.60	-92.49%
Lazio	141.73	37.43	-73.59%
Liguria	3.62	23.81	558.59%
Lombardy	130.39	184.68	41.64%
Marche	6.20	65.33	954.62%
Molise	0.99	0.46	-53.14%
Piedmont	3.92	9.36	138.73%
Apulia	87.44	62.15	-28.92%
Sardinia	3.02	6.81	125.28%
Sicily	3.11	1.12	-63.80%
Tuscany	27.86	8.73	-68.66%
Trentino Alto Adige	1.84	7.12	287.32%
Umbria	14.90	9.82	-34.10%
Valle d'Aosta	0.21	0.01	-97.07%
Veneto	26.83	44.92	67.46%
Regional total	567.68	548.08	-3.45%
International waters	-	-	--%
National total	567.68	548.08	-3.45%



HEROIN - SUMMARY TABLE

	FIVE-YEAR TREND					Var % 21-22
	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	
Operations	2,075	2,242	1,813	1,555	1,279	-17.75
Seizures						
in doses	1,168	502	349	155	423	172.90
by weight (kg)	979.28	618.59	513.12	567.68	548.08	-3.45
Persons reported to the J. A.	3,470	3,400	2,854	2,384	1,977	-17.07
Italians	1,436	1,559	1,491	1,222	965	-21.03
Foreigners	2,034	1,841	1,363	1,162	1,012	-12.91
of whom:						
 Nigerians	632	548	434	320	281	-12.19
 Maroccans	233	231	170	173	183	5.78
 Tunisians	455	266	239	230	178	-22.61
 Gambians	72	63	63	46	58	26.09
 Albanians	150	166	90	88	56	-36.36
Males	3,169	3,066	2,522	2,184	1,772	-18.86
Females	301	334	332	200	205	2.50
Of age	3,445	3,372	2,838	2,366	1,955	-17.37
Minors	25	28	16	18	22	22.22
Illicit trafficking (Art. 73)	3,123	3,050	2,668	2,056	1,702	-17.22
Conspiracy to traffic (Art.74)	347	350	186	327	275	-15.90
Other offences				1		-100
Type of report:						
Arrested	2,453	2,457	2,154	1,848	1,408	-23.81
Reported but not arrested	973	881	668	521	550	5.57
At large	44	62	32	15	19	26.67

Genoa



Seizure of 9.3 kg
of heroin
February 2022

Heroin flows towards Italy

Seizures (kg) and incidence on the total seized at borders - 2022



AIR BORDERS
68.48 kg (72.41%)



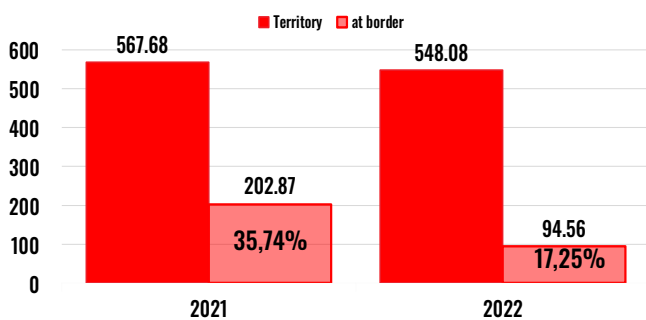
MARITIME BORDERS
26.08 kg (27.58%)



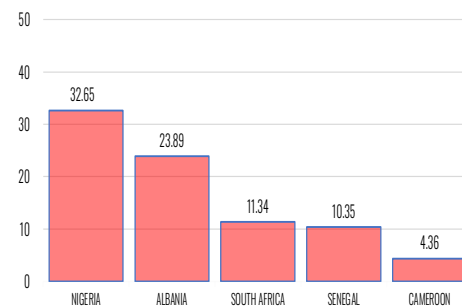
LAND BORDERS
THERE ARE NO SIGNIFICANT SEIZURE

In the two-year period examined there was a decrease in heroin quantities seized at borders, if compared with the overall seizures carried out in Italy, shifting from 35.74% in 2021, to 17.25% in 2022. In 2022, 94.56 kg of heroin were seized at borders, with a decrease of 53.39% in comparison to 2021 (202.87 kg).

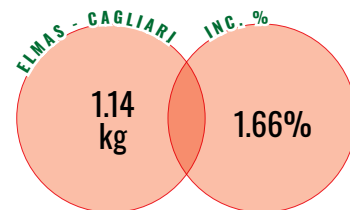
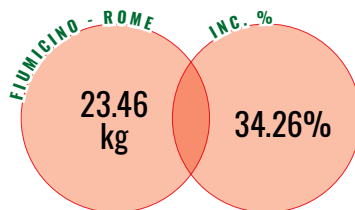
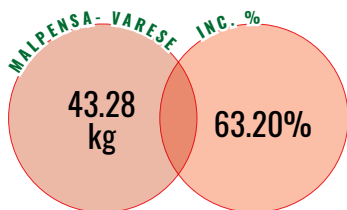
Total of heroin national seizures (kg) / total of seizures at borders



Main source countries



The analysis of the cases where the origin of the drugs has been fully ascertained by the operating bodies, highlights that most of the heroin seized came from Nigeria, Albania, South Africa, Senegal, Cameroon. In 2022, the incidence rate of heroin seizures at **air borders** was 72.42% with respect to the total of border seizures (in 2021 it was 98.69%).



The airports mostly involved in heroin trafficking were Malpensa (VA) with 43.28 kg, Fiumicino (RM) with 23.46 kg. Together they represent 97.46% of the total seizures made at airports.

As to the origin of heroin trafficked by air routes, its flow through the Southern Route, i.e. in transit through African countries² (66.74 kg) is still significant. The heroin transported along such route represented 70.58% of the total of heroin seized at air borders.

The persons reported to the Judicial Authorities at the Italian airports were mainly from Nigeria (11), Portugal, Albania, Cameroon, Tanzania, The Gambia and Ghana (1).

In the period 2021/2022, the quantity of heroin intercepted at **maritime borders** increased (from 2.46 kg of 2021 to 26.08 kg of 2022).

In 2022, the port areas involved in heroin trafficking were Ancona, with 23.64 kg, representing 90.63% of the overall heroin seized, followed by Porto Torres (SS), with 1.50 kg; Cagliari, with 0.41 kg; Alghero (SS), with 0.29 kg and Bari, with 0.25 kg.

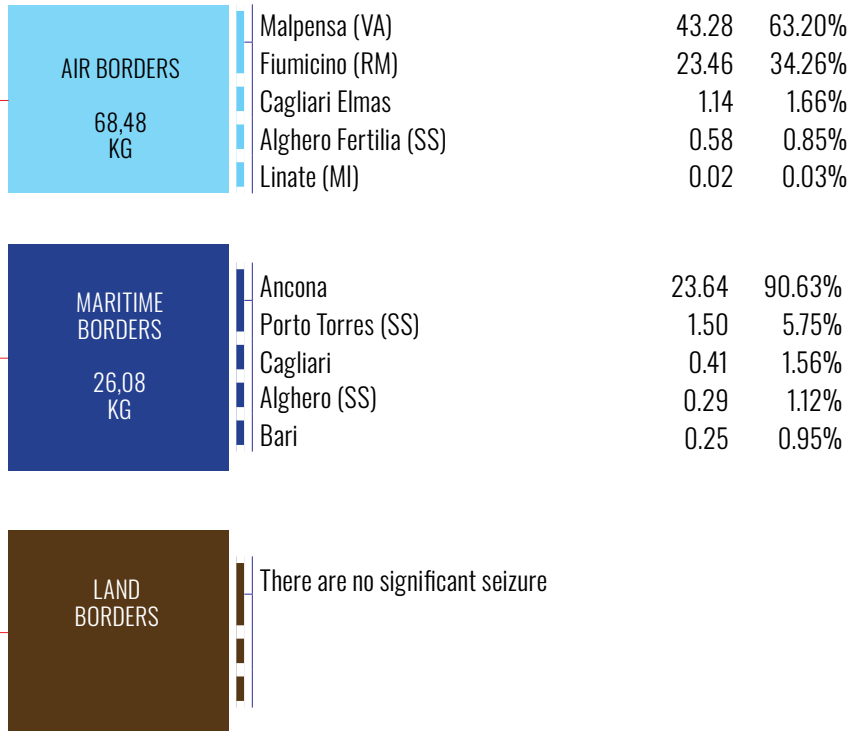
Port of Ancona



*Seizure of 23.64 kg
of heroin
June 2022*

² Nigeria, 32.65 kg; South Africa, 11.34 kg; Senegal, 10.35 kg; Cameroon, 4.36 kg; Ghana, 3.80 kg; Ethiopia, 1.88 kg; Uganda, 1.25 kg and Malawi, 1.12 kg.

HEROIN MAIN CUSTOMS AREAS IN TERMS OF DRUG SEIZURES / INCIDENCE OF SEIZURES MADE AT BORDERS



HEROIN - PERSONS REPORTED TO THE J. A. AT BORDERS

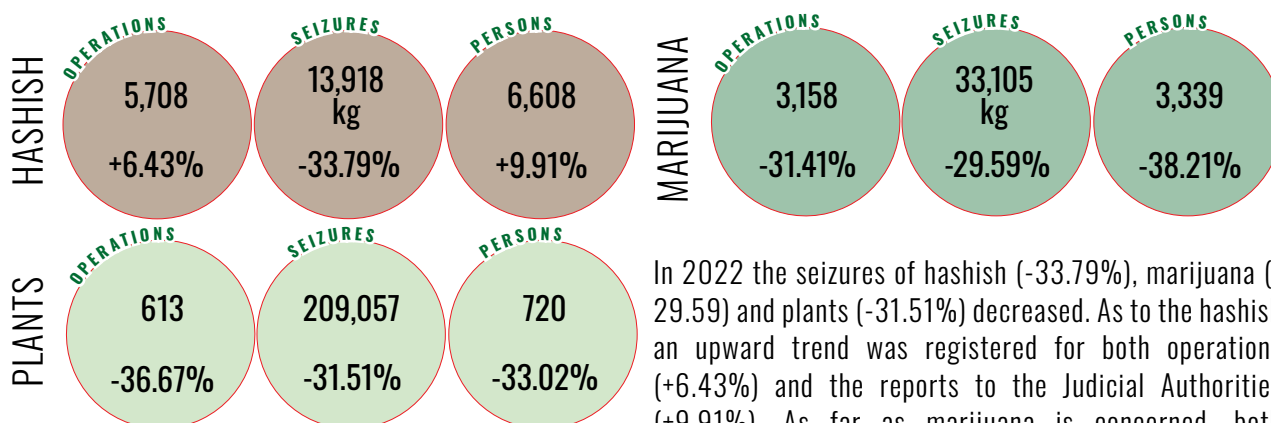


Airport Guglielmo Marconi (BO)



Baggage check by dog unit

THE FIGHT AGAINST CANNABIS



In 2022 the seizures of hashish (-33.79%), marijuana (-29.59) and plants (-31.51%) decreased. As to the hashish an upward trend was registered for both operations (+6.43%) and the reports to the Judicial Authorities (+9.91%). As far as marijuana is concerned, both operations (-31.41%) and persons reported (-38.21%)

decreased. The police operations carried out in the fight against cannabis derivatives amounted to 9,479 (5,708 for hashish, 3,158 for marijuana and 613 for cannabis plants), the reports were 10,667 out of which: 6,608 for hashish, with 3,541 persons arrested; 3,339 for marijuana, with 1,822 persons arrested; 720 for cannabis plants cultivation, with 386 persons arrested.

Out of the total reports for cannabis derivatives offences, 3,090 (28.97%) concerned foreign nationals, in particular Moroccans, Tunisians, Albanians, Gambians and Egyptians; among them, 1,590 (51.46%) were arrested.

Out of 840 minors reported for cannabis related offences, 135 (16.07%) were foreign nationals, in particular Moroccans, Tunisians, Albanians, Romanians and Egyptians.

As to the type of offence, 97.92% of reports concerned the offence of trafficking/pushing, while 2.06% conspiracy to drug trafficking and 0.02% other offences.

23.41% of the persons reported to the Judicial Authorities for cannabis are in the age group 40 and over, 22.76% are aged between 20 and 24 and 15.74% are in the age group 25- 29. The youngest (<18) represent 7.87% of the total of the persons reported for cannabis offences at national level.

As to seizures, hashish seizures reached the total amount of 13,918.17 kg, marijuana 33,105.49 kg, while the plants seized were 209,057.

Sora (FR)

The largest hashish seizures were carried out in Pisa (628 kg in May), in Fonte Nuova (RM) (585 kg in September) and in Castel Volturno (CE) (560 kg in November). The largest marijuana seizures were made in Bedizzole (BS) (2,153.85 kg in December), in Macomer (NU) (1,442 kg in August) and in Talana (NU) (1,240 kg in November).

Most of the cannabis seized was found on the person (2,914 cases), in houses (2,632 cases), in cars (569 cases) and inside postal parcels and letters (369 cases).



Seizure of 120 kg of hashish and 48 kg of cocaine - July 2022

Persons reported to the J.A. for cannabis offences

	2021	2022	var. %
Type of report			
Arrested	7,241	5,749	-20.60%
Reported but not arrested	5,224	4,893	-6.34%
At large	26	25	-3.85%
Type of offence - (Law No. 309/90)			
Illicit trafficking (Art.73)	12,150	10,445	-14.03%
Conspiracy to traffick (art. 74)	341	220	-35.48%
Other offences		2	--%
Gender			
Males	11,626	9,989	-14.08%
Females	865	678	-21.62%
Age			
Of age	11,751	9,827	-16.37%
Minors	740	840	13.51%
Total	12,491	10,667	-14.60%

Nationality

	2021	2022	var. %
Italian	9,402	7,577	-19.41%
Foreign	3,089	3,090	0.03%
of which:			
Moroccan	634	711	12.15%
Tunisian	218	304	39.45%
Albanian	300	239	-20.33%
Gambian	363	234	-35.54%
Egyptians	125	219	75.20%

Age groups

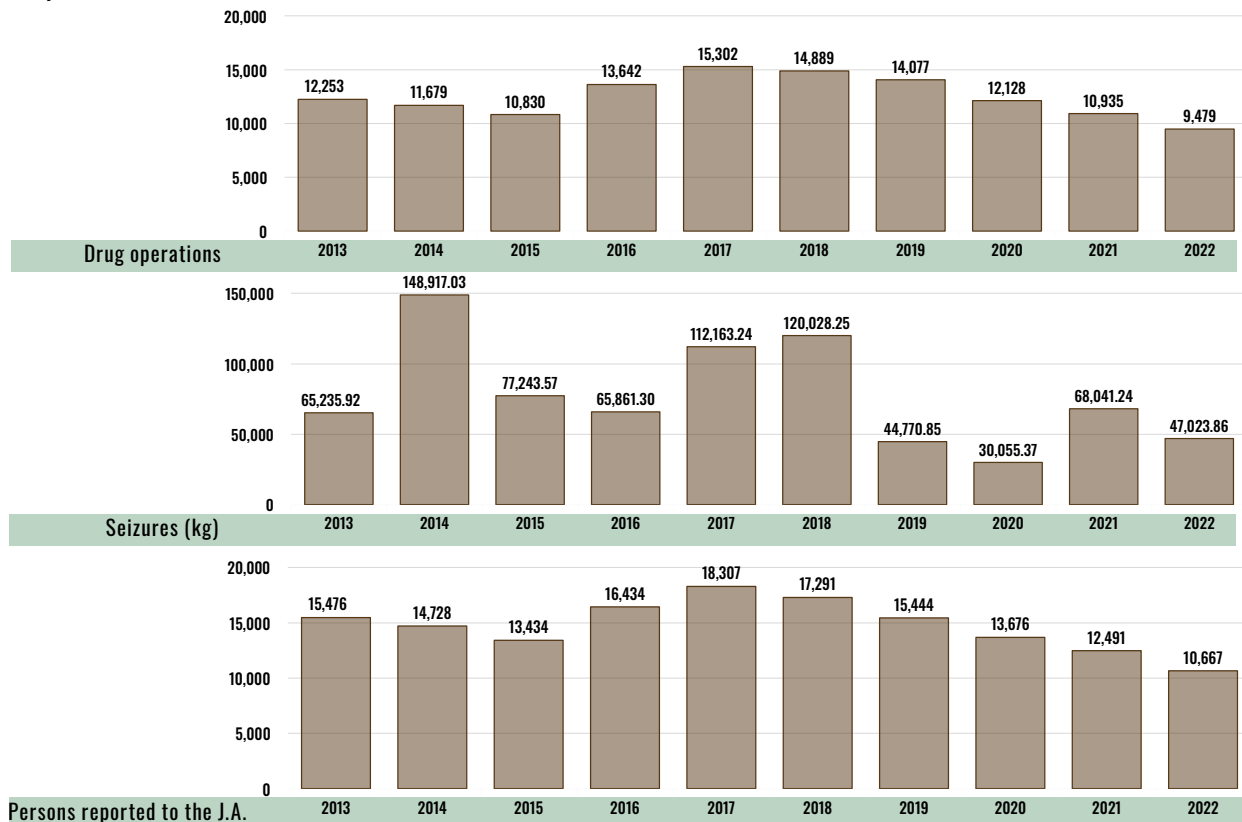
	2021	2022	var. %
< 15	31	44	41.94%
15 ÷ 19	1,798	1,853	3.06%
20 ÷ 24	2,828	2,428	-14.14%
25 ÷ 29	2,002	1,679	-16.13%
30 ÷ 34	1,560	1,254	-19.62%
35 ÷ 39	1,150	912	-20.70%
≥ 40	3,122	2,497	-20.02%

Ten-year trend

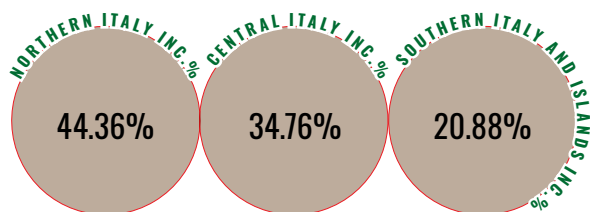
Cannabis, in its different forms (hashish e marijuana), is the most seized drug on the Italian illegal market. Since 2013, the average number of operations concerning cannabis derivatives has always remained around 12,500, peaking in 2017, with 15,302 operations. The highest peak in seizures was reached in 2014 (148,917.03 kg), the lowest in 2020 (30,055.37 kg).

In the last ten years an average of 15,000 reports have been submitted to the Judicial Authorities. The peak was reached in 2017 (18,307), and the lowest level in the reporting year (10,667).

Ten-year trend



Hashish seizures – regional distribution



Analyzing the macro-areas, hashish seizures were distributed as follows: 44.36% in Northern Italy, 34.76% in Central Italy and 20.88% in Southern Italy and islands.

The largest hashish seizures were carried out in Lazio, Lombardy, Campania, Tuscany, Piedmont and Liguria,

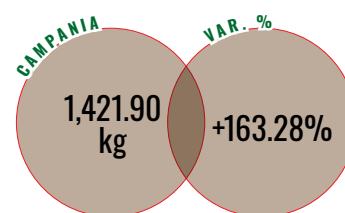
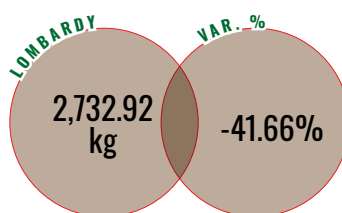
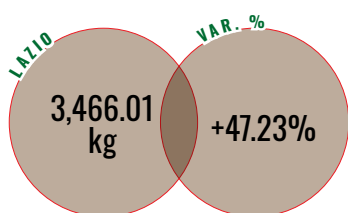
while the lowest amounts were seized in Valle d'Aosta, Basilicata and Molise.

In comparison to 2021, significant increases in percentage terms concerned the seizures made in Abruzzi, Valle d'Aosta, Campania, Veneto and Sardinia.

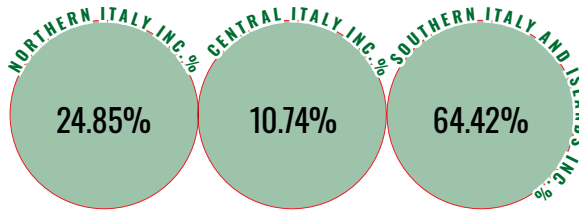
The most notable decreases were registered in Apulia, Umbria and Piedmont.

Regional distribution of hashish seized having incidence on the regional total

Regions	2021	2022	Var. %
Abruzzi	107.95	307.20	184.57%
Basilicata	6.06	9.67	59.42%
Calabria	77.91	64.08	-17.75%
Campania	540.08	1,421.90	163.28%
Emilia Romagna	513.47	667.37	29.97%
Friuli V. G.	25.25	36.40	44.14%
Lazio	2,354.17	3,466.01	47.23%
Liguria	1,567.50	1,025.59	-34.57%
Lombardy	4,684.42	2,732.92	-41.66%
Marche	66.58	76.27	14.56%
Molise	8.56	9.15	6.86%
Piedmont	2,093.00	1,197.48	-42.79%
Apulia	913.94	438.79	-51.99%
Sardinia	64.73	137.73	112.79%
Sicily	884.99	518.10	-41.46%
Tuscany	803.27	1,261.71	57.07%
Trentino A. A.	55.80	42.28	-24.23%
Umbria	65.93	34.25	-48.05%
Valle d'Aosta	0.61	1.66	172.46%
Veneto	185.99	469.83	152.61%
Regional total	15,020.21	13,918.37	-7.34%
International waters	6,000.00	-	-100.00%
National total	21,020.21	13,918.37	-33.79%



Marijuana seizures – regional distribution



Analyzing the macro-areas marijuana seizures were distributed as follows: 64.42% in Southern Italy and islands, 24.85% in Northern Italy and 10.74 % in Central Italy.

The largest marijuana seizures were carried out in Sardinia, Lombardy, Calabria, Lazio and Emilia Romagna,

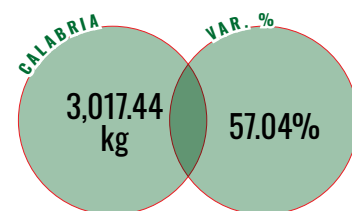
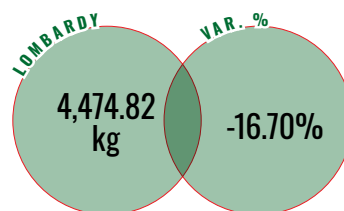
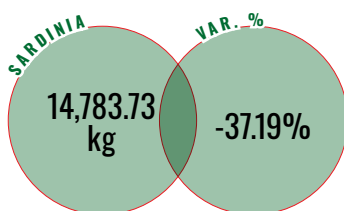
while the lowest seizures occurred in Valle d'Aosta, Molise and Basilicata.

In comparison to 2021, in percentage terms, there were substantial increases in the quantities seized in Trentino A.A., Emilia Romagna, Calabria and Liguria.

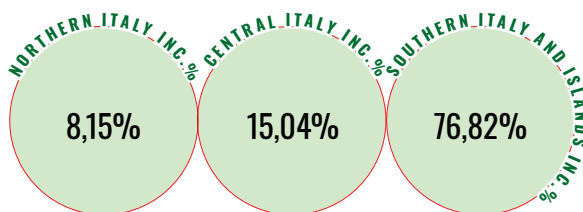
The most notable decreases were registered in Molise, Umbria, Sicily and Abruzzi.

Regional distribution of marijuana seized and incidence on total at regional level

Regions	2021	2022	Var. %
Abruzzi	387.66	104.37	-73.08%
Basilicata	47.53	23.12	-51.36%
Calabria	1,921.51	3,017.44	57.04%
Campania	1,206.79	1,145.61	-5.07%
Emilia Romagna	577.82	1,727.72	199.01%
Friuli V. G.	109.76	55.58	-49.36%
Lazio	3,585.28	2,411.22	-32.75%
Liguria	249.62	370.17	48.30%
Lombardy	5,371.62	4,474.82	-16.70%
Marche	704.62	441.08	-37.40%
Molise	277.90	0.86	-99.69%
Piedmont	860.96	539.98	-37.28%
Apulia	2,840.69	1,674.66	-41.05%
Sardinia	23,539.04	14,783.73	-37.19%
Sicily	2,192.20	576.16	-73.72%
Tuscany	1,048.61	537.59	-48.73%
Trentino A. A.	54.83	200.25	265.22%
Umbria	824.42	164.36	-80.06%
Valle d'Aosta	0.05	0.82	1724.44%
Veneto	1,220.15	855.95	-29.85%
Regional total	47,021.04	33,105.49	-29.59%
International waters	-	-	--%
National total	47,021.04	33,105.49	-29.59%



Cannabis plants seizures – regional distribution



Analyzing the macro-areas cannabis plants seizures were distributed as follows: 76.82% in Southern Italy and islands, 15.04% in Central Italy and 8.15% in Northern Italy.

The largest cannabis seizures were carried out in Calabria, Sardinia, Lazio, Sicily, Campania and Apulia;

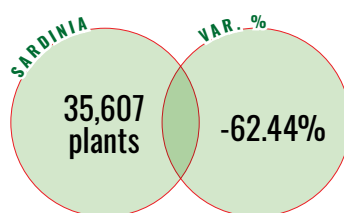
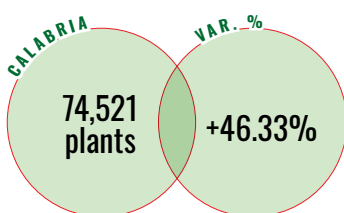
while the smallest seizures occurred in Valle d'Aosta, Molise, Basilicata and Trentino A.A.

In comparison to 2021, in percentage terms, there were substantial increases in the quantities seized in Umbria, Lazio, Calabria and Abruzzi.






The most notable decreases were registered in Molise, Lombardy and Liguria.

Regional distribution of cannabis plants seized and incidence on total at regional level

Regions	2021	2022	Var. %
Abruzzi	917	1,329	44.93%
Basilicata	254	71	-72.05%
Calabria	50,926	74,521	46.33%
Campania	28,728	10,876	-62.14%
Emilia Romagna	4,461	1,174	-73.68%
Friuli V. G.	302	157	-48.01%
Lazio	13,334	29,077	118.07%
Liguria	1,278	233	-81.77%
Lombardy	33,685	4,629	-86.26%
Marche	1,546	693	-55.17%
Molise	4,892	63	-98.71%
Piedmont	6,727	3,726	-44.61%
Apulia	16,754	9,536	-43.08%
Sardinia	94,793	35,607	-62.44%
Sicily	33,194	28,591	-13.87%
Tuscany	2,005	994	-50.42%
Trentino A. A.	277	142	-48.74%
Umbria	262	669	155.34%
Valle d'Aosta	106	30	-71.70%
Veneto	10,805	6,939	-35.78%
Regional total	305,246	209,057	-31.51%
International waters	-	-	--%
National total	305,246	209,057	-31.51%








HASHISH - SUMMARY TABLE

	FIVE-YEAR TREND					Var % 21-22
	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	
Operations	6,566	6,305	4,134	5,363	5,708	6.43
Seizures						
in doses	1,015	711	447	1,488	958	-35.62
by weight (kg)	78,700.33	21,068.77	9,763.42	21,020.21	13,918.37	-33.79
Persons reported to the J.A.	7,690	7,040	4,677	6,012	6,608	9.91
Italians	4,741	4,424	3,235	4,028	4,271	6.03
Foreigners	2,949	2,616	1,442	1,984	2,337	17.79
of whom:						
 Maroccans	891	698	395	565	674	19.29
 Tunisians	302	234	147	189	280	48.15
 Egyptians	230	154	115	110	208	89.09
 Gambians	288	321	173	214	170	-20.56
 Albanians	112	116	76	144	137	-4.86
Males	7,190	6,650	4,409	5,640	6,228	10.43
Females	500	390	268	372	380	2.15
Of age	7,195	6,484	4,386	5,549	5,932	6.90
Minors	495	556	291	463	676	46.00
Illicit trafficking (Art.73)	7,421	6,800	4,466	5,891	6,479	9.98
Conspiracy to traffic (Art.74)	269	240	211	121	127	4.96
Other offences					2	--
Type of report:						
Arrested	4,898	4,474	2,884	3,508	3,541	0.94
Reported but not arrested	2,763	2,527	1,774	2,487	3,055	22.84
At large	29	39	19	17	12	-29.41

Castel Volturno (CE)

Seizure of 560 kg
of hashish
November 2022

MARIJUANA - SUMMARY TABLE






	FIVE-YEAR TREND					Var % 21-22
	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	
Operations	7,370	6,946	6,795	4,604	3,158	-31,41
Seizures						
in doses	4,984	2,543	1,336	51,399	1,915	-96,27
by weight (kg)	41,327,92	23,702,08	20,291,95	47,021,04	33,105,49	-29,59
Persons reported to the J.A.	8,478	7,521	7,646	5,404	3,339	-38,21
Italians	4,884	4,535	5,597	4,383	2,639	-39,79
Foreigners	3,594	2,986	2,049	1,021	700	-31,44
of whom:						
 Nigerians	1,035	832	331	152	113	-25,66
 Albanians	295	238	191	128	97	-24,22
 Gambians	751	700	468	149	62	-58,39
 Romanians	111	87	106	72	37	-48,61
 Moroccans	137	137	126	63	36	-42,86
Males	8,038	7,158	7,168	5,013	3,106	-38,04
Females	440	363	478	391	233	-40,41
Of age	7,951	7,110	7,235	5,134	3,183	-38,00
Minors	527	411	411	270	156	-42,22
Illicit trafficking (Art,73)	8,356	7,351	7,484	5,198	3,294	-36,63
Conspiracy to traffic (Art,74)	120	170	162	206	45	-78,16
Other offences	2					--
Type of report:						
Arrested	5,534	4,920	4,559	3,128	1,822	-41,75
Reported but not arrested	2,923	2,579	3,065	2,270	1,504	-33,74
At large	21	22	22	6	13	116,67

Brindisi



Seizure of 7.5 kg
of marijuana
October 2022

CANNABIS PLANTS - SUMMARY TABLE

	FIVE-YEAR TREND					Var % 21-22
	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	
Operations	953	826	1.199	968	613	-36,67
Seizures of plants	524.904	223.855	415.298	305.246	209.057	-31,51
Persons reported to the J.A.	1.123	883	1.353	1.075	720	-33,02
Italians	1.044	840	1.256	991	667	-32,69
Foreigners	79	43	97	84	53	-36,90
of whom:						
 Romanians	14	8	15	8	12	50,00
 Albanians	14	8	19	28	5	-82,14
 Indians					5	--
 Germans	1		5	1	3	200,00
 Poles	4	1	6	2	3	50,00
Males	1.033	827	1.240	973	655	-32,68
Females	90	56	113	102	65	-36,27
Of age	1.105	873	1.337	1.068	712	-33,33
Minors	18	10	16	7	8	14,29
Illicit trafficking (Art.73)	1.117	875	1.344	1.061	672	-36,66
Conspiracy to traffic (Art.74)	6	8	9	14	48	242,86
Other offences						--
Type of report:						
Arrested	700	585	690	605	386	-36,20
Reported but not arrested	422	295	661	467	334	-28,48
At large	1	3	2	3		-100,00

Pomezia (RM)



Seizure of 4,000 plants of cannabis and 8.8 kg of marijuana July 2022

Hashish flows towards Italy

Seizures (kg) and incidence on the total seized at borders - 2022



MARITIME BORDERS

839.77 kg (60.90%)



LAND BORDERS

496.06 kg (35.98%)

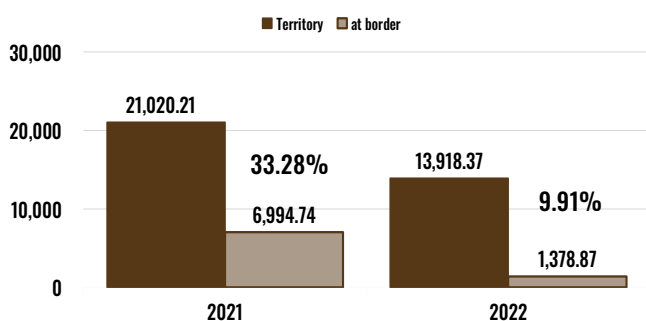


AIR BORDERS

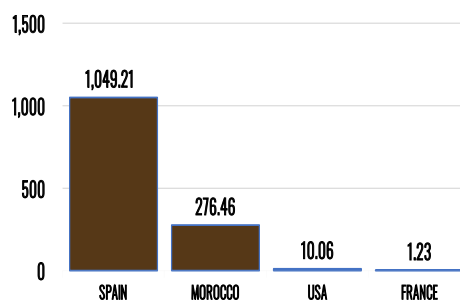
43.04 kg (3.12%)

In the two-year period under examination a decrease in the incidence of the hashish quantities seized at borders was registered, in comparison to the total quantities seized at national level, shifting from 33.28% in 2021 to 9.91% in 2022. A total amount of 1,378.87 kg of hashish was seized at borders, while 6,994.74 kg (-80.29%) were seized in 2021.

Seizures of hashish, comparison between territory and borders (kg)



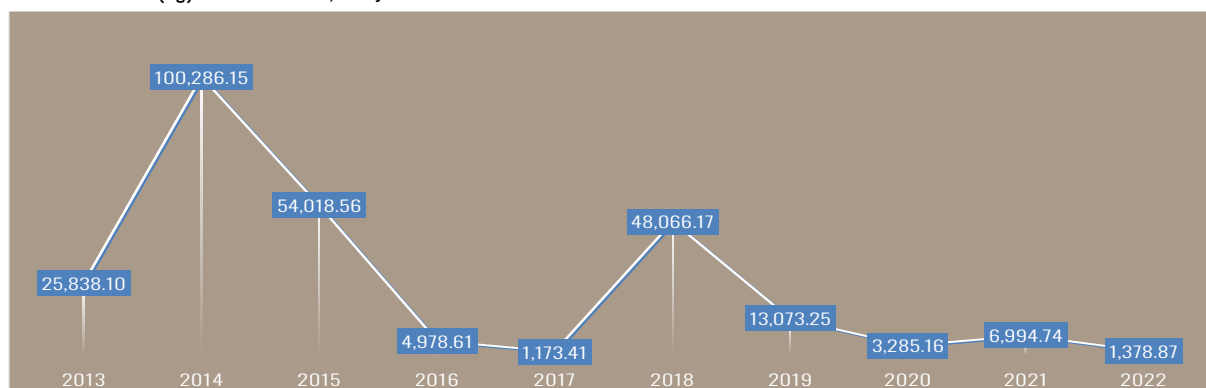
Main source countries



Analyzing the cases where the drug origin was ascertained by the operating authorities, it comes out that most of the hashish seized came from Spain, Morocco, USA and France.

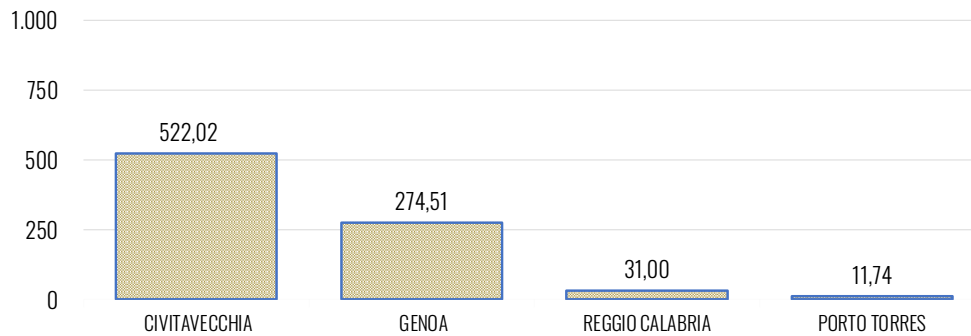
The following graph shows the trend of hashish seizures at the Italian borders in the period 2013/2022; the graph shows the fluctuations in values with sharply declining trends. It should be pointed out that the remarkable difference from year to year is linked to the quantity of each seizure – amounting to tens of tons – carried out on vessels by the national air/naval units of the law enforcement agencies on the Mediterranean sea.

Hashish seizures (kg) in border areas, ten-year trend



839.77 kg were seized at **sea borders**, that remains the operational scenario where the largest quantities of hashish were seized, with a decrease of the incidence in comparison to the total amount seized at borders, shifting from 88.05% of 2021 to 60.90% of 2022. The countries of origin of the drug seized are Spain (533.82 kg) and Morocco (274.45 kg). The ports where the major seizures were made are illustrated in the graph below.

Seizures kg - 2022 - main ports



As to **land borders** (496.06 kg in total), the main crossing point used was Ventimiglia (IM), through the highway "Autofiori", where 495.72 kg were seized, representing 99.94% of the total quantities seized. In fact, it is on the main land route of the hashish transiting through Spain and France to Italy.

The amounts of hashish introduced into Italy through **air borders** were modest, equal to 43.04 kg, with a decrease of 37.43% in comparison to 2021. Airports are marginally used to transport cannabis derivatives, since traffickers need to move huge quantities to get remarkable profits.

In 2022, the most significant seizures occurred at Malpensa (VA) airport (22.96 kg in total), followed by Ciampino (RM), with 5.35 kg, Capodichino (NA), with 5.16 kg, Linate (MI), with 3.31 kg and Orio al Serio (BG), with 2.28 kg.

Civitavecchia (RM)



Seizure of 467.28 kg of hashish July 2022

**HASHISH - MAIN CUSTOMS AREAS
IN TERMS OF QUANTITIES SEIZED / INCIDENCE OF SEIZURES MADE AT BORDERS**

Area	Location	Quantity (KG)	Incidence (%)
MARITIME BORDERS 839.77 KG	Civitavecchia (RM)	522.02	62.16%
	Genoa	274.51	32.69%
	Reggio Calabria	31.00	3.69%
	Porto Torres (SS)	11.74	1.40%
	Ancona	0.23	0.03%
AIR BORDERS 43.04 KG	Malpensa (VA)	22.96	53.35%
	Ciampino (RM))	5.35	12.43%
	Capodichino (NA)	5.16	12.00%
	Linate (MI)	3.31	7.69%
	Orio al Serio (BG)	2.28	5.30%
LAND BORDERS 496.03 KG	Crossing of Autofiori (IM))	495.72	99.93%
	Crossing of Brogeda (CO)	0.20	0.04%
	Crossing of Drezzo (CO)	0.11	0.02%

HASHISH - PERSONS REPORTED TO THE J. A. AT BORDERS

-  Italians (42)
-  French (39)
-  Spanish (37)
-  Dutch (5)
-  Belgian (5)
-  Egyptian (5)
-  Moroccan (3)
-  Swedish (2)
-  Dominican (1)
-  Paraguayan (1)
-  Norwegian (1)
-  Brazilian (1)
-  Portuguese (1)
-  Algerian (1)
-  Moldovan (1)
-  Russians (1)
-  Danish (1)
-  Ivorian (1)
-  Peruviana (1)
-  Albanian (1)
-  Romanian (1)
-  Bengali (1)
-  Cape Verdean (1)
-  Gibraltarians (1)
-  US (1)
-  Indians (1)
-  Mauritian (1)

Palermo



Seizure of 70 kg of hashish May 2022

Marijuana flows towards Italy

Seizures (kg) and incidence on the total seized at borders - 2022



MARITIME BORDERS
1,279.09 kg (77.96)%



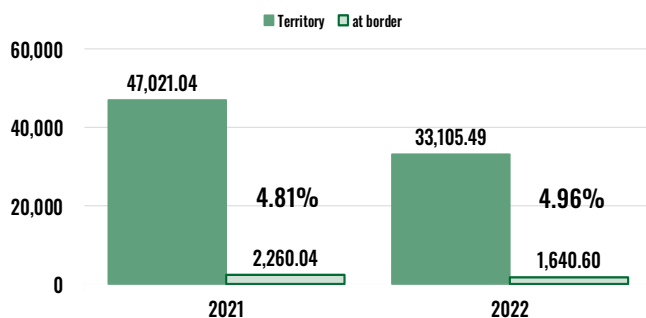
LAND BORDERS
123.61 kg (7.53)%



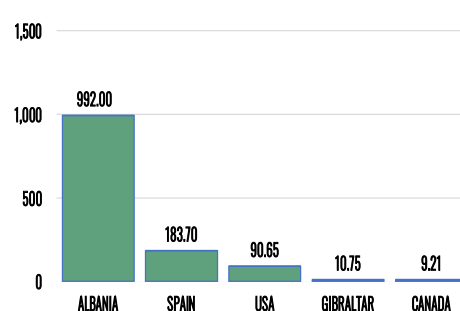
AIR BORDERS
237.91 kg (14.50)%

In the two-year period under examination a slight increase in the incidence of the marijuana quantities seized at borders was registered, in comparison to the total quantities seized at national level, shifting from 4.81% in 2021 to 4.96% in 2022. A total amount of 1,640.60 kg of marijuana was seized at borders in 2022, while in 2021, 2,260.04 kg (-27.41%) were seized.

Marijuana seizures, comparison between territory and borders (kg)



Main source countries



Analyzing the cases where the drug origin was ascertained by the operating authorities, it is possible to state that most of the marijuana seized came from Albania, Spain, USA, Gibraltar and Canada.

With reference to **sea borders**, in 2022, marijuana shipments (1,279.09 kg) were intercepted:

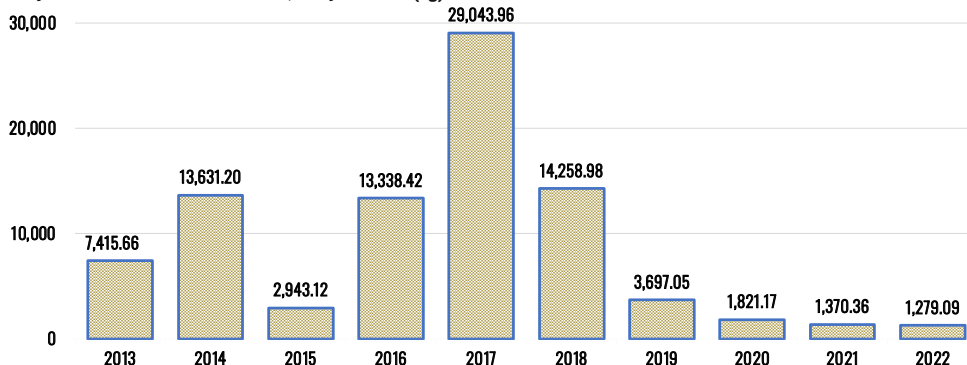
- in the waters close to ports (992 kg);
- at ports (287.09 kg).

As to the loads of marijuana seized at ports, the largest quantities were seized at:

- Leghorn, 195.74 kg;
- Civitavecchia (RM), 62.29 kg;
- Pozzallo (RG), 17.74 kg;
- Messina, 11.06 kg.

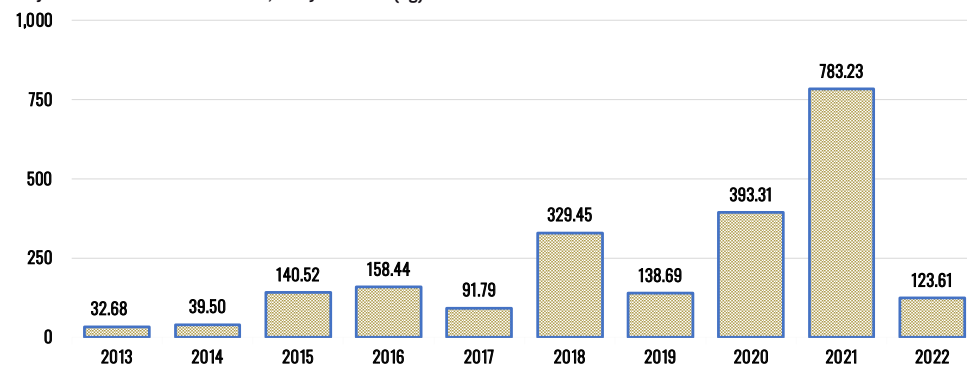
The graph below, concerning marijuana seizures at sea borders in the period 2013/2022, shows a downward trend after 2017, that reached its lowest point in 2022.

Marijuana seizures in maritime areas, ten-year trend (kg)



In 2022, with reference to marijuana, the seizures at **land borders** decreased by 84.22% in comparison to previous year. The following histogram highlights a fluctuating trend in the ten-year period, with a peak in 2021 and the lowest figure in 2013.

Marijuana seizures at land borders, ten-year trend (kg)



The largest seizures at land border crossings were carried out at Ventimiglia (IM) highway “Autofiori” crossing point with 115.54 kg, representing 93.48% of the total amount of the marijuana seized at land borders (123.61 kg).

Spain was the country of origin of the highest quantities of marijuana seized at land borders (116.38 kg, with an incidence of 94.15%).

Air routes were scarcely used also to transport marijuana. In the two-year period 2021/2022, an increase of 123.49% (from 106.45 kg to 237.91 kg) was registered. In 2022, the largest seizure was carried out at Malpensa (VA) airport, amounting to 127.85 kg (53.74% of the total amount seized at the Italian airports).

The major quantities of marijuana seized at airports came from the United States (90.65 kg) and Spain (65,90 kg).

**MARIJUANA - MAIN CUSTOMS AREAS
IN TERMS OF DRUG SEIZURES/INCIDENCE OF SEIZURES MADE AT BORDERS**

**MARITIME
BORDERS**

1,279.09
KG

Leghorn	195.74	15.30%
Civitavecchia (RM)	62.29	4.87%
Pozzallo (RG)	17.74	1.39%
Messina	11.05	0.86%

**AIR
BORDERS**

237.91
KG

Malpensa (VA)	127.85	53.74%
Fiumicino (RM))	48.25	20.28%
Capodichino (NA)	45.89	19.29%
Linate (MI)	12.03	5.06%
Marco Polo (VE)	2.35	0.99%

**LAND
BORDERS**

123.61
KG

Crossing of Autofiori (IM))	115.54	93.48%
Crossing of Drezzo (CO)	6.84	5.53%
Internal customs areas (TO)	0.85	0.68%

**MARIJUANA - PERSONS REPORTED
TO THE J. A. AT BORDERS**

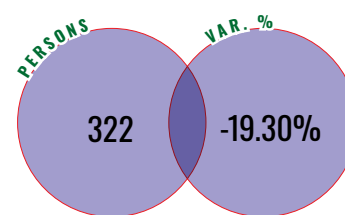
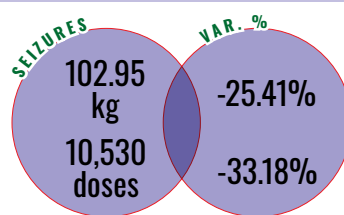
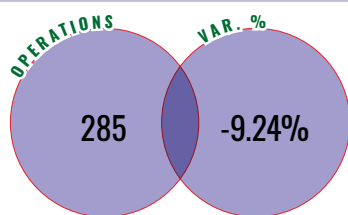
-  Italians (20)
-  Spanish (12)
-  French (10)
-  German (7)
-  Swiss (6)
-  Colombian (4)
-  Belgian (4)
-  US (3)
-  Brazilian (3)
-  Ukrainian (2)
-  Uruguayans (2)
-  Chinese (2)
-  Senegalese (1)
-  Chilean (1)
-  Slovenian (1)
-  Albanian (1)
-  Egyptian (1)
-  English (1)
-  Serbs (1)
-  Bulgarian (1)
-  Bosnian (1)
-  Danish (1)
-  Dominican (1)
-  Mexican (1)
-  Saudi (1)
-  Peruvian (1)
-  Lithuanian (1)

Ventimiglia (IM)



Seizure of 20 kg of marijuana
March 2022

THE FIGHT AGAINST SYNTHETIC DRUGS



In 2022, in Italy, synthetic drug seizures in “dose form” decreased by 33.18%, while those in “powder form” decreased by 25.41%.

For synthetic drugs, seizures in millilitres should also be highlighted, that amounted to 38,207 ml, out of which 37,527 ml of GBL and 680 ml of GHB.

Operations involving synthetic drugs amounted to 285 and the persons reported were 322, out of whom 238 were arrested. 10,530 doses and 102.95 kg were seized.

Among the persons reported for synthetic drugs offences, 140 (43.48%) were foreign nationals (113 of them were arrested), in particular Filipino, Chinese, Nigerian, Senegalese and Romanian nationals.

The most significant quantities were seized in Bellaria – Igea Marina (RN) (12.5 kg of methamphetamine), in Mirano (VE) (8.34 kg of D.M.T.) and in Varese, Malpensa airport (11.05 kg of methamphetamines). The highest quantities in doses were seized in Rome (3,977 doses of ecstasy and 575 doses of amphetamine).

As to the type of offence, reports concerned only the offence of trafficking/pushing.

Out of the 322 persons reported to the Judicial Authorities for synthetic drugs offences, 38.20% were aged 40 or over, 16.77% were aged between 30 and 34 years and 15.84% were between 25 and 29. The youngest (<18) represented 2.80% of the persons reported for synthetic drugs offences at national level.

The synthetic drugs seized during antidrug operations were mostly concealed on the person (107), inside postal parcels or letters (97), in houses (86).

In 2022, as to the synthetic drugs seized in powder form, the Nigerian supply market ranked first, followed by the Dutch one. As to the synthetic drugs seized in doses, the main supply markets were the Nigerian, German and Dutch ones.

Persons reported to the J.A. for synthetic drugs

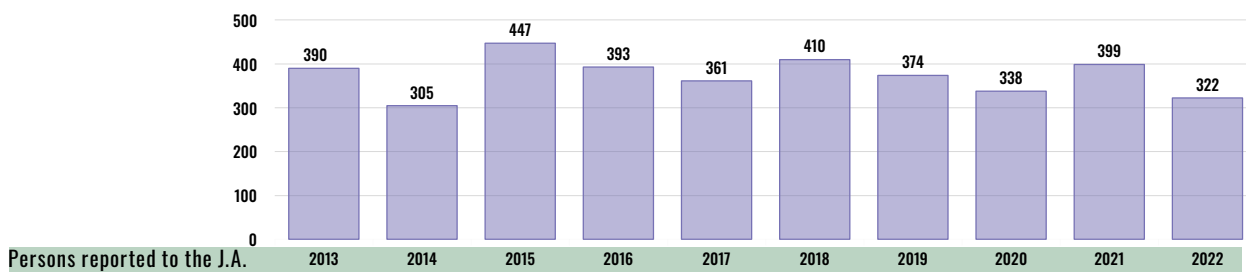
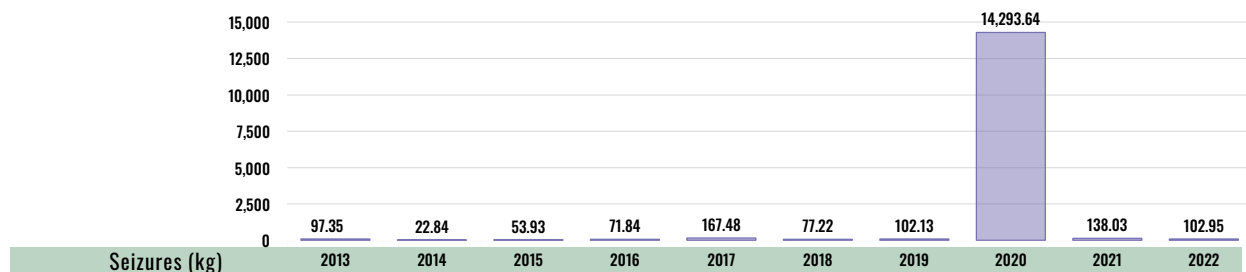
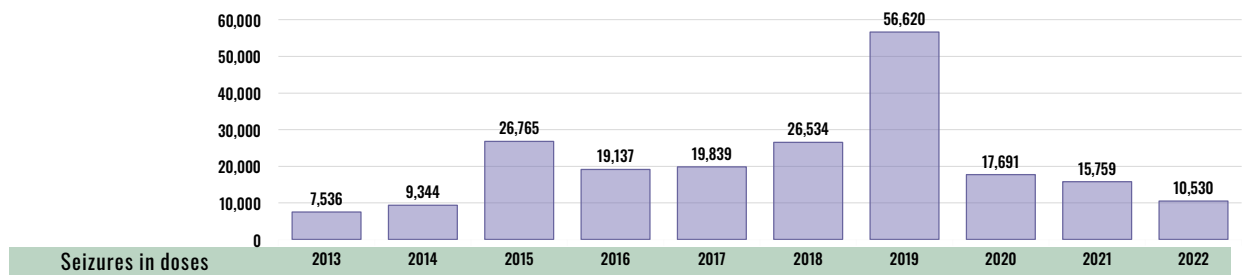
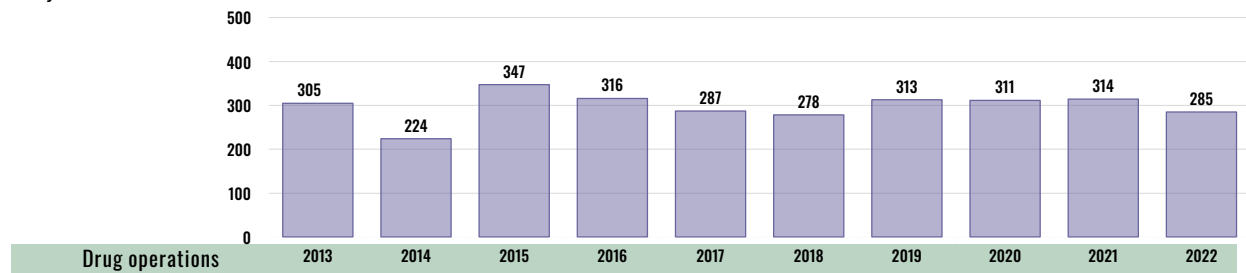
	2021	2022	var. %
Type of report			
Arrested	294	238	-19.05 %
Reported but not arrested	102	84	-17.65 %
At large	3		-100.00 %
Type of offence - (Law No. 309/90)			
Illicit trafficking (Art.73)	389	322	-17.22 %
Conspiracy to traffic (Art.74)	10		-100.00 %
Other offences			-- %
Gender			
Males	360	294	-18.33 %
Females	39	28	-28.21 %
Age			
Of age	395	313	-20.76 %
Minors	4	9	+125.00 %
Total	399	322	-19.30 %

	2021	2022	var. %
Nationality			
Italian	235	182	-22.55 %
Foreigner	164	140	-14.63 %
of which:			
Filipino	65	49	-24.62 %
Chinese	29	25	-13.79 %
Nigerian	14	9	-35.71 %
Senegalese	1	5	400.00 %
Romanian	3	4	33.33 %
Age groups			
< 15		1	-- %
15 ÷ 19	14	14	0.00 %
20 ÷ 24	33	34	3.03 %
25 ÷ 29	46	51	10.87 %
30 ÷ 34	72	54	-25.00 %
35 ÷ 39	59	45	-23.73 %
≥ 40	175	123	-29.71 %

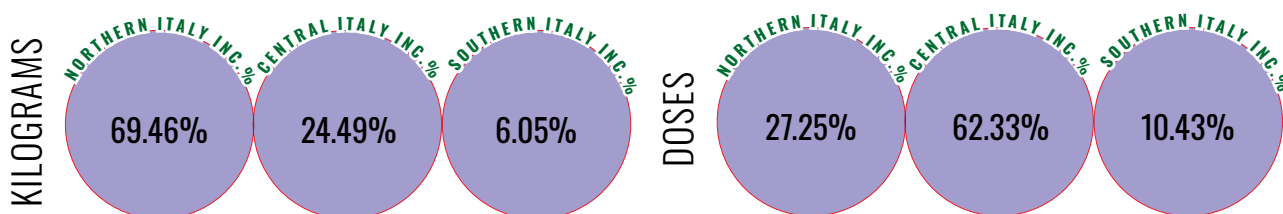
Ten-year trend

Since 2013, synthetic drugs operations, reports and seizures have followed a nearly constant trend. On the other hand, the highest peak for seizures was in 2019 with 56,620 doses and in 2020, with 14,293.64 kg of powder products. In the ten-year period the record low of 7,536 doses seized was registered in 2013, while the lowest seizures of powder products were reached in 2014, with 22.84 kg.

Ten-year trend



Synthetic drugs seizures – regional distribution



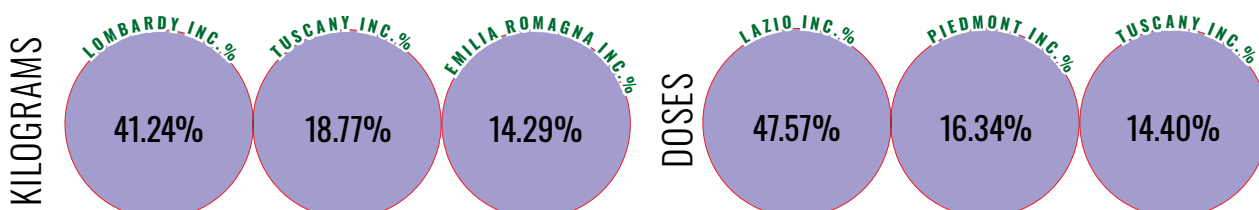
The regions reporting major seizures of synthetic drugs in powder were Lombardy, Tuscany, Emilia Romagna, Veneto, Lazio and Sardinia, while the leading regions for seizures in doses were Lazio, Piedmont, Tuscany, Apulia, and Lombardy.

With respect to 2021, significant percentage increases in seizures of synthetic drugs in powder were registered in Campania, Veneto, Calabria and Trentino A.A., while in terms of seizures in doses in Abruzzi, Marche, Apulia and Tuscany.






The most considerable drops were registered: in terms of seizures in powder, in Basilicata, Marche and Piedmont; in terms of seizures in doses, in Basilicata, Liguria and Umbria.

Regional distribution of synthetic drugs seized and incidence on total at regional level (kg/doses)

Regions	2020	2021	var.%	inc.%	2020	2021	var.%	inc.%
	in kg				in dosi			
Abruzzi	0.13	0.13	1.55%	0.13%	5	64	1,180.00%	0.61%
Basilicata	0.12	0.00	-100.00%	0.00%	459		-100.00%	0.00%
Calabria	0.00	0.04	1,100.00%	0.03%			--%	0.00%
Campania	0.02	0.88	4,536.84%	0.86%	560	8	-98.57%	0.08%
Emilia Romagna	4.99	14.71	194.69%	14.29%	262	380	45.04%	3.61%
Friuli V. G.	1.00	1.65	65.40%	1.61%	105	24	-77.14%	0.23%
Lazio	7.52	5.78	-23.10%	5.62%	7,941	5,009	-36.92%	47.57%
Liguria	0.19	0.09	-50.26%	0.09%	95		-100.00%	0.00%
Lombardy	99.87	42.46	-57.49%	41.24%	558	557	-0.18%	5.29%
Marche	2.05	0.10	-95.23%	0.10%	12	38	216.67%	0.36%
Molise	0.00	0.00	-66.67%	0.00%			--%	0.00%
Piedmont	2.65	0.23	-91.38%	0.22%	2,178	1,721	-20.98%	16.34%
Apulia	0.10	0.13	30.10%	0.13%	328	1,003	205.79%	9.53%
Sardinia	5.03	4.75	-5.45%	4.62%	29	1	-96.55%	0.01%
Sicily	0.84	0.30	-64.68%	0.29%	2,076	22	-98.94%	0.21%
Tuscany	12.13	19.32	59.25%	18.77%	544	1,516	178.68%	14.40%
Trentino A. A.	0.86	2.94	240.67%	2.86%	42	27	-35.71%	0.26%
Umbria	0.07	0.01	-85.92%	0.01%	140		-100.00%	0.00%
Valle d'Aosta			--%	0.00%		4	--%	0.04%
Veneto	0.45	9.43	2,000.67%	9.16%	425	156	-63.29%	1.48%
Regional total	138.02	102.95	-25.41%	100.00%	15,759	10,530	-33.18%	100.00%
International waters	-	-	--%	--%	-	-	--%	--%
National total	138.02	102.95	-25.41%	100.00%	15,759	10,530	-33.18%	100.00%



SYNTHETIC DRUGS - SUMMARY TABLE

	FIVE-YEAR TREND					Var % 21-22
	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	
Operations	278	313	311	314	285	-9.24
Seizures						
Doses/tablets	26,534	56,620	17,691	15,759	10,530	-33.18
Kilograms	77.22	102.13	14,293.64	138.03	102.95	-25.41
Milliliters	316.25	13,421.00	58,830.00	92,612.80	38,206.70	-58.75
Persons reported to the J.A. for synthetic drugs	410	374	338	399	322	-19.30
Italians	146	163	149	235	182	-22.55
Foreigners	264	211	189	164	140	-14.63
of whom:						
 Filipinos	106	101	82	65	49	-24.62
 Chinese	22	51	46	29	25	-13.79
 Nigerians	30	9	13	14	9	-35.71
 Senegalese		2	2	1	5	400.00
 Romanians	4	7	4	3	4	33.33
Males	364	322	306	360	294	-18.33
Females	46	52	32	39	28	-28.21
Of age	406	359	334	395	313	-20.76
Minors	4	15	4	4	9	125.00
Illicit trafficking (Art,73)	350	371	338	389	322	-17.22
Conspiracy to traffic (Art,74)	60	3		10		-100.00
Other offences						--
Type of report:						
Arrested	283	282	244	294	238	-19.05
Reported but not arrested	125	88	92	102	84	-17.65
At large	2	4	2	3		-100.00

Prato



Seizure of 1.358 kg of ketamine, 1,222 tablets of ecstasy, 3 gr of shaboo and 10.50 gr of marijuana February 2022

Synthetic drugs flows towards Italy

Seizures (kg) and incidence on the total seized at borders - 2022



MARITIME BORDERS

THERE ARE NO SIGNIFICANT SEIZURE



LAND BORDERS

0.07 kg (0.19%) and 0 doses

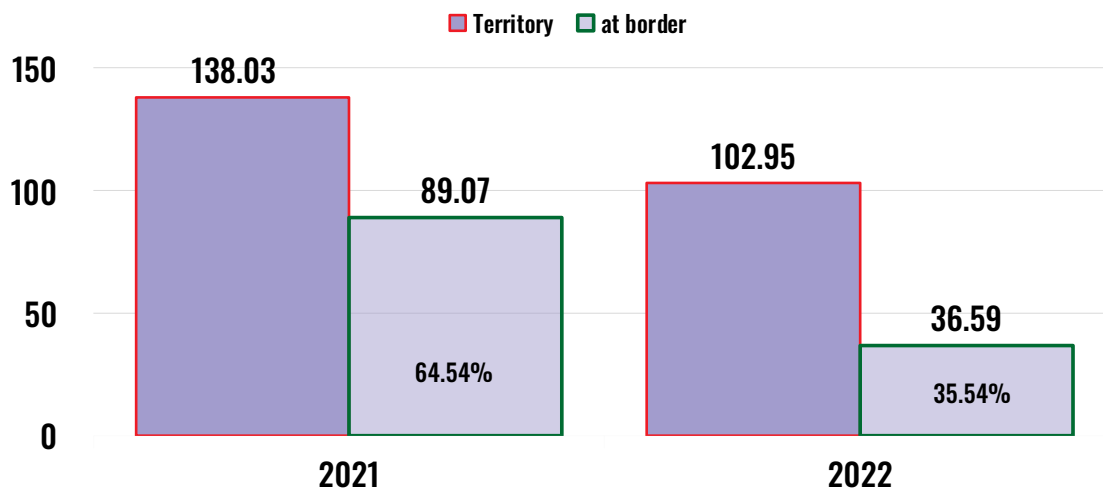


AIR BORDERS

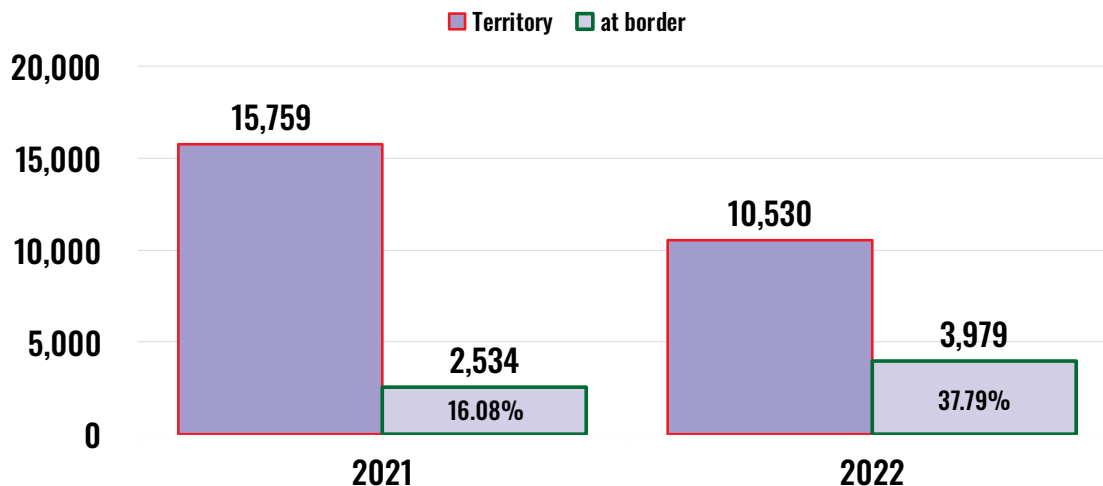
36.52 kg (99.81%) and 3,979 doses (100.00%)

At border areas the seizures registered a decrease of 58.92% (36.59 kg as compared to 89.07 kg seized in the previous year). The seizures in doses increased by 57.02% (3,979 doses, as compared to 2,534 doses seized in 2021).

Synthetic drugs seizures, comparison between territory and borders (kg)

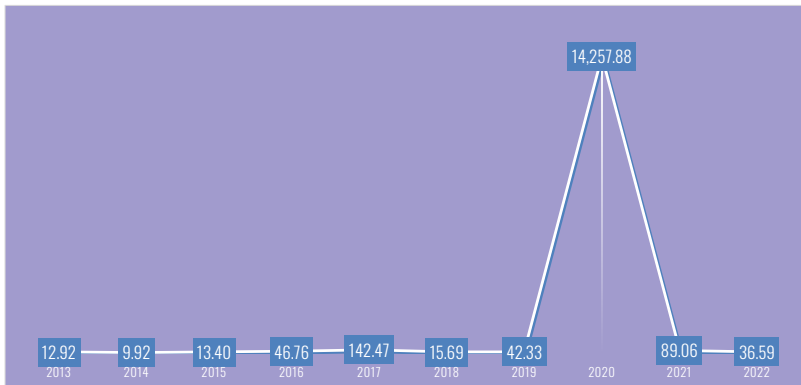


Synthetic drugs seizures, comparison between territory and borders (doses/tablets)

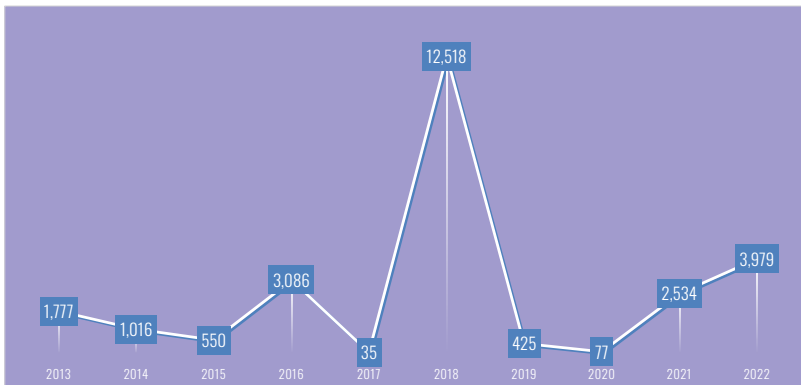


The following graphs show the trend of the synthetic drugs seized in Italy at border areas in the period 2013/2022.

Synthetic drugs seizures at borders, ten-year trend (kg)



Synthetic drugs seizures at borders, ten-year trend (doses/tablets)



Milano



Seizure of GHB and amphetamine April 2022

As to the **air borders**, the airports mainly involved in synthetic drugs seizures were Malpensa (VA) with 29.41 kg; Fiumicino (RM) with 2.40 kg and Galileo Galilei (PI) with 2.22 kg. Together, such seizures represent 93.21% of the total amount seized. 3,978 doses (99.97%) were seized in Fiumicino.

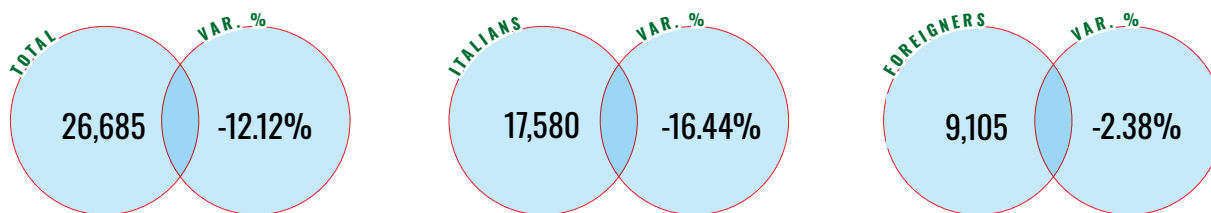
The main countries of origin of the substances seized at the aforementioned air terminals are shown in the table below.

Main source countries	kg	inc. %	doses	inc. %
Nigeria	20.78	56.91%	3,977	99.95%
USA	4.09	11.19%		
South Africa	2.22	6.09%		
Germany	2.10	5.75%		
Peru	1.70	4.66%		
Spain	1.55	4.24%	1	0.02%

As regards seizures at **land borders**, 70% were carried out at the Brogeda (CO) border crossing (0.04 kg), 30% at the Milan Internal Customs post (0.03 kg).

No seizures were carried out at **sea borders**.

PERSONS REPORTED TO THE JUDICIAL AUTHORITY



In 2022, the persons reported to the Judicial Authorities in Italy decreased by 12.12%, shifting from 30,366 in 2021 to 26,685 in 2022.

9,105 (34.12% of the total) foreign nationals were reported, in particular from Morocco, Albania, Tunisia, Nigeria and The Gambia.

2,134 women (8.00%) were reported to the Judicial Authorities, while the reported minors were 1,126 (4.22%). Cocaine offences recorded the highest number of persons reported, 12,148 (-10.22%), followed by hashish 6,608 (+9.91%), marijuana 3,339 (-38.21%) and heroin 1,977 (-17.07%).

Out of the minors reported to the Judicial Authorities for drug offences, 256 (22.74%) were foreigners, in particular from Tunisia, Morocco, Senegal, Albania and Romania.

Out of the 9,105 foreigners reported to the Judicial Authorities, 8,720 (95.77%) were men, mainly from Morocco, Albania, Tunisia, Nigeria and The Gambia.

Out of the total of 26,685 persons reported to the Judicial Authorities for drug offences, 2,794 (10.47%) were reported for conspiracy to drug trafficking (Art. 74 of the Consolidated Act 309/90).

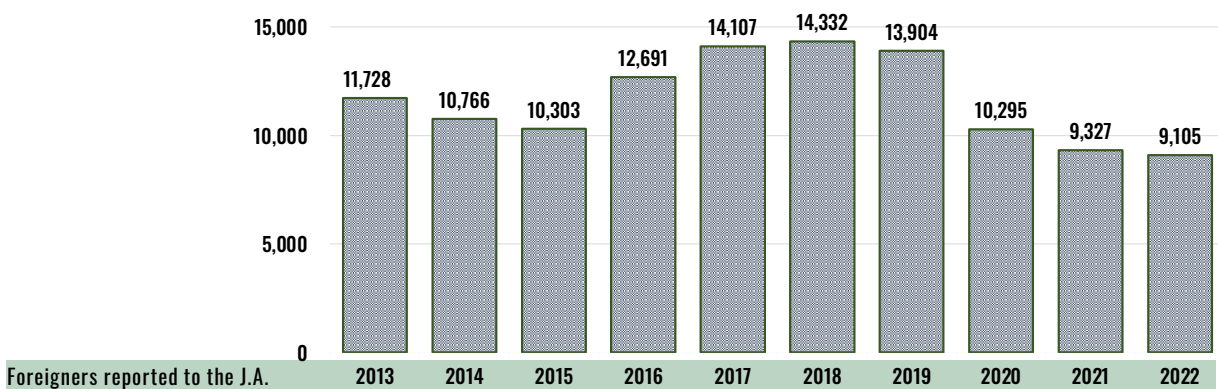
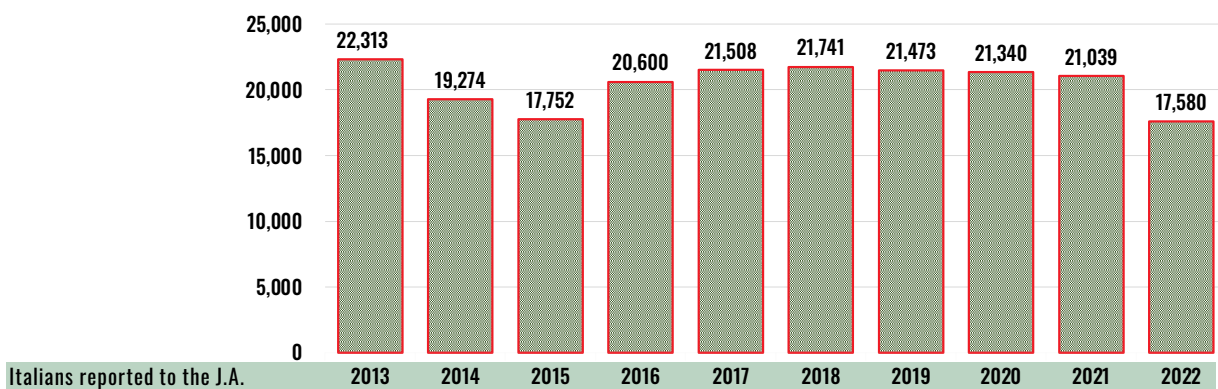
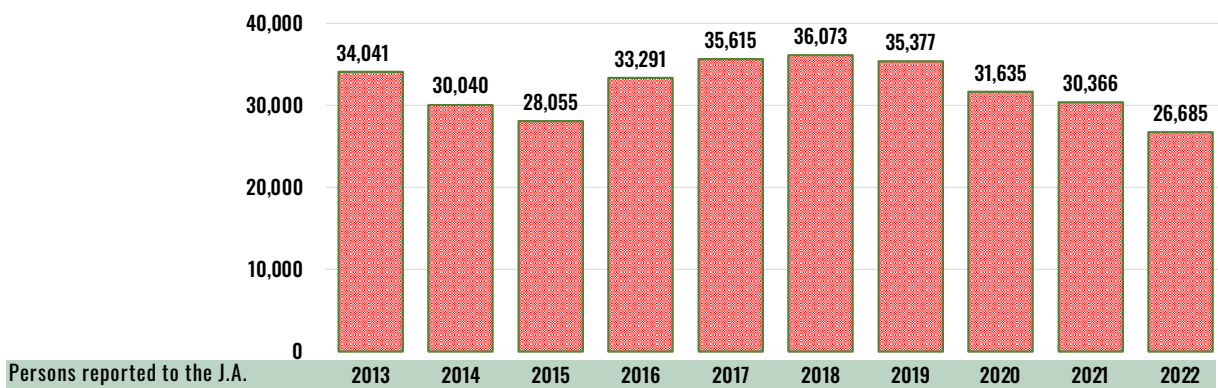
30.08% of the persons reported to the Judicial Authority for drug offences were aged 40 or over, 17.88% were between 20 and 24 and 16.20% between 25 and 29 years. The youngest (<18) represented 4.22% of the overall subjects reported at national level.

Persons reported to the Judicial Authority				Nationality			
	2021	2022	var.%		2021	2022	var.%
Type of report				Nationality			
Arrested	20,130	17,269	-14.21%	Italians	21,039	17,580	-16.44%
Reported but not arrested	10,042	9,209	-8.30%	Foreigners	9,327	9,105	-2.38%
At large	194	207	6.70%	of which:			
Type of offence - (Law No. 309/90)				Moroccans	2,159	2,183	1.11%
Illicit trafficking (Art.73)	27,243	23,884	-12.33%	Albanians	1,599	1,562	-2.31%
Conspiracy to traffic (Art.74)	3,117	2,794	-10.36%	Tunisians	990	1,153	16.46%
Other offences	6	7	16.77%	Nigerians	875	691	-21.03%
Gender				Gambians	542	418	-22.88%
Males	27,877	24,551	-11.93%				
Females	2,489	2,134	-14.26%				
Age				Age groups	2021	2022	var.%
Of age	29,385	25,559	-13.02%	< 15	38	59	55.26%
Minors	981	1,126	14.78%	15 ÷ 19	2,568	2,653	3.31%
Total	30,366	26,685	-12.12%	20 ÷ 24	5,189	4,772	-8.04%
				25 ÷ 29	4,965	4,323	-12.93%
				30 ÷ 34	4,602	3,874	-15.82%
				35 ÷ 39	3,630	2,976	-18.02%
				≥ 40	9,374	8,028	-14.36%

Ten-year trend

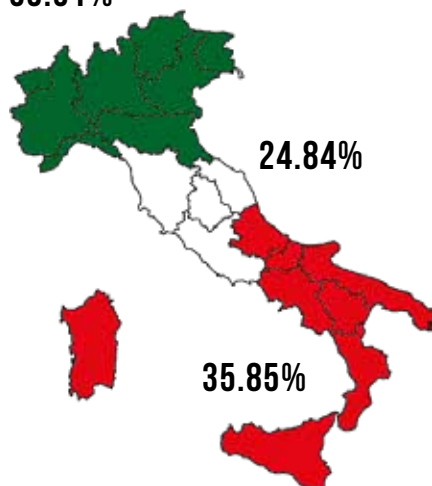
From 2013 to 2015 a downward trend had been reported, reaching the lowest value with 28,055 people reported to the Judicial Authorities in 2015. From 2016 to 2018 the growing trend had stopped, reaching 36,073 people, the highest figure in the ten-year period. From 2019 to 2022 there was an increasing decline that in the reporting year reached 26,685, the lowest figure since the minimum of 2015. The same trend is found when examining the reports concerning Italians and foreigners. The only difference is in the minimum figure reached by foreigners in 2022.

Ten-year trend



Persons reported to the Judicial Authorities – Regional distribution

39.31%



Examining the macro-areas, in 2022, 39.31% of the subjects were reported to the Judicial Authorities in Northern Italy, 35.85% in Southern Italy and islands and 24.84% in Central Italy.

Lazio, with a total of 4,342 subjects involved in drug trafficking, registered the highest value in comparison with the other regions. Lazio is followed by Lombardy, Campania, Sicily, Apulia, Emilia Romagna, Veneto, Piedmont and Tuscany.

The lowest values were registered in Valle d'Aosta, Molise, Basilicata and Friuli V.G.

In comparison to 2021, the reports, in terms of percentage, increased in Trentino A.A., Basilicata and Molise only.

The most significant drops were registered in Valle d'Aosta, Friuli V.G. and Sardinia.

Regional distribution of persons reported and incidence on total at regional level

Regions	2021	2022	Var. %
Abruzzi	673	519	-22.88 %
Basilicata	313	337	7.67 %
Calabria	1,321	898	-32.02 %
Campania	2,998	2,482	-17.21 %
Emilia Romagna	1,990	1,842	-7.44 %
Friuli V. G.	522	341	-34.67 %
Lazio	4,636	4,342	-6.34 %
Liguria	911	866	-4.94 %
Lombardy	4,180	3,851	-7.87 %
Marche	692	607	-12.28 %
Molise	221	226	2.26 %
Piedmont	1,754	1,354	-22.81 %
Apulia	2,117	2,028	-4.20 %
Sardinia	1,106	737	-33.36 %
Sicily	3,015	2,339	-22.42 %
Tuscany	1,388	1,305	-5.98 %
Trentino A. A.	506	671	32.61 %
Umbria	388	374	-3.61 %
Valle d'Aosta	47	28	-40.43 %
Veneto	1,585	1,538	-2.97 %
Regional total	30,363	26,685	-12.11 %
International waters	3		-100.00 %
National total	30,366	26,685	-12.12 %

Foreign nationals reported to the Judicial Authorities



In 2022, 9,105 foreign nationals were reported in Italy for drug-related offences (5,743 of them were arrested), representing 34.12% of the total number of reported persons.

The incidence of women and minors was respectively 4.23% and 2.81%.

The foreigners reported for drug offences at national level were mainly Moroccans, followed by nationals from Albania, Tunisia, Nigeria, The Gambia, Egypt, Senegal, Romania, Pakistan and Algeria.

Albanians, Moroccans, Nigerians, Tunisians, Romanians and Dominicans were the foreign nationals mostly reported in terms of conspiracy to drug trafficking.

Out of a total of 9,105 foreigners reported to the Judicial Authority, 462 of them (5.07%) were reported for conspiracy to drug trafficking (Art. 74 of the Consolidated Act 309/90).

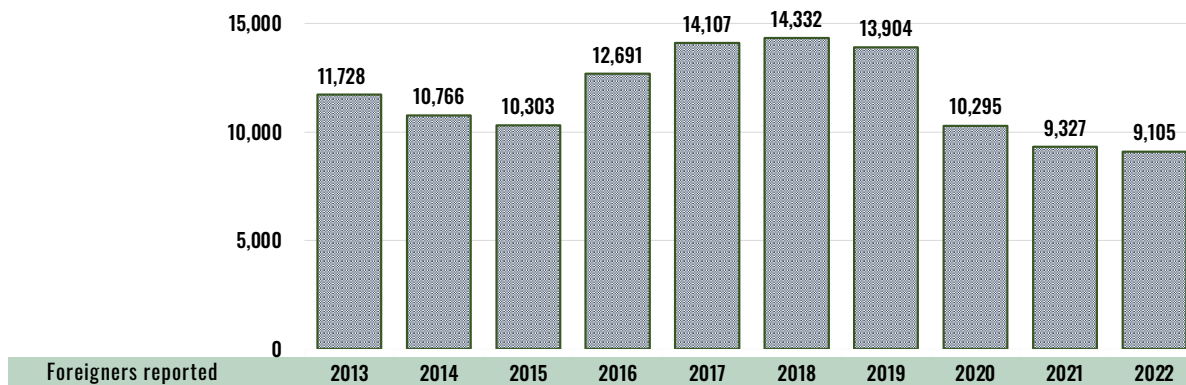
22.48% of the foreigners reported for drug offences were aged 25 to 29, 21.33% were between 20 and 24 and 18.09% were in the age group 40 and over. The youngest (<18) represented 2.81% of the total number; among them, the top five nationalities were: Moroccan, Albanian, Tunisian, Nigerian and Gambian.

Foreigners reported to the J.A.				Nationality			
	2021	2022	var.%		2021	2022	var.%
Type of report				Moroccans	2,159	2,183	1.11%
Arrested	6,270	5,743	-8.41%	Albanians	1,599	1,562	-2.31%
Reported but not arrested	2,926	3,197	9.26%	Tunisians	990	1,153	16.46%
At large	131	165	25.95%	Nigerians	875	691	-21.03%
				Gambians	542	418	-22.88%
Type of offence - (Law No. 309/90)					2021	2022	var.%
Illicit trafficking (Art.73)	8,890	8,642	-2.79%	Age groups			
Conspiracy to traffic (Art.74)	437	462	5.72%	< 15	5	11	120.00%
Other offences		1	--%	15 ÷ 19	564	699	23.94%
				20 ÷ 24	1,970	1,942	-1.42%
				25 ÷ 29	1,968	2,047	4.01%
				30 ÷ 34	1,762	1,656	-6.02%
				35 ÷ 39	1,287	1,103	-14.30%
				≥ 40	1,771	1,647	-7.00%
Gender	2021	2022	var.%				
Males	8,909	8,720	-2.12%				
Females	418	385	-7.89%				
Age							
Of age	9,152	8,849	-3.31%				
Minors	175	256	46.29%				
Totale	9,327	9,105	-2.38%				

Ten-year trend

In the last ten years the reports to the Judicial Authorities of foreign nationals peaked in 2018 (14,332) and reached the lowest point, 9,105, in 2022, with an average number of more than 11,656.

Ten-year trend



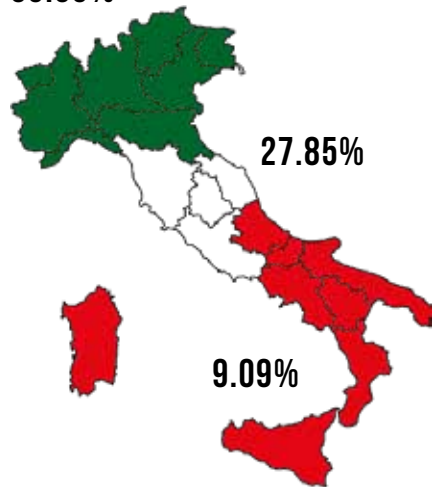
Milano



Seizure of 120 kg of hashish and two foreigners reported to the J.A. July 2022

Foreign nationals reported to the Judicial Authorities – regional distribution

63.05%



Analyzing the macro-areas, in 2022, 63.05% of the foreign nationals were reported to the Judicial Authority in Northern Italy, 27.85% in Central Italy and 9.09% in Southern Italy and islands.

In absolute terms, Lombardy is the region with the highest number of foreign nationals involved in drug trafficking, with a total number of 2,130. Such region is followed by Lazio, Emilia Romagna, Veneto, Tuscany, Piedmont and Liguria. The regions that registered a lower number of foreigners reported were Valle d'Aosta, Molise, Basilicata and Calabria.

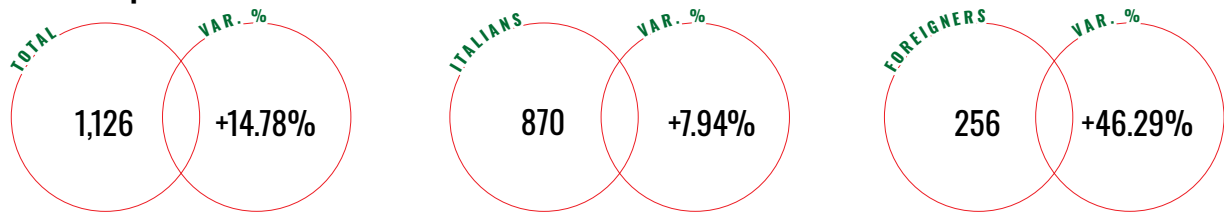
Percentage increases were registered in Apulia, Trentino A.A., Calabria, Veneto and Umbria, in comparison to 2021.

The most significant decreases were registered in Sicily, Molise and Sardinia.

Regional distribution of foreigners reported and incidence on total at regional level

Regions	2021	2022	Var. %
Abruzzi	195	154	-21.03%
Basilicata	37	33	-10.81%
Calabria	60	70	16.67%
Campania	212	197	-7.08%
Emilia Romagna	1,074	986	-8.19%
Friuli V. G.	192	157	-18.23%
Lazio	1,305	1,320	1.15%
Liguria	512	474	-7.42%
Lombardy	2,057	2,130	3.55%
Marche	305	231	-24.26%
Molise	38	21	-44.74%
Piedmont	726	610	-15.98%
Apulia	105	189	80.00%
Sardinia	95	70	-26.32%
Sicily	259	94	-63.71%
Tuscany	746	743	-0.40%
Trentino A. A.	312	429	37.50%
Umbria	228	242	6.14%
Valle d'Aosta	17	16	-5.88%
Veneto	849	939	10.60%
Regional total	9,324	9,105	-2.35%
International waters	3		-100.00%
National total	9,327	9,105	-2.38%

Minors reported to the Judicial Authorities



In 2022, 1,126 minors were reported to the Judicial Authorities. Out of them 376 (33.39% of the total number) were arrested, with an increase of 19.37% if compared to previous year.

As highlighted in the following table, reports increased for all ages, and especially for 14 year- old subjects (+55.26%).

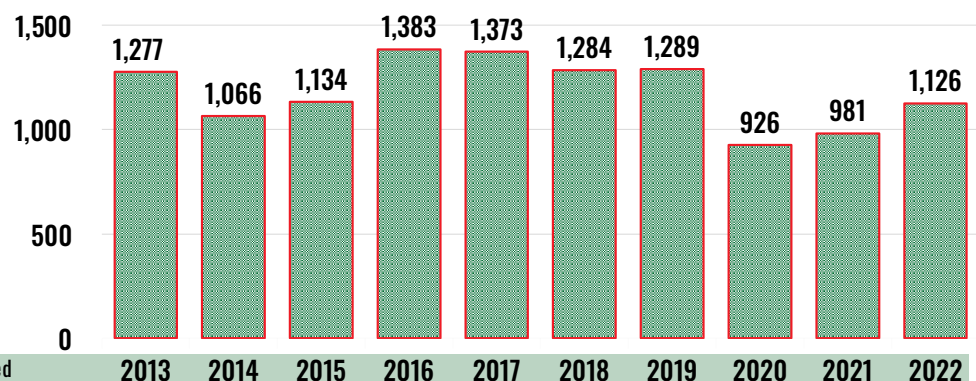
Among the minors reported to the Judicial Authorities, 810 were Italians (77.26%) and 256 were foreigners (22.74%), in particular from Tunisia, Morocco, Senegal, Albania and Romania. As to the type of offence, 99.02% of reports involved trafficking/pushing.

Minors reported to the J.A.				Nationality			
	2021	2022	var. %		2021	2022	var. %
Type of report				Nationality			
Arrested	315	376	19.37 %	Italians	806	870	7.94 %
Reported but not arrested	666	747	12.16 %	Foreigners	175	256	46.29 %
At large		3	-- %	of which:			
Type of offence - (Law No. 309/90)				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tunisians 42 84 100.00 % Moroccans 30 38 26.67 % Senegalese 22 31 40.91 % Albanians 15 19 26.67 % Romanians 12 18 50.00 % 			
Illicit trafficking (Art.73)	979	1,115	13.89 %	Age			
Conspiracy to traffic (Art.74)	2	11	450.00 %	14	38	59	55.26 %
Other offences			-- %	15	146	183	25.34 %
Gender				16	341	368	7.92 %
Males	939	1,084	15.44 %	17	456	516	13.16 %
Females	42	42	-- %				
Totale	981	1,126	14.78 %				

Ten-year trend

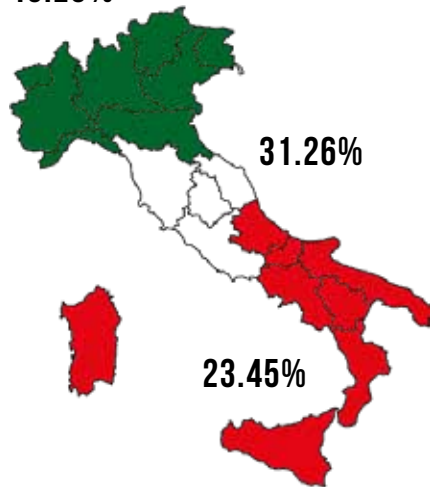
In the last ten years the reports involving minors peaked in 2016, with 1,383, and reached the lowest point (926) in 2020, with an average of 1,184.

Ten-year trend



Minors reported to the Judicial Authorities – regional distribution

45.29%



Analyzing the macro-areas, in 2022, 45.29% of the minors were reported to the Judicial Authority in Northern Italy, 31.26% in Central Italy and 23.45% in Southern Italy and islands.

Lazio, with a total number of 190 minors involved in drug trafficking and pushing had the highest number of minors reported. It is followed by Lombardy, Veneto, Tuscany, Piedmont, Sicily, Marche and Emilia Romagna.

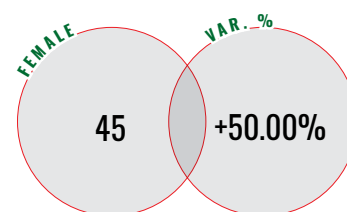
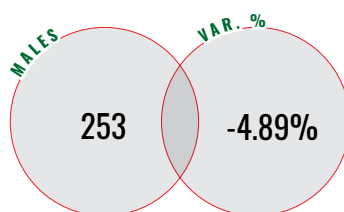
The lowest values were registered in Valle d'Aosta, Calabria and Molise. As compared to 2021, an increase of reports, in terms of percentage, was registered in Molise, Basilicata and Abruzzi.

The most striking drops occurred in Friuli V.G. and Sardinia.

Regional distribution of minors reported and incidence on total at regional level

Regions	2021	2022	Var. %
Abruzzi	14	40	185.71%
Basilicata	6	21	250.00%
Calabria	10	10	0.00%
Campania	31	41	32.26%
Emilia Romagna	55	49	-10.91%
Friuli V. G.	32	15	-53.13%
Lazio	138	190	37.68%
Liguria	50	48	-4.00%
Lombardy	141	158	12.06%
Marche	25	52	108.00%
Molise	2	12	500.00%
Piedmont	78	88	12.82%
Apulia	49	48	-2.04%
Sardinia	61	32	-47.54%
Sicily	63	60	-4.76%
Tuscany	65	92	41.54%
Trentino A. A.	15	36	140.00%
Umbria	18	18	0.00%
Valle d'Aosta		1	--%
Veneto	128	115	-10.16%
Regional total	981	1,126	14.78%
International waters			--%
National total	981	1,126	14.78%

DRUG ABUSE DEATHS



National situation

In 2022², the deaths for drug abuse recorded by the law enforcement agencies or reported by the Prefettura were 298, with an increase of 0.68% with respect to 2021, when drug deaths amounted to 296.

Deaths for drug abuse were first recorded in Italy in 1973 (only one case was reported that year). In the course of the following 48 years, there have been 26,749 drug deaths in total.

The initial upward trend was explained by the spreading – above all in the seventies and eighties – of heroin abuse. Up to now, this substance has always been the major cause of drug abuse deaths.

In the reporting year, the males deceased for drug abuse were 253 (84.90%), while females were 45 (15.10%), which confirms that the number of females who died of drug abuse has always been lower in comparison with that of males.

Analysing the age groups, the highest levels of mortality referred to those aged 34 or over and the peak records to the age group of 40 or more.

Drug abuse deaths five-year trend by age group and gender

Age groups	2018		2019		2020		2021		2022	
	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males
< 15										1
15 ÷ 19	3	4	2	6	2	9		6		2
20 ÷ 24	5	15	4	16	7	19	2	12	2	11
25 ÷ 29	4	21	10	26	6	16	3	18	7	15
30 ÷ 34	6	42	11	24	6	34	7	28	6	21
35 ÷ 39	8	53	5	47	3	37	7	31	4	38
≥ 40	23	152	19	204	17	153	11	171	26	165
Total	49	287	51	323	41	268	30	266	45	253
	336		374		309		296		298	

² These figures refer to deaths due to direct drug abuse, and those deaths that were reported to the police authorities. The data on the deaths due to indirect causes, for ex. road accidents caused by driving while intoxicated, or deaths of drug addicts, caused or related to pre-existing diseases. It must be stressed that the drug-abuse deaths reported by the police authorities to the DCSA are not always completed by toxicological and post-mortem examinations.

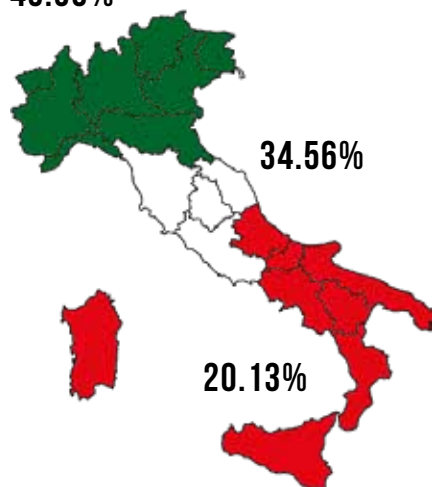
In 2022, the deaths were caused by heroin (127), by cocaine (64), by methadone (22), by cocaine “crack” (2), benzodiazepines (2), ketamine (2), by barbiturates (1), diazepam (1), hashish (1), Suboxone (1) and Subutex (1), while in 75 cases the substance was not indicated.

Drug abuse deaths by type of substance – ten-year trend

Type of substance	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Amphetamine	5	1	2		1	1	3	2	1	
Barbiturates	1		2	1	1		1	2	1	1
Benzodiazepines						1	1			2
Cocaine	30	23	38	39	53	64	64	71	64	64
Crack cocaine							1			2
Diazepam										1
Heroin	148	147	103	100	149	156	168	136	137	127
Fentanyl							1			
Furanylfentanyl						1				
Unspecified drugs	152	132	158	116	74	93	116	60	68	75
Non precisata + alcol			1							
Ketamine								1		2
L.S.D.					1				1	
MDMA Amphetamine			1	1	2					
Mephedrone					1			1		
Methadone	13	10	3	9	13	17	16	35	21	22
Methamphetamine						2	1	1		
Morphine							1		2	
Ocfentanil					1					
Opium				1			1			
Psychoactive drugs						1			1	
Buprenorphine				1						2
U47700					1					
Total	349	313	308	268	297	336	374	309	296	298

Regional situation

45.30%



Analyzing the macro-areas, in 2022, the deaths ascertained by the law enforcement services or reported by the Prefettura, were distributed as follows: 45.30% in Northern Italy, 34.56% in Central Italy and 20.13% in Southern Italy and islands.

In 2022, Veneto, Tuscany, Lazio, Emilia Romagna, Marche and Lombardy were the most affected regions.

In respect to 2021, remarkable increases of drug abuse deaths were registered in Apulia, Trentino A.A., Basilicata and Lazio.

The most significant percentage drops were reported in Valle d'Aosta, Calabria, Lombardy, Sicily and Abruzzo.

In the last ten years Emilia Romagna has been the most affected region with 352 deaths, followed by Tuscany (342), Lazio (317), Veneto (303), Piedmont (271), Lombardy (243) and Campania (235), while Molise (9), Valle d'Aosta (14) and Basilicata (18) have been the least affected ones.

Drug abuse deaths regional distribution and incidence on total at regional level

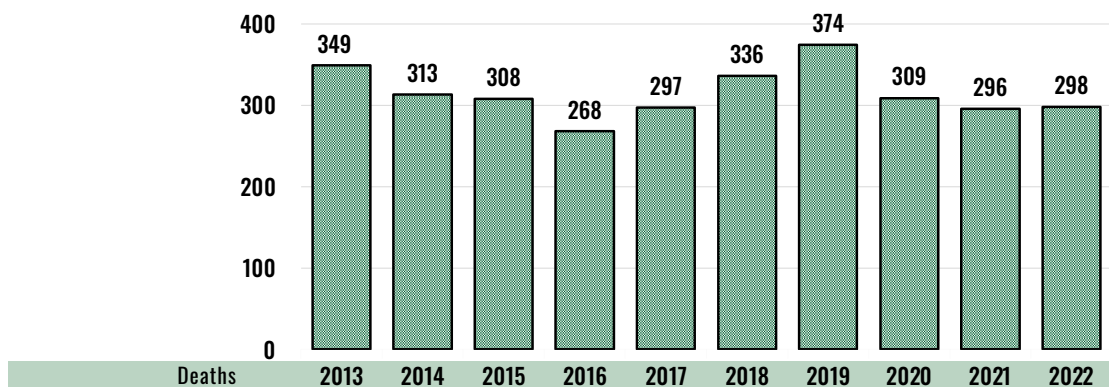
Regions	2021	2022	Var. %
Abruzzi	12	8	-33.33 %
Basilicata	1	2	100.00 %
Calabria	13	2	-84.62 %
Campania	21	15	-28.57 %
Emilia Romagna	32	27	-15.63 %
Friuli V. G.	12	12	-- %
Lazio	21	32	52.38 %
Liguria	9	9	0.00 %
Lombardy	34	20	-41.18 %
Marche	14	21	50.00% %
Molise	1	1	-- %
Piedmont	20	16	-20.00 %
Apulia	2	10	400.00 %
Sardinia	11	16	45.45 %
Sicily	9	6	-33.33 %
Tuscany	31	34	9.68 %
Trentino A. A.	2	9	350.00 %
Umbria	16	16	-- %
Valle d'Aosta	1		-100.00 %
Veneto	34	42	23.53 %
Regional total	296	298	0.68 %
Total	296	298	0.68 %

In the following table, the drug abuse deaths of the last ten years are subdivided by regions, indicating the data for each year, while the next graph describes – also at regional level – the death toll in the decade.

Drug abuse deaths
regional distribution - ten-year trend 2013/2022

Regions	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Abruzzi	10	8	3	3	11	15	14	13	12	8
Basilicata	1	1	3	3	1	3	2	1	1	2
Calabria	1	3	4	4	3	3	4	3	13	2
Campania	31	17	37	19	22	21	26	26	21	15
Emilia Romagna	34	37	43	25	34	34	53	33	32	27
Friuli V. G.	1	5	6	4	8	8	11	13	12	12
Lazio	57	35	33	20	37	29	35	18	21	32
Liguria	18	17	9	11	7	9	12	8	9	9
Lombardy	18	16	25	21	14	32	37	26	34	20
Marche	24	19	19	17	13	13	17	17	14	21
Molise		1			2	3		1	1	1
Piedmont	27	33	32	36	25	36	28	18	20	16
Apulia	5	7	2	3	9	6	7	10	2	10
Sardinia	23	21	19	15	10	15	25	13	11	16
Sicily	19	6	12	17	4	18	9	15	9	6
Tuscany	32	37	33	28	43	35	39	30	31	34
Trentino A. A.	6	4	4	6	5	8	9	10	2	9
Umbria	19	17	9	9	11	11	9	19	16	16
Valle d'Aosta	2	3		3	2	1		2	1	
Veneto	20	26	15	24	36	36	37	33	34	42
Total in Italy	348	313	308	268	297	336	374	309	296	298
Italians deceased abroad	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	349	313	308	268	297	336	374	309	296	298

Ten-year trend







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