

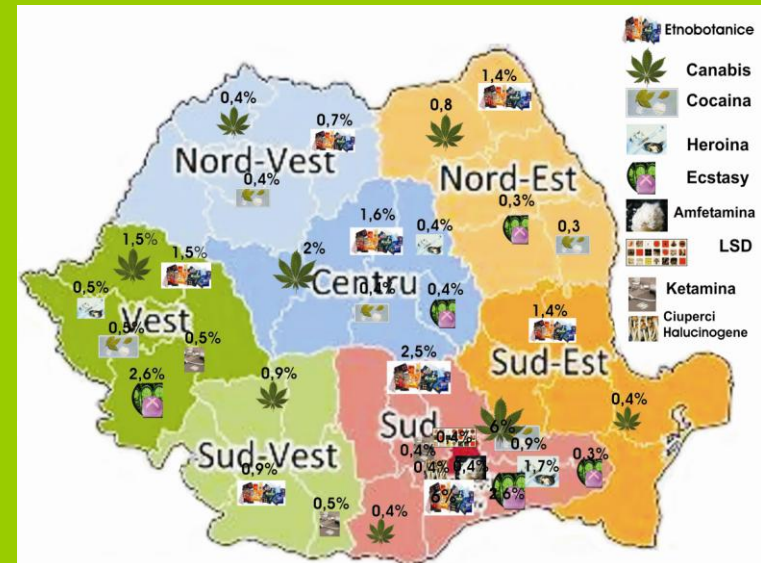
Trends and facts of NPS use in Romania

Romanian National Focal Point on Drugs

- New Psychoactive Substances ('ethnobotanicals') were spotted since 2006 but the use of NPS started as a trend from 2008 and since then this trend has grown and developed very fast, with variations determined by government control laws.
- Since 2008 the appearance of the new "legal highs"(NSP) has induced a steep increase in the life time/users and also has spread the phenomenon throughout the country

Prevalence of NPS use

- The GPS report for 2010 found for the first time that the legal highs have surpassed marijuana in lifetime prevalence 1,9% vs. 1,6%
- 0.6% report the use of substances containing synthetic cannabinoids – “Spice”, and 1.6% mentioned the use of other substances from the category of the so-called “ethnobotanical plants” often amphetamine type stimulants);



Problem Drug use

- The 2010 estimate is 18316 problematic drug users in Bucharest, showing an increase from 18.0/1000 inhabitants(2009) to 19,2/1000
- Relevant data on the profile and drug use patterns of injected drug users are detailed in the survey „Behavioural and serologic survey on HIV, hepatitis B and C prevalence among injecting drug users (IDU) in Bucharest - Behavioural Surveillance Survey 2010”.
- Behavioral surveillance surveys among IDUs have shown changes in drug use patterns from 2009, where 97% reported heroin as the main drug of injection, to 2010, where 67% reported heroin and 31% reported amphetamine-type stimulants, mostly synthetic cathinones, as the main drug of injection
- *But in fact many users (51.2%) declared they used both heroin and NPS in the last 30 days regardless the main drug classification.* Actually, many heroin users started to combine heroin with NPS and later to use exclusively NPS.
- another important aspect is the injecting pattern which for stimulants involves 6-10 times / day comparing with 3-5 times / day for opiates;

Treatment demand

Legal highs intoxications came to represent 38.9% of the required emergency cases registered for psychoactive substances, 32.3% of inpatient drug treatment demands and 10% of outpatient treatment demands.

This situation is different from the time interval 2007-2009 when SNPP was unheard of among treatment demands.

The commercial names for the most popular substances registered in treatment demands were KATANA, CHILL, Magic, Pure By Magic, Special Gold, Spice, Stone, Pure by Magic (sold as bath salts, plant fertilisers and aromatherapy).

- Legal highs have reduced the waiting list for substitution treatments in 2010 and 2011, but we are just beginning to see an increase in services demand in the last 3-4 months

Infectious diseases

Higher frequency injecting patterns may explain the outbreak of HIV among IDU's in Bucharest. Accordingly we identified a steep increase of HIV cases among IDU's in 2011 (116 cases, compared to 1 to 6 cases in the previous years)

Social assessment in the behaviour of these HIV+ drug users revealed:

- More than 80% of the cases of IDU HIV+ confirmed so far by the National HIV database were admitted in infectious diseases wards, for pathology associated with drug use, and later diagnosed with HIV infection which had as associated risk factor the drug consumption.
- Most of them are from Bucharest;
- Low level of education or illiteracy; Social cases, homelessness;
- Major behavioural disorders;
- Do not access health services;
- Lack of family support;
- Many of them spent time in prison in Romania or in other countries;
- The injecting pattern which for stimulants involves 6-10 times injections / day comparing with
- 3-5 times injections / day for opiates;

Categorization and monitoring challenges for NPS

The New Psychoactive Substances, sold as ‘legal drugs’, came in two variations:

Plants and chemicals mixtures for smoking – ‘Spice’ products;

Chemicals mixtures for injecting or sniffing – psychoactive designer drugs with energizing or hallucinogenic effects, sold under various names and mixed with well-known stimulants: caffeine, creatine, etc.

This diversity is a challenge for both toxicology labs, and evaluating risks and developing control and harm reduction strategies.

In Romania, the demand for ‘Spice’ blends begun in the last 4 or 5 months of the 2008, with an abrupt peak at the end of 2009, followed by a decline after the first government directive that restricted the use of 36 NPS and psychoactive plants.

Another NPS category includes plants like *Kratom* or *Salvia Divinorum*, these being also in products for smoking. They have been blacklisted and data shows that they are seldom found on the market. Maybe the first substance called ‘ethnobotanical’ was *Salvia Divinorum*. Online searches indicate the dawn of interest in this plant at the end of 2006 and the beginning of 2007.

Web Search Interest: etnobotanice

Romania, Jan 2006 - Apr 2011

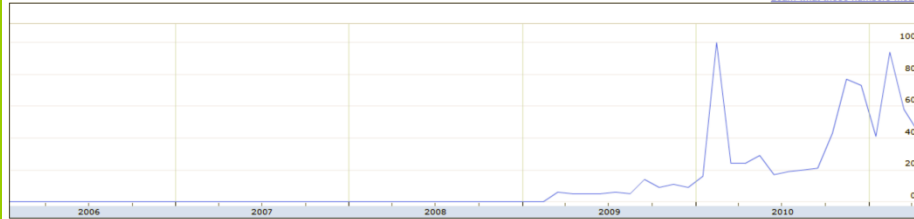
An improvement to our geographical assignment was applied retroactively from 1/1/2011. [Learn more](#)

Totals
etnobotanice 12

Interest over time

forecast News headlines

[Learn what these numbers mean](#)

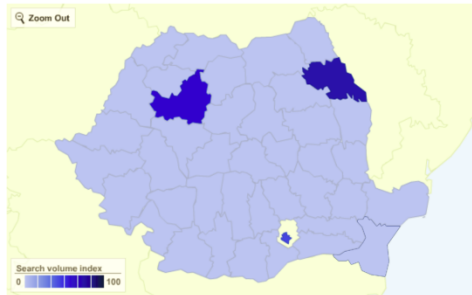


Embed this chart

Regional interest

[Sub-region Town/City](#)

1. Iași	100
2. Cluj	79
3. Bucharest	68



[View change over time](#)

Search terms

Top searches

1. plante etnobotanice	100
2. droguri	30
3. etnobotanice efecte	25
4. etnobotanice legale	25
5. magazin etnobotanice	20
6. magazine etnobotanice	20
7. etnobotanice online	15
8. etnobotanice interzise	15
9. produse etnobotanice	15
10. despre etnobotanice	15

Embed this table

Rising searches

1. despre etnobotanice	Breakout
2. droguri	Breakout
3. etnobotanice efecte	Breakout
4. etnobotanice interzise	Breakout
5. etnobotanice legale	Breakout
6. etnobotanice online	Breakout
7. magazin etnobotanice	Breakout
8. magazine etnobotanice	Breakout
9. plante etnobotanice	Breakout
10. plantele etnobotanice	Breakout

Embed this table

Search terms
 Locations
 Time Ranges

Tip: Use a comma as shorthand to add comparison items. (tennis, squash)

etnobotanice
[+ Add search term](#)

Web Search
Romania All subregions
Feb 2011 - Mar 2012
Reset
All Categories

Search

Web Search Interest: etnobotanice

Romania, Feb 2011 - Mar 2012

The categorization taxonomy of Google Insights for Search has been updated during December 2011. [Learn more](#)

An improvement to our geographical assignment was applied retroactively from 1/1/2011. [Learn more](#)

Totals
etnobotanice 21

Interest over time

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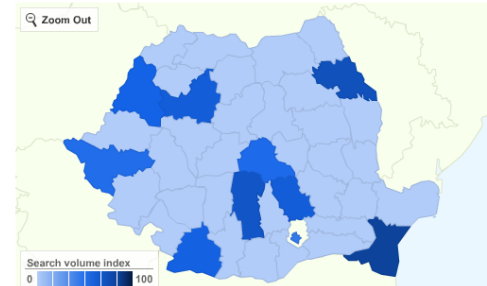


Embed this chart

Regional interest

[Subregion City](#)


1. Constanța	100
2. Iași	80
3. Argeș	82
4. Prahova	74
5. Cluj	74
6. Dolj	70
7. Bihor	68
8. Brașov	63
9. Timiș	61
10. Bucharest	53



Search volume index
0 100

Web Search Interest: maraciuca, spice gold, spice diamond



Romania, Jan 2008 - Jan 2011

 An improvement to our geographical assignment was applied retroactively from 1/1/2011. [Learn more](#)

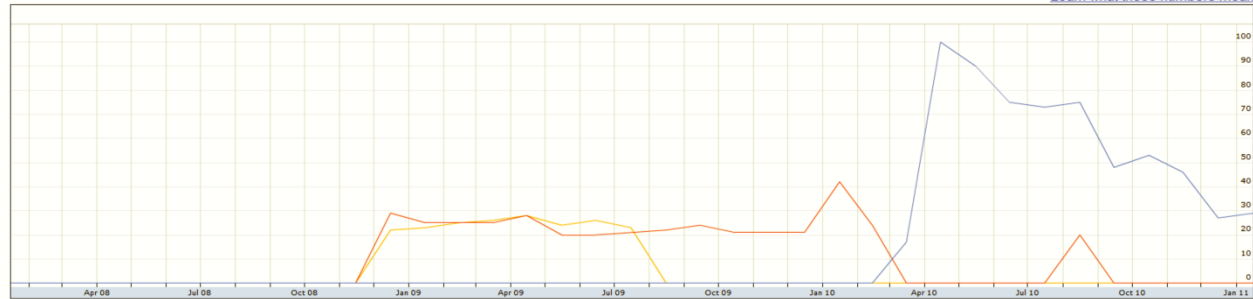
Totals

maraciuca  17
spice gold  10
spice diamond  5

Interest over time


forecast  News headlines 

[Learn what these numbers mean](#)



Web Search Interest: special gold



Romania, Jan 2008 - Jan 2011

 An improvement to our geographical assignment was applied retroactively from 1/1/2011. [Learn more](#)

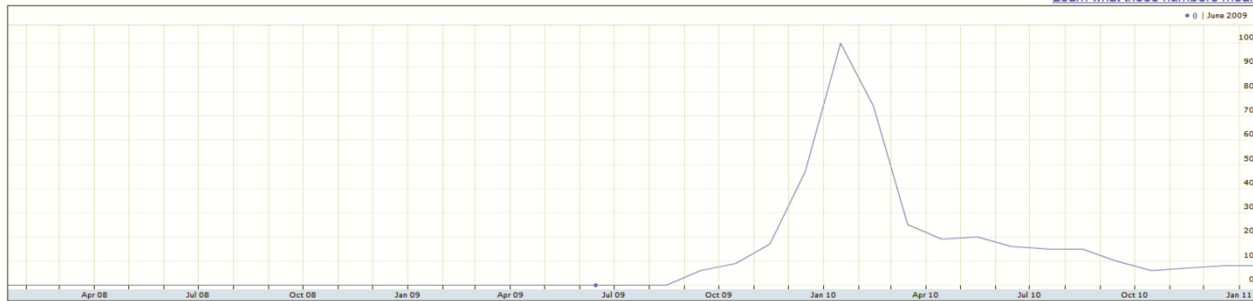
Totals

special gold  11

Interest over time


forecast  News headlines 

[Learn what these numbers mean](#)




Web Search Interest: generation 2012

Romania, Jan 2008 - Jan 2011

 An improvement to our geographical assignment was applied retroactively from 1/1/2011. [Learn more](#)

Totals

generation 2012  5

Interest over time

forecast  News headlines 

[Learn what these numbers mean](#)



Amphetamine type stimulants

These blends are stimulant or hallucinogenic NPS sold under various names and mixed with classic stimulants like caffeine or creatine. Most NSD in this category are cathinones or piperazines.

The data from Central Drugs' Analysis and Profiling Lab in IGPR, between January 2009 and February 2010 these substances usually contained mephedrone and other substances with similar chemical structure – cathinones (fluoromethcathinone, ethcathinone, methoxymethcathinone, butylone, methylone, etc.), and were presented as crystals or powder. Most popular brands were 'Special Gold' and 'Magic'. Other similar products were 'Flower Magic Powder', 'Flower Magic Powder+', 'Charge+', 'Flower Power', 'Crush', 'Cristal bath', 'Dark+', 'Special Diamond', 'Special Original'.

4-MMC or 4-methylmethcathinone.

Later appeared substances like MDPV – Methylenedioxypropylvalerone (the most popular product being 'Generation 2012') or those triptamine-based like 5-MeO-DALT or *N,N*-diallyl-5-methoxytryptamine. Their popularity decreased following blacklisting by another government directive.

Government Directive 575/2010.

After MDPV and 5-MeO-DALT being blacklisted, one of the most popular drugs in mid 2010, according to droguri101.ro forum, was 'White Sensation', advertised as 'Special Gold' replacement. We have no data on the substances contained, but the people on the mentioned forum asserted that it contained 4-MEC or 4-methylethcathinone, that has a similar chemical structure to mephedrone (4-MCC) and similar effects.

Another very popular stimulant product, especially following the two government directives, is 'Pure by Magic'. There is no data on the active principle, although empirical evaluations discern similarities with another new product on the market, 'NRG1' that would contain Naphyrone, also known as O-2482 and naphthylpyrovalerone. This is a derivative from MPDV with similar effects.

New approaches in monitoring and data collection

Risk assessment on intensive NPS use

The research proposed to evaluate knowledge, attitudes and practices regarding the use and abuse of NPS, sold as 'legal drugs', in 10 major cities of Romania, in view of developing harm reduction programs adequate to children and young people aged between 10 and 24 years.

Specific goals

- Documenting NPS use in communities.
- Assessing NPS user profile and identifying patterns of NPS use.
- Identifying risk and protection factors regarding NPS use and abuse.
- Creating recommendations for developing evidence-based harm reduction programs.

We used **6 key variables** essential to 'risk assessment' of the NPS on the market:

- Physical, chemical and pharmaceutical contents;
- Abuse and addiction potential;
- The magnitude of the consumption;
- Health risks;
- Social risks;
- Organized crime involvement.

Risk assessment on intensive NPS use (more than four times a month)

Data sources

The research focused on NPS consumption in Romania and was conducted on two levels: the empirical level – a field qualitative study in ten major cities of Romania; and the secondary analysis of various data and information from scientific and online media:

- Information from specialized labs;
- Epidemiological data;
- Sociological data;
- Criminological data.
- Online data (forums and other sites that might contain revealing information).
- information from national and international scientific and grey literature on the phenomenon,
- Field research data collected through a national project that took place in ten major cities of Romania:

Questionnaires addressed to NPS users;

Questionnaires addressed to persons linked to NSP selling

- Interviews with experts representing local authorities and NGOs activating in social, medical and educational fields;

Results

- **The NSD, sold as ‘legal drugs’, come in two variations:**
- **Plants and chemicals blends for smoking**
- The most common NPS are ‘Spice’ products. There are a lot of products for inhaling/smoking that are sold under a ‘Spice’ brand: *Spice Silver, Spice Gold, Spice Diamond, Spice Arctic Synergy, Spice Tropical Synergy, Spice Egypt, Spice Maraciuca, Ganja, M6, Diesel, Katana*. The classification is hindered by the speed these names change and the continuous apparition of new blends on the market.
- **Chemicals mix for injecting or sniffing – psychoactive designer drugs with energizing or hallucinogenic effects, sold under various names and mixed with well-known stimulants: caffeine, creatine, etc.**
- **The two options have about the same success: interviewed people use mainly ‘Spice’ products (56.1%), while stimulant substances are consumed at a lower, but close, rate (43.9%).**
- **By confronting data from different sources, we found out that the most popular brands in Romania at the time of the research were ‘Diesel’, ‘Pure’, ‘Katana’ and ‘Magic’.**
- **The synthetic drugs we have mentioned here are but a few from what the market has to offer. These products change often, as well as the ingredients and their concentration in substances sold under the same name. Also, the commercial names change often, so associating certain substances with certain brand becomes a difficult task.**

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- The majority of NPS consumers are socially integrated middle-class children and teens. NPS users have ages between 11 and 40 years. There is a significant use in the category of children up to 15 years. Three quarters of the interviewed users are male – this is consistent with the classic drugs' use pattern.
- There is enough evidence regarding NPS multiuse in intensive consumers. More than half of those interviewed declared that they had used several types of 'legal' products in the last 30 days. Besides alcohol and 'legals', the consumption includes different types of illegal drugs or prescription medication: heroin, amphetamines, inhalants ('aurolac'), cocaine, glues ('prenandez'), diazepam, valium, rofedex, tusin.
- Information on products' contents and on their effects on health is scarce or completely missing.
- An alarming area is the intravenous usage of NSD: 1 in 6 respondents declare they inject NSD. Most of them are in Bucharest. The major risk regarding these users is getting infected and transmitting various diseases by sharing syringes. As to respondents' STD and blood-borne disease status, 1 in 3 injecting drug users are HCV positive, 3 respondents are HBV positive and 1 HIV positive.
- NPS use may lead to serious health problems: weight loss, appetite loss, personality disorders, psychotic disorders, prolonged insomnia, cachexia. After a period of time depending on administration method, use rate and the consumer lifestyle, these may cause death. Specialists mentioned cases of injecting drug users that died after changing heroin for 'ethnobotanicals'.
- Information on social risks associated with 'ethnobotanicals' use is scarce. Education and work may be disturbed by constant NPS use. Long-term risks include social exclusion, education interruption, career problems and moral values' decay. Delinquent behavior appears as heavy use or addiction gets critical.
- These users may resort to crimes in order to compensate the high costs required to maintain a steady level of consumption.

Legal measures and new monitoring and assessment tasks for the experts form the National Focal Point on Drugs and Drug Addiction

Initial legislative reactions

- Governmental Emergency Ordinance no. 6 of 10.02.2010 which placed under control 36 new psychoactive substances and simplified this procedure applicable to various substances for which a narcotic or psychotropic effect is evidenced
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- Governmental Decision no. 575 of 16.06.2010 that updates the appendix to the Law no. 339/2005 on the on the legal status of narcotic and psychotropic plants, substances and preparations and the Law no. 143/2000 on countering the illicit drug trafficking and use, further amended and supplemented, which placed 8 new psychoactive substances under control;

- A new reaction of the Government of Romania in early 2011 was elaborated upon from two points of view: the use of new psychoactive substances and the impact on the drug phenomenon.
- A measure plan to counter the trade and use of new psychoactive substances/products that are health damaging no. 5/1194 of 18.02.2011, was approved by the prime-minister of Romanian Government. This program represents a coordinated, integrated and balanced reaction of public authorities to the new phenomenon and puts forward organisation, legal, operative and prevention measures.
- At legal level, the measures provided for in the mentioned programme, translated into tangible steps once the Joint order of the minister of health, of agriculture and rural development, minister of administration and interior, minister of public finance, president of the National Authority for Consumer Protection, of February 2011 for the setup of joint team that will perform controls, according to competences, in locations and/or settings where new psychoactive substances and/or products that are health threatening are manufactures, traded, used by law.
- Concretely, this order lays the groundwork for the compulsory joint intervention for all institutions charged with control over all legal provisions in the field of public health, over legal trade and sale of products, goods and services to the population or over financial legal provisions applicable to trade activities.
- The National Focal Point was entitled to perform a monthly report of the evolution of the NPS use and a monitoring of the progress of drug demand reduction measures performed by the multidisciplinary commissions

- In November 2011 a new law 178/2011 stipulated a new approach of regulating the NPS commerce, initiating a joint evaluation commission of these substances made up of experts in public health who needs to assess the health impact of these substances on health and social and psychological dimension requiring an authorization of these products based on the commission assessment.
- The norms of this new law are to be published soon.