

# Monitoring new substances at European level

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EMCDDA

## Emergence of a new phenomenon

- Increasing availability of new unregulated psychoactive substances;
- Mimic the effects of known drugs;
- Designed to circumvent control;
- Sold via Internet or specialised shops;
- Advertised with aggressive and sophisticated marketing;
- In some cases intentionally mislabelled;
- Suppliers adapt fast to controls;
- Target specific groups.



# New substances: from imitation to innovation

Designer drugs

Party pills

Research chemicals

Herbal highs

Legal highs



Phenethylamines

1980s

The quest for new 'ecstasy'



Tryptamines

1990s

Legal highs



Piperazines

2000s

BZP



Cathinones

2005

Mephedrone



Synthetic CBs

2008

Spice



# EU level tools, sources

- Eurobarometer
- Internet monitoring, snapshots
- National reports
- STs, expert meetings GPS, EWS
- EWS 'tracking', risk assessments
- Global drug survey
- ESPAD, HSBC

# Existing data sources and tools

- Seizure and forensic data,
- Toxicology reports, deaths
- Gen Pop surveys
- School surveys
- Ad hoc studies, internet and nightlife
- Internet monitoring
- Accident and emergency data
- Waste water and urine analysis
- City level, local monitoring systems

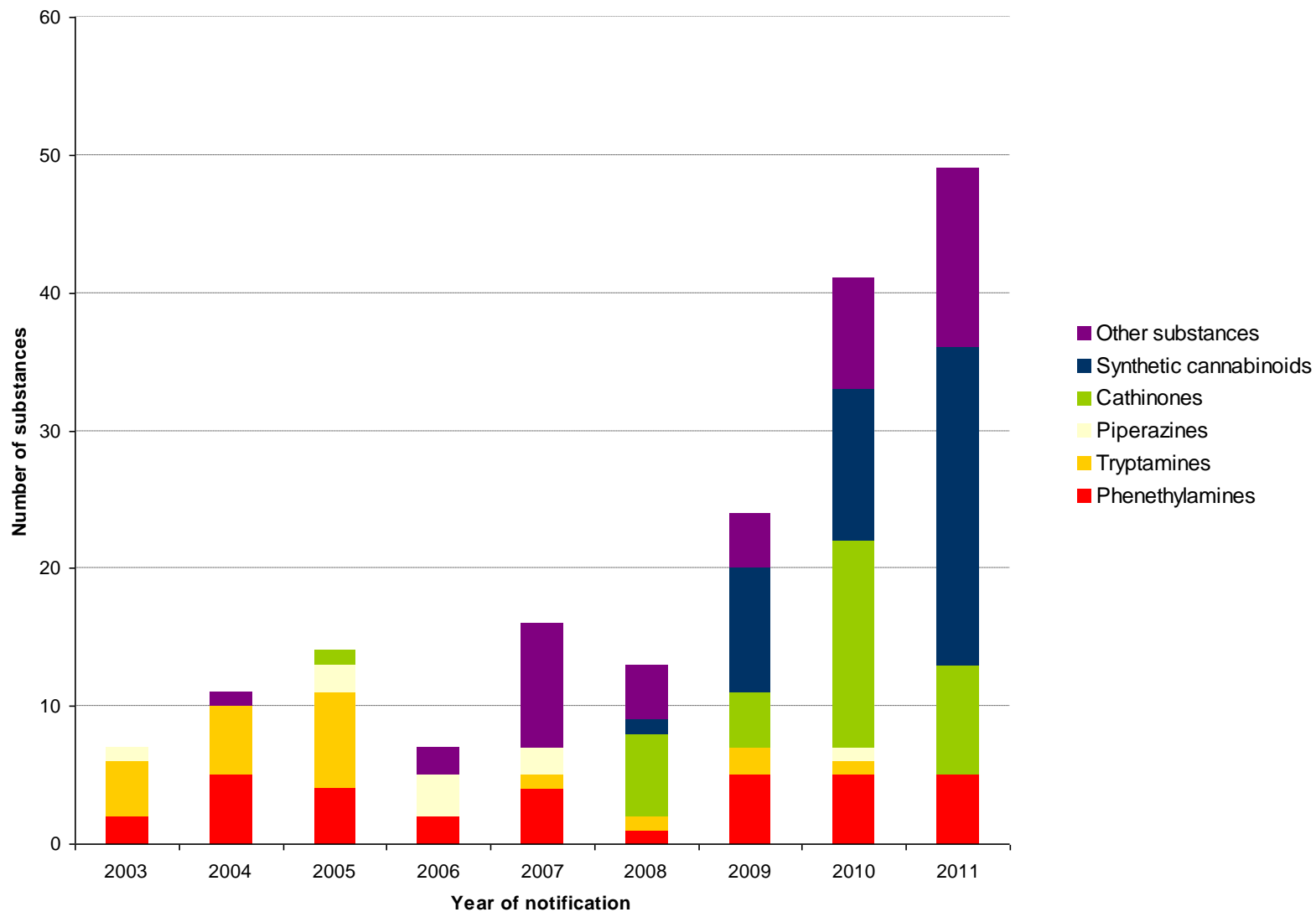
# Studies

- Europe
  - Eurobarometer: Lifetime use **legal highs** (15–24)
- National
  - Spain (2010) **new drugs** (14-18)
  - Ireland (2010/11) **legal highs & mephedrone** (15-64)
  - Poland (2008 & 10) **legal highs** (18-19) & GPS (15-75)
  - UK BCS (2011) **mephedrone** (16-59). Scottish crime and justice survey **included 5 new drugs**
  - Germany (Frankfurt) **spice**
- Special population
  - UK Mixmag (2010/11) **mephedrone**
  - Global Drug survey?

# EU situation re new drugs

- Trends.. Increasing nos of new substances
- Little evidence that many are used
- One or two each decade makes the cross over and stay eg E, GHB, ketamine, mephedrone. Most with past medical uses
- Generally low prevalence, but high in specific groups, country differences
- Some used as replacements in periods of drought and low purity eg cathinones for cocaine (heroin) and piperazines for E
- Displacement products very rare

# Number of new substances reported through the EWS





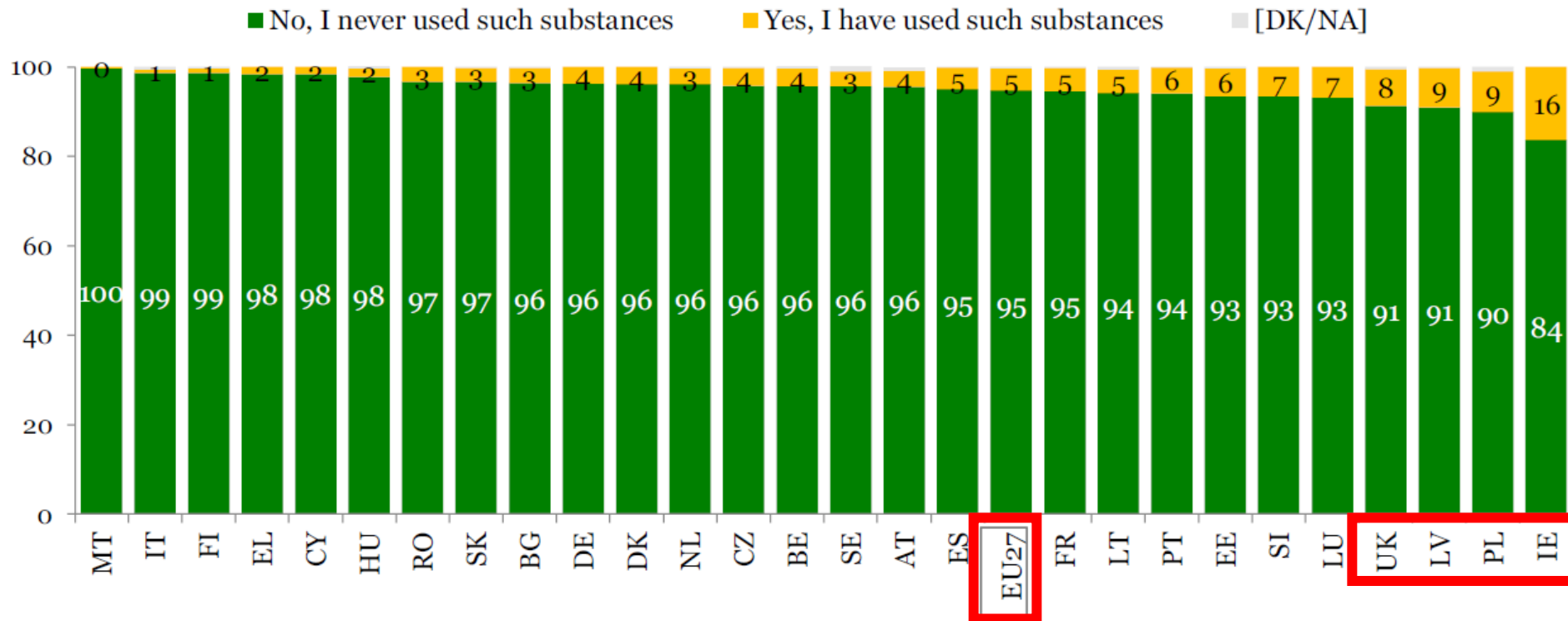
# Internet availability

- Snapshots in 23 languages
- Increasing no of sites selling LH, 693 in Jan 2012 (313)
- Increasing diversity of products sold
- Kratom, salvia, mushrooms top 3
- .....not new drugs
- Mephedrone still available
- Needs link to test purchasing

# What do we know about prevalence?

Eurobarometer 2011, European Commission

lifetime use of 'legal highs' – 5%, IE (16%), PL, LV (9%), UK (8%)



Q5. In certain countries some new substances that imitate the effects of illicit drugs are being sold as legal substances in the form of - for example - powders, tablets/pills or herbs. Have you ever used such substances?

Base: all respondents, % by country

# Challenges

- How to fill or bridge the EWS ID and epi gap?
- Which substances to track? EWS NPS or products sold aka legal highs or consumption
- When to start, stop monitoring (tipping point)
- How to monitor
  - Which instruments to use
- Polydrug use, medicines
- Packaging misleading
- Limited test purchasing at present, linking substances to products

# Epidemiology & legal highs

- Studies beginning to appear
- Technical difficulties
  - codes & questions
  - sampling & sample size
- Prevalence levels
  - heterogeneous situation at country level
  - overall not dramatically high but not insignificant
  - can be very high in some sub-populations

# GPS issues – N. Singleton

- A lot of people don't know what they are taking  
BUT some can give names so while no use for prevalence may be useful as alert?
- Same name / different drug eg Ivory Wave
- Time delays
  - GPS looks backward:  
BCS 2010-11 Publish July 2011  
LYP = Apr 2009-Mar2011
  - Getting questions included
- Fashions change – difficult to keep up.
- Prevalence actually much lower than suggested
- Questionnaire overload.  
BUT substitution could effect use rates?

# Similar challenges re tracking NPS and emerging trends in old drugs?

- Timeliness, challenge for routine systems
- Reliability and validity, challenge for sensitive sources
- Flexibility of instruments
- Comparability (EU level problem)