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DIREZIONE CENTRALE PER I SERVIZI ANTIDROGA

ANNUAL REPORT

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INTRODUCTION



Data on overall drug seizures show a marked increase if compared to the previous year: from 59 tons in 2020 to 91 tons in 2021, with a 54.04% increase which, due to a significant rise in seizures of cocaine and cannabis derivatives, is the fourth highest result since 2000.

As usual every year, the Central Directorate for Antidrug Services publishes its "Annual Report" and 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 those of previous years.

The year 2021 continued to be influenced by the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, which had a major impact on the way of life of citizens due to the implications on the public health system and the restrictions imposed by the Health Authority. By contrast, as early as 2020, criminal organisations identified mechanisms and instruments allowing them to fully revive their illicit trafficking through various changes and adjustments, and to pour into consumer markets quantities of drugs comparable to the pre-pandemic periods.

In line with the second half of 2020, criminal networks were able to adapt their logistical and organisational structures to the new economic and social dynamics determined by the crisis, thus demonstrating extraordinary resilience; in fact, 2021 saw a strong and growing upswing in drug imports to storage locations and, above all, to final destination countries.

Like any other legal or criminal sector, drug trafficking, as a transnational phenomenon, had been affected by the health crisis on legal trade and the global slowdown in commercial transactions. Control measures had not only affected drug cultivation and production, but had made it more difficult to find the precursors and the labour needed for collection and synthesis operations. The gradual return to normality and the consequent reduction of restrictions on movement of people and goods, both in border areas and within the countries' territory reactivated the mechanisms of drug trafficking through a diversification of transport methods, an adjustment of routes and carriers related to the evolution of sanitary restrictions and the forms of control exercised by the Police Forces.

Drug traffickers showed quick resilience and developed innovative operational schemes and new business patterns, both in the management of large-scale trafficking and in small-scale drug retail activities. In fact, on the one hand they resorted to global supply chains for the furtherance of their trades and, on the other, to methods of sale increasingly based on the use of the Internet and the new tools offered by IT platforms.

The return to a more intense social life as a result of the gradual reduction of COVID-19 containment measures has also had an effect on drug demand, which appears to be in line with pre-COVID-19 values.

The overview of seizures and anti-drug operations shows a significant resumption of the drug trafficking chain, particularly that of cocaine, and presents data and percentages substantially comparable with those of previous years in terms of national statistics.

At national level, the results achieved by law enforcement activities are still influenced by the pandemic crisis in some respects: antidrug operations (-6.53%) and reports to the Judicial Authorities (-4.70) decreased in comparison to the preceding year, although the differences are less significant than in the previous year. Moreover, 21,318 antidrug operations were carried out in 2021. This figure is basically in line with the average value of the last ten years (22,967 per year), while the number of reports to the Judicial Authorities (a total of 30,083) is only slightly below the average threshold in the ten-year period (32,973 per year) although it has been the lowest in the last six years.

However, data on overall drug seizures show a marked increase if compared to the previous year: from 59 tons in 2020 to 91 tons in 2021, with a 54.04% increase which, due to a significant rise in seizures of cocaine and cannabis derivatives, is the fourth highest result since 2000. If we exclude the years 2014, 2017 and 2018, which were characterised by particular and contingent elements, such a remarkable result had never been achieved in the last 40 years.



For all main drugs, significant percentage increases were observed compared to the previous year; in absolute terms, this is approximately 32 tons more than in 2020, bringing the overall figure concerning seizures above the 10-year average (approximately 88 tons), reversing a negative trend that had been going on since 2019.

Cocaine seizures marked a further record increase after the outstanding performance of 2020, when 13.6 tons had been seized, reaching the unprecedented amount of 20.07 tons. The percentage increase is 47.66% compared to the previous year, which had already marked a huge increase with respect to 2019 (+64.25%) and 2018 (+127.76%). The data relating to the first months of this year seem to confirm the considerable rise in the drug volumes removed from the illicit market. This is a steady growth with an exponential trendline: from 3.6 tons in 2018, roughly doubling every year, it skyrocketed to 8.2 in 2019, 13.5 in 2020 and, finally, 20.07 in 2021. There seems to be a consolidated factor, which prompts some considerations. It is conceivable that Police Forces have developed effective strategies for detecting cargoes arriving in our country, through an increasingly advanced and incisive risk analysis regarding the movement of commercial containers. In the reporting year not by chance the seizures of cocaine made at borders represented 69.13% of the total intercepted in Italy (98.7% considering maritime borders), with 13.8 tons out of a total of 20.07 tons. This highly significant figure also supports another consideration; as early as 2020, the possibility of a 'new' Mediterranean route had already been assumed, which, after stopping over at national ports (first of all Gioia Tauro), allowed ethnic criminal gangs, particularly Albanian and Serbian-Montenegrin, to transfer drugs to ports in the Balkan area, the Aegean Sea and the Black Sea. The seizures made in 2021 support the increasingly realistic hypothesis that our country is the gateway to other drug consumption markets and the Balkan criminal organizations, closely cooperating with the criminal cartels of the producers and with the more structured local criminal syndicates, are consolidating their presence on the criminal scene.

The third interpretation of this vertiginous trend can probably be found in the resumption of traffic in the second year of the sanitary crisis due to COVID-19.

As already mentioned, after the slowdown in early 2020, there has been a marked resurgence of drug imports from South America, where drug trafficking cartels are feeding into traffic flows the surplus product stockpiled during the most aggressive phases of the pandemic. It is conceivable that this phenomenon will influence cocaine imports to European consumer markets in the medium term. As mentioned before, this marked increase in intercepted quantities includes cannabis as well, both in terms of hashish (+113%) and marijuana (+135%), which are both derived from cannabis, while a reduction in the number of seized plants (-27,51%) was registered. The sharp decrease in the total amounts of seized cannabis has stopped with respect to the previous two years, 44.7 tons in 2019 and 29.6 tons in 2020 (120 tons had been detected in 2018). Seizures reached 67.7 tons, just below the average (around 77 tons) of the last decade. On the contrary, data on cannabis plants dropped from 414,396 to 300,448.

The results achieved in 2021 confirm that cannabis remains the most widely seized drug in our country, accounting for over two thirds (67.7 tons) of all drugs detected by the Law Enforcement Agencies (91 tons) last year, demonstrating a remarkably high level of demand. A quota of 20.9 tons of inflorescences and derivatives with a low THC content accounts for this substantial volume of cannabis seizures. It is important to emphasise this figure, not so much to downplay the result achieved, but rather to mark law enforcement efforts in containing the phenomenon of the illicit marketing of these substances in line with the principles of law established in its May 2019 ruling by the United Sections of the Court of Cassation.

A more detailed analysis on cannabis derivatives confirms, also for 2021, the decline in border seizures, which gradually started in 2018. Although a considerable seizure of 6 tons was made in June in international waters off the Sicilian coast, the incidence of hashish is 33.53% (out of which 88.05% at maritime borders), while the rate for marijuana fell to 4.82% (also in this case 60.67% of seizures was made at maritime borders).

This figure, together with the data on the regional distribution of the total quantities seized, shows 20.8 tons of hashish and 46.8 tons of marijuana being detected respectively mainly in Northern Italy (43.7%) and in Southern Italy and islands (68.83%), which leads us to assume a re-shaping of the operational scenario. Besides the narcotics coming from traditional importing countries, a domestic 'outdoor' production is becoming significant, mainly in Sardinia (+498% of marijuana and +150.62% of plants with respect to the previous year). The reduction in the percentage of seizures made in the Adriatic regions (Apulia -83.77%, Abruzzi -72.06%, Basilicata -18.06%, Marche -59.96%) and the absence of seizures in ports on this side of the Italian coastline seem to confirm a decrease in flows from the Balkan region, in particular from Albania. The operational, aerial and technological support offered to the latter country by Italy in detecting cannabis plantations (the so called "Campagna Sorvoli" – Overflights Campaign) may certainly have contributed to reducing such crops (92,428 plants were eradicated, with a percentage increase of 58.20% in comparison with 58,423 detected in 2020). Based on the analysis, we may think that we are facing a change in the dynamics of this specific trafficking, in particular in the illicit flows routing and management. The future seizures trend will clarify whether we are facing a reshaping of the routes and operational strategies of the traffickers trading in this specific drug, as a consequence of the control activities by the Law Enforcement Agencies in Italy and in drug departure countries.

Heroin seizures amounting to 567.52 kg registered a modest positive shift of 10.61%, showing a reversal trend with respect to the two-year period 2019-2020. The heroin situation overview, as underlined in the latest Annual Reports, maintains overall coherence and a constant amount of seizures. In short, seizures of this substance confirm a tendency to slight fluctuations over time due, probably, to the peculiar characteristics of demand, limited and referred to an almost stable number of consumers/drug addicts. The seizures recorded in 2021, amounting to 512.3 kg, are in line with the average of the last five years. The heroin seizures have always accounted for around half a ton, with the exception of 2018, when a particularly large seizure had been made.

We would like to point out the significant percentage increase in the heroin seizures carried out at borders (air and sea), that rose by 182.35% from 2020 to 2021, with an incidence on the national total shifting from 14% to 35.75%. This proves the influence of the extraordinary surveillance measures implemented over the last years due to the pandemic. By contrast, seizures made at land borders, that are traditionally most frequently used to smuggle this type of narcotic into Italy from production countries through the so called "Balkan route", are declining (-70.04%). The analysis of this latter figure, indicating a modest flow to the continental consumer market, inevitably raises questions about the role and new arrangements in Afghanistan following the withdrawal of US troops. In August 2021 the Taliban regained control over the country where more than 80% of the world's opium production is concentrated. Only future reports will show either a decrease in cultivation, as observed in recent years up to 2019, or the resumption of a large-scale increase in poppy cultivation (already recorded as early as 2020), leading to an increase in the supply of heroin to European markets.

As to the substances showing a decrease with respect to previous years, synthetic drugs deserve specific consideration in relation to the amount of seizures. Statistics show a significant decrease in the weight (-99.03%) rather than in the doses (-10.93%) seized. The percentage figure concerning



weight is due to an extraordinary seizure made in 2020 in the port of Salerno when 14 tons of amphetamines were seized, presumably destined for foreign markets.

However, net of the above mentioned exceptional seizure made in 2020, the quantity of synthetic drugs intercepted in 2021 (137.95 kg) represents the second highest figure in the ten-year period after the one registered in 2017 (167.48 kg).

The quantity of drugs in doses seized last year (15,757 pills or tablets) is one of the lowest in a decade. On the other hand, the seizures of liquid substances is increasing compared to those of substances in doses or powder: 90 litres of GBL and over 5 litres of GHB, two powerful dissociative sedatives notoriously used as “date rape drugs”. These substances were already well-known, but in 2021 they hit the headlines again due to the detection of a widespread trafficking phenomenon perpetrated through 'online' sales sites, which led to a threefold increase in seizures compared to the previous year, as a result of complex investigations conducted through controlled deliveries and undercover operations.

A realistic examination of the data on synthetic drug seizures suggests that the quantity seized in our country is still limited after all. There is, however, a clear need to continue maintaining a high level of attention on the use of these drugs, which are popular, above all, among the young population. Notwithstanding a gradual involvement of criminal organizations attracted by the constant increase in demand (and the consequent rising profits), the threat posed by synthetic drugs is not yet at the level of other substances. However, it is expected that in the next few years Law Enforcement Agencies will have to enhance their capacity to operate in the Internet's virtual space, facing its insidious methods of demand enhancement.

In such context, there are, in fact, all the conditions for developing a new form of 'do-it-yourself' criminal entrepreneurs, setting up flourishing drug-dealing activities using the potential offered by the Web, in terms of easy access and 'anonymity', and by the so-called e-commerce. It is well known that synthetic drugs are very powerful, small quantities are enough to make hundreds of doses; a simple 'click' is all it takes to create a digital drug marketplace. Orders can be placed online and the narcotics can be delivered home by post.

This year a special reference was made to social networks. Many of the instant messaging applications allowing anonymous, even encrypted and self-deleting communications have become very popular tools in the drug dealing business and support drug transactions that take place both on the open web and on the deep and dark web thanks to the use of special 'anonymisation' and delocalisation software.

The phenomenon of the so-called New Psychoactive Substances is very similar to that of the synthetic drugs. The NPS are mostly of synthetic origin and mainly obtained from the manipulation of controlled chemicals. 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.

In the reporting year the Law enforcement services seized 32 NPS, five of which had never been detected in Italy before and were reported to the National Early Warning System (SNAP). Three of them (all synthetic cannabinoids) were already included in the ministerial Tables, as they are legally recognised as structure analogues, while the other two were specifically included in the lists of prohibited substances by the decrees of the Minister of Health in October and December 2021.

Although at present there is no perception of an extensive spread of NPS in our country, it is necessary to carefully monitor system indicators to avoid being taken by surprise by new consumption phenomena, which in some countries of the American continent are representing a real emergency to public health, causing tens of thousands of overdose death.

Although at present there is no perception of an extensive spread of NPS in our country, it is necessary to carefully monitor system indicators to avoid being taken by surprise by new consumption phenomena, which in some countries of the American continent are representing a real public health emergency, causing tens of thousands of overdose deaths.

Also in 2021, the number of foreigners involved in drug trafficking and distribution decreased (-10.15%) continuing the downward trend registered in 2020 when there had been a reduction of 26.56% with respect to the previous year. This figure reached its lowest level in a ten-year period with 9,232 people involved, over 6,223 of whom were arrested, and still represent about one third (30.69%) of all those reported to the Judicial Authority for this type of crime (30,083). These are mainly non-EU labourers – as in the previous years, mostly of Moroccan, Tunisian, Albanian, Nigerian and Gambian origin – employed in street-level dealing in the domestic drug market. Taking into consideration the offence of criminal conspiracy to drug trafficking, the number of foreigners reported to the Judicial Authority showed instead a percentage increase (+12.34%) in comparison with 2020, accounting for 428 people.

In 2021, the negative trend in overdose deaths also seems to be confirmed. In the previous year, after three years of continuous growth, such trend had been interrupted showing a significant reduction (-65 units) with respect to 2019. In the reporting year this figure drops to 293, showing, in percentage terms, a decrease of 5.18% as compared to 2020, when drug deaths had dropped to 309. The analysis of data pertaining to individual substances causing death does not show any particular reasons to explain why there were 16 fewer deaths than in the previous year.

In 2021, the decrease of overdose deaths caused by methadone (15), heroin (1), and cocaine (7) is partially offset by the rise of death from unknown causes (8). For the first time in years, LSD was registered as the cause of a fatal event.

It is still too early to say whether we are facing a structural decline in the phenomenon, as would certainly be desirable, or whether the decrease is still the result of incidental and transitory circumstances. It is true, on the other hand, that since 1973, when Italy started to collect data on drug overdose deaths, 26,448 persons have died due to drug abuse.

In the period under examination, no significant changes in drug importation routes were identified. We have already mentioned the drug flow that crosses, with frequent occurrence, 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, Romania and Ukraine.

It is possible to assume that the complex relationships linking the criminal groups who, in agreement with each other, manage logistics and maximise profits are fostering the creation of a number of ramifications of the main traffic routes to satisfy the need of criminal organizations for safer routes in order to exploit their collusive contacts working at departure and arrival seaports and have storage areas close to the landing places.

The analysis of drug trafficking criminal organizations confirms that drug production and trade is still today among the main areas of interest of criminal organisations and represents a transnational phenomenon operating on a worldwide market, thanks above all to an ever-growing demand from a very large consumer base.

The fight against drug trafficking should focus on counteraction strategies. They must not be limited to narcotic seizures, but should envisage well-structured inquiries that, starting from producing and transit countries, can lead to the identification of the criminal groups involved in the illicit traffic.



In such context, particularly important is, on the one side, identifying the so-called “capital of relationships”, which criminal organisations have secured over time by forging relations with the “grey area” of compliant individuals belonging to the world of finance and enterprise and, on the other side, the removal of the huge profits from drug trafficking that criminal syndicates aim to reintroduce into the legal economy by using ever more sophisticated money-laundering techniques. The monitoring of phenomena and the analysis of indicators offered by the antidrug activities concluded in 2021 by Law Enforcement Agencies coordinated by the DCSA reveal two new aspects in comparison with previous reports: an increasing use of cryptographic technology, which hinders the investigations into drug trafficking, and the help from accomplices, based mainly in seaport areas, to facilitate the movement of containers where the drug is concealed.

In this complex scenario, an increasingly leading role is played by the Calabrian ‘Ndrangheta. It is still one of the most powerful and dangerous criminal organizations worldwide and, thanks to the presence of its own members and operational brokers established in the producing countries and in the temporary drug storage areas located both in Italy and in Europe, it still holds a primary position in the management of drug trafficking as a real “player” capable of relocating its illicit activities worldwide. This is certainly the Italian Mafia-type organisation with the greatest degree of expansion, both at national and international level, and certainly the most influential in the trafficking of cocaine from South America and the main temporary storage areas in Europe. The large amounts of money of illicit origin and a strong ability to manage the various traffic sectors and hubs have enabled it, over time, to consolidate such a significant role in the international drug trafficking that other criminal networks resort to it for their supply of the narcotics destined for consumer markets.

As to the Mafia organization “Cosa Nostra”, investigations coordinated by the DCSA highlighted its persistent vitality and a continuing interest in drug trafficking, a remarkable ability to adapt to the changing context and a pragmatic approach to the lucrative drug trafficking business. The latter generates huge profits with less risk than other typical Mafia crimes (such as, e.g., extortions) and is again a key element in the financial budget of this powerful criminal organisation. The effective police action against extortions led the most important families to recover a major role in the narcotics trafficking, although in a position of subordination to other Mafia-type organisations from Campania and Calabria, both in terms of supply from producer countries and import and distribution at national level.

In the reporting year, also Camorra continued its drug import activities, mainly hashish and cocaine, exploiting on the one hand its operational bases in Spain, South American countries, Africa and the Arabian Peninsula and on the other hand the close cooperation with the Calabrian clans.

The concept of ‘criminal fluidity’ is certainly a typical feature of the Camorra gangs, a universe of clans and groups, often in conflict with each other for the management of illegal activities in the area where they compete for drug markets. The coexistence in the same region of criminal groups with different histories, 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 Apulian criminal organizations, subdivided on the basis of their geographical areas of reference (the “Mafia from Foggia”, different branches of the “Foggia society”, the “Mafia from Gargano” and the “Mob from Cerignola”, the “criminality from Bari” based mainly in the main city of the region, and the “Sacra Corona Unita”, which is still well-rooted in Salento), continue to represent a multifaceted and heterogeneous universe that is difficult to classify and characterised by the absence of ‘leadership’.

For the above mentioned reasons, these criminal organisations are characterised by a fragmentary and changeable structure based on factions and composed of individuals linked by family ties.

As previously mentioned, the flow of cannabis derivatives arriving from the Balkan side of the Adriatic Sea, seems to decrease, whereas in the Gargano, located in that geographical area, there has been an increase in the illicit cultivation of marijuana, facilitated by the geomorphology of that territory, rich in inaccessible areas covered with thick vegetation, which is ideal for concealing plantations.

Moreover, this year's Annual Report mentions organised crime in the Lazio region, in the areas of Rome and in other provinces, and in particular well-structured groups, often based on family ties, that have been playing a major role in drug trafficking for a long time. In Rome these criminal organisations operate beside branches of the Sicilian, Calabrian and Campanian traditional Mafias as well as foreign Mafias attracted by the possibility of reinvesting the proceeds from their illicit traffic. Through their 'silent' strategy, they aim at camouflaging themselves and making law enforcement counteraction more difficult.

In 2021 also ethnic criminal structures continued to develop an increasing ability and operational independence in managing drug trafficking, including retail distribution in many Italian regions.

Investigative results revealed that Albanian organizations have spread across most of Italy and can be considered among the most active and consolidated foreign organizations on the international drug trafficking scene. These groups are particularly reliable partners for the criminal network involved in drug trafficking, especially for their ability to move large quantities of cocaine and heroin across Europe, handling every step in the supply chain, from drug collection at the ports in the Netherlands and Belgium to transport to the intended destination in specifically adapted vehicles and distribution within Italy. The Albanian organizations have also developed direct channels for the supply, storage and marketing of drugs and are in business, as reliable intermediaries, with Mafia-type organizations from Calabria, Campania and Sicily as well as with other criminal groups.

Among other foreign organisations, there is a growing involvement of Nigerian criminal groups. Although they operate in a wide range of criminal activities, they are now consolidating their position in the financing and management of international drug trafficking. Nigerian groups are now active in almost all regions, in particular along the Northern half of the Campanian coast, in the province of Caserta and on the outskirts of Rome; they are among the most active groups in drug transport using body packers. Although these human couriers can only carry small quantities of drugs, when used in large numbers, they guarantee a constant supply of drugs.

At the same level are North-African criminal syndicates, mainly from the Maghreb region, which are nowadays generally settled and well-rooted almost all over Italy. Thanks to their strong integration into the urban social and criminal fabric, even in areas where local criminal groups are traditionally active, these groups manage large portions of transnational drug trafficking in cooperation with other criminal groups operating in Italy.

Investigations have continued to indicate that these organisations demonstrate their criminal abilities in different ways: in the southern regions, they are subordinated to local criminal networks, while in the central and northern regions, they have gradually gained such a degree of independence that, in some urban areas, they have conquered a dominant position, especially in drug distribution activities.

The picture is completed by the criminal organizations connected to the Balkan cartels and the Turkish criminality, as well as the organizations composed of South American nationals living in our country, in particular those belonging to large Salvadoran, Ecuadorian, Peruvian and Dominican



communities in Northern Italy, within which street 'gangs' made up of young and very young people are becoming increasingly structured. Although drug trade is their main source of revenue, they also engage in predatory crimes. This is a growing phenomenon causing concern and alarm, especially due to the frequent use of violence by street gang members.

As to international relations, although the pandemic restrictions limited in-presence meetings, during the reporting year the DCSA participated in important fora on the planning of strategic guidelines to curb drug trafficking and other drug-related phenomena. In particular, the DCSA took part in the works of the 64th Session of the United Nations Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND), which was held in Vienna from 12 to 16 April 2021 (Regular Session). In such context, participants thoroughly examined the effects of COVID-19 on drug trafficking and, in particular, the ability of drug trafficking criminal organisations to adapt to the restrictive measures imposed by States during the global health crisis.

The growing threat posed by synthetic drugs and NPS, the use of e-commerce networks for the online sale of these substances and the use of instant and encrypted messaging platforms for the management of illicit transactions were also topics of discussion. The assembly unanimously approved WHO recommendations to place under international control eight new narcotic substances that are reportedly becoming widely abused.

Moreover, in the reporting year, the DCSA participated in the COPOLAD III programme for the prevention and fight against drug trafficking with a "mid-term expert" designated specifically for this activity, thus making a further contribution through its Law Enforcement Attachés posted 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.

At bilateral level, the DCSA started negotiations with Croatia, Israel, Austria, Greece, Moldova, Spain, Bulgaria and France. Such negotiations are aimed at concluding agreements and understandings, in the form of Antidrug Operational Memoranda focused on the exchange of police information and fostering joint investigative initiatives against trafficking of drugs and their precursors. In connection with the above mentioned Memoranda and in the initial stage also with the support of the Law Enforcement Attachés, specific negotiations were promoted or further developed with Albania, Brazil, Bulgaria, Colombia, Ivory Coast, Georgia, Northern Macedonia, Morocco, Montenegro, Panama, Romania, Serbia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

Furthermore, activities concerning the "ICARUS" and "HERMES" projects have continued. These projects were signed by the DCSA and the Department for Antidrug Policies of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers to enhance the synergies between these two Offices and increase their effectiveness in the common areas of their respective institutional competences. Within the first project, which is at an advanced implementation stage, several initiatives have been developed to increase the level of efficiency of counter-narcotic activities and the processing of useful data for a more comprehensive analysis of the relevant phenomena.

In 2021, the activities for the implementation of the "Southern Route" project continued. Such project is aimed at strengthening police cooperation with the countries of South-East Africa, through which heroin coming from Afghanistan is smuggled to Italy and Europe.

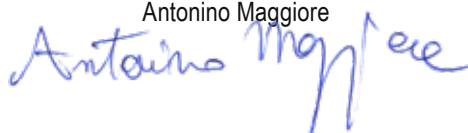
In such framework and in cooperation with the Central Directorate of Criminal Police, an online meeting took place in January 2021 with the representatives of the Police Authorities of the African countries interested in this specific cooperation. This is a multilateral project aimed at the exchange of information and good practices through specific training initiatives and at providing technical support for the coordination of international operations carried out in the respective territories. At present, Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius, Mozambique, South Africa, Tanzania and Uganda have expressed real interest in joining the project, which intends to support the investigative efforts and law enforcement initiatives carried out by the Police Forces of the countries affected by this emerging drug trafficking route. Within the same project, although the limitations imposed by the health crisis hindered the implementation of some initiatives in presence, 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, is aimed at raising students' awareness of the risks of drug use. In particular, with the support of the Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore (Catholic University of the Sacred Heart), consultation booklets were developed for parents, students and teachers and will be distributed in 220 schools selected under the programme with the aim of providing comprehensive information on the risks and harms of drug use.

The second project, developed with the Department for Antidrug Policies of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, was signed in November 2019 and it aims to identify operational methods to face more effectively drug import and trade (especially synthetic drugs) by monitoring and controlling postal deliveries and goods transported by public and private couriers (the so-called parcels). The initiative, currently in its operational phase, continued with a number of training activities conducted on the field to improve methods to detect synthetic drugs and New Psychoactive Substances sent by post, by involving law enforcement operational units. In particular, in such context, four portable devices using 'Raman' technology that can give immediate detection and identification of drugs were purchased. In the three months of practical testing of this technology, synthetic drugs sent by post or courier were detected and seized in over 400 cases. In two cases, the substance seized was reported to the National Early Warning System since these were new phenomena of drug use, potentially dangerous to public health.

Following the substitution of the paper version with an electronic version, the 2022 Annual report is published in the form of a flash memory card and translated into English and Spanish in order to promote its dissemination also abroad.

The Annual report can also be consulted on the DCSA website, a useful tool for finding data, information and reports on the anti-drug activities carried out by Law Enforcement Agencies.

THE DIRECTOR
Antonino Maggiore



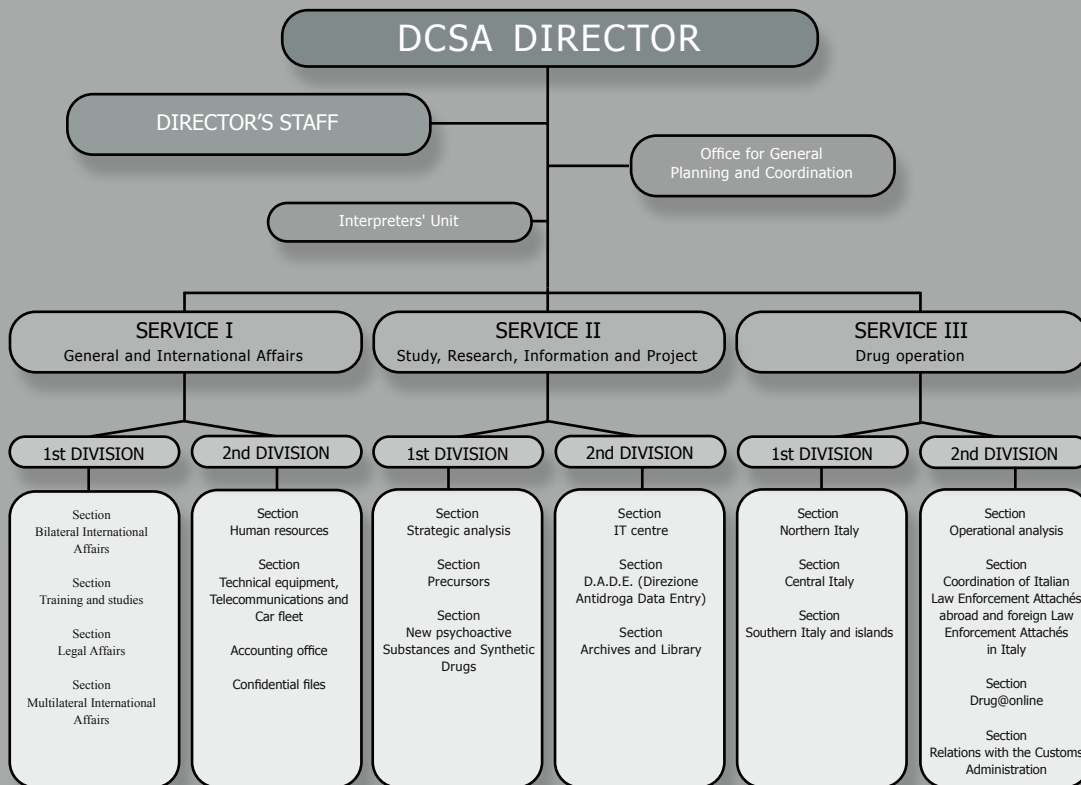


P A R T



C H A P T E R

THE ROLE
AND TASKS OF
THE CENTRAL
DIRECTORATE FOR
ANTIDRUG SERVICES



The organization, the tasks and the activities of the Direzione Centrale per i Servizi Antidroga

1. THE ROLE AND TASKS OF THE CENTRAL DIRECTORATE FOR ANTIDRUG SERVICES

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

Established by Law No. 16 of January 15, 1991 within the Department of Public Security, the Central Directorate for Anti-Drug Services (hereafter referred to with its Italian acronym: DCSA) is composed equally 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 replaced 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 organisational 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.



Headquarters of DCSA up to 2005

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

Multilateral activities

During 2021 DCSA has continued to pursue the numerous multilateral initiatives primarily developed with 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.

As in 2020, a number of international meetings were held virtually due to the continuing COVID-19 health emergency.

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)**, the central policy-making body for the UN drug control system.

The CND is mandated to review and analyze the global drug situation and make proposals to address the related problems and strengthen the control system. The **64th regular session of the CND** was held in Vienna on 12-16 April 2021 following the usual procedure envisaging:

- an Operational Segment, including discussions on, *inter alia*, administrative and budgetary questions, working methods of the Commission and Staff composition of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and other related matters;
- a Normative Segment, including discussions on the implementation of international drug control treaties and on all commitments at the national, regional and international levels to address and counter the world drug problem.

During the event particular attention was devoted to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on drug trafficking. Discussions highlighted the swift adaptation of organised crime groups in drug distribution and the growing threat posed by synthetic drugs and NPS, facilitated by online purchases and the use of instant and encrypted messaging platforms.

In addition, a number of resolutions were discussed and adopted, presented by Canada (Facilitating access to drug demand reduction services), Portugal, in agreement with the other EU Member States



Current headquarters of the DCSA



Visit of a delegation of the Moldovan Republic, headed by the Secretary of State of the Ministry of Internal Affairs Mr. Serghei DIACONU - September 2021

(Promoting drug prevention, treatment and recovery services), Nigeria (Improving data collection on the use of non-medical pharmaceuticals containing narcotic drugs) and Peru, together with Thailand and Germany, co-sponsored by the European Union (Promoting alternative development as a drug control strategy).

In particular, the Italian delegation, coordinated by the Permanent Mission of Italy to the International Organizations in Vienna, supported the Portuguese Resolution – subsequently adopted with broad support – as it undoubtedly shows increased international consensus for promoting a public health approach to the drug problem.

Likewise, WHO recommendations to control eight new psychoactive substances were also unanimously approved.

Furthermore, DCSA representatives participated in Heads of National Drug Law Enforcement Agencies (HONLEA) regional meetings. Established in 1973 to further cooperation in drug law enforcement activities at the regional level, HONLEA is a subsidiary body of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs. The regions covered are Europe, Asia and the Pacific, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean.

Heads of National Drug Law Enforcement Agencies or their representatives meet annually to discuss drug trafficking prevention and enforcement strategies and to improve the relevant international cooperation programmes.

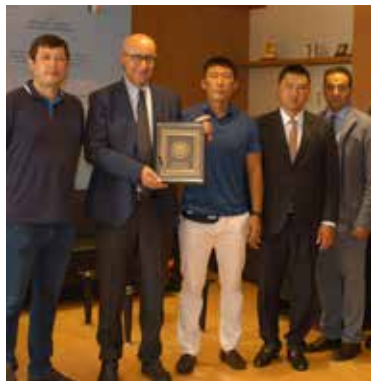
At the various HONLEA meetings held in 2021, participating States focused their attention on the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the illicit drug market, with special reference to the different forms of organised crime, on the laundering of drug trafficking proceeds, as well as on the use of information technologies for illicit drug-related activities.

During the HONLAP (Asia and the Pacific) meeting, the Iranian delegation provided a detailed overview of drug crime in that region. Iran is situated in a strategic geographical position from a drug trafficking perspective, which coincides with the main smuggling routes for the drugs originating in Asia, in particular in Afghanistan e Myanmar. 35% of the opium produced in Afghanistan¹ is smuggled by land in trucks through the Iranian territory. In particular, heroin transits Iran along the following three known routes:

- the **“Northern Route”**, which covers the province of Khorasan-e-Razavi, bordering Turkmenistan. The specific itinerary includes crossing an extremely rugged mountainous area. As a result, the fight against drug trafficking is a very demanding task for the local police forces;
- the **“Southern Route”**, maggiormente utilizzata negli ultimi anni dai narcotrafficienti, che percorre le province iraniane del Sistan e Baluchistan, ai confini con l’Afghanistan e il Pakistan, in direzione del Golfo di Oman e successivamente si ramifica, transitando anche attraverso il continente africano;
- the **“Hormuzgan Route”** – named after the Hormuzgan province – crosses the Persian Gulf region and reaches the port of Bandar Abbas, the most important commercial port in Iran.

After crossing the Iranian territory, narcotic drug consignments flow towards the following directions of the various international markets, depending on the destinations:

- Europe, along the so-called **“Rotta Balcanica”** and the **“Southern Route”**, which entails transit through East and Southern African countries and the Near East;
- Russia and Central Asian countries, crossing the border with Azerbaijan, towards the Caucasus, along the Black Sea and then onwards to Russia.



Visit of a delegation of Kazakhstan July 2021

¹ Not only opium, though. Over the last few years, narcotic drugs produced in Afghanistan include ephedrine, the active ingredient extracted from Ephedra Sinica, a plant which is widely available in Afghanistan. Ephedrine is used in the manufacture of methamphetamine.

During the event, information was provided about the amounts of drugs seized in Iran in the first eight months of 2021, compared to the same period in the previous year.

DATA PROVIDED BY THE IRANIAN DELEGATION

	Opium	Hashish	Heroin	Morphine	Methamphetamine	Others	Total
First eight months (2020) kg	556,957	70,928	20,680	14,996	13,476	18,398	695,435
First eight months (2021) kg	585,549	86,392	18,368	25,008	14,729	26,419	756,483
percentage variation	+5%	+22%	-11%	+67%	+9%	+44%	+9%

At EU level, DCSA took part in the meetings of the relevant dedicated working groups such as the “**Horizontal Drug Group**” (HDG), which was established in 1997 with the mission of promoting the EU Council’s work on drugs. It performs both legislative and general policy work in the field of drug supply and drug demand reduction.

DCSA also participates in the “**Dublin Group**”, an informal group established in 1990, with the purpose of evaluating the regional cooperation policies in favour of drug producing and/or transit countries. At its periodical plenary meeting held online on 14 December 2021, the global drug situation was assessed based on the situation reports submitted by so-called “mini-Dublin groups”², each of which covers a particular geographical area and reports to the Central Dublin Group in Brussels. The “mini-Dublin Group” for Central Asia is chaired by Italy through the DCSA Law Enforcement Attaché in Tashkent (Uzbekistan).

No less important is the participation of DCSA in **EUROPOL’s** initiative³ to strengthen the fight against drug trafficking under a dedicated Drugs Programme Board, aimed at reviewing drug trafficking trends and sharing experiences. An Action Plan is adopted during the annual conference also with the participation of EU Member States’ drug enforcement agencies, which identifies the priorities for a coordinated law enforcement response to drug supply. A DCSA delegation attended the 5th of such annual conferences on 3 December 2021.

In a context of growing cooperation between the EU and Latin America and the Caribbean in the fight against drug trafficking⁴, a number of technical assistance and legal diplomacy programmes⁵ have been developed by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation in agreement, for the part concerning police cooperation, with the Department of Public Security – to be executed by the Italian-Latin America International Organization (IILA)⁶ to the benefit of countries in that region. In particular, DCSA cooperates⁷, on **COPOLAD III**, a programme aimed at preventing and combating drug trafficking, with a Mid-term Expert and its Law Enforcement Attachés deployed in the region.

In addition, several cooperative initiatives were also developed with other **international bodies and regional platforms**. Mention should be made, in particular, of the work of the **G7 - Roma/Lyon**



*Visit of Mr. Flavio Siniscalchi
Head of the Department for Antidrug
Policies - July 2021*

² 13 mini-groups in total, with 3 active in Africa, 3 in America, 4 in Asia, 1 in the Middle East and 2 in Europe.

³ Since its inception in 2017.

⁴ A key instrument in Europe’s support for the overall stability of the region as well as for upholding and strengthening the rule of law.

⁵ The main cooperation initiative is the FALCONE-BORSELLINO Programme (improving the capacity to combat transnational organized crime through the fight against corruption in public procurement, cybercrime and organized crime illicit assets). Other EU-funded programmes include EL PACTO (police, justice and penitentiary), EUROFRONT (border management), COPOLAD III (preventing and combating drug trafficking) and EUROsocial+ (support for reforming processes and social policy).

⁶ IILA concluded a technical arrangement with the Italian Department of Public Security on 16 November 2021.

⁷ Within the frame of the specific initiatives supported by the Department of Public Security.



Signature of the scientific Cooperation Agreement between DCSA and the Department of Social and Economic Sciences of the University of Rome "Sapienza" - July 2021

Group, involving experts and government officials from Canada, France, Germany, Japan, United Kingdom, United States of America and Italy. In 2021, the UK assumed the rotating presidency of this Group. More specifically, DCSA took part in the virtual meetings of the Law Enforcement Projects Sub Group (LEPSG) held in April and November 2021. In its spring session, LEPSG held a discussion on the emergency experienced by North American countries due to the spread of synthetic opioids and fentanyl. Mexican cartels are involved in this trade also through an extensive use of the darknet. In the November session, the discussion focused on the new emerging scenarios as a result of geopolitical developments concerning Afghanistan.

In November 2021 a meeting was held at DCSA headquarters with a delegation of high level officials from a number of **ASEAN countries**⁸. This event falls within the initiatives launched by the Department of Public Security to enhance international police cooperation with countries in that region.

Finally, preliminary activities on Project Southern Route were continued in close coordination with the **INTERPOL General Secretariat in Lyon**. This initiative is included among the goals of the interinstitutional cooperation agreement and the related executive project "Icarus", promoted by the Department for Antidrug Policies of Italy's Presidency of the Council of Ministers, and is aimed at preventing and combating heroin trafficking along the African Southern Route, in close cooperation with the Central Directorate of Criminal Police. In this regard, an online meeting was held on 28 January 2021 with the representatives of law enforcement agencies from the African countries interested in cooperating at multilateral level. To date, Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius, Mozambique, South Africa, Tanzania and Uganda have expressed interest in adopting proposed development guidelines. In addition, the possible involvement of Somalia is being considered. During 2022, if the COVID-19 pandemic situation permits, a number of activities concerning the exchange of best practices and training will be carried out directly in the countries mentioned above, along with project status meetings in Rome and Lyon.

8 The Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) includes Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, Brunei, Vietnam, Myanmar, Lao PDR and Cambodia.



Meeting of an ASEAN delegation (Association of South East Asian Nations), members: Singapore, Brunei, Cambodia, Philippines, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam - November 2021

Bilateral activities

Developing bilateral cooperation is one of the strategic cornerstones of DCSA's operational policy to counter the illegal trade in narcotic drugs. To this end, DCSA actively contributes to the negotiation of agreements with States of interest, in cooperation with the relevant offices of the Department of Public Security. In 2021, contributions and assessments were provided, *inter alia*, with respect to intergovernmental agreements on cooperation in security matters under negotiation with Panama, United Arab Emirates and Botswana. Furthermore, negotiations already started on the basis of a DCSA proposal are underway with Canada, Senegal and Tajikistan, to develop an intergovernmental agreement on police cooperation with the first two countries and on the fight against drug trafficking with the third country.

Moreover, several strictly technical arrangements are also being negotiated with drug-transit, drug-producing and/or drug trafficking countries, including a Letter of Cooperation with Iran on the fight against trafficking in narcotic drugs and precursor chemicals⁹ and bilateral Action Plans with Albania and Paraguay.

On top of this, bilateral negotiations were further developed in 2021 with Albania, Brazil, Bulgaria, Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, Georgia, North Macedonia, Morocco, Montenegro, Panama, Romania, Serbia, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan there with a view to the conclusion of drug enforcement operational memoranda of understanding (known with the Italian acronym MOA). In addition, DCSA also proposed to develop the same MoUs with Croatia, Israel, Austria, Greece, Moldavia, Spain, Bulgaria and France.

With a view to strengthening cooperation and increasing the effectiveness of law enforcement action, there has been an extensive exchange of knowledge and experiences through continued contacts with the Liaison Officers posted in Italy by the various foreign police forces, as well as during the following institutional visits: a US Marshals Service delegation led by the Deputy Director of the Investigative Operations Division¹⁰; a Turkish National Police delegation led by the Deputy



*Visit of a delegation of the Turkish Police Authorities headed by Deputy Director General of the National Police
September 2021*

⁹ This Letter of Cooperation is also linked to an Iranian initiative to develop an Action Plan for the enhancement of police cooperation.

¹⁰ On 26 May 2021.



Project White Snow created by Police Authorities from Poland with the Ministry of Interior of Poland - October 2021



Director General of the National Police¹¹; the Secretary of State of the Ministry for Internal Affairs of the Republic of Moldova along with a representative of the Moldovan Police¹²; a delegation of four prosecutors from the General Prosecutor's Office of the Republic of Uzbekistan¹³.

A DCSA delegation attended several interministerial and international bilateral meetings, often in virtual mode, with Qatar¹⁴, Albania¹⁵, Spain¹⁶, Libya¹⁷, Turkey¹⁸, Côte d'Ivoire¹⁹, Tunisia²⁰, UK²¹, Israel²² and Russia²³.

Furthermore, in view of international engagements of top level officials, several situation reports were drafted to contribute to the identification of criminal phenomena and police cooperation in the fight against drug trafficking in the countries of strategic and operational interest²⁴.

11 On 7 September 2021.

12 On 27 September 2021.

13 On 21 December 2021.

14 1st bilateral operational meeting of experts between Italy and Qatar (VTC, 13 January 2021).

15 Bilateral cooperation with Albania to present a proposal for a partnership with the USA (VTC, 4 February 2021).

16 Italy-Spain 19th Intergovernmental Summit (VTC, 7 May 2021).

17 Bilateral cooperation with Libya (VTC, 18 June 2021) and expert meeting at the Office for the planning and coordination of police forces with Libyan authorities (Rome 23 June 2021).

18 Bilateral expert meeting between Italy and Turkey (VTC, 29 July 2021) and Italy-Turkey bilateral expert meeting pursuant to Art. 7 of the cooperation agreement on the fight against serious crimes, especially terrorism and organized crime, which was signed on 8 May 2012 and entered in force on 1 April 2018 (6 September 2021).

19 Videoconference with the Diplomatic Advisor to the Minister of the Interior and Security of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire (VTC, 15 September 2021).

20 1st meeting of the Joint Italy-Tunisia Expert Committee established by the bilateral agreement on the fight against organized crime signed in Tunis on 13 December 2003 (VTC, 28 October 2021).

21 Roundtable with the Director of the Cooperation Strategies and International Initiatives Unit of the UK Home Office (Rome - UCPFP, 11 November 2021).

22 Presentation of the 7th bilateral strategic working group between Italy and Israel (Rome-UCPFP, 26 November 2021).

23 4th meeting of the "Italy-Russian Federation Interministerial Working Group on combating global challenges" (Moscow, 24 November 2021).

24 Afghanistan, Algeria, Saudi Arabia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bosnia, Bulgaria, Canada, China, Colombia, South Korea, Côte D'Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, United Arab Emirates, Russian Federation, Philippines, France, Georgia, Japan, Greece, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Libya, Lithuania, North Macedonia, Mali, Malta, Morocco, Moldova, Montenegro, Niger, Poland, Qatar, UK, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia, Spain, South Africa, Thailand, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine, Hungary, USA and Uzbekistan.



Visit of a delegation of the Attorney General's Office of the Uzbekistan Republic, headed by the Director Mr. Rustam Y. Giyasov – December 2021

COORDINATION AND OPERATIONAL SUPPORT

The III Service “Drug Operations” deals with the information and investigative coordination of drug-related activities conducted by Police Forces nationwide and abroad.

In particular, by means of strategic and operational intelligence activities, the III Service identifies investigative matches among the various anti-drug trafficking operations underway, actively supports ongoing investigations, and promotes new ones, both within and outside the national territory. In short, DCSA is a partner of Police Forces operating on the territory, able to ensure them inter-force expertise in the process of initiating and integrating investigations, and to provide technical, investigative, logistic, operational and financial support to Units and Commands.

More specifically, its constant processing and analysis of relevant information is aimed at reporting possible cases of operational cross-matching to investigative and judicial bodies.

To this end, it plans and convenes information and intelligence exchange meetings among the various Departments/Units, aimed at enabling the mutual in-depth examination of the information available and avoiding useless and uneconomic overlaps at an operational level.

It also provides technical and logistic support to the local units’ investigations, by deploying resources and equipment of the highest technical value. It provides information support to the most complex investigations, by developing operational analysis useful to steer the activities and facilitate the advancement of investigations.

Furthermore, the III Service is the internal point of reference for the authorisation and operational coordination of “special operations” (undercover operations and controlled deliveries at national and international levels) and for the requests to board vessels suspected of carrying drugs in international waters.

“Undercover” investigation techniques prove to be of fundamental importance because, through the infiltration of specialised police officers, they make it possible to track down the criminal network, hitting the top levels of the organisations.

The III Service encompasses the Drug@Online Section, through which DCSA can ensure the coordination and support of investigation activities on the national territory and abroad, in the prevention, fight and suppression of crimes related to the illicit trafficking of drugs, perpetrated by using computer systems, electronic communication means or publicly available communication networks.

Focusing again on the functions performed by the III Service, it promotes anti-drug activities at international level. The internationalisation of investigations, through the Law Enforcement Attachés’ network abroad, is, in fact, one of the elements that characterises the fight against major criminal organisations operating on a transnational scale. The ability to relate to and cooperate with the Police Forces of the various States affected by the drug trafficking phenomenon is a fundamental factor to counter it effectively. In the field of international cooperation, the Italian Police Forces, through DCSA, avail themselves of the support of corresponding agencies of the main illicit drug-producing and drug-transit countries.

Over the last years, this has led to strengthened investigative capacity and substantial seizures of narcotic drugs and assets, as well as to the arrest of important fugitives.

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 law²⁵.

The II Service includes the Anti-Drug Directorate Data Entry Section (DADE)²⁶, which feeds, with the available information, the database known as the Anti-Drug Directorate Integrated Statistical System (DASIS).

This database allows for 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 national level.

The intelligence mission, designed to support the fight against criminal phenomena related to drug trafficking, instead, is 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 organisations 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's 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 performs teaching activities as part of the internal and external training.

TRAINING ACTIVITIES

In 2021, the regular training activities of the Central Directorate for Anti-Drug Services continued, on behalf of national police officers, as well as of senior officers of foreign counterpart offices²⁷. In particular, a total of 150 members of the national Police Forces and 291 members of the corresponding foreign Police Forces attended the courses delivered during 35 training days.

In the period under review, it was necessary - due to the continuing limitations to in-person activities imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic - to remotely deliver most of the training initiatives, thanks to the availability shown by academics, experts in the field and well-trained national law enforcement officers. They succeeded, even by this approach, in conveying their know-how to the participants, providing a valuable impulse to enhance the police officers' professional background.

The following didactic activities were provided, in detail, in distance learning mode:

- 10th "Drug on line" Course, held from 9 to 12 March 2021, on behalf of 22 national and 39 foreign law enforcement officers;
- 5th "Clandestine Laboratories and New Psychoactive Substances" Course, which was held from 20 to 22 April 2021, for 21 national and 46 foreign law enforcement officers;
- 22nd Course for " Heads of Specialised Anti-Drug Units", which was attended, in the period 24 - 27 May 2021, by 23 members of the national Police Forces and 51 officers from foreign Police Forces;

25 The Consolidated Text on narcotic substances, approved by Presidential Decree 309/90, states in Article 87 that immediate notification must be given to the DCSA of all seizures of narcotics resulting from law enforcement activities against drug trafficking

26 The DAD. Section (Antidrug Directorate Data Entry) has been, since 1992, a member of SISTAN (National Statistical System under ISTAT and in accordance with Legislative Decree 6.9.1989, no. 322 is the official body of the statistics produced by the National Statistical System) in which the flow of reports received by the D.C.S.A. is channeled

27 Within the framework of the institutional objective set out in Article 10 of Presidential Decree no. 309 of 9 October 1990 (international cooperation) and in the Decree of the Minister of the Interior dated 6 February 2020, adopted in agreement with the Minister of the Economy and Finance, concerning the organization and responsibilities of the offices, services and divisions of the Public Security Department of the Ministry of the Interior, the Central Directorate for Anti-Drug Services promotes inter-force anti-drug qualification and development courses for law enforcement officers.

- 5th Course for "Law Enforcement Attachés", organised by the Interagency Law Enforcement College of Advanced Studies, which was attended by 5 Senior Officers/Officers of the national Police Forces to be deployed abroad. In this framework, DCSA was responsible for the training module in the period 14 - 18 June 2021;
- 12th Seminar for "Undercover Agents", which was held from 20 to 21 October 2021, on behalf of 27 national law enforcement officers;
- 30th Anti-Drug Course for "Undercover Agents", which was attended, in the period 15 - 26 November 2021, by 33 members of the National Police Forces.

Only the 2nd "Synthetic Drugs and NPS"²⁸, Course which took place from 20 to 23 September 2021, was attended in person, at DCSA headquarters, by 20 national law enforcement officers. Through an increasingly active cooperation - also in the training context - with UNODC, DCSA also ensured the participation of its experts in a training course named "**Airport Communication Project**" (**AIRCOP**), held last December in Rome, organised by the aforementioned international organisation on behalf of senior officers/officers from the Police Forces of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia and North Macedonia.

TECHNOLOGICAL AND LOGISTIC SUPPORT TO CRIMINAL POLICE INVESTIGATIONS

There is no doubt that one of the core businesses of the Central Directorate for Anti-Drug Services is the daily technical and logistic support to the investigations of Police Forces' local units, which are engaged in an increasingly technological fight against hardened transnational criminal organisations involved in drug trafficking. A dedicated team of DCSA's highly specialised officers, constantly updated on "investigative technology" is committed to this task, in order to ensure an increasingly effective response to diversified needs. The Directorate's team, in 2021, supported 82 operations, through 99 interventions on the national territory.



Address by the DCSA Director during the 2nd course "Synthetic Drugs and NPS: characteristics and classification, reference legislation and law enforcement strategies"

²⁸ Organised within the framework of the inter-institutional cooperation agreement between the Department for Anti-Drug Policies of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers and the Central Directorate for Anti-Drug Services to enhance the prevention and fight against the spread of narcotic substances mainly of a synthetic nature, named "Project HERMES".



30th Course for Undercover Agents, with the participation of 33 law enforcement operators – November 2021



LEGISLATION ACTIVITY

The Directorate's activity is also carried out through a series of specialised opinions issued in its areas of responsibility, in response to requests from the Department's offices. In 2021, it provided opinions on 23 draft laws and bills under consideration by the national Parliament, and also provided answers to 15 parliamentary inspection acts (questions, enquiries and motions), as well as to 5 draft regional laws and various memoranda of understanding on narcotics. An important contribution was made during the examination of the constitutional legitimacy of Piedmont's regional law allowing hemp cultivation.

On the other hand, 15 experts' opinions were rendered in connection with the procedures for the Ministry of the Interior's civil action in criminal proceedings on drug trafficking cases.

Additional technical documents were drawn up in the framework of the Minister of the Interior's Hearing at the Parliamentary Commission for Childhood and Adolescence (fact-finding investigation into pathological addictions among young people), with reference to the urgent report on the fight against drug trafficking requested by the Chamber of Deputies and, also, on the occasion of the Hearing of the Chief of Police - Director General of Public Security before the Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry on the phenomenon of mafias and other organised criminal organisations, including foreign ones.

It also ensured constant regulatory advice in the field of narcotics to external, national, EU and international bodies, and provided information support on the matter to Foreign Liaison Officers in Italy.

DCSA examined 12 notifications relating to draft regulations of European Union states in the field of narcotics, pursuant to Directive (EU) 2015/1535, providing specialist assistance on complex issues, upon request of the Public Security Department.

ACTIVITIES ON NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL PROJECTS

By Ministerial Decree of 6 February 2020, the end point of a reform project wanted by the Chief of Police, aimed at updating the organisational structure and staffing levels of the Public Security



6th National Conference on drug addiction - address by the DCSA Director during the 2nd panel discussion "From international drug trafficking routes to 2.0 distribution channels. Analysis and perspectives of intelligence and law enforcement activities" - Genoa, November 2021

Department, the II Service of the Central Directorate for Anti-Drug Services took on its current denomination of “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.

The globalisation of markets and the growth of e-commerce has facilitated the spread of drugs, especially synthetic drugs, which develop their psychotropic potential from very small quantities of substance, sometimes in terms of milligrams. This evolution has prompted the need, as indicated above, for an implementation of the national anti-drug strategy through the enhancement of new expertise, which would make it possible to intercept drugs concealed within postal parcels arriving in the national territory, estimated at around 300 million per year.

In this connection, a project initiative (named HERMES) developed with the Department for Anti-Drug Policies of the Presidency of the Council was continued, with the aim of identifying innovative control methods to counter the aforesaid threat, through the monitoring of postal and courier shipments, including those not subject to customs constraints.

The results obtained from observation, inspection and possible suppression activities will constitute an information asset and a useful enhancing tool for the operational requirements of the Early Warning System (SNAP), which has been adopted nationwide.

GENERAL PLANNING AND COORDINATION OFFICE'S ACTIVITIES

This Office cooperates with the various branches of the Public Security Department and the other Departments of the Ministry of the Interior in jointly establishing the lines of action in the fight against drugs and the prevention of drug addiction.

The institutional functions assigned to this Office include supporting the Director-General in defining the structure's strategic (Operational Objectives) and 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 *ad hoc* anti-drug programmes and projects.

In this context, the Office, as in previous years, participated in various initiatives, aimed at implementing forms of “integrated” or “participatory” prevention, in order to strengthen synergies between the Police Forces, the bodies and the various institutional actors involved, in different capacities, in the programme to tackle the spread of drugs among the youth population.

Such interventions, aimed at informing and raising awareness of the harms associated with drug use, have involved students in several schools and have focused on the motivations for entering the world of drugs and what the protection factors against this threat may be. The continuation of the pandemic has made it possible to gradually resume in-person prevention activities at schools in the last months of the year 2021 only.

As part of the collaboration on prevention initiatives with the aforementioned Department for Anti-Drug Policies (DPA), the support activity carried out by the DCSA continued through:

- the project, already launched by the DPA with the Ministry of Education, within the framework of the Memorandum of Understanding, signed between these bodies on 7 August 2017, aimed at strengthening cooperation on the prevention of the use of drugs and alcohol at school age. The relevant project, aimed at creating a “contact-teacher” figure, for the prevention of drug use in schools, named “CUORA il Futuro”, now in its second edition, is reaching its conclusion. Out of



School open days





- the 11,273 teachers, who benefited from the training, 6,064 successfully completed the whole programme and 5,179 successfully passed the asynchronous online part of the second edition;
- the implementation of the “Hugs not Drugs” project, in cooperation with the mandated organisation. In this context, in 2021, the information material for adults and young people to be distributed in the selected secondary schools was finalised and specific booklets were revised in terms of contents and graphics to meet the requirements of secondary school children. A further 18 schools were added to the 220 schools already involved in the project, selected nationwide on the basis of the analysis of the most "at risk" environmental contexts.

DOCUMENTATION CENTRE

DCSA's tasks include the research, analysis and study of documents of various types and sources, produced by specialised bodies, including international ones, involved in various capacities in the fight against illicit drug trafficking and, more generally, drug addictions, including the result of parliamentary activity. The documents acquired are managed and stored by the Documentation Centre within the II Service and are shared with the other offices of the Directorate. The same Centre is in charge of managing the Directorate's website, a space on the web intended for those interested in learning more about drug issues and the role, tasks and initiatives carried out by DCSA.

ACTIVITIES ON PARTICIPATION IN THE NATIONAL EARLY WARNING SYSTEM AND OTHER PLATFORMS FOR PRECURSORS MONITORING

In response to the growing consumption of new psychoactive substances (NPS) and transposing European Council Decision 2005/387/JHA, the National Early Warning System (SNAP) was set up in 2009 at the Department for Anti-Drug Policies of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, with the aim of identifying at an early stage phenomena potentially dangerous to public health, connected to the emergence of NPS on the national territory and to new ways of consuming classic drugs, such as heroin, cocaine, amphetamines and cannabis.

The Central Directorate for Anti-Drug Services actively collaborates, through the New Psychoactive Substances Section, with this platform, managed with the scientific support and operational coordination of the National Institute of Health. More specifically, SNAP is the result of the synergic and collaborative work of several State bodies and administrations, including the Ministry of Health, the Forensic Toxicology Research Unit of Anatomical, Histological, Medico-legal and Locomotor



4th Workshop on the fight against drug trafficking, organised by the Direzione Centrale per i Servizi Antidroga and developed in distance learning mode – December 2021

Apparatus Sciences of “La Sapienza” University of Rome, the Poison Control Centre at the Salvatore Maugeri Foundation in Pavia, the scientific laboratories of the State Police and the Carabinieri, the laboratories of the Customs and Monopolies, and numerous other collaborating centres on the national territory.

SNAP's aim is to provide timely information of a toxicological nature to the main actors in the field of prevention and countering of drug abuse, such as, for instance, the Addiction Services, the Emergency Departments, the therapeutic communities, the Police Forces, the Ministry of Health, through information reports and alerts, in close connection with the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction, based in Lisbon (P) (EMCDDA). This is a complex work that, in 2021, produced 52 information documents. In this respect, out of 62 NPS circulating and identified on the national territory in the reporting year, 32 have been reported by Police Forces and 30 by collaborating centres.

Another aspect connected with New Psychoactive Substances is the international information exchange that DCSA, as national contact point, performs for the I.N.C.B. (*International Narcotics Control Board*) of the United Nations within the I.O.N. (*International Operations on NPS*) project. These further activities are aimed at coordinating, collecting and communicating strategic and operational information on suspicious shipments, trafficking or production of NPS. Communications take place through an electronic platform called I.O.N.I.C.S. (*International Operation on NPS Incident Communication System*), dedicated to the reception/transmission of information on transnational seizures of New Psychoactive Substances by national Police Forces. Besides that, there is the exchange of confidential intelligence concerning the international trafficking of synthetic drugs (e.g. new methods of concealment, new routes, etc.) by means of “alerts” issued by I.N.C.B., which are conveyed to the central structures of the Police Forces and the Customs and Monopolies Agency. During 2021, DCSA reported 92 operations related to transnational drug activities, which resulted in the seizure of NPS, including predominantly: synthetic opioids, synthetic cathinones, synthetic cannabinoids, ketamines, tryptamines, GBL and GHB.

In the area of controlled chemicals, the II Service constantly monitors precursor transactions between authorised operators, who are required to report any movement of chemicals to DCSA, under Article 70 (15) of Presidential Decree 309/1990.



NEW PSYCHOACTIVE SUBSTANCES (NPS)

In recent years, the New psychoactive Substances have become the new frontier of illicit drug trafficking, in addition to the wide illegal market for traditional drugs such as cannabis, cocaine and heroin. NPS are produced in illegal laboratories and ordered by consumers on the Internet and social media. They are usually concealed and delivered in anonymous postal parcels or via private couriers. NPS pose a serious threat to public health, since their production is not regulated by the safety standards laid down for the marketing of medicines and the consumers are in most cases used as human guinea pigs, they are very young and unaware of their effects that can be very harmful. Unlike the traditional drugs of abuse (opiates, cocaine, cannabis and amphetamines), the pharmaceutical and toxicological aspects of which have long been known, there is very limited information on the mechanism of action, toxicity and long-term effects on users.

NPS are produced in clandestine laboratories to circumvent international and national drug laws, as their peculiarity is that they are not included in the list of prohibited drugs, although they do



replicate their effects. The definition of a New Psychoactive Substance, provided by UNODC (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime) and universally acknowledged, gives us a better understanding of the concept: "... substances of abuse, either in a pure form or a preparation, that are not controlled by the 1961 UN Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs as amended by the 1972 Protocol, or the 1971 UN Convention on Psychotropic Substance, but which may pose health and social risks, similar to those posed by the substances covered by those Conventions..". UNODC adds that the term "new" does not necessarily refer to new inventions — several NPS were first synthesized decades ago — but to substances that have recently become available on the market. Adopting the same concept for legal aspects, NPS are, therefore, substances with a narcotic action that are not covered by the drug laws of each state. NPS are a global phenomenon and Italy has long adopted effective legislation to deal with this threat.

In such context the Ministry of Health in 2021 issued 9 decrees that enabled the implementation of the drug Tables annexed to the Presidential Decree No.309 of 1990, by including 85 new substances of synthetic origin in Table I (in 2020 six decrees were issued involving over 50 substances). Another significant aspect is the provision of the structure analogue in the legislation. When a substance that is not included in the Tables is found, in most cases it can be classified as a prohibited narcotic when its chemical structure derives from or is similar to one that is classified. This legislative initiative, which is useful in preventing the circumvention of the rule, is essential to the fight against illicit drug trafficking, because it enables the Police Forces to perform the special operations envisaged by Law No. 146¹, of 16 March 2006, such as controlled deliveries.

In the reporting year the Law Enforcement Agencies detected and reported 32 NPS, 5 of which had never been identified before in Italy. Two of them had not been included in the Tables yet, while the other three molecules (all synthetic cannabinoids), although recognised as structure analogues in the Tables, were specifically included in the lists of banned substances by two decrees of the Minister of Health in October and December 2021. In November 2021 the Direzione Centrale per i Servizi Antidroga, following a cooperation agreement with the Department for Antidrug Policies of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, launched the operational phase of the HERMES Project, with the active participation of the State Police, *Carabinieri* and *Guardia di Finanza*. The aim of the project is to tackle the spread of drugs by monitoring shipments operated by couriers within the European Union. After the training phase on synthetic drugs and NPS (detection and concealment methods) carried out by DCSA, along with specialized staff of the State Police Forensic Units and the *Carabinieri* RACIS, the operating units were equipped with portable devices operating with RAMAN spectrometry, allowing to establish the nature of the substance found, without resorting to laboratory analysis. Although in their early stage, the activities carried out under the direction of the local Judicial Authorities allowed to detect and seize over 430 deliveries and detect amphetamine type drugs, LSD, cocaine, cannabis, ecstasy, hallucinogenic mushrooms, GHB/GBL, coming from different European countries.

¹ Ratification and implementation of the UN Convention and Protocols against transnational organized crime adopted by the general Assembly on November 15, 2000 and May 31, 2001.

CONTROLLED CHEMICALS – DRUG PRECURSORS

The controlled chemical substances, which are usually called “Drug Precursors” are chemicals which are used to produce narcotic drugs 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 prohibited, but it is necessary to monitor their licit trade in order to avoid their diversion to illicit use. 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.

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

The EU legislation on drug precursors is based on two fundamental Regulations:

- (EC) Regulation No. 111/2005 on drug precursors trade between EU and third countries;
- (EC) Regulation 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, Art. 70 of the Presidential Decree No. 309 of 9 October, 1990 defines all the commitments 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 licences/registrations and having power of control over the “operators”, i.e. the firms involved;
- the Ministry of the Interior, through DCSPA, 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 Art. 70 of the Consolidated Act on Drugs, that consists of 21 paragraphs, outlines all types of offences regarding precursors, the penal and administrative sanctions and also foresees criminal conspiracy, like the one provided for in case of drug trafficking.

As already mentioned, INCB is one of the major actors in the global strategy against the trafficking in drugs and precursors, monitoring the compliance with the Vienna Convention of 1988. In this framework, the UN manages projects /IT platform:

- **PRISM** - launched in 2003 in the field of synthetic drugs - which monitors legal chemical substances that can be used as precursors of ATS (*Amphetamine-type stimulants*);
- **COHESION** - launched in 2006 - which monitors legal chemical substances that can be used as precursors of heroin and cocaine;
- **GRIDS** - (*Global Rapid Interdiction of Dangerous Substances*) which aims to measurably



reduce trafficking in dangerous substances globally, with a particular focus on newly emerging 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 fundamental tool to prevent the diversion of licitly traded precursors among the Convention's signatory countries. Up to November 1st, 2021, the States and Territories requiring a formal pre-export notification under Art.12 sub. 10 (a) of the 1988 Convention were 116 and 166 States or Territories already joined the PEN-Online, while the other 31 are constantly encouraged to adopt it. Every month approximately 2,800 PEN on-line are drawn up;
- **PICS** (*Precursors Incident Notification System*) - which enables and promotes the sharing of information on precursors diversion and seizures among participating countries. In 2021, over 300 International Police and Customs Agencies participated in it, with 127 adhering countries and approximately 600 registered users. From 2012 to October 2021, the participating countries communicated more than 3,400 "incidents" on precursors, with an average of over 370 per year¹. The mentioned instruments provide a global overview on licit trade and illicit events concerning precursors, which are very useful to develop counteraction strategies and targeted analyses. In this particular sector, DCSA, based on the provisions of the Consolidated Act on drugs (DPR 309/90), has the following tasks:

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

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, called G.A.Do.P. (Gestione Archivio Documentale Precursori – Management of the Precursors Documentary Archive) and 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 UN bodies, and is the national focal point for projects and IT platforms.

New Precursors in the European Union

Europe has long been a centre for the illicit manufacture of synthetic drugs, such as amphetamine, methamphetamine and MDMA (ecstasy). Manufacturing 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 more urgent the speeding up of institutional processes

¹ Publication: "Precursors and chemicals frequently used in the illicit manufacture of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances 2020" (published by UN-INCB).

to update the “Tables of Narcotic Substances and Precursors”, which are 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 seven more chemicals were included in the Category 1. Not much later, on 13 January 2021, red phosphorous was listed under subcategory 2A (substances subject to increased trade control) due to its use as a catalyst in the illicit manufacture of methamphetamine. In the first year since the introduction of control of the trade in red phosphorous, three Italian businesses were registered as “operators” and informed the DCSA (under Article 70 (15) of Presidential Decree No. 309 of 1990) that altogether 280 transactions involving the movement of that precursor took place for legitimate purposes both in Italy and Europe. 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 efficiency and effectiveness of the present control system based on Tables and Categories, as recommended by an ad-hoc working group set up to explore alternative solutions.

The European Drug Report 2021 published by the Lisbon-based European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA) reads as follows (page 32): *“The increased number of facilities detected and the manufacturing of a wider range of drugs reflect the scaling-up of efforts by criminals to produce drugs closer to consumer markets in order to evade anti-trafficking measures. This shift brings with it threats to local environments and risks to the health of people using the drugs. Combating drug production presents legislators with the complex regulatory challenge of controlling precursor chemicals and law enforcement agencies with a hazardous phenomenon to tackle.”*

PEN (Pre-Export Notification) online system

Article 12, paragraphs 10 and 11, of the 1988 United Nations Convention against the Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances², requires that, in Signatory States, the competent authorities of the country of departure provide information to those of the country of destination about transactions involving drug precursors and businesses trading them prior to departure. The same provision is contained in Council Regulation (EC) No. 111/2005 of 22 December 2004 laying down rules for the monitoring of trade between the Community and non-EU countries in drug precursors, where the provisions of the 1988 UN Convention are recalled in Article 11 (pre-export notification). 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 Category 2 and 3 ... shall be preceded by a pre-export notification*

² Adottata dalla Conferenza ONU nella sua 6^a seduta plenaria, in Vienna (A) il 20 dicembre 1988.



sent 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 (EC) No. 1277/2005". These obligations are currently fulfilled by 166 Signatory States to the 1988 UN Convention using the so-called PEN (Pre-Export Notification) online system managed by INCB on a dedicated platform. This system, made available by the UN, allows the authorities of the country where the exporter is established to notify in advance the authorities of the country where the importer is established of shipments of precursor chemicals. The destination country may accept an application for export authorization, or ask the exporter to provide additional documents if the application is considered incomplete, or deny export authorization and reject the shipment. As regards the European Union, the 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, the 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 2021 the Drug Precursor Unit handled 20 PENs bound for Italy from India (6), Switzerland (6), the UK (4), the USA (2), Turkey (1) and Korea (1) for substances like potassium permanganate (90 tonnes), pseudoephedrine hydrochloride (606 kg), piperonal (11.1 tonnes), ephedrine hydrochloride (1 tonne), BMK (2.8 tonnes), acetone (72 tonnes), pseudoephedrine (39 kg) and sulphuric acid (6 tonnes). These are all substances used in pharmaceuticals, research laboratories and certain industrial processes.

2

CHAPTER

DRUG TRAFFICKING IN ITALY: CURRENT STATUS AND TRENDS

2. DRUG TRAFFICKING IN ITALY: CURRENT STATUS AND TRENDS

The COVID-19 pandemic also affected the way of life of all citizens in 2021 due to the measures adopted to protect public health. Just like “legal” businesses, organized criminal groups were hit hard by the effects of the pandemic and many of them turned to global supply chains to continue their trade and adapted their business models.

In general, it should be noted that the transport of goods worldwide was disrupted less than passenger transport, so it continued to be one of the principal ways of moving drugs.

Investigations during this period continued to reveal that, in any case, criminal syndicates made efforts to diversify supply routes and carriers according to changing restrictions and the attention levels of law enforcement agencies.

Data on seizures and operations coordinated by the DCSA in 2021 indicate a remarkable resurgence in drug trafficking, especially of cocaine, and national statistics show that the quantities of drugs seized were the same as in the pre-COVID-19 period.

CRIMINAL ORGANIZATIONS AND MAJOR OPERATIONS COORDINATED BY THE DCSA

Drug trafficking is still to date one of the main areas of interest for criminal organizations characterized, more nowadays than in the past, by a transnational dimension and by constantly changing dynamics. The increasingly widespread nature of drug trafficking throughout Italy – facilitated by the illicit exploitation of the opportunities created by globalization and “virtualization” of markets (trading via Internet) and by the technological advances in communications – shows that criminal organizations are becoming more and more complex as they adapt to social and economic changes. In doing so, they have exponentially increased opportunities for contacts within the criminal network and between supply and demand so that new forms of distribution channels are able to provide large quantities of drugs to their widespread consumer base.

The analysis shows that drug trafficking in Italy is, in most cases, handled by structured criminal groups, including Mafia-type ones. It is no coincidence that investigations, both recent and historical, to combat drug trafficking to Italy tend to overlap with law enforcement operations against Italian and foreign Mafia-type organizations, regardless of where they are based.

In the fight against drug trafficking it is essential to adopt a strategic law enforcement response which should not simply aim at seizing drugs, but rather at developing in-depth and well-coordinated investigations into criminal syndicates involved in the management and exploitation of this illegal traffic starting from drug producing and transit countries.

In this context, it is fundamental to identify two elements. The so-called “capital of relationships that criminal organizations have secured over time by forging connections with the ‘grey area’ of compliant individuals from the world of finance and business [...] and the huge financial resources derived from illegal trafficking, first and foremost drug trafficking, that criminal syndicates aim to reintroduce into the legal economy by using ever more sophisticated money-laundering techniques”¹. As regards the need to build illicit networks of relationships, it should be emphasized that the results of investigations coordinated by the DCSA and those of international investigations shared during institutional meetings have revealed, among other things, that law enforcement antidrug efforts are undermined by a particularly insidious obstacle, i.e. colluding dock workers tasked with recovering drugs from containers, hence the need to keep a close eye on this phenomenon, also because



Fight against cybercrime

¹ Parliamentary Committee of Inquiry into Mafia-related and other criminal organizations, including foreign organizations, Hearing of the Chief of Police – Director General of Public Security held on 29th April 2021.



Operation TROJAN SHIELD/GREENLIGHT

of the significant increase in seizures made in seaports. Another common obstacle to conducting successful investigations into drug trafficking is the growing use of *encryption technology* by criminal organizations² involved in management of drug trafficking.

The expansion of the social network of criminal organizations is also facilitated by the presence of “absorbable” social structures, like, for example, individuals in need of cash and businesses at risk of failure. The cash available to clans becomes a tool to raise social consensus through, inter alia, forms of financial support, thus creating a sort of criminal welfare system. This entails the risk that small and medium-sized businesses might be swallowed up in the medium term by criminal organizations, so that they themselves become instruments for laundering and reinvesting criminal proceeds.

At the same time, drug trafficking criminal organizations use their growing access to cash resources as leverage to successfully create “illegal networks” with non-members of the organization by making a mutually beneficial proposal which poses an increased corruption risk in all the areas of interest for criminal organizations.

The investments financed by Italy’s National Recovery and Resilience Plan can provide an additional opportunity to illegally reinvest drug trafficking proceeds, which enables criminal organizations to infiltrate the legitimate economy.

This must prompt law enforcement authorities to pay renewed attention to warning signs emerging during antidrug investigations. If they are looked into in a timely manner, the risks of criminal infiltration of the legitimate economy can be reduced significantly just like related criminal activities, in particular money laundering, corruption and tampering with public procurement processes or public works contracts.

This brief overview, while being nothing new, allows us to take stock of a gradually evolving complex scenario. Based on the in-depth analysis of the intelligence gathered during the main law enforcement operations carried out at national level and of the data provided by reports drawn up by specialized law enforcement agencies or by the DCSA, each of the examined Mafia-type organizations needs to be described separately, highlighting the network of ties that link them.

'Ndrangheta

Nowadays the *'Ndrangheta* is Italy’s most wide-reaching Mafia-type organization both nationally and internationally and the most influential player in cocaine trafficking from South America and from the main temporary storage areas in Europe.

Investigation outcomes gathered by the DCSA in 2020 confirmed again that the *'Ndrine* are firmly established outside Calabria and have also honed their criminal skills in the reinvestment of drug trafficking proceeds using sophisticated money laundering techniques.

2 As part of Operation 26SASSENHEIM, the Dutch authorities were able to discover and decrypt about 3 million messages sent with the so-called PGP Blackberry devices stored on some servers in Costa Rica and Canada.
As part of Operation EMMA 95/ LEMONT 26, a Joint Investigation Team was set up in 2020 between the French National Gendarmerie and the Dutch police to investigate the Encrochat encrypted platform.
As part of Operation LIMIT, an OTF (Operational Task Force) created in 2021 between the law enforcement agencies of Belgium, France and the Netherlands with the support of Europol and Eurojust successfully blocked the use of the Sky ECC platform.
More recently in June 2021, the FBI and the Australian Federal Police, in cooperation with Europol, concluded an operation known as TROJAN SHIELD/GREENLIGHT. It led to the arrest of 800 criminals who were using an encrypted communication platform called ANOM, strategically developed and covertly operated by the FBI itself, which had grown to service more than 12,000 encrypted devices to over 300 criminal syndicates operating in more than 100 countries, including Italian organized crime, outlaw motorcycle gangs, and international drug trafficking organizations. In addition to the arrests, the operation also led to the seizure of over 8 tonnes of cocaine, 22 tonnes of cannabis and cannabis resin, 2 tonnes of synthetic drugs (amphetamine and methamphetamine), 6 tonnes of synthetic drugs precursors, 250 firearms, 55 luxury vehicles and over \$48 million in various worldwide currencies and cryptocurrencies.



Press conference on investigation
CRIMINE INFINITO
at the Court in Milan

The availability of large amounts of criminal proceeds combined with an uncanny ability to forge relations with individuals in civil society have gradually enabled the *'Ndrangheta* to diversify its interests and infiltrate social and entrepreneurial contexts. Moreover, its highly penetrated control over the territory helps it maintain a position of absolute prominence in drug trafficking worldwide. From the early 2000s, investigations into the *'Ndrangheta* required investigators to gather a wide range of evidence to demonstrate that this Mafia-type organization was operating outside its areas of origin. At present, instead, it can be argued, based on numerous court judgments³, that the existence of Calabrian clans even outside Calabria, for example in regions like Lombardy, has been clearly proven.

3 In the framework of the investigations known as "Crimine" and "Infinito" (criminal proceeding No. 43733/2006 RGNR coordinated by the District Prosecutor's Office in Milan), by judgment of 6th June 2014, the Supreme Court of Cassation upheld the first-instance sentences handed down on defendants tried in abridged proceedings (judgment of 19th November 2011 passed by the Preliminary Hearing Judge in Milan). By judgment of 6th Dec. 2012, the 7th Criminal Section of the Court in Milan found the remaining defendants guilty of Mafia-type association and related crimes. This judgment was upheld by the Court of Appeal in Milan on 28th June 2014 and became final following judgment of 30th Apr. 2015 passed by the Supreme Court of Cassation. A twin investigation conducted by the District Prosecutor's Office of Reggio Calabria also led to convictions both by the Preliminary Hearing Court in Reggio Calabria (judgment of 8th March 2012 upheld by judgment of 27th Feb. 2014 passed by the Court of Appeal in Reggio Calabria) and by the Court in Locri (judgment of 19th March 2013). For the first time it was established in a convincing manner that:

- the *'Ndrangheta* in Lombardy is organized into a series of "locali", which answer to a coordinating body known as "la Lombardia";
- so far the presence of the following "locale" in Lombardy is deemed proven: Bollate, Cormano, Milano, Pavia, Corsico, Mariano Comense, Seregno-Giussano, Desio, Rho, Pioltello, Legnano, Erba, Bresso, Limbiate, Canzo, Solaro, Fino Mornasco, Ceremate and Calozziocorte.
- the *'Ndrangheta* has deep roots in Lombardy, i.e. it has established a stable and constant presence there and this contributes to its visibility and recognition;
- it is no longer a matter of infiltration, understood as the sporadic presence of Mafiosi in illegal activities; this has been replaced by rootedness. The business-oriented logic is combined with membership logic; action towards profit is flanked by an operational method aiming at exercising power; the individual interests of each "locale" are flanked by the collective interests of the criminal organization;
- Lombardy's "locali" are constantly in touch with Calabria. In fact, each "locale" in Lombardy has a mirror organization and stems from a similar structure in Calabria;
- within each "locale", members have their own posts and charges, which determine their function and importance within the *'Ndrangheta*. The attribution of ranks is particularly relevant from three perspectives: for the person bestowing the rank, for the person upon whom the rank is bestowed and for those witnessing the ritual ceremony. It is worth underlining that the power to confer ranks is even more important than the power to impose penalties, which obviously puts in a bad light the imposer;
- the *'Ndrangheta*'s rootedness in Lombardy has led to widespread subjugation and a code of silence, the fruit of the power of intimidation wielded by an armed Mafia association with deep roots in the region;
- the meetings between associates, whose purpose is to confer rank and draft strategies for the association, take place during so-called 'mangiate' (large meals), which are veritable Mafia summits;
- the purpose of the association is to commit crimes (extortion, usury, other crimes against property, murders, other crimes against persons, waste trafficking, aiding and abetting fugitives, arson, debt collection using intimidation), acquire business activities, tamper with elections in order to favour individuals who would then be willing to advance Mafia interests and help them obtain unfair advantages;
- the conditions that characterize the context that allowed the *'Ndrangheta* to take root in Lombardy include the willingness on the part of entrepreneurs, politicians, and white-collar professionals (the *'Ndrangheta*'s so-called social capital) to enter into mutually profitable relationships with the Mafia association.



Press conference - Operation
NUOVA NARCOS EUROPEA

In November 2021 the State Police Investigative Units of Milan, Florence and Reggio Calabria, coordinated by the relevant District Prosecutor's Offices in the above cities, concluded an operation called NUOVA NARCOS EUROPEA which revealed that Calabrian clans are actively involved in trafficking drugs from South America using their bases in Lombardy, Tuscany and Switzerland. From the records of arrest warrants issued by the District Prosecutor's Office in Milan⁴ there emerges a cross section not only of drug trafficking, but also of traditional predatory activities, such as extortion, used a means to

control the territory and infiltrate legitimate economic and business sectors.

More specifically, this investigation managed to demonstrate the long-standing relationship of the 'Ndrangheta's "locale" at Fino Monasco (CO) with families stemming from Calabria and with their branches in Switzerland where it "... fosters and coordinates cocaine trafficking between Italy and Switzerland [...], also settling any disputes between associates or third persons, including members of other criminal clans ..."⁵. Light was also shed on the trafficking of weapons from Switzerland that were used to pay for the cocaine received by the clan in Switzerland⁶.

The 'Ndrangheta has carved out a primary role with a wide range of illegal interests and has become one of the key players in global drug trafficking thanks to the presence of many associates in production areas and to logistical and operational hubs in a number of European and Central American countries.

Over the last few years, larger amounts of cocaine have been seized in the ports of Genoa and Livorno than in the Calabrian port of Gioia Tauro (RC), which had for years been the preferred entry point for cocaine arriving from South America. This indicates that criminal organizations have recently been using other ports in the Mediterranean in an attempt to reduce the risk of drug seizures and, in some cases, to further the interests of local clans.

Press conference - Operation
GEPPPO-CALATRURIA



Operation GEPPPO-CALATRURIA, carried out by the Carabinieri Special Operations Group (ROS) and the Carabinieri Provincial Command in Livorno, was initiated in May 2017 after the discovery of 183 kg of cocaine in the waters just off the city's port. The investigation ascertained the involvement of an 'Ndrangheta clan in the import of large quantities of cocaine for distribution all over Central Italy. The leader of this group was a fugitive who had been arrested in August 2019 at Giardini Naxos (ME) during the investigation. The group was also actively engaged in eco-Mafia infiltration in illicit construction waste management in a number of Tuscan cities and in extortion. In 2021, however, 13 tonnes of cocaine were seized in the port of Gioia Tauro, thus confirming that it continues to play a dominant role. The preventive custody order issued by the Preliminary Investigation Judge of the Court in Reggio Calabria⁷ clarifies that criminal syndicates keep a close watch on seaports where cocaine cargoes hidden inside arriving containers have to be recovered.

4 Arrest warrant No. 24847/19 R.G. of 26 Oct. 2021 issued by the Anti-Mafia District Directorate of Milan.

5 Ibid.

6 Ibid

7 Preventive custody order No. 5183/19 RGNR and 85/20 RGIP of 8th November 2021 issued by the Preliminary Investigation Judge of the Court in Reggio Calabria.

Thanks to their intricate operational network, criminal associations can count on logistical support even in areas far away from Gioia Tauro. The investigation revealed that some dock workers in Livorno provided assistance in offloading large quantities of drugs from arriving containers on a regular basis, as evidenced by the large seizures carried out in November 2019 in that Tuscan port⁸. These seizures show that the *'Ndrine*⁹ were directly involved in the area, although the actual drug recipients were initially unknown. The investigation also revealed that a criminal cell based in Barcelona, Spain, was in contact with the *'Ndrine* for the management of drug trafficking, and Bolivian and Colombian citizens were called from Spain to Gioia Tauro to set up a drug laboratory for refining, manufacturing and packaging bricks of cocaine.

Contacts between different criminal cells tend to expand and diversify the range of illegal investments, providing potential opportunities to import drugs from Brazil using couriers holding EU passports and employing variously sophisticated concealment systems to prevent scanner detection¹⁰.

What emerges from the outlined scenario is a “drug trafficking joint venture” that is nothing new historically in the world of drug traffickers where different criminal organizations forge partnerships to achieve shared criminal goals and increasingly rely on “brokers” (middlemen) living in major drug trafficking hubs. While not necessarily being associates, they certainly play an instrumental role for the organization because they can keep close contacts with the main drug suppliers in South America and with their representatives in Europe.

The FAUST investigation, carried out by the Carabinieri Provincial Command in Reggio Calabria, led in January 2021 to the execution of a preventive custody order against 49 individuals and brought to light a criminal clan operating in the area around Rosarno. Its members were involved in running a thriving drug trafficking activity supported by associated criminal branches in Campania, Apulia, Basilicata and Lombardy, and in influencing top-ranking officials in local administrations who had been elected in the latest municipal elections thanks to vote rigging on the part of the criminal clan. The investigation outcomes, analyzed by the DCSA over the reporting period, have shown that the Calabrian criminal clans still repeatedly use Europe in general, and Germany in particular, to trade large quantities of drugs.

Operation CRYPTO, carried out in September 2021 by the Economic and Financial Unit (PEF) of the Guardia di Finanza in Catanzaro, led to the execution of preventive orders against 57 individuals and the seizure of assets worth €3.7 million from members of two *'Ndrine*. The criminal organization which had powerful international connections was successful in planning large consignments of cocaine from Northern European seaports (the Netherlands, Germany and Belgium) and from Spain to be dealt on the streets in Lombardy, Piedmont, Emilia Romagna, Lazio, Campania and Apulia, as well as in Malta. Acting as an international drug trafficking network and systematically using encryption technology to secure communications between its associates, the criminal organization relied on



Cocaine record haul carried out at Gioia Tauro port in 2021

Press conference - Operation CRYPTO



8 On 6th and 8th November 2019, the Italian State Police found and seized almost 500 kg of cocaine in two containers in the port of Livorno.

9 DCSA, Annual Report 2020 based on 2019 data, page 18 and DCSA, Annual Report 2021 based on 2020 data, page.24.

10 Preventive custody order No. 5183/19 RGNR and 85/20 RGIP of 8th November 2021 issued by the Preliminary Investigation Judge of the Court in Reggio Calabria.



Operation CRYPTO



intermediaries in the Dominican Republic to maintain contacts with South-American suppliers or members of 'Ndrine living permanently in Germany.

Cosa Nostra

Investigations have revealed that the Sicilian underworld includes not only Cosa Nostra, but also a criminal syndicate known as the *Stidda*, active in the central-southern part of Sicily¹¹.

With regard to *Cosa Nostra*, it reaffirmed¹² its willingness to abandon a *modus operandi* based on the use of violence while at the same time readmitting the so-called “survivors” of the 1980s Mafia war. An analysis of investigation outcomes over the last few years has also shown that it constantly seeks to enter into family alliances for a mutually advantageous co-existence.

Investigations coordinated by the DCSA showed a renewed interest in drug trafficking, which – unlike other typical Mafia-type crimes like, for example, extortion – generates higher profits with fewer risks. The interest of the main *Cosa Nostra* groups in drug trafficking was often sparked by effective law enforcement anti-extortion action. It is worth noting that Sicilian Mafia organizations are still subordinate to Calabrian or Campanian Mafia-type organizations in the area of drug supply from producing countries, import and sale in Italy.

In the province of Catania in Eastern Sicily, detectives from the Investigative Unit in Catania and the Adrano (CT) Police Station focused their attention on the members of a local criminal clan allied with a Mafia family from Catania.

Operation ADRANO LIBERA



Operation ADRANO LIBERA of February 2021 led to the execution of a court order against 35 members of the criminal syndicate suspected of drug trafficking, conspiracy to use arms and control of businesses financed by criminal proceeds. The investigation documented the trafficking of large quantities of cocaine from Lombardy to Adrano and revealed that a liaison role was played by certain associates from Catania living in the provinces of Varese and Como who set up a heroin supply line from Albania through their Calabrian connections. These associates obtained the money they needed for their criminal activities by ripping out cashpoint machines with heavy machinery (diggers or tow trucks) in sensational ATM thefts.

In Messina, an investigation conducted by the Economic and Financial Unit (PEF) of the local Guardia di Finanza shed light on a criminal syndicate involved in drug trafficking and drug dealing in the area of Messina and Catania. The investigation ascertained that the criminal organization had contacts with members of a Romani clan from Pescara for the sale of a consignment of marijuana. During the pandemic, the organization relied on ambulances and food delivery vans to hide transported drugs and avoid more frequent police checks due to COVID-19restrictions on movement.

In the area of Palermo, investigations carried out by the Carabinieri Group in Monreale and coordinated by the DCSA during Operation GORDIO exposed the crime operation tactics in the *Mandamento* (Mafia district) of Partinico and led to the arrest of 85 people on charges of Mafia-type association, drug trafficking, firearm-related crimes and extortion. The investigations revealed the presence of more criminal groups led by certain members of the Mafia family historically playing a dominant role in that area and by other individuals linked to them, all of whom were competing for control over illegal activities in the area, in particular over the drug market¹³. This was clearly

Operation GORDIO



11 Parliamentary Committee of Inquiry into Mafia-related and other criminal organizations, including foreign organizations. Hearing of the Chief of Police – Director General of Public Security held on 29th April 2021.

12 Ibid.

13 Preventive custody order No. 4726/17 RGNR and No. 5856/17 RGGIP issued by the Preliminary Investigation Judge of the Court in Palermo on 24th June 2021.

explained by a state witness who declared that, in the lead-up to the meeting of its Provincial Commission on 29 May 2018, *Cosa Nostra* did not even take the time to check ‘whether the territory of Partinico was covered’¹⁴. Hence, it realized that there was a split in the *Mandamento* and rival factions clashed in moments of friction because of overlaps in the drug trafficking management or by things one member did or omitted to do to the others¹⁵.

The reconstruction of the command hierarchy also allowed the investigations to identify the role that a former state witness, no longer under the protection programme, played in the negotiations with Rome-based clans and Calabrian *‘Ndrine* for the purchase of a cocaine consignment.

Among *Cosa Nostra*’s illegal activities, drug trafficking is a key source of income to support the families of incarcerated associates, as evidenced by Operation BREVIS II, conducted by the Carabinieri Provincial Command in Palermo. The investigation ended in December 2021 with the execution of seven preventive custody orders and identified two drug supply channels linked to previous offenders from Campania involved in different roles in the purchase of hashish in Malaga, Spain, and Calabrian individuals handling the supply of cocaine.

As for the *Stidda*, major investigation outcomes showed in 2021 that it had evolved from its rural, agricultural origins to an enterprise with marked military skills. Currently, as stated by the President of the Court of Appeal in Palermo, “there is also evidence that *Cosa Nostra* and the *Stidda* have signed a peace agreement that is still in place”¹⁶.

Within this framework, the Carabinieri Provincial Command in Caltanissetta concluded Operation CHIMERA in September 2021, which resulted in 55 individuals being arrested under a preventive custody order. Those arrested were members of a local Mafia family who played a dominant role in Mazzarino (CL) and who were connected to the *Stidda*. They were suspected, under a range of charges, of drug trafficking, Mafia-type criminal association, murders and other crimes. The extensive investigation carried out between 2017 and 2021 was started on the basis of information provided by the Carabinieri Command for Agri-Food Protection in connection with European agricultural subsidies granted to members of the above family. During the investigation it was ascertained that there had been negotiations with *‘Ndrangheta* clans in the province of Vibo Valentia for the supply of cocaine to be dealt on the streets in and around Caltanissetta as well as close business relationships with a Campanian criminal group for the management of street dealing in Cinisello Balsamo, near Milan. The search for joint venture opportunities comes up frequently, as already discussed above in the paragraph about *‘Ndrangheta*, indicating an ongoing quest to reach understandings and pacts with the other Mafia families and with different criminal groups while pursuing common financial interests.

The analysis of law enforcement operations against drug trafficking highlighted a common feature in the management of criminal activities by Sicilian criminal groups. All of them engage in extortion in their respective territories of reference, yet their main source of income lies increasingly often in trafficking drugs they purchase with the help of Calabrian and Campanian organizations, although they leave street dealing to other criminal groups. Preventive measures ordered against previous

Operation BREVIS II



Press conference - Operation CHIMERA



14 Ibid.

15 Ibid.

16 Court of Appeal in Palermo, Report on the Administration of Justice in 2021, page 256.



offenders who are not directly connected with Cosa Nostra families indicate that the various drug trafficking stages are being “outsourced”.

As for its relationships with other criminal organizations, investigations conducted in 2021 confirmed that Cosa Nostra adopted a cautious approach with Nigerian groups who are increasingly well-integrated in neighbourhoods under the control of Mafia members, by avoiding disputes and armed clashes, as evidenced by several operations carried out over the last few years¹⁷. There were no recorded instances of bloodshed, although there was no shortage of sometimes vicious beatings and brawls. This element raises special interest because it could be a decisive factor in the evolution of criminal dynamics, especially in drug trafficking, in those neighbourhoods historically under Mafia control.

Camorra

The phrase “criminal fluidity” undoubtedly gives a fitting definition of Camorra organizations, a whole world of clans and groups who often fight for the management of illegal activities, especially of drug dealing marketplaces, in the territories of they consider their own. These organizations are always very active in trafficking hashish and cocaine arriving in Italy through associates working in Spain, South-American countries, Africa and in the Arab peninsula.

This was the case of a fugitive Camorra member linked to the long-established clan of Scampia who was arrested in August 2021 by the Italian Police in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, namely by the Servizio Centrale Operativo (Central Operations Service) of the Direzione Centrale Anticrimine (Central Anticrime Directorate) and by the Investigative Unit of the Police Headquarters in Naples. This fugitive was considered an accomplice of another international drug trafficker who had been wanted since 2016 and who was also arrested in the same month in Dubai by the Investigative Unit on Organized Crime (GICO) of the Guardia di Finanza in Naples.

“The coexistence of criminal groups with different histories, structures and working methods in the same area often leads to alliances, as unpredictable as they are fragile, for the control over areas of influence, resulting in unstable dynamics between certain clan leaders who are almost constantly fighting for full control over the territory.”¹⁸

These criminal dynamics were documented by an investigation known as BUENAVENTURA 2017, conducted by the Investigative Unit on Organized Crime (GICO) of the Guardia di Finanza in Naples. This investigation revealed that drugs were being trafficked from Colombia and Spain to Italy, and in some cases also to Malta, and subsequently dealt on the streets. Preventive measures were executed against 24 alleged members of different drug trafficking criminal groups with operational headquarters in Torre Annunziata and in Naples neighbourhoods of Scampia and Secondigliano. More specifically, one group active in the above neighbourhoods was importing large quantities of hashish and cocaine with the support of highly able drug brokers directly from Spain, where they had woven bonds of trust with Spanish drug cartels. Another group based in Torre Annunziata handled the transfer of large consignments of hashish destined for Malta from Campania to Sicily. Some of the drug consignments travelled to their final destination together with cargoes of arms and ammunition.

Malta is one of the preferred markets for Italian criminal organizations for their illegal activities¹⁹. The investigations coordinated by the DCSA demonstrated that, generally speaking, different criminal



Hashish seized during Operation BUENAVENTURA 2017

17 DCSA, Annual Report for the First Half of 2020, page170.

18 Anti-Mafia Investigative Directorate, Half-Yearly Report to Parliament, first half of 2020.

19 Parliamentary Committee of Inquiry into Mafia-related and other criminal organizations, including foreign organizations. Hearing of the Chief of Police – Director General of Public Security held on 29th April 2021.

groups²⁰ are keen to exploit the geographical proximity and the huge opportunities offered by Malta not only to traffic drugs but also to launder the proceeds derived from this criminal activity.

The Carabinieri Investigative Unit in Castello di Cisterna (NA) carried out an investigation in the Parco Verde neighbourhood in Caivano (NA), which ended in May 2021. Preventive measures were executed against 48 members and accomplices of the dominant clan in the Parco Verde neighbourhood in Caivano and in Orta di Atella on charges of drug trafficking management involving all local “capi piazza” (area drug pushers). The investigation identified 14 drug dealing marketplaces with a constellation of outlets for different types of drugs open round the clock, all year round. It was also ascertained that independent drug pushers were authorized and protected by the clans on condition that they agreed to being supplied with drugs under the clan's non-negotiable terms.

The investigation outcomes fully confirmed the ongoing close collaboration between Camorra and Calabrian clans. This was evidenced by Operation RE-DIVIVI carried out by the Carabinieri in Torre Annunziata (NA), resulting in 26 preventive measures being issued while assets worth €50 million were placed under preventive seizure. This investigation documented the presence of two rival criminal organizations fighting for the supply of drugs in the territory of Poggiomarino (NA). One of the two organizations was allied with criminal groups in the Salerno area.

In the province of Salerno, the local Carabinieri Provincial Command concluded Operation DELIZIA in September 2021, an investigation into a criminal syndicate engaged in handling drug dealing in that area and linked to a clan from Torre Annunziata (NA) and other clans from Pagani. The clans were constant suppliers of drugs that the syndicate distributed to its street dealers. The investigation led to the issue of 53 preventive measures and the seizure of 5 kg of cocaine.

Press conference - Operation DELIZIA



²⁰ Operation LA VALLETTE, carried out by Guardia di Finanza Provincial Commands in Catania and Ragusa e by the Central Investigation Service on Organized Crime (SCICO), revealed a well-organised network based in Eastern Sicily with branches and connections in other Italian regions and abroad. It was involved in the management of multiple transnational supply channels of drugs that were illegally purchased in Albania, Apulia and Calabria and sold in Sicily, Lombardy and Malta.



Apulian criminality

The Apulian Mafias, each with its own geographical area of influence, form a multifaceted and mixed universe of entities too complex to be classified. They lack a unified and clear leadership structure and for this reason they are fragmented into different groups and fractions whose members are bound by close family ties²¹.

Based on the geographical area of reference, we can be broken down into:

- the “mafia of Foggia”, with its three components (“società foggiana”, “mafia garganica” e “malavita cerignolana”);
- the “criminality of Bari”, predominant in the territory of the regional capital;
- the “Sacra Corona Unita”, to date based in Salento.

Investigations carried out during 2021 confirmed the Mafia nature of these criminal groups, as evidenced, for example, by Operation VORTICE – MAESTRALE, concluded in April 2021 by the Carabinieri Provincial Command of Bari. This investigation into a clan operating in Bari led to the arrest of 59 suspects and documented the clan’s ambitions to expand its control in the town over gambling machines and above all over the lucrative running of street dealing of drugs, supplied in large quantities by an allied criminal group. Tensions between different groups also continue in prison. This last investigation identified those who ordered and who started a nasty brawl in the Correctional Facility in Bari involving a dozen “High Security” inmates belonging to rival clans fighting for control over portions of the local territory.

Press conference - Operation VORTICE - MAESTRALE



In November 2021 the Carabinieri in Bari launched another Operation known as LOGOS against a drug trafficking organization in Altamura (BA), which led to the execution of preventive custody orders against 24 people and the seizure of assets and companies into which the illicit profits of the drug trade had been reinvested.

In the province of Foggia, the Public Prosecutor ascertained²² that “a truly remarkable number of youths is involved in drug dealing because many organized crime groups engage [...] in this activity by recruiting young people, often with no criminal record. There is a vast market for drugs and the demand grows significantly in the summer when coastal towns are packed with holidaymakers. Moreover, on the Gargano peninsula, illegal cultivation of marijuana registered an increase undoubtedly aided by the landscape of the territory which is rich in inaccessible areas covered with thick vegetation, which provides an ideal place to conceal marijuana plants”.

In the area of Taranto, Operation TAROS, conducted by the Carabinieri Special Operations Group (ROS) in Lecce and by the Carabinieri Provincial Command of Taranto, ended in March 2021 with the execution of custody orders against 16 people suspected of Mafia-type association, drug trafficking and dealing, illegal carrying of firearms and political Mafia-related vote rigging. The investigation originated from a number of killings of members of the Sacra Corona Unita during fights for the control of the drug market.



Helicopter monitoring activity-Operation LOGOS



Operation TAROS

21 Parliamentary Committee of Inquiry into Mafia-related and other criminal organizations, including foreign organizations. Hearing of the Chief of Police – Director General of Public Security held on 29th April 2021.

22 General Prosecutor’s Office attached to the Court of Appeal in Bari, Report on the Administration of Justice in 2021, page 7.

Criminality in Rome

Thanks to its central position in Italy, Rome is strategically placed at the crossroads of illegal trade. It acts as a traffic hub for high-speed rail transport as well as for road transport as it lies at the intersection of two motorways, i.e. the A1 or “Autostrada del Sole” and the A24 or “Autostrada dei Parchi”. Moreover, Rome owes its strategic importance to its two airports and one seaport in Civitavecchia.

There is evidence that well-structured criminal syndicates have been active for some time now in Rome and in the Lazio region. It is “an established fact that long-established Sicilian, Calabrian and Campanian, as well as foreign Mafias have branches in Italy’s capital, attracted there by the opportunity to reinvest their illicit profits through a silent strategy aimed at blending in and making law enforcement action more difficult”²³.

Various criminal groups in Rome have been charged over time with loan-sharking and extortion as well as international drug trafficking. The criminal power acquired by these groups and their growing relevance on the international criminal scene was highlighted by Operation “BRASILE LOW COST”²⁴. Conducted in 2019²⁵ by the Investigative Unit on Organized Crime (GICO) of the Guardia di Finanza in Rome, it looked into a Rome criminal group and members of the Montenegrin and Albanian criminal underworld involved in the procurement of large quantities of cocaine. This group had promoted a “cartel” composed of drug trafficking criminal organizations who entered into an alliance to jointly finance the import of large quantities of cocaine by air from Brazil.

A recent judgment by the Supreme Court of Cassation²⁶ recognized Mafia traits in the modus operandi of these Rome groups although they operate in so-called “non-traditional” Mafia areas. In particular, according to the Supreme Court, “it can be argued that the city of Rome has witnessed the presence of the Mafia in a different form than in other southern cities, but nonetheless equally dangerous and damaging for the target economic and social fabric”.

In this complex reality, traditional criminal organizations have infiltrated the territory to maintain a solid grip on the management of drug trafficking and insinuated themselves into business and professional activities to launder illicit profits with the involvement of a wide local criminal base.

In this regard, we cannot omit to mention Operation MANILA, conducted by the Economic and Financial Unit (PEF) of the Guardia di Finanza in Rome into a criminal syndicate composed of 11 Italians involved in the importation of large quantities of drugs – mainly hashish – from Morocco via Spain to be sold by local dealers in Rome.

Although these different forms of criminality have in most cases coexisted and developed in a peaceful way, as they preferred to act “under the surface” in order to facilitate the generation of profits, there has been no lack of bloodshed involving affiliates held responsible for violating the clan’s rules. In Rome, some episodes, even fatal, were connected to the management of drug dealing on the streets or in the capital’s nightlife venues.

Press conference - Operation BRASILE LOW COST



Operation MANILA



23 Parliamentary Committee of Inquiry into Mafia-related and other criminal organizations, including foreign organizations. Hearing of the Chief of Police – Director General of Public Security held on 29th April 2021.

24 Preventive custody order No. 8018/17 RGNR and No. 997/2018 RGGIP issued by the Preliminary Investigation Judge of the Court in Rome.

25 DCSA, Annual Report 2020.

26 Supreme Court of Cassation, 2nd Criminal Section, No. 10255, 16th March 2020.



Albanian criminality

Albanian organizations are present throughout most parts of Italy and considered²⁷ among the most complex and best-organized ethnic-based criminal syndicates, capable of pursuing a wide range of illegal activities. Over the years, the geographical proximity between 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.

In drug trafficking, Albanian organizations are known to be very reliable and firmly established players on the international scene. They can move large quantities of cocaine and heroin through European countries, especially the Netherlands, and often do business with the Calabrian, Campanian and Sicilian Mafias or with other criminal organizations²⁸, acting as reliable intermediaries with drug suppliers.

It is worth noting that Albanian groups are well-established abroad as a result of massive emigration over the past few decades. This has helped them establish profitable relationships with local crime groups in the host countries and penetrate a number of European contexts, where they have reproduced the same criminal patterns as in their country of origin. This has allowed them to hone the criminal skills they have acquired over the years, due also to the extensive contacts they have in different places around the world. This element of cohesion is based on family ties, which are the cornerstone of the organizational structure of Albanian criminal groups and render them unlikely to collaborate with law enforcement bodies.

Albanian groups are becoming increasingly involved in the trafficking of drugs, especially cocaine, arriving in Dutch or Belgian ports, which the criminal organizations use for the importation and subsequent distribution of drugs all over Europe. In this context, Albanian organizations have demonstrated remarkable management skills, ranging from the recovery of drugs in Dutch and Belgian seaports with the complicity of local dock workers to transport in specially modified vehicles and finally to drug dealing on Italian streets²⁹.

An operation conducted by the Economic and Financial Unit (PEF) of the Guardia di Finanza in Naples and Salerno revealed the existence of Italian-Albanian syndicates. The investigation, prompted by a seizure of hashish and amphetamine in June 2020 in the seaport of Salerno, led to the execution of preventive measures against 11 individuals, both Italian and Albanian, who imported large cargoes of cocaine and hashish from South America and North Africa via Swiss freight companies. This activity also was facilitated by a tightly-knit network of contacts communicating with encrypted telephones.

A convergence of interests was confirmed by Operation MIRACOLO, carried out in February 2021 by the Investigative Unit of the Police Headquarters in Milan. Its aim was to dismantle an Italian criminal organization active in Milan and in some Italian regions who had entered into an alliance with an Albanian syndicate specializing in the importation of large quantities of cocaine to Italy and interested in dealing drugs on Milan's streets in collaboration with an Italian organization. The above investigation led to a execution of preventive custody orders against a total of 37 individuals and to the seizure of large quantities of drugs.

Ethnically mixed organizations were targeted during Operation SAUDADE BIS, carried out by the Economic and Financial Unit (PEF) of the Guardia di Finanza in Milan into a drug trafficking



Cocaine seized during Operation MIRACOLO

²⁷ Anti-Mafia Investigative Directorate, Half-Yearly Report to Parliament, second half of 2019.

²⁸ Anti-Mafia Investigative Directorate, Half-Yearly Report to Parliament, first half of 2020.

²⁹ Cf. DCSA, Annual Report 2021, page 48.

criminal syndicate composed of Italian as well as ethnic Albanian and South-American citizens. The investigators were able to reconstruct a wide-ranging drug traffic from Albania and South America. The drugs arrived in Italy along the Adriatic maritime route and by air and were destined for street dealing in the townships in Milan's hinterland. 19 people involved in this illegal business were arrested under a preventive custody order issued by the Court in Milan. Also worth mentioning is Operation ALENTO, conducted by the Carabinieri in Chieti, which dismantled a criminal group composed of Albanians and Italians active in Chieti and Pescara. They purchased different types of drugs in Belgium and the Netherlands and transported them to Italy where it was dealt on the streets. 12 preventive custody orders were executed and more than 70 kg of heroin, cocaine and hashish were seized.

Press conference - Operation ALENTO



Nigerian criminality

The establishment in Italy of the first Nigerian criminal organizations involved in drug trafficking, especially by using their fellow nationals as drug couriers, goes back to the 1980s. They have a horizontal rather than a top-down structure divided into so-called "blocks" and are characterized by extreme secrecy and by a deeply rooted "magical-religious" factor, which is used to exert a powerful influence over members in order to force them into performing any action³⁰.

In the selection of members, preference is given, in the following order, to family members, members of the same tribe, fellow nationals and non-Nigerian individuals³¹. The latter are normally used in marginal but high-risk tasks, for example as drug couriers.

Nigerian criminal organizations display the characteristics typical of Italian organizations, i.e. tight control over parts of the territory, omertà (code of silence) and strong association ties³².

The high level of organization and the dangerousness of Nigerian criminal groups have been demonstrated by the typical Mafia traits attributed to them by the courts based on their behaviour and methods in carrying out their criminal activities³³.

These criminal groups are involved in multiple forms of illicit trafficking, with a specific interest in financing and managing international drug trafficking. Nigerian criminal groups are among the most active in drug transport using body packers (drug mules). Although these human couriers can only carry small quantities of drugs, using them in large numbers guarantees a constant supply of drugs. Recent investigations have confirmed these organizations still use the same transport methods, i.e. they train couriers to carry drug-filled packets by eating food of the same size and texture as the drug capsules they swallow.

In Italy, Nigerian groups (also known as cultists³⁴) are widely present in almost all regions and especially in the Northern stretch of the Campanian coast, in the province of Caserta and on the

30 Cf. "Report del Centro Studi Internazionale e del Ministero degli affari Esteri e della Cooperazione internazionale", 2019.

31 These are usually nationals from Black African countries, like Kenya, Tanzania, Mali and Senegal.

32 Cf. the hearing of the Chief of Police – Director General of Public Security before the Anti-Mafia Parliamentary Committee held on 29th April 2021.

33 Grasso, "Compatibilità tra la struttura del reato di cui all'art. 416 bis e i moduli organizzativi della criminalità straniera", in "Studi in onore di L. Arcidiacono", 2010, Vol. IV, p. 1770.

34 The origin of cult groups can be traced back to Nigerian universities since they stem from the oldest confraternity known as PYRATES. Their initial goal was to assist students with red tape and offer solutions to their most common problems, including by liaising with university institutions. Subsequently, they all engaged in violent and threatening behaviour, typical of criminal organizations, and committed serious crimes and killings, especially of rival cult members, thus radically changing their original aims.



outskirts of Rome. They normally avoid disputes with Italian criminal organizations, as demonstrated by various investigations. However, co-existence between local and Nigerian groups has never been completely peaceful historically. Over the years, for example, there have been fights among street dealers of drugs in the Northern stretch of the Campanian coast. Recent investigations have revealed, in fact, that Nigerian criminal groups have gained control over parts of the coast and stand up to local Mafias showing no intention of backing down.

Arrests during Operation DISCONNECTION ZONE



The features commonly attributed to Nigerian groups – also known as cults – include in the first place a high level of dangerousness due to their propensity for violence, on both members and non-members, and a great willingness to commit crimes. Nigerian organizations assert their territorial supremacy through assaults and attempted murders targeting not only those who do not comply with internal rules, but also members of rival cult groups³⁵.

Within this framework, the Investigative Unit of the Police Headquarters in Palermo carried out Operation DISCONNECTION ZONE that led to the execution of a preventive custody order³⁶ against members of the Viking cult group suspected of Mafia-type criminal association, exploitation of prostitution and trafficking in cocaine and heroin in the area of Palermo’s Ballarò market. The investigation originated from outbursts of violence against members of rival cult groups.

Internal cohesion of Nigerian criminal groups is based not only on members going through affiliation rituals, but also on their being required to comply with strict internal rules to avoid heavy punishment as well as hierarchical and horizontal distribution of power in the territory. “Black magic” rituals combined with ethnic ties and a strong influence on management by powerful individuals exerting pressure from Nigeria round off the framework of characteristics within which these organizations generally operate.

Press conference - Operation IKA RIMA



Operation IKA RIMA conducted by the Carabinieri Provincial Command in Caltanissetta, confirms the outlined picture. The preventive custody order³⁷ highlights that the presence of a Nigerian migrant community in Italy is “not so much the effect of a migration brought about by poverty in various intercontinental regions or to seek social, economic and cultural integration in the host country. It is rather the execution of a clear plan to export a criminal profile to Italy which mirrors Italian crime models without apparent clashes, for the sole purpose of gaining drug dealing market segments in Italy”. Moreover, the court order clearly emphasized the link with Nigeria by describing the organization as the “expression of an international social engineering operation aimed at colonizing Italy criminally. Its

masterminds are not based in Italy, but in the country of origin of the suspects who came to Italy for the sole and express purpose of getting rich through drug trafficking”³⁸.

Nigerian Mafia cults are constantly evolving. Recent investigations have uncovered their ability to establish and terminate agreements with other Mafia groups according to their self-interest³⁹ and the

35 Anti-Mafia Investigative Directorate, Half-Yearly Report to Parliament, second half of 2020.

36 Preventive custody order No. 2774/2020 RGGIP of the Court in Palermo.

37 Preventive custody order No. 1809/2018 RGNR and No. 14/2021 R. GIP issued by the Preliminary Investigation Judge of the Court in Caltanissetta on 18th May 2021.

38 Ibid.

39 Operations “MAPHITE – BIBBIA VERDE” and “BURNING FLAME”, coordinated by the Anti-Mafia District Directorates in Turin and

strategies used to reshape relationships with other organizations whenever temporary alliances are needed to maximize illicit profits.

This same target area was at the centre of an investigation called TIBUS, carried out by the Carabinieri Company in Rome-Parioli into two Nigerian organizations linked to the Black Cats and the Eiyé group as well as into an Albanian organization. The investigators were able to reconstruct the activity of a drug hub in the “Tibus” bus station at Rome’s Tiburtina railway station and the busy schedule of drug couriers who felt safe enough to move cargoes of marijuana from Albania to Italy and other European countries using private buses. This investigation also highlighted that easy access to first and second level reception facilities for asylum seekers and refugees (respectively CARA⁴⁰ and SPRAR⁴¹) have turned them into recruitment centres for “ready-to-go” drug couriers among migrants with temporary residence permits and clean criminal records.

Drugs and currency seizure - Operation TIBUS



North-African criminality

North-African crime syndicates, mainly from the Maghreb region, are generally settled and well-established almost all over Italy thanks to their successful integration into the social and criminal fabric even in areas where local organized criminal groups are traditionally present.

These criminal groups are involved in transnational management of multiple forms of illicit trafficking, mostly of drugs, in collaboration with other criminal groups active in Italy. North-African criminal groups present in Italy are, in most cases, linked to criminal organizations based in Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, Libya and Mauritania⁴².

Like other criminal organizations, such as those of Albanian or Nigerian origin, north-African groups, particularly highly structured ones, have transformed their organizational and operational structure so as to carve out a role for themselves especially in drug trafficking, provide legal assistance to their members, take on leading roles in transnational and multi-ethnic organizations and attribute positions of command even to women.

In this respect, it is worth noting that in September 2021, within the framework of Operation KOMBA 2019, the Investigative Unit of the Police Headquarters in Milan executed 23 preventive custody orders against Moroccan and Tunisian individuals as well as Albanian citizens. They were suspected of membership of a crime syndicate involved in the importation of heroin and cocaine to Italy, dealing them in Bolzano and exporting them to France.

Drug seized - Operation KOMBA 2019

Again, in September 2021, with Operation CLEAN SWEEP 2019, the Investigative Unit of the Police Headquarters in Bologna dismantled a Moroccan organization involved in street drug dealing, especially of cocaine and hashish, in Bologna and in the nearby city of Modena.



Bologna, ended in summer 2019. Maphite members were arrested and the Green Bible, a sort of Maphite Constitution, was found along with another document which says: "...any agreement between GCA (Green Circuit Association) and local Italian mafia groups is destroyed ..., we don't need them to operate in Italy: we can operate on our own, ...We don't need them for the moment and if we need them, we can reconsider the registration in the future ...".

40 The acronym CARA stands for “Reception Centres for Asylum Seekers” (Centri di accoglienza per richiedenti asilo).

41 The acronym SPRAR stands for “Protection System for Asylum Seekers and Refugees” (Sistema di protezione richiedenti asilo e rifugiati).

42 Cf. the Report of the Interior Minister to Parliament, 2020.



The Operation ended with the execution of a preventive measure against 13 individuals and the seizure of 2 kg of cocaine and 23 kg of hashish.

In Italian cities, drugs are dealt not only in urban squares and streets, but also in parks covering large areas where there are plenty of places to hide drugs among vegetation. Operation CARLITO, conducted by the Investigative Unit of the Police Headquarters in Lecco, shed light on a Moroccan criminal group dealing different types of drugs, who maintain a constant presence in the forest areas along arterial road number 36 in the province of Lecco.

Press conference - Operation CARLITO



Turkish criminality

Turkish criminal groups continue to play a major role in drug trafficking, especially of heroin and opium derivatives in cooperation with local criminal organizations.

Because of their so-called “satellite” structure, the modus operandi of Turkish criminal groups has always been difficult to pinpoint unlike for other Mafia-type criminal organizations. Turkish criminal groups are normally composed of members of the same family, but they also accept non-members who run the most delicate stages of illicit transactions, such as shipments and laundering of crime proceeds. In Italy, Turkish criminal organizations are most active in drug trafficking in the North East. The WOLF 2018 Investigation, conducted by the Investigative Unit of the Police Headquarters in Venice, revealed that 10 Turkish citizens, all of them arrested under a preventive custody order, were involved in intense drug trafficking activity along the Venice-Varese-Switzerland route. The drugs travelled in lorries from the Middle East to Italy and then were partly sold to users in Veneto and Lombardy and partly transferred to Switzerland.

Operation WOLF 2018

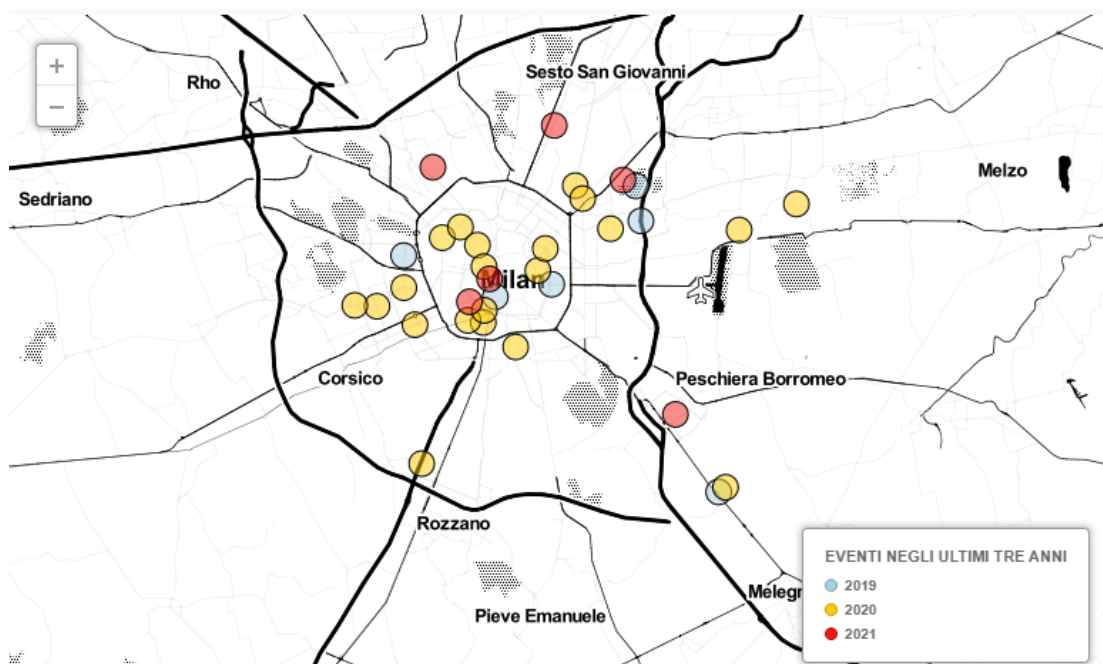


Latin-American criminality

Conventionally, Latin-American criminality is linked to groups of mixed nationalities involved in particular in drug trafficking and prostitution. These crime syndicates have gradually established themselves as points of reference for the importation of drugs from South America using a network of “back packers” (drug mules) of different nationalities travelling on scheduled flights.

The outlined picture was confirmed by the SANTIAGO 2018 investigation, conducted in June 2021 by the Carabinieri Provincial Command in Rome into an organization mostly composed of Peruvian and Chilean nationals who had the task of carrying the drugs that they hid inside bottles or, alternatively, in packets that they swallowed before boarding flights on the Santiago-Lima-Rome route.

Source: *Il Giornale*, episodes involving the pandillas between 2019 and 2021 in Milan (8 April 2021)





It is worth mentioning that in some Italian cities there are street gangs composed of young and very young Latin American members mainly engaged in predatory crimes. Some of them replicate the typical model of Salvadoran criminal gangs like Mara Salvatrucha also known as MS13⁴³.

In Milan's geography of street gangs, the most notorious Pandillas are MS13 and Barrio 18 (Salvadoran), Latin Kings (Ecuadorian and Peruvian) and Trinitarios (Dominican). These gangs have been present in Lombardy for some time now and most of their income comes from street-level drug dealing. The main identifying characteristic of Pandillas is the recourse to violence by using bladed weapons. Stabbing is a *modus agendi* whereby Pandillas show their strength and supremacy. In 2019 and 2021, this violent behavior resulted in the killings of two Salvadoran street gang members and in several instances of vandalism, assaults and robberies in Milan⁴⁴.

DRUG TRAFFICKING ON THE WEB

The widespread growth of the Internet, the enhancement of technological infrastructures and the development of web surfing have greatly increased telematic commercial transactions, with the use of so-called e-commerce channels. Commercial transactions on the various telematic platforms continue to grow, taking advantage of the numerous opportunities offered by the web.

At the same time this phenomenon has encouraged similar dynamics in the field of the trafficking in narcotics and psychotropic substances. The conditions for the development of a new form of "do-it yourself" criminal entrepreneurs, which had already skyrocketed with the onset and the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, has allowed professional criminals, but also persons with no criminal records to start and develop flourishing drug distribution activities by exploiting the potential of the web in terms of easy access and anonymity and by taking advantage of payments through the so-called virtual currencies (bitcoin and other digital currencies). This type of transactions ensure that seller and buyer never come into contact with each other, neither during the negotiation phase, nor during the payment and delivery. The above-mentioned phenomenon requires that the Internet monitoring should be increasingly intensified and strengthened. The Council of the European Union, in outlining the strategies to strengthen the fight against drug trafficking indicated, among the strategic priorities for the period 2021 – 2025 the need to focus on: the fight against the illicit sale of drugs, including new psychoactive substances, sold through social media platforms and online markets; the cryptocurrencies, often used to purchase illicit goods. The attention of law enforcement agencies which carry out investigations in this area must be focused not only on the open access web (the so-called open web), but also on the 'hidden' part, the deep web and dark web, that is only accessible by using special 'anonymisation' and delocalisation software packages. The investigations coordinated in 2021 by the DCSA Drug@online Section in this area revealed that the darknet-markets, which have particularly intensified their activities since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, have further increased their activities. Along with the dark web, vendors and buyers still use for the online drug sale encrypted messaging services to arrange transactions details, which makes communication monitoring more difficult. The drugs traded on the web are mainly sent from Great Britain, Germany and the Netherlands. In this context, it is worth noting that many vendors use the same dynamics of legal commerce, trying to gain the trust of consumers and a high degree of reliability, by offering to potential customers discounts, special offers and



Seizure of postal shipment operated by the Guardia di Finanza of Milan Malpensa Airport

43 Cf. further down, the paragraph entitled "North, Centre e South American Area (El Salvador)" in Chapter 3 of this Annual Report.

44 Cf. <https://www.ilgiornale.it/news/cronache/milano-bronx-negli-anni-80-gang-dilagano-sul-territorio-1936882.html> and <https://www.fanpage.it/milano/appartenenza-violenza-e-armi-bianche-a-milano-torna-lincubo-delle-pandillas-le-gang-di-latinos/>.

the re-shipment of the purchased 'goods' in the event of non-delivery. From this point of view, it is particularly important for vendors to receive feedback from buyers.

The substances traded online are mainly synthetic drugs (amphetamine, MDMA, ecstasy), but also marijuana, hashish, heroin and cocaine. Such drugs are delivered in purposely made postal parcels, using new and improved methods of concealment, such as DVD, CD and cosmetics cases, silver vacuum bags to prevent odours and avoid law enforcement checks through x-rays and/or spectrometers. To keep up with the described innovative packaging methods DCSA assigned to the operating units of the State Police, Carabinieri and Guardia di Finanza portable devices with RAMAN⁴⁵ spectroscopy. Such devices are aimed at detecting drugs concealed in postal parcels and packages. This initiative is part of the "Hermes" project, developed in cooperation with the Department for Antidrug Policies of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers.

Recently, the marketing of GBL (gamma butyrolactone) has arisen particular interest. This substance has recreational purposes since it facilitates the so-called chemsex. It is also known as the 'date rape drug', as it is given unknowingly to its intended victims.

The operation SBALLO POSTALE (Postal high) is emblematic of the growing drug trafficking on the web. This operation was coordinated by the DCSA and has been conducted at the Milan-Linate airport by the Linate group of the Guardia di Finanza from the end of 2019 to October 2021. It was based on a thorough analysis of the shipments coming from the Netherlands towards several destinations in Italy, transiting in the airport customs warehouses used by Poste Italiane S.p.A., now disused.

Investigations allowed to seize 56 kg of different narcotic and psychotropic substances and to report 5,772 recipients to the local units of the Guardia di Finanza for further checks and possible further reports to the Judicial and/ or Administrative Authorities.

THE SOCIAL NETWORKS

The drug trade among young people, including adolescents, is often carried out through the typical and most commonly used tools offered by the Internet. Therefore, the development of the traffic using the instant messaging applications, such as "Instagram, Telegram, Snapchat, Wickr and Kik, has become more important. As known, these applications allow anonymous and encrypted communications and the exchange of messages that are automatically deleted after a short period of time. The increase in the drug trade through social networks is due, above all, to the quick and easy access and the minimised risk of being detected. Buyers, even with no particular computer skills, have the possibility to contact vendors in real time and following his purchase instruction, quickly receive the "goods" at home, without any particular risk, as mentioned above. Vendors operating in the darknet work also on Telegram, WhatsApp or Instagram to define transaction details. The parcels are packaged with care, adopting precautions to pass the inspection of airport scanners and elude police controls. Among the operations involving minors active in the drug trade through the social networks, which were coordinated by DCSA and concluded in 2021, mention must be made of two investigations conducted by the Carabinieri Company of Assisi and by the P.E.F. Unit (Economic and Financial Police Unit) of the Guardia di Finanza of Siena respectively.



GBL bottles seized and analyzed through RAMAN device



Dog units - Operation SBALLO POSTALE

⁴⁵ Raman spectroscopy is a technique for analysing materials based on the diffusion of a monochromatic electromagnetic radiation by the analysed sample. It is the most suitable tool in the antidrug field to identify unknown substances in a short time (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). With Raman spectrometers, only small quantities of samples are needed to obtain the 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, which can be integrated over time.



Operation
DANGEROUS MARKET

The first operation led to the report of a group of six youths (aged 16 and 17) to the Judicial Authority. These individuals bought hashish on Instagram to resell it. The second one, operation DANGEROUS MARKET, identified a group of youths, mostly minors, who used to virtually meet on Telegram, where they negotiated, talked about drug payments and deliveries using price lists, videos and images of hashish and marijuana on sale. Examining other chats frequented by one of the guys under investigation, interactions with other Telegram channels emerged which, through access links, allowed navigation in dark web sites and channels dedicated to drug trade. The investigative activities were also carried out with the support of technical means, such as telephone and web interceptions. They allowed to report to the Judicial Authority over 30 persons (out of them 21 were minors). Moreover, 12 sites operating in the darkweb and 87 Telegram channels having over 420,000 subscribers were reported.

ACTIVITIES CARRIED OUT BY DRUG@ONLINE SECTION

The Section drug@online of the III Service, that usually monitors the Internet for investigative coordination purposes, in 2021 identified several sites in the dark net and in the open web promoting, advertising and selling drugs and/or new psychoactive substances.

In carrying out its coordination activities DCSA supported investigations involving “undercover agents on the Internet” aimed at identifying and tracing through the web sales, the sellers and receivers of the traded substances.

Substances seized - Operation
EARPHONES



Among the activities carried out, mention must be made of operation EARPHONES, which was started in 2019 by the Carabinieri Operational Unit for Health Protection. The investigation was concluded in October 2021 and led the GIP (Preliminary investigation Judge) at the Court of Rome to issue preventive measures against 39 individuals residing in different Italian provinces. Moreover, further 24 persons were reported but not arrested. The persons under investigation were charged with international trafficking in drugs – importation from abroad – including GBL (“date rape drug”), fentanyl, synthetic cathinones and other psychotropic substances. The investigative activity monitored e-shops on the deep and dark web and reconstructed the international routes of the drugs

bought online. In particular, fentanyls came from Canada, Poland and Czech Republic; GBL from China, the Netherlands, France and Croatia; synthetic cathinones and benzodiazepines from the Netherlands. Illicit activities also involved high concentration heroin detected in shipments from Great Britain and Germany. The investigation identified over 290 shipments containing drugs intended for persons throughout Italy with an estimated turnover of around 5 million euro. Moreover, the investigation allowed to detect an Italian “import centre” in Rome⁴⁶, trafficking in GBL, and to detect numerous foreign supply channels of the same substance and synthetic cathinones. The foreign groups involved in the supply of NPS were contacted on the dark web and usually paid

46 On this subject, see the strategic importance of the capital city, in the chapter describing the criminality in Rome

with cryptocurrencies. The parcels containing drugs were sent with fictitious names of senders and recipients. Several persons were involved in the import centre in Rome. They dealt with the incoming illicit traffic and then managed the distribution of drugs to the numerous clients, using a “coded” language to mislead investigators. At local level, the group had organized a home delivery service involving unaware couriers. In addition, some of the suspects reinvested drug proceeds in virtual currency. Within several undercover operations involving controlled deliveries and delayed seizures, this investigation led to the seizure of: 42 litres of GBL, equal to over 50,400 doses and 1.3 kg of synthetic drugs in powder and crystals, including 116 grams of fentanyl. Furthermore, 1.2 kg of synthetic cathinones, 8 grams of high-concentration heroin (99% purity), destined to be mixed with fentanyl, 20 stamps containing flualprazolam and 115 grams of marijuana were seized. The operation led to the arrest of the three Italian importers, including the manager of a family house for minors. Among the persons under investigation there were professionals of the public administration and the private sector, including a dentist, a lawyer, a local government official, a school teacher (the latter received at school the parcels containing synthetic cathinones) two bank clerks, two retired soldiers and an architect.

Drug concealment techniques. Body packers

The ability to conceal drugs is one of the crucial success factors for organised crime. The techniques used to transport drugs from the production and processing sites are proving to be increasingly innovative and sophisticated. The intercontinental shipment of large quantities of drugs is mainly carried out by sea on board container-ships. The drug is usually mixed with other substances such as tea or coffee to disguise the smell or, alternatively, it is concealed in hollow spaces created in shipping containers or in the engines of food refrigerators. The false bottoms of suitcases, as well as specially made compartments in the frames and dashboards of vehicles are among the hiding places most frequently used to transfer drugs over short distances. Another ingenious system is the use of absorbent materials, such as cloth, cardboard and books, which through specific chemical processes retain the narcotic, which is then recovered by a reverse process. Another trick used is the production of handcrafted artefacts, using the drug as a raw material to be worked like clay. A few years ago the first case of cocaine smuggled in small “cylinders” was detected in Colombia. The cylinders had been introduced into a dog's abdomen through a small incision that was then sutured. A similar concealment method was detected in the province of Pisa in 2012. In that case the Law Enforcement units detected 1 kg of cocaine in the abdomen of a Molossus, reported the pusher and a veterinarian also for animal abuse. This technique needs time to be carried out, because it is a surgical procedure, after which it is necessary to wait at least one month before the wound heals and the animal's hair grows again. The most widespread transport/concealment method, which is at the same time the most dangerous for health, is carried out by employing couriers, usually referred to as “body packers”. Such term, having different synonyms, such as “mule”(from the Spanish mulas, donkeys), correos humanos (human mail) or body packers, to use an English expression, indicates individuals who use their bodies to conceal and illicitly transport drugs. Usually they carry such narcotics from producing and processing countries to countries where they are distributed and consumed. The term body stuffer instead indicates a consumer or a pusher who, fearing to be discovered by the police, impulsively swallows drug wrappings ready for consumption or retail sale, in order to avoid the arrest. The above mentioned forms of conduct are similar and both involve the illegal concealment of drugs inside the human body; however, there are significant differences with



Concealment methods



Cocaine pellets found in the stomach of a courier

the places of concealment, the type and quantity of drugs concealed in the body, and the packaging method. This is certainly by no means a new phenomenon, since the first case of body packer was detected in 1973 in Canada, where a young 21-year-old man went to hospital with an intestinal obstruction. X-ray examination revealed that the obstruction was due to the ingestion of a condom containing hashish. On that occasion, two US doctors, in describing for the first time the use of the digestive tube to transport and conceal drugs, said that 'when it comes to making money human ingenuity has no limits, not even when such activities are not only illegal but may also pose a serious health risk'⁴⁷.

The small ovules are sealed in wrappings of various sizes and materials (plastic, rubber, latex, condoms) before being introduced by mouth into the person's digestive tube. However, in case of larger ovules, these are pushed to the large intestine through the rectum, in order to make detection by rectal exploration difficult. Of course, one does not suddenly become a 'swallower'; the skills to pack the drug properly and to swallow the ovules are acquired through real training courses. Adequate physical training is required, consisting of diets low in fat and flour, as well as exercises to strengthen the abdominal muscles. Real training centres for "body packers" were identified in South America in previous years. They were trained to swallow grapes, small sausages and other food items of various sizes, so to accustom the mouth of the stomach (in jargon *maleta*, i.e. suitcase)⁴⁸. This organ is trained, as above described, to receive and store drug ovules not only by introducing the aforementioned grapes, but also, for example, whole pieces of carrot or small powder milk capsules. In general, a body packer is a person of low socio-economic status, usually he/she is not a drug user and hardly ever travels alone. He is usually a male, with a tall and strong body structure (the body has a greater capacity to receive ovules), and is around thirty years old, although very young couriers, even minors, and elderly people have been intercepted.

Not only is drug transportation in corpore more cost-effective than transportation on board vehicles, in terms of organization and logistics, but also it may more easily escape controls by canine units. We should also add that the large supply of cheap labour balances the small quantity that each courier can transport. The couriers are paid according to the ovules swallowed. For one hundred ovules, roughly equal to one kilogram of drugs, they can earn from two to a maximum of four thousand euro per trip. More experienced couriers generally make longer journeys, while 'greenhorns' are given transport on shorter routes to minimise risks. Those who organize shipments often distribute the drug loads among different "carriers" on the same flight. Some of them can be "sacrificed" by reporting them to the police in order to have most of the load arrived at destination. This trick implies the 'sacrifice-loss' of a courier, but in doing so, airport controls are often passed to the advantage of the remaining group of couriers⁴⁹. Transporting drugs in corpore is dangerous, although very lucrative for the courier. The possible loss of impermeability of the wrapping once it is in the digestive tube and before its natural expulsion, entails the risk of massive drug absorption with the danger of death by cardiac arrest of the courier. In fact, this could have caused the death of a Peruvian national who in September 2021 was found lifeless inside the Roman bed & breakfast where he was staying on his return from a trip to Spain. The owner of the accommodation facility was drawn by the foul smell coming from the room and alerted the police. In addition to the lifeless body, the police

47 "intestinal obstruction by an unusual foreign body" – M Deitel, A K Syed (can med Assoc J. 1973 Aug 4; 109 (3); 211-2).

48 www.emporioae.com/il-mulo-corriere/

49 www.liberainformazione.org/2013/02/08/gli-ingoiatori-di-droghe/

found 12 ovules of cocaine on the floor that the man, after being probably taken ill, was trying to expel with spasms.

As to counteraction, investigations concluded in 2021 by the Italian Law Enforcement Agencies led to the detection of 127 body packers and the seizure of over 200 kg of drugs (127 kg of heroin, 29 kg of cocaine and 89.8 kg of hashish). The analysis of data revealed that 51% of the couriers arrested was of Nigerian nationality. This data shifts to 53% considering the arrested persons of Nigerian origin who became naturalized Italians. Almost all body packers arrived to EU countries from Africa by plane. The couriers mainly departed from Malawi, Kenya, Ethiopia and Nigeria while major Italian destination airports were Milan, Rome and Bologna.

In particular, the Guardia di Finanza Group in Fiumicino carried out a constant risk analysis on the major air routes in 2021, that allowed to identify and arrest 29 body packers and seize a total amount of approximately 29 kg of drugs.

Another operation carried out in the same year by the Guardia di Finanza of Ancona led to the arrest of 29 persons and the seizure of 44 kg of drugs, allowing to dismantle a drug trafficking from Pakistan aimed at introducing into Italy large quantities of drug destined for the illicit markets in Central and Southern Italy. The drugs were transported to Italy by body packers or were concealed in false bottoms inside luggage and in special abdominal belts carried by the couriers.

Officers of the Guardia di Finanza of Bologna arrested 5 Nigerian body packers and the madame who supervised them and seized 15 kg of heroin and cocaine as a whole contained in ovules that the couriers were supposed to deliver in several cities of Emilia-Romagna. Investigations ascertained that each courier had swallowed up to 30/40 ovules, containing 10 grams each, for every single trip. Said drugs, if placed on the market, would have yielded more than two and a half million euro.



Cocaine seizure - Fiumicino Airport

The use of GBL in Chemsex

The recreational use of Gamma-Butyrolactone acid, better known as GBL⁵⁰, has been causing alarm on and off for about a decade in several European countries. On rare occasions however, the abuse of this chemical has been regarded as a serious social risk, although it is known that it is given to unaware victims as a 'date rape drug', like GHB that is its metabolic precursor. With regard to its consumption, GBL can be easily diluted in water or other beverages and, when given to unaware victims⁵¹ it makes them totally incapable of reacting to the violence; even if they remain conscious, they are unable to remember what happened. In particular, its consumption causes euphoria, states of hallucination, pervasive pleasure, relaxation, tranquillity and fluent speech. At higher doses, it causes grogginess, loss of co-ordination of movements, convulsions, severe drowsiness and narcosis, manifested by comatose sleep and dreamlike activity, which can last up to 24 hours, and memory lapses. Combined with alcohol or ingested in large quantities, GBL increases drowsiness. It can cause respiratory problems, loss of consciousness, coma and death by respiratory arrest. In general, its effects begin 5 to 10 minutes after ingestion and last for 1 to 3 hours. Also at the medical- forensic and investigative levels, its health risks are underestimated, since it is difficult to link overdose deaths to the ingestion of this substance. In fact it is quickly metabolised and its traces disappear within a few hours, thus escaping any control through the screening of biological



GBL seizure - June 2021

50 It replaced the use of GHB (gamma- hydroxybutyric acid), that is now internationally considered a narcotic substance and therefore controlled.

51 It is found in liquid form, colourless and with a slightly pungent odour, as well as in the form of a white crystalline powder. It is taken almost exclusively orally, usually mixed with drinks such as orange juice in order to disguise its salty taste." (From: "Drug Universe, encyclopaedic glossary of substances of abuse and hallucinogenic plants ", by the Direzione Centrale per i Servizi Antidroga – September 2010.)



GBL seizure - Carabinieri Bologna



GBL seizure - G. di F. Malpensa Airport

samples⁵². The “camouflaging” attitude of GBL can also be seen in its licit use in a variety of areas, as an industrial solvent, in the production of plastics and pesticides, but also as an additive in foodstuffs, which makes it more difficult to classify it as a hazardous substance⁵³.

At international level it is considered as legal⁵⁴, with a few exceptions and it is not always “controlled”, unlike GHB, which, by contrast is always included in the tables of narcotic substances. In the Italian legislation GBL is comparable to cannabis, sedatives and tranquillizers.

For many years Italy has recognised the dangerous nature of this substance. In fact it is one of the first and few European countries that considered it as a “scheduled” chemical and included it in Table IV of narcotic substances. The prevention and law enforcement activities at national level are therefore particularly intensive and there are many investigative initiatives to counter its diffusion.

This constant attention to the phenomenon, in addition to the operational results, allowed to acquire 'on the field' valuable information on a narcotic often considered a 'niche' drug used only by specific categories of individuals, for example in the bodybuilding environment where, due to its effects comparable to those of growth hormones, it has been popular as a doping substance or at sex parties (often referred to as chemsex or “chemical sex”).

Investigations revealed that in fact the consumption of GBL is much more widespread and extensive than one might imagine, and the group of its consumers is heterogeneous, both in relation to age and economic-social status. Its success also depends on the fact that it can be easily found in anonymity, especially on the open and dark web. Moreover, its low price makes it highly competitive, especially in comparison to other traditional and/or synthetic drugs having similar or even less remarkable effects, which are more expensive and can often only be purchased through the mediation of third parties. In particular, investigations carried out revealed a large trafficking in GBL towards our country and destined for private consumers, coming from Central-Northern European countries where, thanks to a favourable legislation, there are numerous companies importing, storing, packaging and marketing this product, apparently destined for the production of cleansers and detergents. The careful and accurate monitoring of websites used for sales, shipments and deliveries, which are usually carried out by international couriers, has revealed that the owners of companies and administrators of websites are often of a different nationality than the one where their business premises are located. This shows how the different legislative approaches on the subject are exploited by locating facilities and warehouses where they can count on greater freedom of action. For this reason, after having been subject to the attention of the local judicial authorities, on many occasions companies established in some countries relocate to other countries their operations involving the sale of GBL. Another important aspect is the fact that several companies that are apparently autonomous and independent belong to the same individuals who have been operating in the specific sector for years and who have often moved their operational headquarters around, after controls and/or investigations against them. These expedients raise doubts about the real turnover relating to the marketing of a product which is legally sold at the price of a detergent and is then illegally trafficked as a narcotic drug, without mixing it with other substances since, as already pointed out, GBL just needs to come into contact with saliva to produce its effects. As to its

52 Article on Paginemedicheof september 1st, 2010 by Serena Chiurazzi and Clelia Scanzano - Scuola di Specializzazione in Farmacia Ospedaliera dell'ospedale Antonio Cardarelli.

53 EMCDDA, European Drug Report 2021, p. 29.

54 Although GHB can be easily converted into GBL by the only contact with saliva, it is easier to obtain and cheaper than many illicit drugs with similar and sometimes even stronger effects.

price, we should consider that it is sold on the Internet sites at around 50/70 euros per litre, but the retail price rises to 1 euro per millilitre, i.e. 1,000 euros per litre. The monitoring of a single website for six months revealed that shipments were made throughout Europe to around 4,000 people with transactions involving more than 10,000 kg of this substance. Buyers, as verified in Italy⁵⁵, resold the substances at retail to many other users/dealers, thus exponentially increasing the number of people involved and, of course, the business revolving around it. This retail trade is also likely to occur on a large scale in the other countries concerned, which is in sharp contrast with the poor attention paid to this substance⁵⁶.

In 2021, more than eighty persons were arrested in Italy for importation of and/or trafficking in GBL and the seizures tripled with respect to 2020, as shown in the table. The numbers shown in the table, while significant, do not portray the true extent of the phenomenon, which is far more extensive, as observed monitoring and analyzing the shipments of several online web sites. Law enforcement agencies under the coordination of DCSA and in cooperation with foreign Police and Judicial Authorities continue to carry out info-investigative and preventive activities in this field, through complex investigations into the trafficking and distribution of this dangerous substance that is often available on the open web.

Recent information exchanges with several European countries on this issue revealed on one side increased attention to the widespread phenomenon of GBL for “recreational” use and, on the other side difficulties in carrying out effective counteraction due to the lack of adequate regulations prohibiting its free marketing. In fact GBL is considered legal for its many uses in lawful sectors and, in some cases, subject only to voluntary control/monitoring by traders and producers. As mentioned above, it is widely used as an industrial solvent: GBL is in fact a component of various liquid detergents and cannot be replaced by any other substances. It is widely used in the paint industry, in the composition of car cleaners, adhesive solvents, but also in cosmetology (e.g. GBL in low doses is present in nail polish removers). Thus, classifying it as a narcotic is hardly compatible with its use in industry.

Homogenous and specific European legislation would be undoubtedly desirable to adequately address the phenomenon. In the meantime, the growing interest in the consumption of GBL, used voluntarily or on unaware subjects, has prompted legislative initiatives in several EU countries to schedule it as a controlled precursor, or as a totally prohibited narcotic drug. Where the substance is already considered a narcotic drug, there is a strong pressure to upgrade it, inserting it in the table containing the most dangerous drugs.

GBL

	2020	2021	%var.
Seizures (no)	14	56	300.00 %
Quantity in g	9,220	12,950	40.45 %
Quantity in ml	58,650	89,472	52.55 %
Persons reported:			
Arrested	7	82	1,071.43 %
At large	9	37	311.11 %
Total	16	119	643.75 %

⁵⁵ Analysis of the shipments of an online sale website selling GBL worldwide as an industrial solvent

⁵⁶ EMCDDA, European Drug Report 2021, p. 29.



P A R T



C H A P T E R

LAW ENFORCEMENT
ACTIVITIES AT
NATIONAL LEVEL

1. LAW ENFORCEMENT ACTIVITIES AT NATIONAL LEVEL

INTRODUCTION

The following is an analysis of the data concerning antidrug operations, reports to the Judicial Authorities and drug seizures carried out in 2021, in the framework of the fight against the traffic in narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances. Such data concern the seizures conducted by the Italian law enforcement agencies within national territory, national territorial waters and in international waters.

Considering only the interventions for criminal acts, in 2021, 21,318 operations were conducted (-6.53% with respect to 2020). Such operations led to 30,083 persons being reported to the Judicial Authorities (-4.70%), of whom 9,232 foreign nationals (-10.15%) and 967 minors (+4.65%), as well as to the seizure of 91,152.45 kg (+54.04%) of drugs.

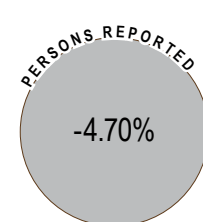
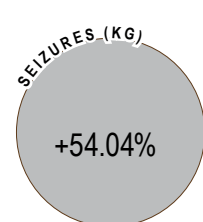
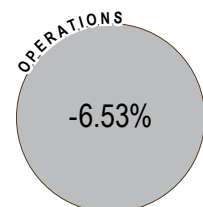
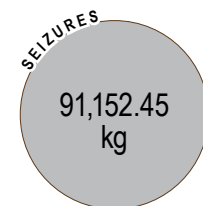
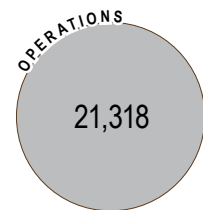
As to drug abuse deaths, a decrease of 5.18% was registered.

The most significant seizures were made:

- for cocaine, 2,226 kg in Catania;
- for heroin, 27.66 kg in Rome;
- for hashish, 6,000 kg in international waters off the coast of Sicily;
- for marijuana, 4,203 kg in Macomer (NU);
- for synthetic drugs, 60 kg of DMT (dimethyltryptamine) in Varese.

Mention must also be made of the data on major seizures of other psychoactive substances, whose consumption is not commonly widespread in our country: 2,293.96 kg of khat (or Qat), 263 kg of poppy bulbs and 1,563 doses/tablets of oxycodone. The table below shows in detail the quantities seized for each substance.

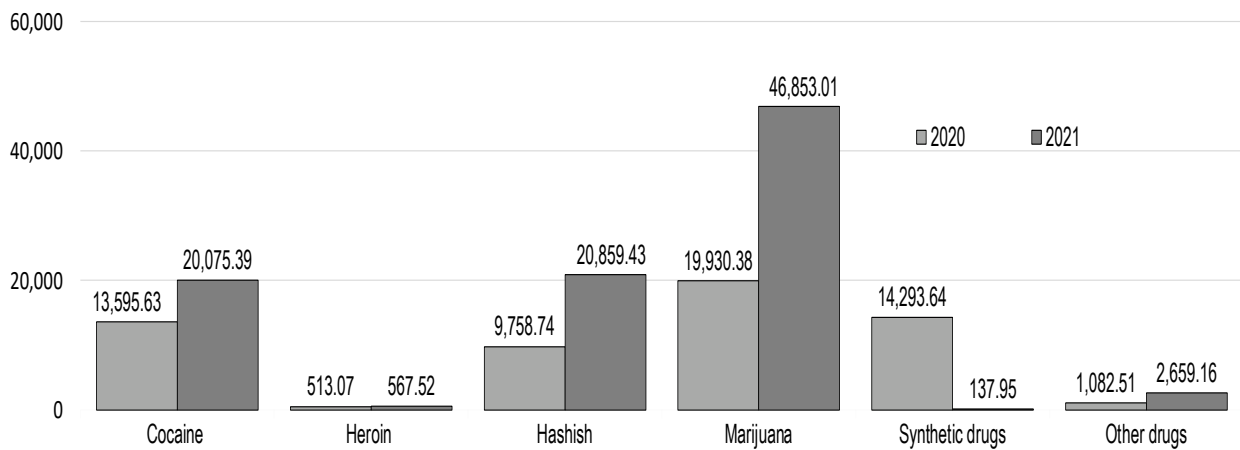
Substances drugs seized 2019/2020 with % variation		2020	2021	Var. %
Cannabis	Cocaine (kg)	13,595.63	20,075.39	47.66
	Heroin (kg)	513.07	567.52	10.61
	Hashish (kg)	9,758.74	20,859.43	113.75%
	Marijuana (kg)	19,930.38	46,853.01	135.08%
Synthetic drugs	Cannabis plants (Plants no)	414,476	300,448	-27.51%
	tablets/doses (no)	17,691	15,757	-10.93%
Other drugs	kg	14,293.64	137.95	-99.03%
	tablets/doses (no)	20,591	4,482	-78.23%
Total	kg	1,082.51	2,659.16	145.65%
	(kg)	59,173.97	91,152.45	54.04%
	tablets/doses (no)	38,282	20,239	-47.13%
	Plants (no)	414.476	300.448	-27.51%
Drug operations		22,808	21,318	-6.53%
Persons reported to the Judicial Authority		31,567	30,083	-4.70%
Drug abuse deaths		309	293	-5.18%



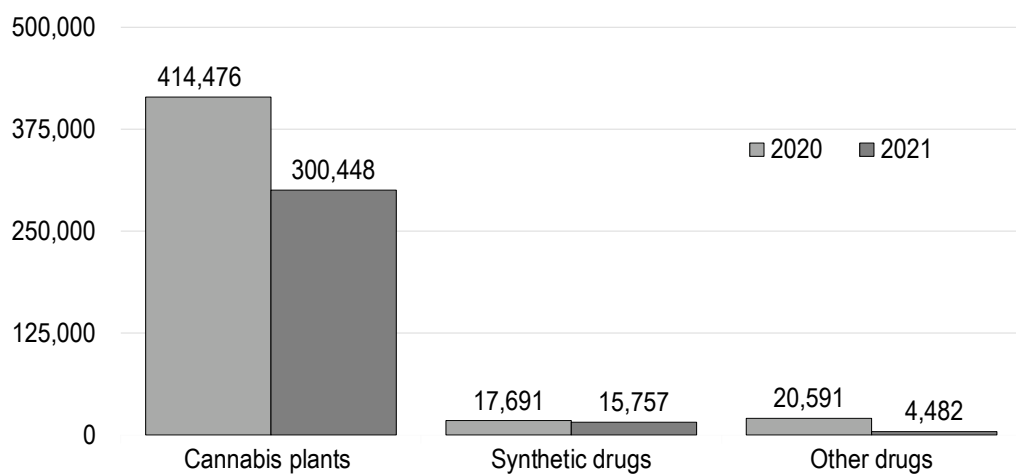


Polizia di Stato - Seizure of 80 kg of hashish - Rome, March 2021

Comparison of drugs seized (in kg) - 2020/2021



Comparison of drugs seized (doses) - 2020/2021

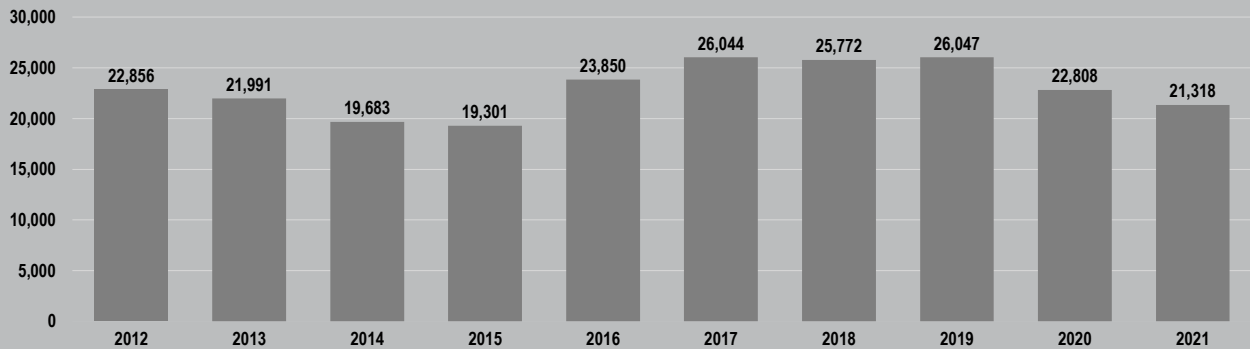


Ten-year trend

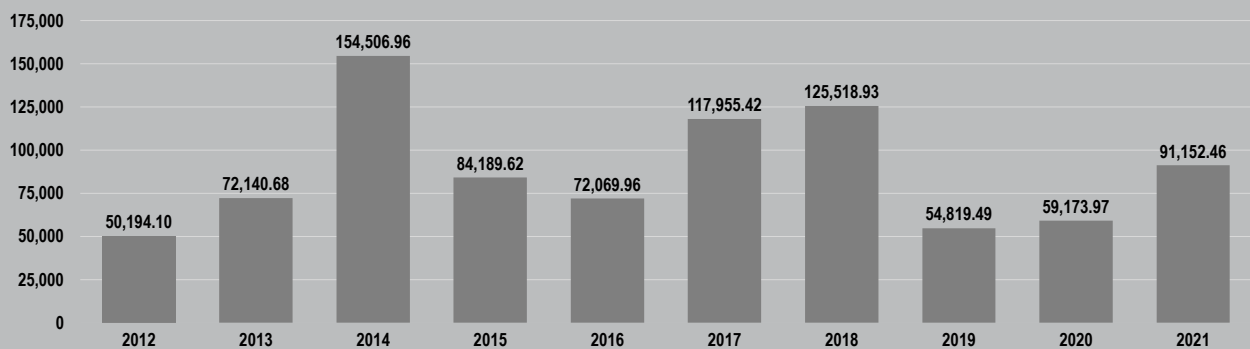
Since 2012, the average value regarding antidrug operations has always been around 23,000, with a peak of 26,047 in 2019 and the lowest level of 19,301 in 2015.

Since 2012, the total quantity of drug seizures has been over 50 tons, with a peak of 154,507 kg in 2014, and the lowest level in 2012 with 50,194 kg. Such significant results are mainly due to the cannabis derivatives seizures, which, in the last decade, on average led to 77,500 kg seized. In the last decade an average of 33,000 reports has been made to the Judicial Authorities. The peak was registered in 2018 (36,072), while the lowest level was reached in 2015 (28,055).

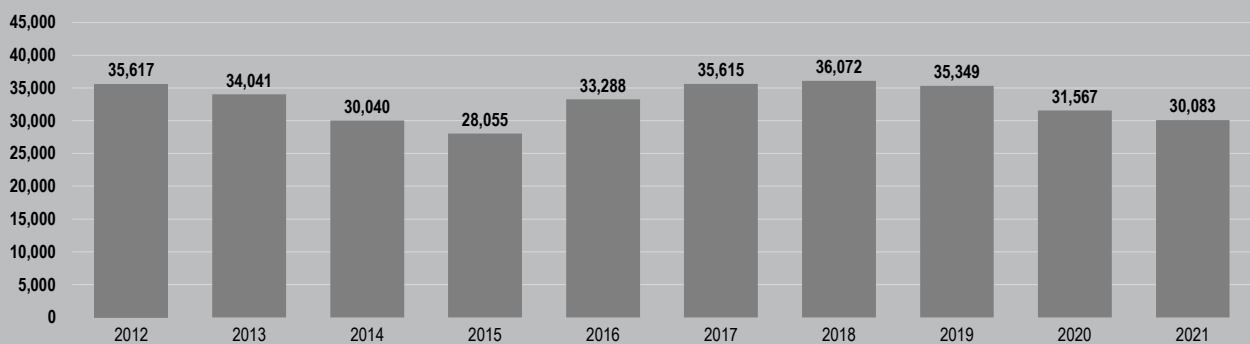
Drug operations - ten-year trend



Drug seizures kg - ten-year trend



Persons reported - ten-year trend





Antidrug Operations - regional distribution

Lombardy was the region with the highest number of operations (3,729), followed by Lazio, Campania, Sicily, Apulia, Emilia Romagna and Veneto.

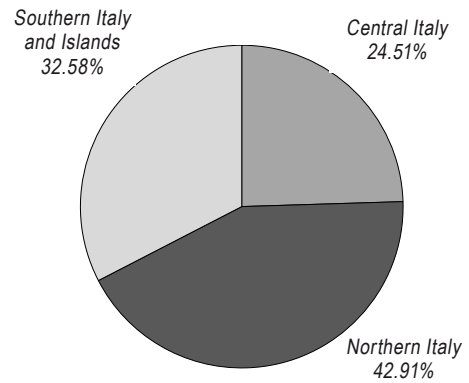
The lowest records were registered in Molise and Valle d'Aosta.

In comparison with 2020, police activities mainly increased in Lazio and in Trentino Alto Adige, while the most significant percentage decreases were registered in Piedmont, Marche, Sardinia, Umbria, Liguria and Lombardy.

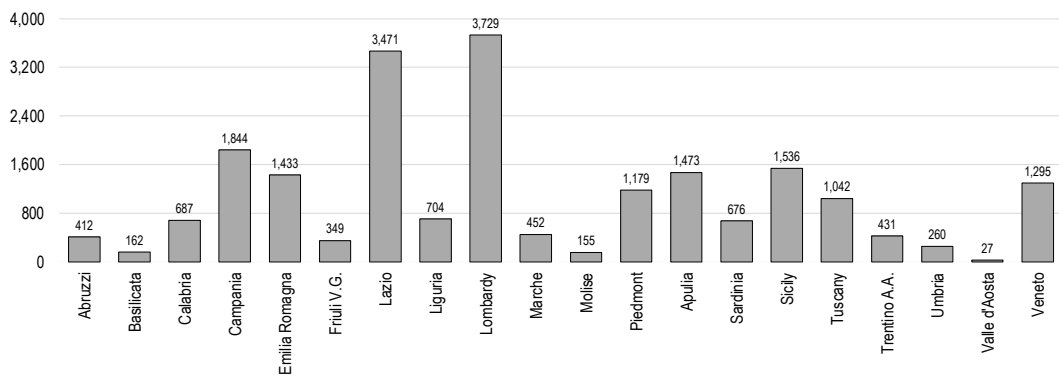
The review of macro-areas revealed that, in 2021 the highest number of antidrug operations was carried out in Northern Italy, with 42.91%, followed by Southern Italy and Islands with 32.58% and by Central Italy with 24.51%.

Regional distribution - drug operations

Regions	2020	2021	var. %
Abruzzi	444	412	-7.21 %
Basilicata	155	162	4.52 %
Calabria	653	687	5.21 %
Campania	1,895	1,844	-2.69 %
Emilia Romagna	1,506	1,433	-4.85 %
Friuli Venezia Giulia	382	349	-8.64 %
Lazio	3,057	3,471	13.54 %
Liguria	826	704	-14.77 %
Lombardy	4,342	3,729	-14.12 %
Marche	568	452	-20.42 %
Molise	154	155	0.65 %
Piedmont	1,505	1,179	-21.66 %
Apulia	1,544	1,473	-4.60 %
Sardinia	836	676	-19.14 %
Sicily	1,765	1,536	-12.97 %
Tuscany	1,142	1,042	-8.76 %
Trentino Alto Adige	385	431	11.95 %
Umbria	315	260	-17.46 %
Valle d'Aosta	30	27	-10.00 %
Veneto	1,304	1,295	-0.69 %
Regional total	22,808	21,317	-6.54 %
International waters	-	1	-- %
National total	22,808	21,318	-6.53 %



Regional distribution - drug operations

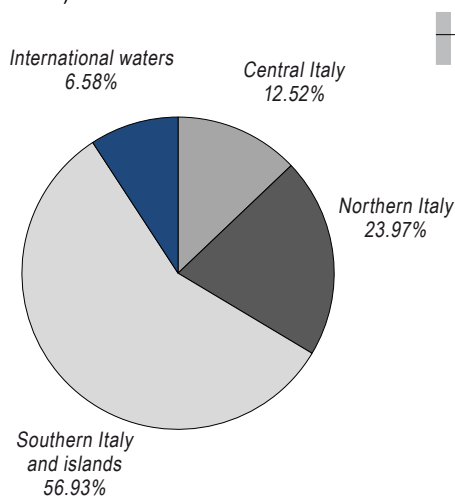


Drug seizures – regional distribution

Sardinia, with 23,676.35 kg of drugs, registered the highest amount of seizures with respect to the other regions. This figure is mainly due to marijuana seizures amounting to 23,539.04 kg. Sardinia is followed by Calabria, Lombardy, Lazio, Sicily, Apulia, Piedmont, Tuscany and Campania. The lowest records were reached in Valle d'Aosta and Basilicata.

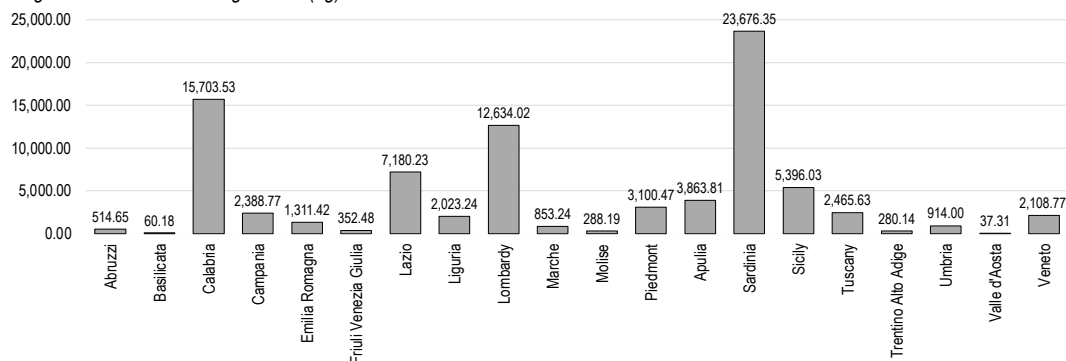
With respect to 2020, drug seizures, in percentage, were on the increase in Molise, Sardinia, Umbria, Sicily, Basilicata, Friuli Venezia Giulia, Lazio, Lombardy, while the most considerable decreases were registered in Campania, Tuscany, Valle d'Aosta and Emilia Romagna.

The review of macro-areas revealed that, in 2021, the highest quantities of seizures were carried out in Southern Italy and Islands (56.93%), followed by Northern Italy (23.97%) and Central Italy (12.52%). The seizure carried out in international waters alone represents 6.58%.



Regions	2020	2021	var. %
Abruzzi	285.40	514.65	80.33 %
Basilicata	20.20	60.18	197.96 %
Calabria	8,431.48	15,703.53	86.25 %
Campania	18,614.58	2,388.77	-87.17 %
Emilia Romagna	1,648.33	1,311.42	-20.44 %
Friuli Venezia Giulia	142.93	352.48	146.61 %
Lazio	3,340.48	7,180.23	114.95 %
Liguria	1,866.65	2,023.24	8.39 %
Lombardy	5,918.54	12,634.02	113.47 %
Marche	551.84	853.24	54.62 %
Molise	28.36	288.19	916.10 %
Piedmont	1,565.32	3,100.47	98.07 %
Apulia	3,975.96	3,863.81	-2.82 %
Sardinia	4,142.93	23,676.35	471.49 %
Sicily	1,791.80	5,396.03	201.15 %
Tuscany	4,329.77	2,465.63	-43.05 %
Trentino Alto Adige	209.40	280.14	33.78 %
Umbria	183.60	914.00	397.83 %
Valle d'Aosta	50.88	37.31	-26.67 %
Veneto	2,075.53	2,108.77	1.60 %
Regional total	59,173.97	85,152.46	43.90 %
International waters	-	6,000.00	-- %
National total	59,173.97	91,152.46	54.04 %

Regional distribution - drug seized (kg)

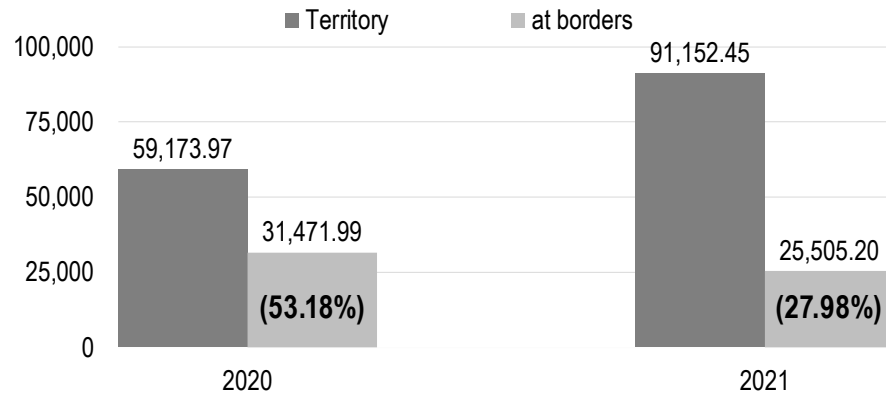




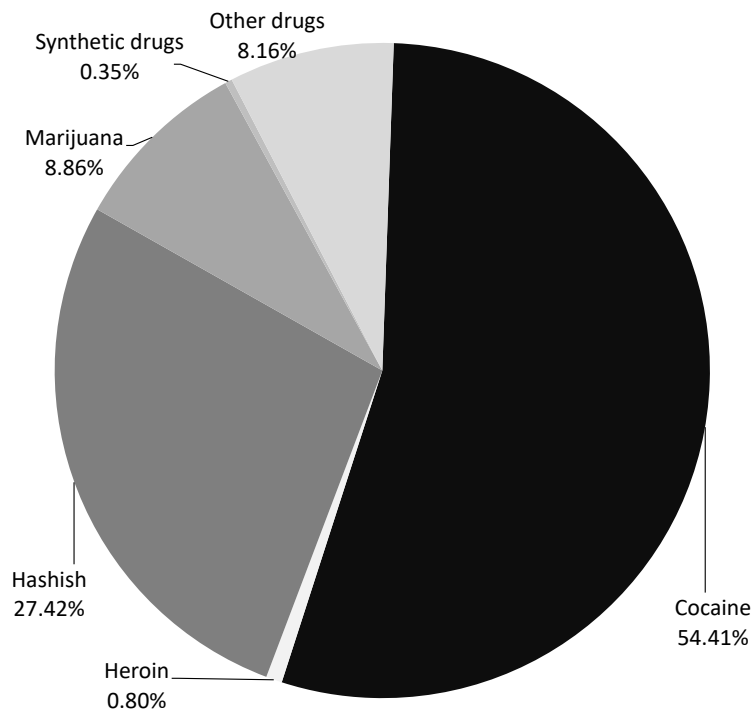
DRUG TRAFFICKING TOWARDS ITALY

In 2021, 91,152.45 kg of drugs were seized in Italy, 25,505.20 of which (27,98%) at borders, compared to 59,173.97 kg seized in 2020, with 31,471.99 kg (53.18%) at borders. In 2021, the total amount of intercepted drugs at borders decreased by 18.96% with respect to 2020.

Drug seizures (kg) total of drug seizures at borders in kg



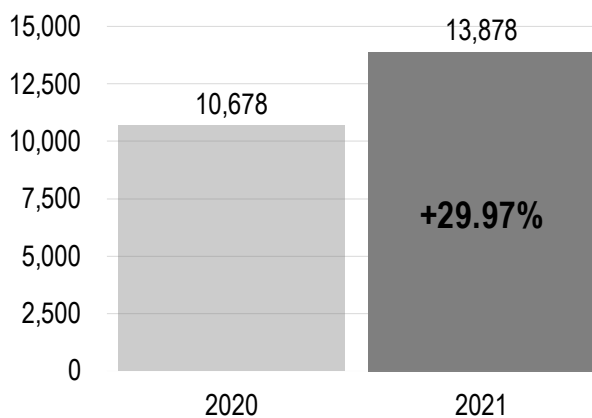
In 2021 cocaine, with 54.41% was the most seized drug at borders, followed by hashish, marijuana, by other drugs and heroin. Synthetic drugs, that in 2020 had represented 45.30% of the total of the intercepted drugs, due to the large seizure of 14,005 kg of amphetamine, in 2021 were in the last position, with only 89 kg intercepted.



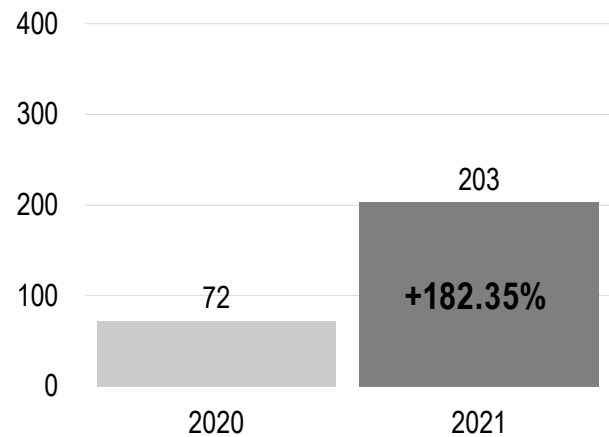
As indicated below in the chapter devoted to each substance, the following results achieved at borders in 2021 can be highlighted:

- the quantity of cocaine, equal to 13,878.17 kg (of which 13,709.06 at sea borders), increased by 29.97% with respect to 10,678.47 kg of 2020;
- the quantity of heroin shifted from 71.85 kg seized in 2020 to 202.87 kg (+182.35%) in 2021, thus showing an evident drop;
- the quantity of hashish shifted from 3,285.16 kg in 2020 to 6,994.73 in 2021 (+112,92%), has more than doubled;
- the quantity of marijuana shifted from 2,387.24 kg in 2020 to 2,258.86 kg in 2021 (-5,38%), registering a slight decrease.

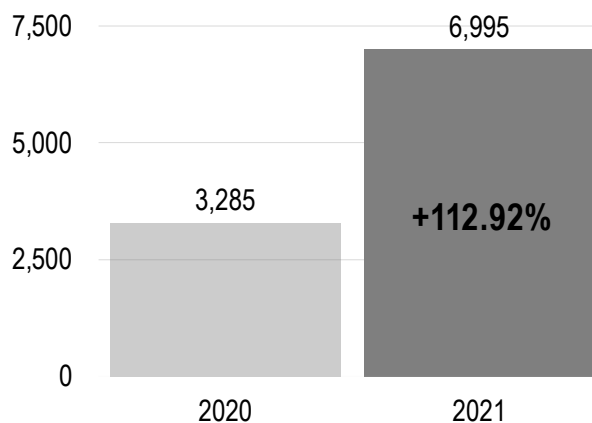
Cocaine (kg) seized at borders



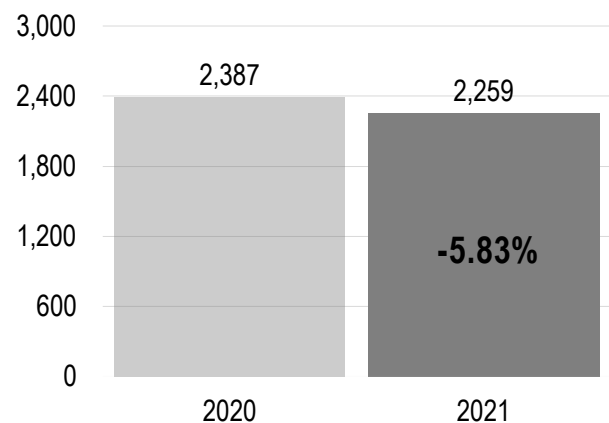
Heroin (kg) seized at borders

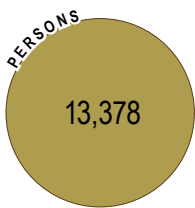


Hashish (kg) seized at borders



Marijuana (kg) seized at borders





THE FIGHT AGAINST COCAINE

In 2021, the operations against cocaine trade were 7,902 (+1,06% with respect to 2020), showing a significant increase in the quantities seized, from 13,595.63 in 2020 to 20,075.39 kg in 2021 (+47,66%). There was also an increase (+2.18 %) in the number of persons reported (13,378), 9,740 of whom were arrested.

The most important seizures occurred in Catania¹ in March (2,226 kg), at Gioia Tauro (RC) port in October (2,140.80 kg), in November (1,520.30 kg), in February (1,163.35 kg) and in May (1,126.84 kg). 4,399 foreign nationals were reported to the judicial authorities, 3,107 of which were arrested.

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

Among the persons reported for cocaine-related offences, 1,216 were women (9.09%) and 12,162 men (90.91%).

Among the 176 minors (1.31%) reported for cocaine-related offences, 71 (40.34%) were foreign nationals, in particular from Tunisia, Senegal, Gabon, Morocco, Romania and Albania.

As to the type of offence, 85.2% of the reports concerned drug trafficking/pushing and 14.97% conspiracy to drug trafficking.

34.85% of the total number of persons reported to the Judicial Authorities for cocaine trafficking were in the 40/over age group, 17.13% in the 30-34 age group, 16.52% in the 25-29 age group and 13.71% in the age group 35 - 39. The youngest (<18) represented 1.32% of the total number of the persons reported at national level.

The cocaine seized was mainly concealed on the persons (1,595 cases), in body cavities (21 cases), in houses (1,087 cases), in cars (488 cases) and in parcels or letters (63 cases).

Persons reported to the J.A. for cocaine

	2020	2021	var.%
Type of report			
Arrested	9,365	9,740	4.00%
Reported but not arrested	3,552	3,504	-1.35%
At large	176	134	-23.86%
Type of offence - (Law No. 309/90)			
Illicit trafficking (art. 73)	11,501	11,374	-1.10%
Conspiracy to traffic (art. 74)	1,591	2,003	25.90%
Other offences	1	1	0.00%
Gender	2020	2021	var.%
Males	11,915	12,162	2.07%
Females	1,178	1,216	3.23%
Age			
Of age	12,935	13,202	2.06%
Minors	158	176	11.39%
Total	13,093	13,378	2.18%

Nationality	2020	2021	var.%
Italian	8,478	8,979	5.91%
Foreign	4,615	4,399	-4.68%
of which:			
Maroccan	1,342	1,213	-9.61%
Albanian	1,328	1,113	-16.19%
Tunisian	444	506	13.96%
Nigerian	276	269	-2.54%
Senegalese	236	183	-22.46%

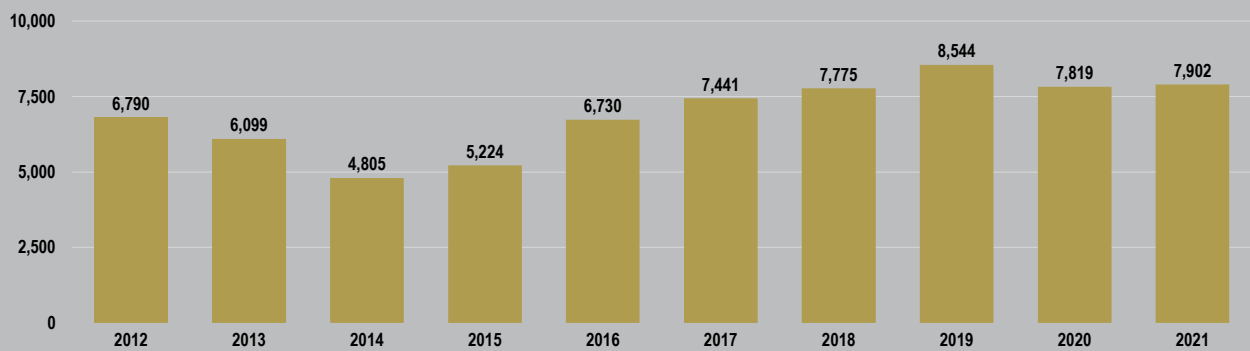
Age groups	2020	2021	var.%
< 15	7	3	-57.14%
15 ÷ 19	562	588	4.63%
20 ÷ 24	1,897	1,789	-5.69%
25 ÷ 29	2,328	2,210	-5.07%
30 ÷ 34	2,195	2,292	4.42%
35 ÷ 39	1,877	1,834	-2.29%
≥ 40	4,227	4,662	10.29%

¹ Controlled delivery from the port of Gioia Tauro.

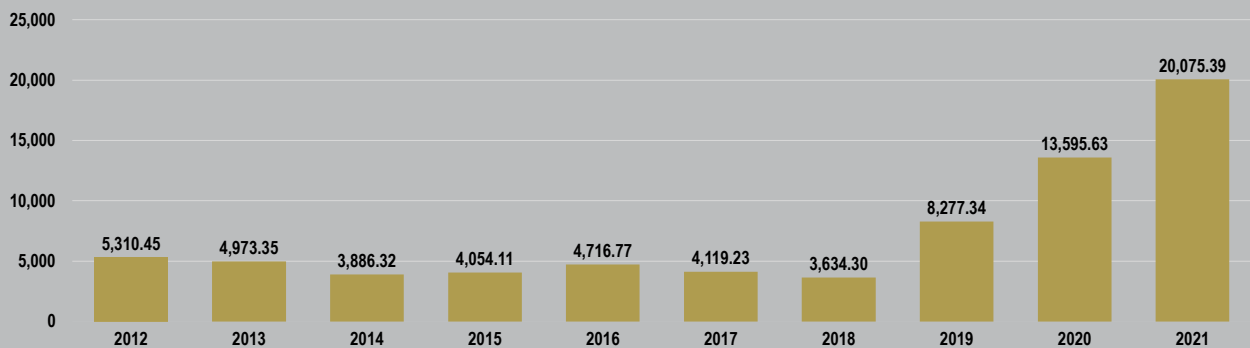
Ten-year trend

From 2012 to 2014, the trend of cocaine operations and persons reported to the Judicial Authority for cocaine decreased, while it has been constantly growing since 2015 and decreased in the last two years. The ten-year average amount of seizure was about 7,265 kg, with a peak in the reporting year and in the previous one, with 20,075.39 kg and 13,595.63 kg respectively.

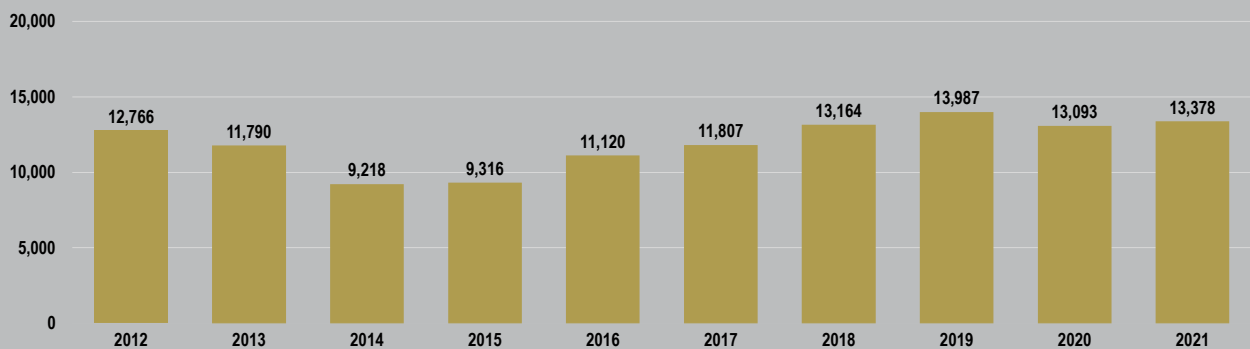
Drug operations

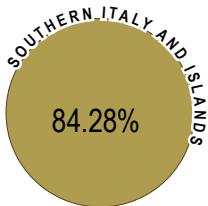
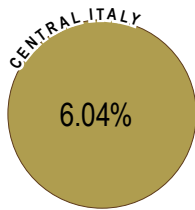
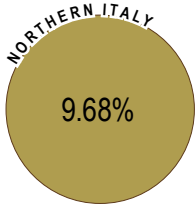


Drug seizures kg



Persons reported to the Judicial Authority





Cocaine seizures – regional distribution

The regions where the largest quantities of cocaine were seized are Calabria, Sicily, Veneto, Tuscany, Campania, Lazio and Lombardy, while the lowest quantities were registered in Molise, Basilicata and Umbria.

In comparison with 2020, a significant percentage increase in seizures was registered in Veneto, Basilicata, Campania, Sicily and Friuli V.G..

The most considerable decreases were registered in Marche, Tuscany, Umbria and Liguria.

Considering the macro-areas, 84.28% of cocaine seizures occurred in Southern Italy and islands, 9.68% in Northern Italy and 6.04% in Central Italy.

Regional distribution of **cocaine** seized having incidence on the regional total

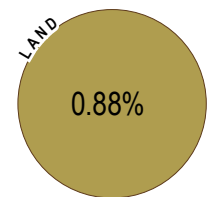
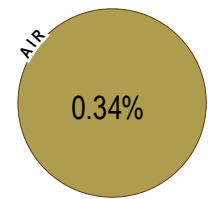
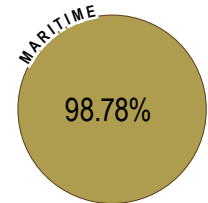
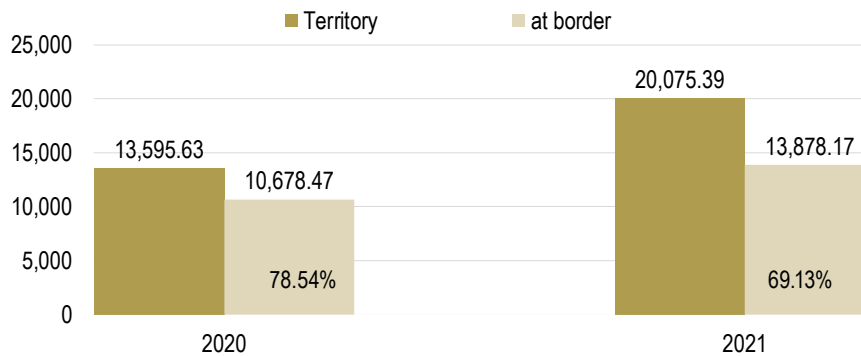
Regions	2020	2021	var.%
0.07 Abruzzi	11.13	14.88	33.76%
0.03 Basilicata	0.80	5.27	557.68%
68.23 Calabria	7,313.61	13,698.30	87.30%
3.08 Campania	121.18	618.01	409.98%
0.64 Emilia Romagna	107.03	129.18	20.69%
0.81 Friuli V. G.	44.09	162.06	267.58%
2.59 Lazio	420.86	519.57	23.45%
0.99 Liguria	570.27	197.78	-65.32%
2.17 Lombardy	313.38	435.03	38.82%
0.17 Marche	240.25	34.92	-85.46%
0.00 Molise	1.52	0.74	-51.28%
0.71 Piedmont	59.25	142.96	141.28%
0.39 Apulia	103.78	79.19	-23.69%
0.30 Sardinia	39.14	59.38	51.71%
12.18 Sicily	479.46	2,444.56	409.85%
3.24 Tuscany	3,495.50	651.26	-81.37%
0.83 Trentino A. A.	135.83	165.96	22.18%
0.03 Umbria	34.60	6.74	-80.53%
0.18 Valle d'Aosta	28.30	36.45	28.78%
3.35 Veneto	75.66	673.17	789.75%
Regional total	13,595.63	20,075.39	47.66%
International waters	-	-	--%
National Total	13,595.63	20,075.39	47,66%

Cocaine flows towards Italy

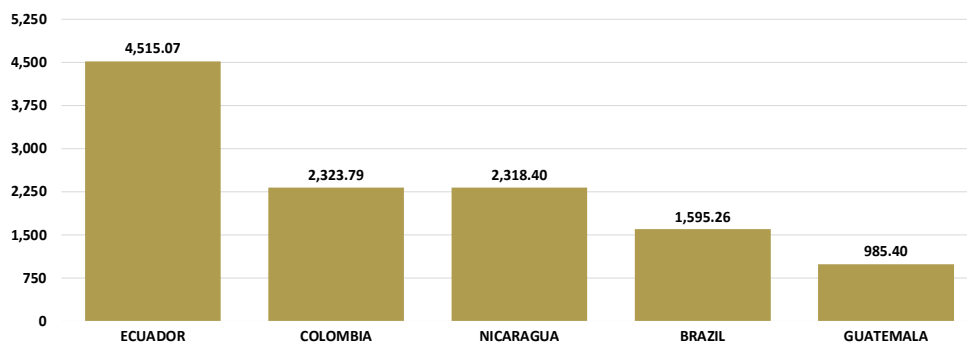
In the two-year period 2020/2021 the incidence of seizures at borders, with respect to the total seizures at national level, shifted from 78.54% to 69.13%.

In 2021, 20,075.39 kg of cocaine were seized at national level, with an increase of 47.66% in comparison with 13,595.63 kg in 2020; seizures at borders amounted to 13,878.17 kg, with an increase of 29.96% in comparison with 10,678.47 in 2020.

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



Main cocaine origin countries (kg)



According to information available, in 2021 the countries of origin of the cocaine seized at borders were:

- Ecuador, 4,515.07 kg;
- Colombia, 2,323.79 kg;
- Nicaragua, 2,318.40 kg;
- Brazil, 1,595.26 kg;
- Guatemala, 985.40 kg.

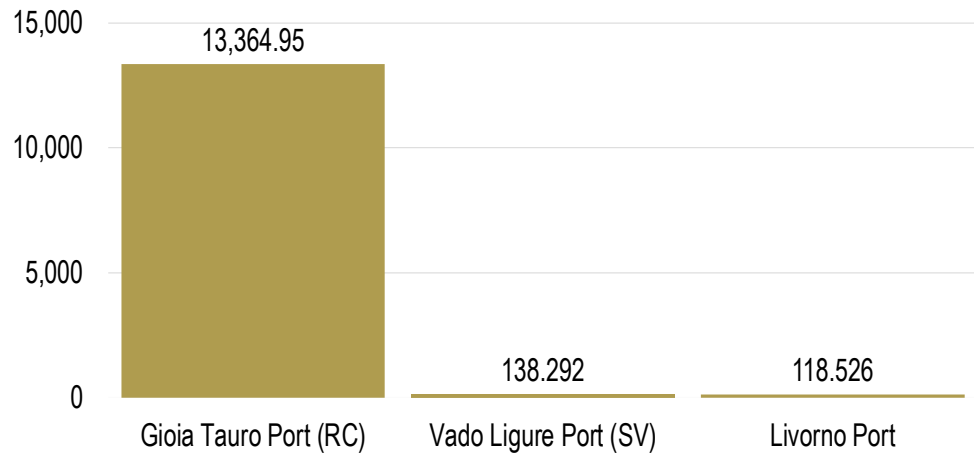
The largest quantities of cocaine were seized at **maritime borders** (13,709 kg), with a small incidence increase in relation to the total quantities intercepted at borders, shifting from 98.13% in 2020 to 98.78% in 2021.

The cocaine seizures made at maritime borders regarded the port areas of the western coast.

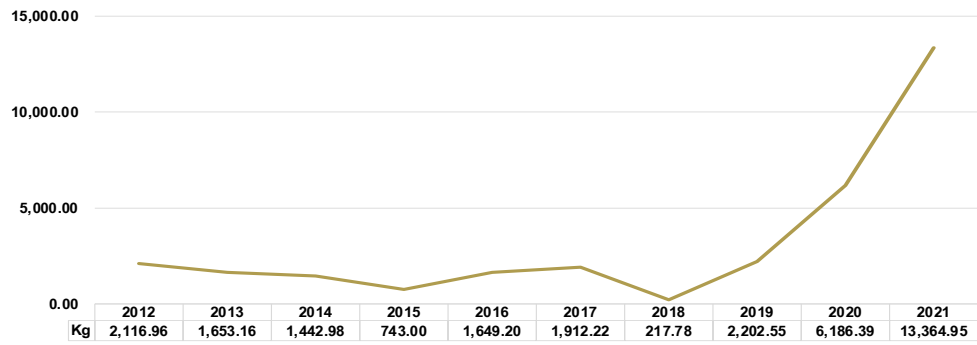
Most cocaine shipments (13,364.96 kg, representing 97.49%) were seized at Gioia Tauro port, followed by Vado Ligure (SV) with 138.29 kg and Leghorn with 118.53 kg.



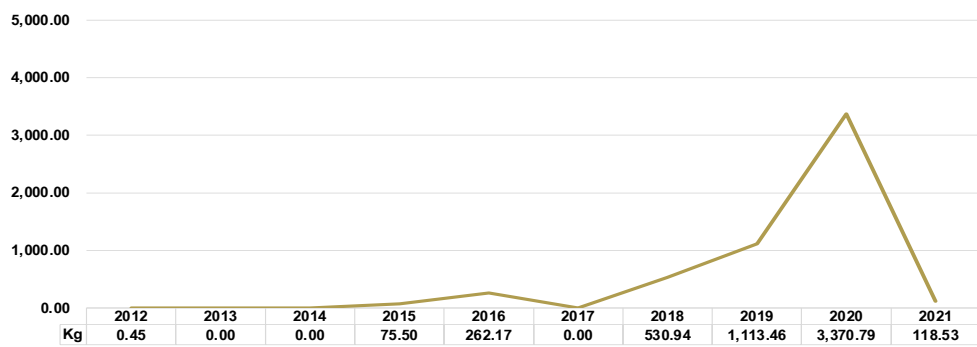
Seizures kg - 2021 - main ports



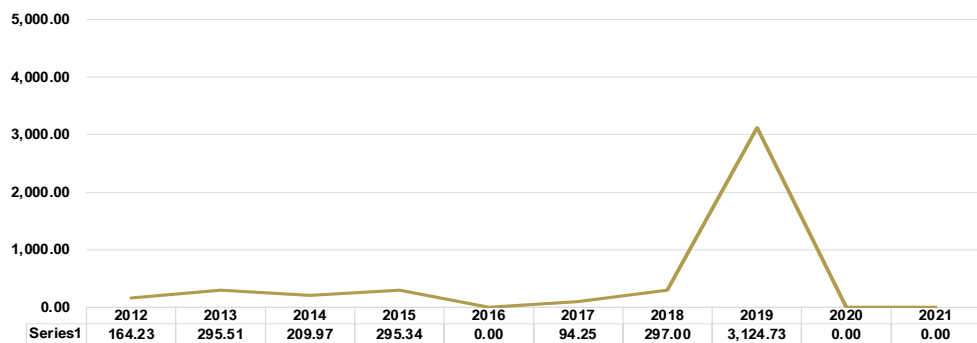
Cocaine seizures at Gioia Tauro port (RC) (kg) - ten-year trend



Cocaine seizures at Livorno port (kg) - ten-year trend



Cocaine seizures at Genoa port (kg) - ten-year trend



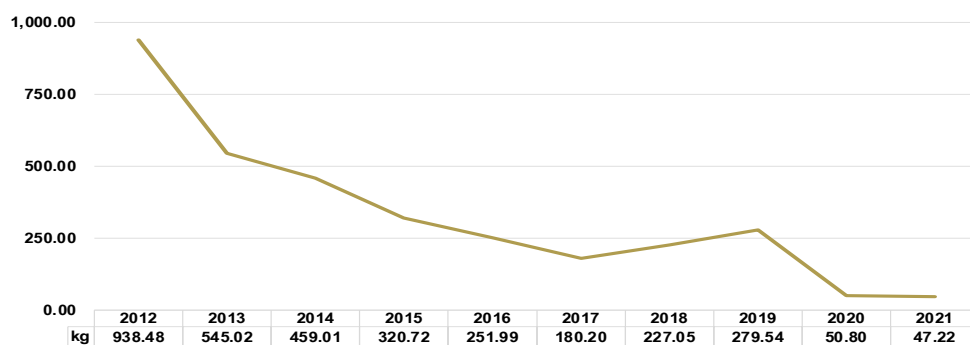
The graphs regarding the ten-year trend in the main ports of the western coast show that the exponential growth of the seizures carried out at Gioia Tauro port in the last two years corresponds to a decrease in cocaine seizures in the ports of Leghorn and Genoa.

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

The persons reported to the Judicial Authorities for operations conducted in maritime areas globally concerned 8 subjects, 6 of which were Italian nationals.

In 2021 the seizures at air borders were equal to 47.22 kg, a figure in line with the 50.80 kg seized in 2020. The graph below shows the seizure trend of cocaine transported by air carrier.

Cocaine seizures at air borders (kg) - ten-year trend



The Italian airport where the largest quantities of cocaine were seized was Milan Malpensa (VA), with 28.78 kg (60.94% of the total quantity seized at air borders), followed by Naples Capodichino, with 9.82 kg (20.79%) and Rome Fiumicino, with 5.16 kg (10.93%). These three airports have accounted for 91.86% of the total of cocaine seized at the Italian airports.

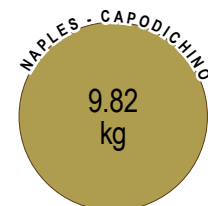
Among the main countries of origin of the largest cocaine quantities transported by air Spain and France are in the leading position. The quantities are the following:

- Spain, 9.09;
- France, 8.30 kg;
- Uruguay, 7.40 kg;
- Dominican Republic, 4.94 kg;
- Ethiopia, 3.77 kg

In the airport areas 36 subjects were reported; most of them were Italians (9), Nigerians (6), Albanians (6), Dominicans (3).

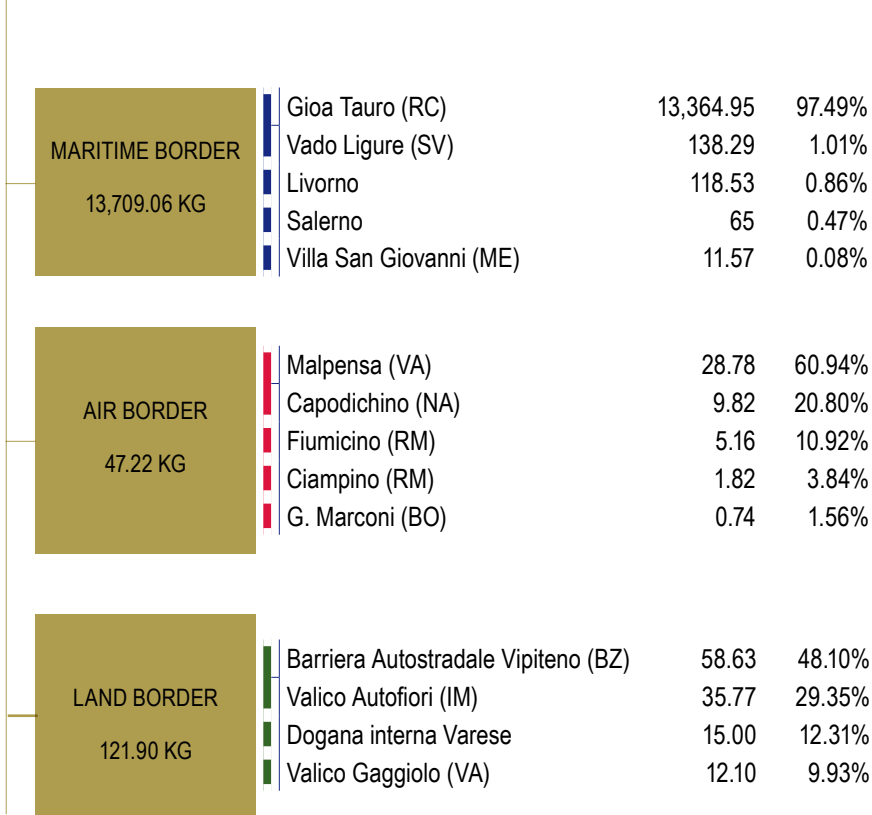
In 2021, 121.90 kg of cocaine were seized at **land borders**, with a decrease of 17.77%, in comparison with 148.23 kg seized in 2020.

Major seizures were made at the motorway border of Vipiteno (BZ) with 58.63 kg, followed by Autofiori (IM) border crossing with 35.77 kg, the internal customs post(VA), with 15.00 kg and the Gaggiolo (VA) border post, with 12.10 kg.










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



Persons reported to the J. A. at border 58 persons of whom 36 foreigners e 22 Italians

Albanian (9)	German (2)	Latvian (1)
Nigerian (6)	Spanish (2)	French (1)
Dominican (3)	Congolese (1)	Bissau-Guinean (1)
Dutch (2)	Slovak (1)	Sudanese (1)
Peruvian (2)	Slovenian (1)	
Romanian (2)	Colombian (1)	

COCAINE - SUMMARY TABLE

	Five-year trend					Var % 20-21
	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	
Operations	7,441	7,775	8,544	7,819	7,902	1.06
Seizures						
in doses	1,499	1,737	2,021	2,348	2,046	-12.86
by weight (kg)	4,119.23	3,634.30	8,277.34	13,595.63	20,075.39	47.66
Persons reported to the J. A.	11,807	13,164	13,987	13,093	13,378	2.18
Italians	7,234	8,313	8,541	8,478	8,979	5.91
Foreigners	4,573	4,851	5,446	4,615	4,399	-4.68
<i>of whom:</i>						
 Maroccans	1,280	1,450	1,472	1,342	1,213	-9.61
 Albanians	1,158	1,295	1,458	1,328	1,113	-16.19
 Tunisians	422	470	455	444	506	13.96
 Nigerians	266	257	371	276	269	-2.54
 Senegalese	277	209	347	236	183	-22.46
Males	10,881	12,023	12,843	11,915	12,162	2.07
Females	926	1,141	1,144	1,178	1,216	3.23
Of age	11,640	12,989	13,765	12,935	13,202	2.06
Minors	167	175	222	158	176	11.39
Illicit trafficking (Art.73)	10,549	11,189	11,975	11,501	11,374	-1.10
Conspiracy to traffic (Art.74)	1,255	1,973	2,011	1,591	2,003	25.90
Other offences	3	2	1	1	1	0,00
<i>Type of report:</i>						
Arrested	9,259	9,865	10,352	9,365	9,740	4.00
Reported but not arrested	2,450	3,175	3,493	3,552	3,504	-1.35
At large	98	124	142	176	134	-23.86



Guardia di Finanza - Seizure of 138 kg of cocaine - Vado Ligure (SV), April 2021



OPERATIONS

1,550

SEIZURES

567.52
kg

PERSONS

2,377

FIGHT AGAINST HEROIN

In 2021, the heroin seized in Italy increased by 10.61%, shifting from 513.07 to 567.52 kg. The operations and the number of persons reported to the Judicial Authorities with regard to this drug decreased in comparison to 2020, accounting for 1,550 (-14.41%) and 2,377 (-16.65) respectively and resulting in the arrest of 1,845 individuals (-14.31%).

The foreign nationals reported were 1,155 which corresponds to 48.59% of the total persons reported for that substance, 932 of which were arrested.

The foreign nationals who were mainly involved in heroin trafficking were Nigerians, Tunisians, Moroccans, Albanians and Pakistanis.

Among the persons reported for heroin-related offences, 199 (8.37%) were women and 2,178 (91.63%) men.

Among 18 (0.76%) minors reported for heroin-related offences, 10 (55.55%) were foreign nationals, in particular from Tunisia, Senegal, Nigeria, Gabon, Morocco and Albania.

As to the type of offence, 86.20% of subjects were reported for trafficking/pushing and 13.76% conspiracy to drug trafficking.

Out of the total number of persons reported to the Judicial Authorities for heroin trafficking, 33.07% are in the 40/over age group, 18.09% in the 25 - 29 age group and 17.58% in the 30 - 34 age group. The youngest (<18) represent 0.76% of the total number of the persons reported for this substance at national level.

The most significant seizures were made in Rome in July (27.66 kg), in Bologna in March (25.20 kg), in Florence in July (22.52 kg) and in Milan in May (21.26 kg).

Heroin seized during antidrug operations was mainly concealed on the person (411 cases), inside houses (215 cases), in cars (77 cases) and in body cavities (53 cases).

Persons reported to the J. A. for heroin

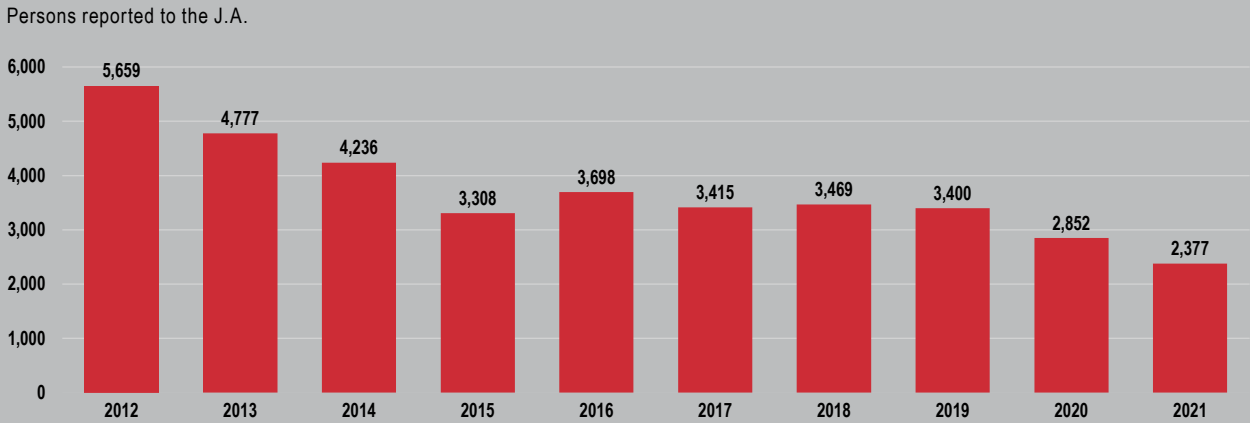
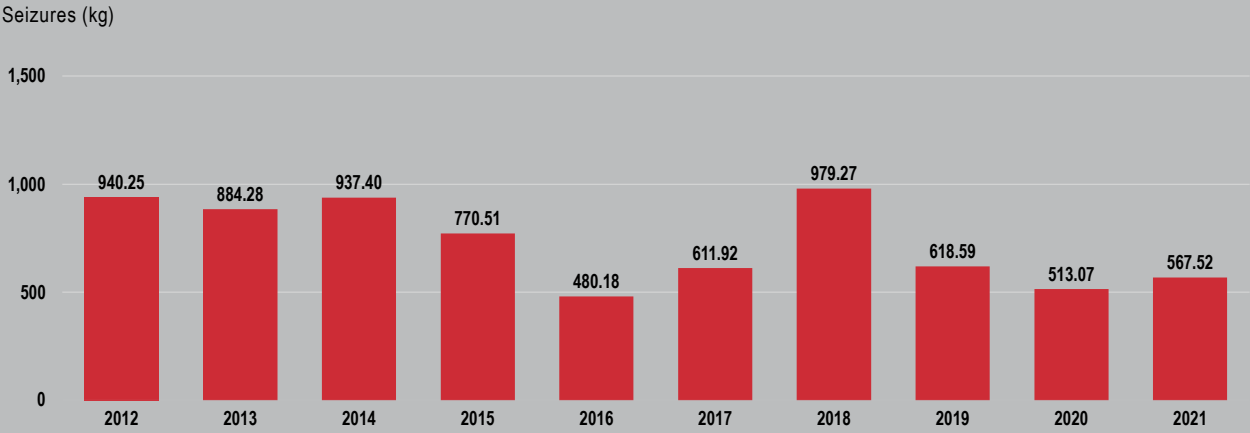
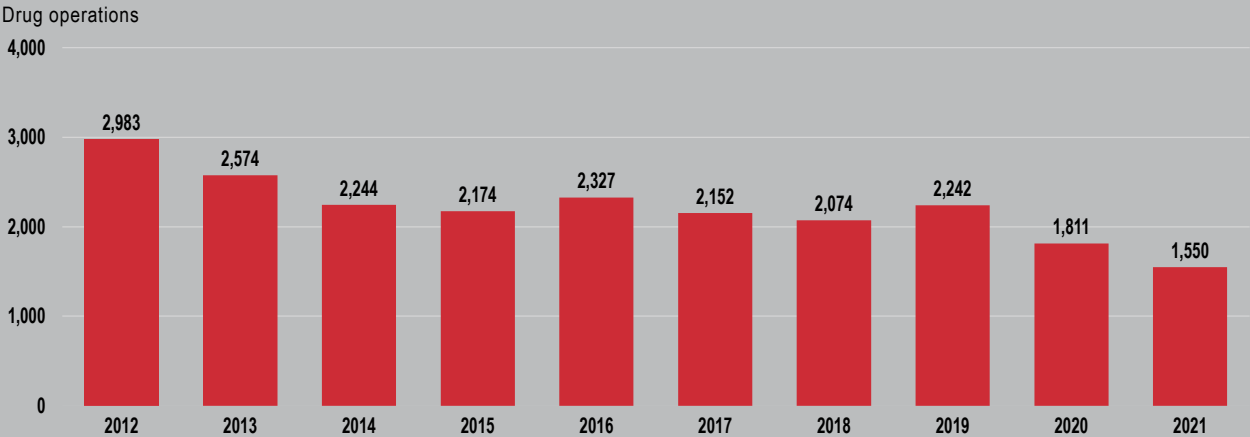
	2020	2021	var.%
Type of report			
Arrested	2,153	1,845	-14.31%
Reported but not arrested	667	517	-22.49%
At large	32	15	-53.13%
Type of offence - (Law No. 309/90)			
Illicit trafficking (Art. 73)	2,666	2,049	-23.14%
Conspiracy to traffic (Art.74)	186	327	75.81%
Other offences	0	1	--%
Gender	2020	2021	var.%
Males	2,521	2,178	-13.61%
Females	331	199	-39.88%
Age			
Of age	2,836	2,359	-16.82%
Minors	16	18	12.50%
Total	2,852	2,377	-16.65%

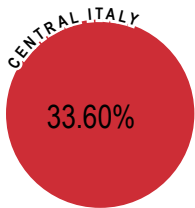
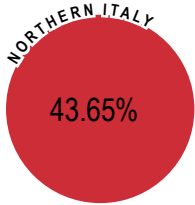
Nationality	2020	2021	var.%
Italian	1,489	1,222	-17.93%
Foreign	1,363	1,155	-15.26%
of which:			
Nigerian	434	320	-26.27%
Tunisian	239	229	-4.18%
Moroccan	170	168	-1.18%
Albanian	90	88	-2.22%
Pakistani	83	68	-18.07%

Age groups	2020	2021	var.%
< 15	0	1	--%
15 ÷ 19	83	72	-13.25%
20 ÷ 24	464	302	-34.91%
25 ÷ 29	511	430	-15.85%
30 ÷ 34	507	418	-17.55%
35 ÷ 39	397	368	-7.30%
≥ 40	890	786	-11.69%

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 2,213 operations and 3,719 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.





Heroin seizures – regional distribution

The regions where the largest quantities of heroin were seized are Lazio, Lombardy, Apulia, Emilia Romagna, Tuscany, Veneto and Campania, while the lowest quantities were registered in Valle d'Aosta and Molise, with less than 1 kg.

In comparison with 2020, significant percentage increases in the seized quantities were registered in Umbria, Friuli V.G. and Emilia Romagna.

The most considerable decreases were registered in Abruzzi, Val d'Aosta, Marche, Liguria, and Piedmont.

Considering the macro-areas, 43.65% of heroin was seized in Northern Italy, 33.60% in Central Italy and 22.75% in Southern Italy and islands.

Regional distribution of heroin seized having incidence on the regional total

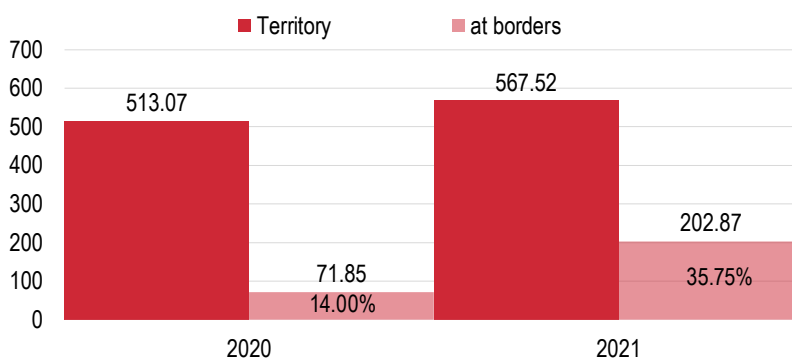
Regions	2020	2021	var.%
Abruzzi	40.73	4.02	-90.13%
Basilicata	1.93	1.20	-37.90%
Calabria	5.45	5.74	5.31%
Campania	9.16	23.62	157.84%
Emilia Romagna	16.95	73.04	330.97%
Friuli Venezia Giulia	1.68	8.04	379.09%
Lazio	44.52	141.73	218.34%
Liguria	10.89	3.62	-66.79%
Lombardy	205.42	130.26	-36.59%
Marche	20.58	6.20	-69.89%
Molise	0.53	0.99	87.45%
Piedmont	8.96	3.88	-56.64%
Apulia	42.30	87.44	106.69%
Sardinia	4.30	3.02	-29.77%
Sicily	4.58	3.11	-32.19%
Tuscany	26.97	27.86	3.31%
Trentino Alto Adige	4.16	1.84	-55.81%
Umbria	1.82	14.90	718.12%
Valle d'Aosta	0.99	0.21	-79.29%
Veneto	61.18	26.83	-56.15%
Regional total	513.07	567.52	10.61%
International waters	-	-	--%
National total	513.07	567.52	10.61%

Heroin flows towards Italy

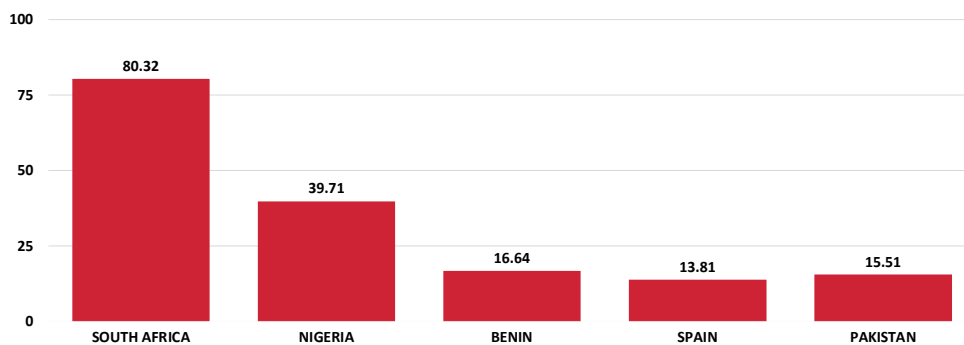
In the two-year period examined there was an increase in heroin quantities seized at borders, if compared with the overall seizures carried out in Italy, shifting from 14.00% in 2020, to 35.75% in 2021.

In 2021, 202.87 kg of heroin were seized at borders, with an increase of 182.33% in comparison to 2020 (71.85 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 South Africa, Nigeria, Benin, Spain and Pakistan.

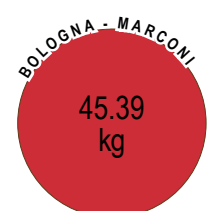
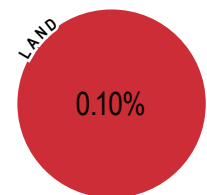
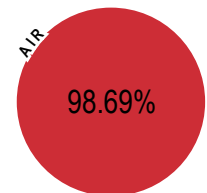
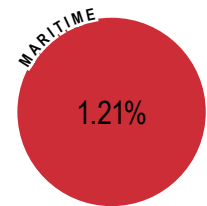
In 2021, the incidence rate of heroin seizures at air borders was 98.69% with respect to the total of border seizures (in 2020 it was 71.98%).

In the reporting year the airports mostly involved in heroin trafficking were Rome Fiumicino, with 103.07 kg, Bologna Marconi with 45.39 kg and Milan Malpensa with 41.18 kg; together they represent 94.72% 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 (170.54 kg) is still significant. The heroin transported along such route represented 85.18% of the total of heroin seized at air borders.

The persons reported to the Judicial Authorities at the Italian airports were mainly Nigerians (41),

² South Africa, 80.32 kg; Nigeria, 39.71 kg; Benin, 16.64 kg; Malawi, 10.75 kg; Ethiopia, 9.49 kg; Kenya, 6.51 kg; Ghana, 2.42 kg.



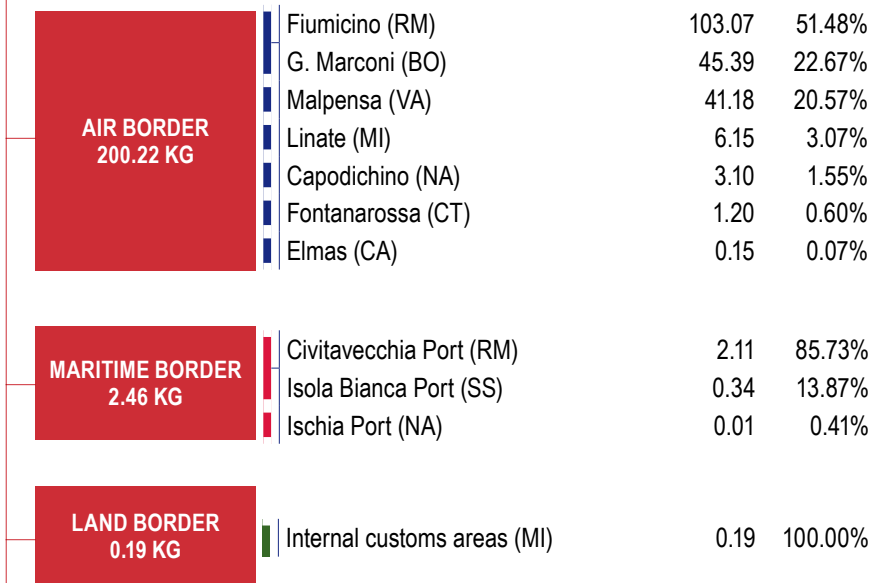


Pakistanis (6), Italians (6), Ghanaians (2) and Malians (2).

In the period 2020/2021, the quantity of heroin intercepted at **maritime** borders significantly decreased (-87.39%).

In 2021, the only port areas involved in heroin trafficking were Civitavecchia (RM), with 2.11 kg, Isola Bianca (SS), with 0.34 kg and Ischia (NA), with 0.01 kg. In 2021, the quantity of heroin intercepted at **land** borders, amounting to 0.19 kg, sharply decreased in comparison to 0.64 kg seized in 2020 (-70.04%).






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



Persons reported to the J.A. at borders **75** persons of whom **68** foreigners and **7** Italians

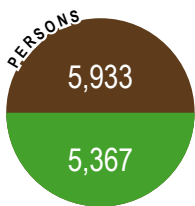
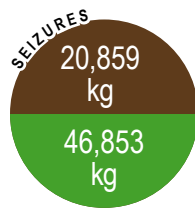


HEROIN - SUMMARY TABLE

	Five-year trend					Var % 20/21
	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	
Operations	2,152	2,074	2,242	1,811	1,550	-14.41
Seizures						
in doses	909	1,168	502	349	145	-58.45
by weight (kg)	611.92	979.27	618.59	513.07	567.52	10.61
Persons reported to the J. A.	3,415	3,469	3,400	2,852	2,377	-16.65
Italians	1,550	1,436	1,559	1,489	1,222	-17.93
Foreigners	1,865	2,033	1,841	1,363	1,155	-15.26
<i>of whom:</i>						
 Nigerians	403	632	548	434	320	-26.27
 Tunisians	436	455	266	239	229	-4.18
 Maroccans	247	233	231	170	168	-1.18
 Albanians	167	150	166	90	88	-2.22
 Pakistani	72	96	112	83	68	-18.07
Males	3,097	3,169	3,068	2,521	2,178	-13.61
Females	318	300	332	331	199	-39.88
Of age	3,381	3,444	3,372	2,836	2,359	-16.82
Minors	34	25	28	16	18	12.50
Illicit trafficking (Art. 73)	3,240	3,122	3,050	2,666	2,049	-23.14
Conspiracy to traffic (Art.74)	175	347	350	186	327	75.81
Other offences	0	0	0	0	1	--
<i>Type of report:</i>						
Arrested	2,479	2,452	2,457	2,153	1,845	-14.31
Reported but not arrested	900	973	881	667	517	-22.49
At large	36	44	62	32	15	-53.13



Carabinieri - Seizure of 692 g of heroin - Lecce, March 2021



THE FIGHT AGAINST CANNABIS

In 2021 the seizures of (+113.75%) and marijuana (+135.08%) remarkably increased. As to the hashish this upward trend concerned both operations (+28.54%) and the reports to the Judicial Authorities (+26.91%). As far as marijuana is concerned, both operations (-32.59%) and persons reported (-29.73%) decreased. The police operations carried out in the fight against cannabis derivatives amounted to 10,851 (5,310 for hashish, 4,577 for marijuana and 964 for cannabis plants), the reports were 12,371 out of which: 5,933 for hashish, with 3,484 persons arrested; 5,367 for marijuana, with 3,105 persons arrested; 1,071 for cannabis plants cultivation, with 602 persons arrested.

Out of the total reports for cannabis derivatives offences, 3,058 (24.72%) concerned foreign nationals, in particular Moroccans, Gambians, Albanians, Nigerians, and Tunisians; among them, 1,780 (58.21%) were arrested.

Out of 728 minors reported for cannabis related offences, 74 (10.16%) were foreign nationals, in particular Tunisians, Moroccans and Albanians.

As to the type of offence, 97.19% concerned the offence of trafficking/pushing, while 2.81% the conspiracy to drug trafficking.

25.09% of the persons reported to the Judicial Authorities for cannabis are in the age group 40 and over, 22.63% are aged between 20 and 24 and 16% are in the age group 25- 29. The youngest (<18) represent 5.88% of the total of the persons reported for cannabis offences at national level.

As to seizures, hashish seizures reached the total amount of 20,859.43 kg and marijuana 46,853.01 kg.

The largest hashish seizures were carried out in international waters off the Sicilian coast (6,000 kg in June), in Ventimiglia (IM) (688 kg in February) and in Milan (687.45kg in July); the largest marijuana seizures were made in Macomer (NU) (4,203 kg in November), in Borgo San Giacomo (BS) (2,704 kg in November) and in Monastir (CA) (1,662 kg in October).

Persons reported to the J.A. for cannabis offences			
	2020	2021	var.%
Type of report			
Arrested	8,130	7,191	-11.55%
Reported but not arrested	5,491	5,154	-6.14%
At large	43	26	-39,53%
Type of offence - (Law No. 309/90)			
Illicit trafficking (Art.73)	13,282	12,024	-9.47%
Conspiracy to traffic (Art.74)	382	347	-9.16%
Other offences	-	-	--%
Gender			
Males	12,806	11,515	-10.08%
Females	858	856	-0.23%
Age			
Of age	12,947	11,643	-10.07%
Minors	717	728	1.53%
Total	13,664	12,371	-9.46%

Nationality			
	2020	2021	var.%
Italian	10,078	9,313	-7.59%
Foreign	3,586	3,058	-14.72%
<i>of which:</i>			
Moroccan	530	627	18.30%
Gambian	643	360	-44.01%
Albanian	285	299	4.91%
Nigerian	396	239	-39.65%
Tunisian	207	217	4.83%

Age groups			
	2020	2021	var.%
< 15	37	30	-18.92%
15 ÷ 19	1,913	1,777	-7.11%
20 ÷ 24	3,340	2,800	-16.17%
25 ÷ 29	2,369	1,980	-16.42%
30 ÷ 34	1,695	1,540	-9.14%
35 ÷ 39	1,214	1,140	-6.10%
≥ 40	3,096	3,104	0.26%

Most of the cannabis seized was found on the person (2,398 cases), in houses (2,758 cases), in cars (548 cases) and inside postal parcels and letters (422 cases).

Analyzing the cases where the drug origin was ascertained by the operating authorities, it is possible to state that the hashish destined for the Italian market mainly came from Morocco and Spain, while marijuana mainly came from Spain.

Ten-year trend

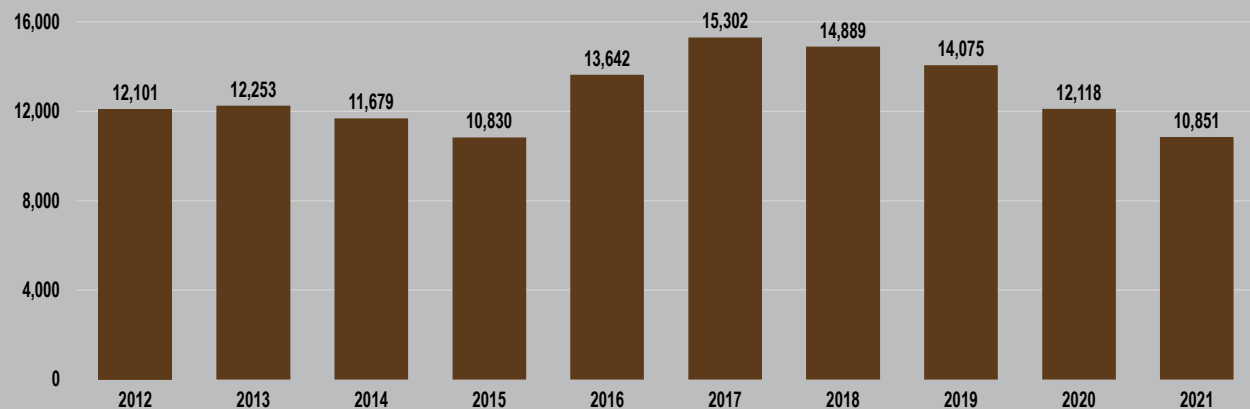
Cannabis, in its different forms (hashish e marijuana), is the most seized drug on the Italian illegal market.

Since 2012, the average number of operations concerning cannabis derivatives has always remained around 12,000, peaking in 2017, with 15,302 operations.

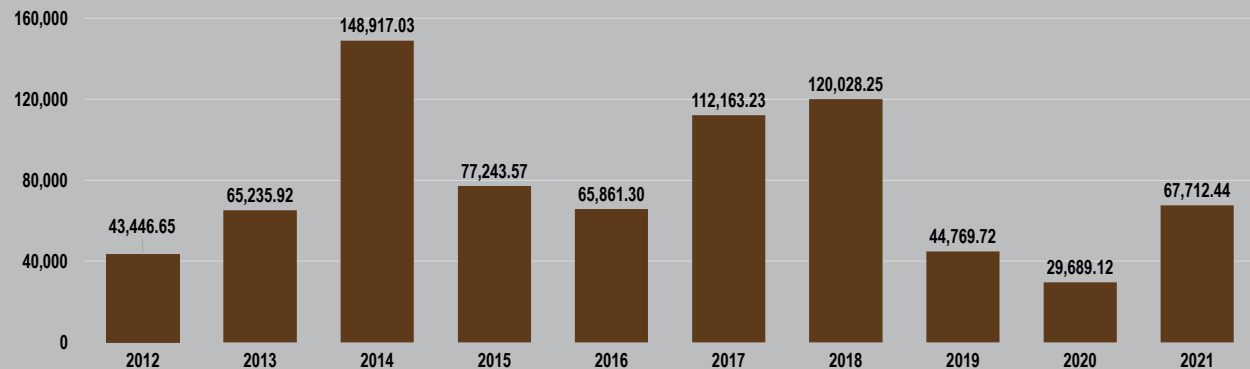
The highest peak in seizures was reached in 2014 (148,917.03 kg), the lowest rate in 2020 (29,689.12 kg).

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 (12,371).

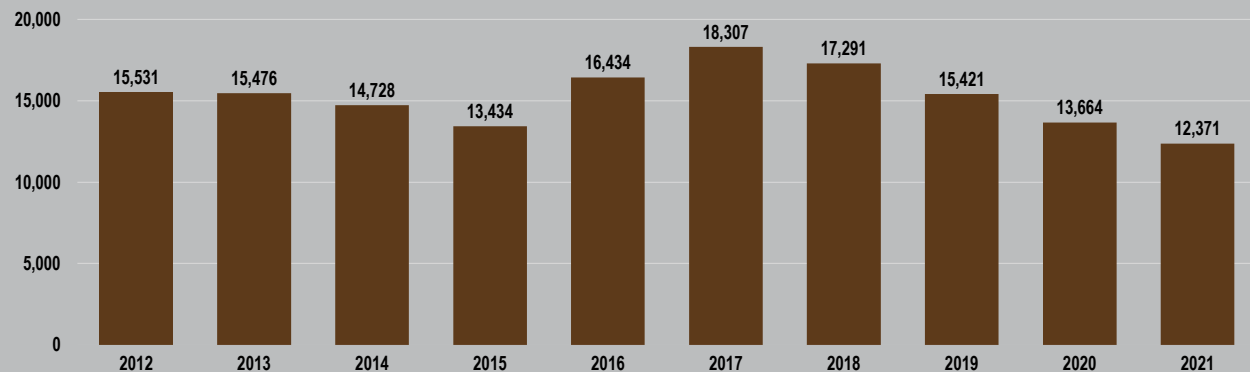
Drug operations

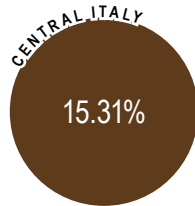
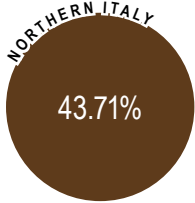


Seizures (kg)



Persons reported to the J.A.





Hashish seizures – regional distribution

The largest hashish seizures were carried out in Lombardy, Lazio, Piedmont, Apulia, Sicily, Tuscany and Campania, while the lowest amounts were seized in Valle d'Aosta, Basilicata and Molise.

In comparison to 2020, significant increases in percentage terms concerned the seizures made in Molise, Liguria, Piedmont, Trentino A.A., Friuli V.G. and Calabria.

The most notable decreases were registered in Campania, Sardinia, Basilicata and Umbria.

Analyzing the macro-areas, involving also international waters, hashish seizures were distributed as follows: 43.71% in Northern Italy, 28.76% in international waters, 15.31% in Central Italy and 12.22% in Southern Italy and islands.

Regional distribution of hashish seized having incidence on the regional total

Regions	2020	2021	var. %
Abruzzi	60.82	107.95	77.49 %
Basilicata	13.47	6.06	-54.99 %
Calabria	30.14	77.91	158.52 %
Campania	3,472.55	540.08	-84.45 %
Emilia Romagna	376.91	513.38	36.21 %
Friuli V.G.	9.15	26.29	187.28 %
Lazio	1,043.96	2,352.55	125.35 %
Liguria	157.62	1,567.49	894.50 %
Lombardy	2,456.88	4,681.05	90.53 %
Marche	34.63	66.58	92.24 %
Molise	0.33	8.56	2,478.61 %
Piedmont	217.33	2,087.30	860.44 %
Apulia	527.46	913.79	73.24 %
Sardinia	161.75	64.73	-59.98 %
Sicily	656.18	829.67	26.44 %
Tuscany	310.07	707.81	128.28 %
Trentino A.A.	12.64	55.80	341.46 %
Umbria	121.60	65.84	-45.86 %
Valle d'Aosta	0.32	0.61	91.82 %
Veneto	94.95	185.99	95.89 %
Regional total	9,758.74	14,859.43	52.27 %
International waters	-	6,000.00	-- %
National total	9,758.74	20,859.43	113.75 %

Marijuana seizures – regional distribution

The largest marijuana seizures were carried out in Sardinia, that alone accounts for 50.24%, followed by Lombardy, Lazio, Apulia, Sicily, Calabria, Veneto and Campania, while the lowest seizures occurred in Basilicata and Valle d'Aosta.

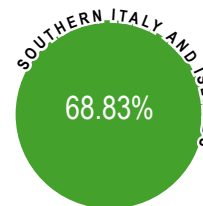
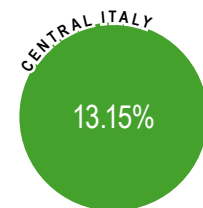
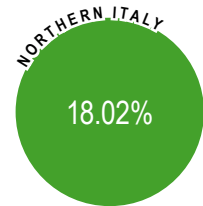
In comparison to 2020, in percentage terms, there were substantial increases in the quantities seized in Umbria, Basilicata, Molise, Sardinia and Sicily.

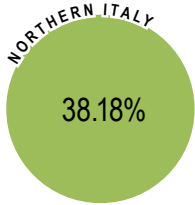
The most notable decreases were registered in Valle d'Aosta, Liguria, Veneto and Piedmont.

Analyzing the macro-areas marijuana seizures were distributed as follows: 68.83% in Southern Italy and islands, 18.02% in Northern Italy and 13.15% in Central Italy.

■ Regional distribution of marijuana seized having incidence on the regional total

Regions	2020	2021	var. %	
0.83	Abruzzi	172.72	387.66	124.45 %
0.10	Basilicata	3.92	47.53	1,114.10 %
4.10	Calabria	1,082.29	1,921.51	77.54 %
2.58	Campania	812.48	1,206.79	48.53 %
1.23	Emilia Romagna	1,139.92	577.82	-49.31 %
0.23	Friuli Venezia Giulia	78.38	109.76	40.04 %
7.65	Lazio	1,416.42	3,584.76	153.09 %
0.53	Liguria	1,126.19	249.62	-77.84 %
11.46	Lombardy	2,221.12	5,368.91	141.72 %
1.50	Marche	255.76	704.62	175.50 %
0.59	Molise	25.98	277.90	969.53 %
1.84	Piedmont	1,278.27	860.95	-32.65 %
5.88	Apulia	3,302.16	2,755.25	-16.56 %
50.24	Sardinia	3,934.32	23,539.04	498.30 %
4.51	Sicily	650.82	2,113.48	224.74 %
2.24	Tuscany	490.75	1,047.97	113.55 %
0.12	Trentino Alto Adige	56.57	54.83	-3.08 %
1.76	Umbria	25.52	824.42	3,130.36 %
0.00	Valle d'Aosta	21.27	0.05	-99.79 %
2.60	Veneto	1,835.51	1,220.15	-33.53 %
	Regional total	19,930.38	46,853.01	135.08 %
	International waters	-	-	-- %
	National total	19,930.38	46,853.01	135.08 %





Cannabis plants seizures – regional distribution

The largest cannabis plants seizures were carried out in Sardinia, Calabria, Lombardy, Sicily and Campania, while the smallest seizures occurred in Valle d'Aosta and Umbria.

In comparison to 2020, in percentage terms, there were substantial increases in the quantities seized in Lazio, Sardinia and Umbria.

The most notable decreases were registered in Apulia, Lombardy and Abruzzi.

Analyzing the macro-areas, cannabis plants seizures were distributed as follows: 58.99% in Southern Italy and islands, 38.18% in Northern Italy and 2.83% in Central Italy.

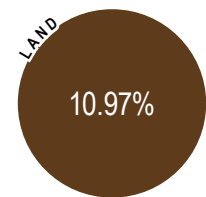
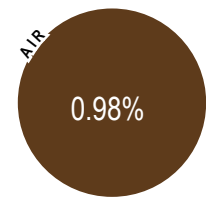
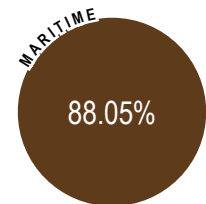
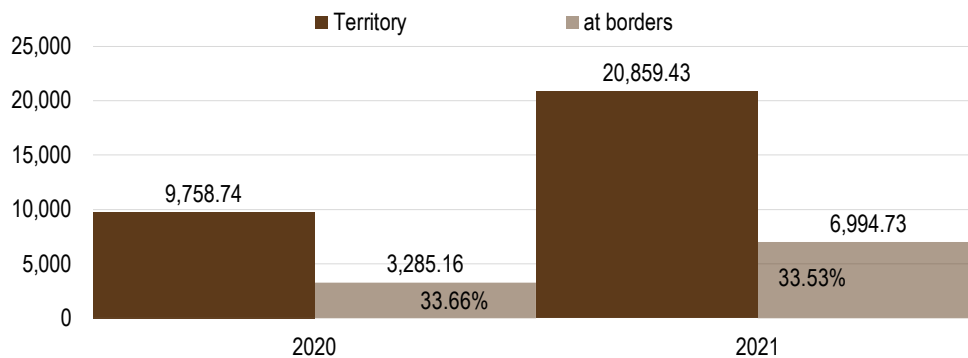
Regional distribution of cannabis plants seized having incidence on the regional total

Regions	2020	2021	var.%
Abruzzi	3,282	917	-72.06%
Basilicata	310	254	-18.06%
Calabria	48,292	50,926	5.45%
Campania	17,968	28,728	59.88%
Emilia Romagna	3,223	4,461	38.41%
Friuli Venezia Giulia	236	302	27.97%
Lazio	4,009	13,338	232.70%
Liguria	3,042	1,278	-57.99%
Lombardy	125,246	33,680	-73.11%
Marche	3,861	1,546	-59.96%
Molise	4,018	4,892	21.75%
Piedmont	5,824	6,587	13.10%
Apulia	103,204	16,754	-83.77%
Sardinia	35,973	90,155	150.62%
Sicily	31,416	33,175	5.60%
Tuscany	3,820	2,005	-47.51%
Trentino Alto Adige	141	277	96.45%
Umbria	105	262	149.52%
Valle d'Aosta	63	106	68.25%
Veneto	20,443	10,805	-47.15%
Regional total	414,476	300,448	-27.51%
International waters	-	-	--%
National total	414,476	300,448	-27.51%

Cannabis flows towards Italy

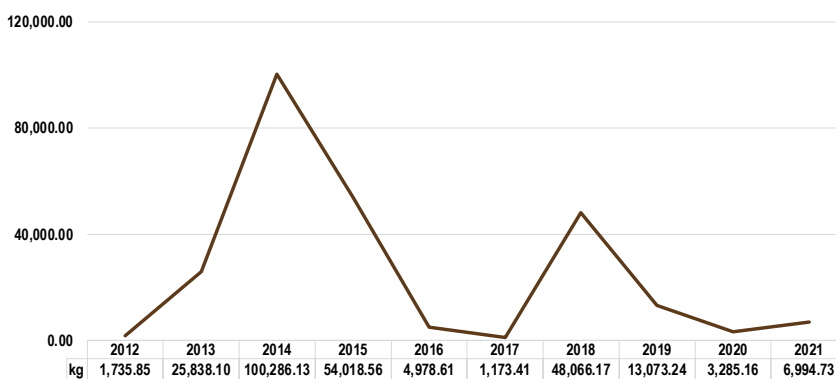
In 2021 hashish seizures in Italy amounted to 20,859.43 kg as a whole (+113.75%, in comparison to 2020). The incidence rate of seizures at borders in the total amount of seizures in Italy was 33.53%. The graphs below show the percentage incidence of the hashish seizures according to the type of border.

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



The following graph shows the trend of hashish seizures at the Italian borders in the period 2012/2021, with fluctuating, though, sharply decreasing figures. 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 in border areas, ten-year trend (kg)



In 2021, hashish seizures at sea (6,159 kg) were carried out:

- in international waters, with the seizure of 6,000 kg;
- at the port of Civitavecchia (RM), with the seizure of 92.56 kg;
- at the port of Palermo, with the seizure of 58.63 kg.

As to land borders (766.95 kg in total), the main crossing point used was Ventimiglia (IM), through the highway “Autofiori”, where 760.64 kg were seized, 99.18% of the total quantities seized. Ventimiglia is on the main land route to Italy for the hashish transiting through Spain and France.



The amounts of hashish introduced into Italy through air borders were modest, equal to 68.78 kg, although there was a slight increase (13.49%) in comparison to 2020. Airports are marginally used to transport cannabis derivatives, since traffickers need to move huge quantities to get remarkable profits.

In 2021, the most significant seizures occurred at Malpensa (VA) airport, (29.38 kg in total), followed by Ciampino (RM), with 15.01 kg, Falconara (AN), with 9.66 kg, Venice with 5.93 kg, Fiumicino with 4.37 kg and by Catania with 3.98 kg.

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

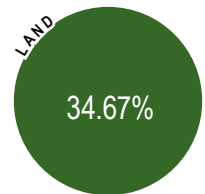
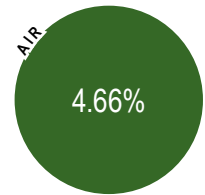
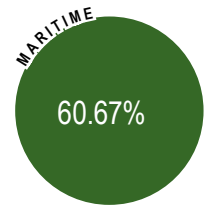
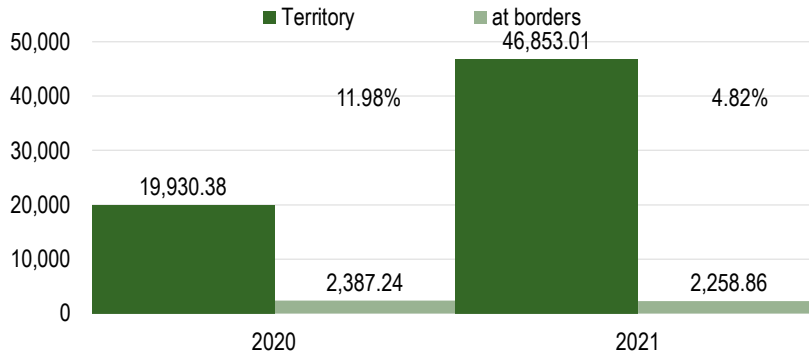
Border Type	Location	Quantity (KG)	Incidence (%)
MARITIME BORDER 6,159.00 KG	International waters	6,000.00	96.34%
	Civitavecchia (RM)	92.56	1.49%
	Palermo	58.63	0.94%
	Genova	7.46	0.12%
AIR BORDER 68.78 KG	Malpensa (VA)	29.38	42.72%
	Ciampino (RM)	15.01	21.82%
	Falconara (AN)	9.66	14.04%
	Marco Polo (VE)	5.93	8.62%
	Fiumicino (RM)	4.37	6.36%
LAND BORDER 766.95 KG	Valico Autofiori (IM)	760.64	99.18%
	Pontechiasso (CO)	5.10	0.66%
	Internal customs areas Milan	1.16	0.15%

Persons reported to the J.A. at borders for hashish 116 persons, of whom 69 foreigners and 47 italians

Spanish (30)	Chilean (1)	Togolese (1)
French (14)	Portuguese (1)	Greek (1)
Moroccan (7)	Brazilian (1)	Filipino (1)
Bulgarian (4)	Turkish (1)	German (1)
Swiss (2)	Algerian (1)	
Egyptian (2)	Bosnian (1)	

In 2021, **marijuana** seizures in Italy amounted to 46,853.01 kg (+135.08%, with respect to 19,930.38 kg in 2020).

Marijuana seizures, comparison between territory and borders (kg)



60.67% of the seizures at borders were carried out at sea borders. In 2021, the percentage rate in such seizures decreased (-24.75%) because of the drop in the quantities intercepted.

With reference to sea borders, in 2021, marijuana seizures (1,370.36 kg) were distributed as follows:

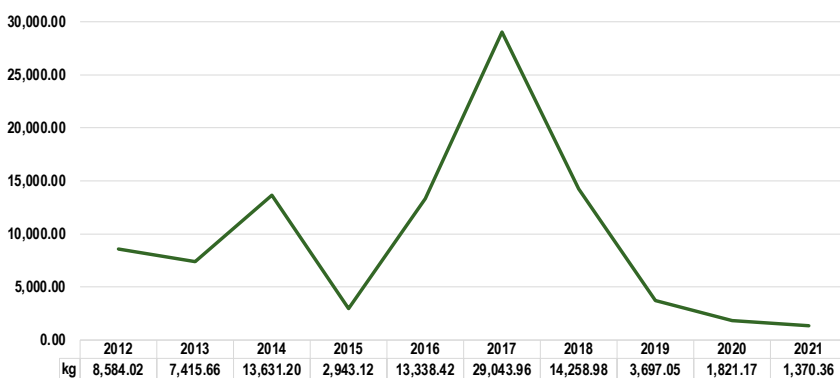
- in the waters close to ports (508.60 kg);
- at ports (861.76 kg).

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

- Civitavecchia (RM), 528.21 kg;
- Leghorn, 327.74 kg.

The graph below, concerning marijuana seizures at sea borders in the period 2012/2021, shows a downward trend since 2017 that reached its lowest point in 2021

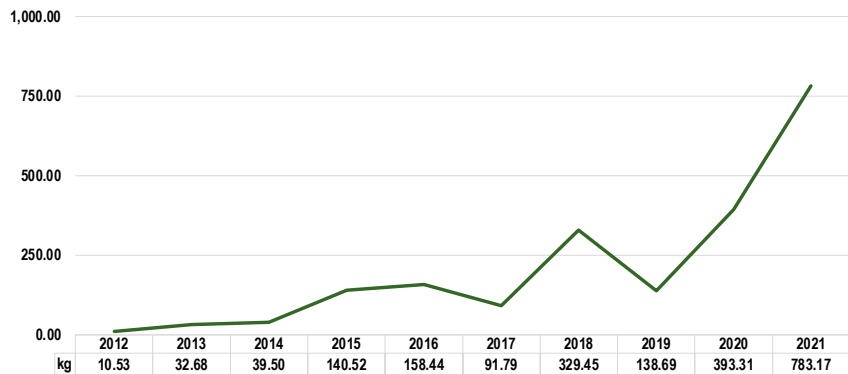
Marijuana seizures in maritime areas, ten-year trend (kg)



In 2021, with reference to marijuana, the seizures at land borders crossing points increased by 99.12% in comparison to the previous year. The following histogram highlights an upward trend in the ten-year period, with a peak in the reporting year.



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



The largest seizures at land border crossings were carried out at Ponte Chiasso (CO), with 717.21 kg, with an incidence rate of 91.58% in the total amount of the marijuana intercepted at land borders (783.17 kg).

Among the identified countries of origin of such substance, Spain was at the forefront (500.16 kg).

Air routes were scarcely used to transport marijuana. In the two-year period 2020/2021, a decrease of 39.03% (from 172.76 kg to 105.33kg) was registered. In 2021, the largest seizure was carried out at Malpensa (VA) airport, amounting to 63.26 kg (a little over 60% of the total amount seized at the Italian airports).

The marijuana seized at airports mostly came from Spain (40.78 kg) and the United States of America (16.79 kg).






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

MARITIME BORDER 1,370.36 KG	Civitavecchia (RM)	528.21	38.55%
	Coastal waters	508.60	37.11%
	Livorno	327.74	23.92%
AIR BORDER 105.33 KG	Malpensa (VA)	63.26	60.06%
	Linate (MI)	35.16	33.38%
	Ciampino (RM)	5.66	5.37%
	Fiumicino (RM)	1.05	1.00%
LAND BORDER 783.17 KG	Ponte Chiasso (CO)	717.21	91.58%
	Internal customs areas Genova	36.20	4.62%
	Brogeda (CO)	26.65	3.40%

Persons reported
to the J.A. at borders for marijuana **60** persons, of whom **35** foreigners and **25** italians

French (6)	Romanian (3)	Brazilian (1)	German (1)
Slovak (4)	Belgian (3)	US (1)	Greek (1)
Albanian (4)	Swiss (2)	Slovenian (1)	Dutch (1)
Spanish (3)	Bulgarian (2)	Peruvian (1)	Moroccan (1)

MARIJUANA - SUMMARY TABLE






	Five-year trend					Var %
	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	
Operations	5,998	6,566	6,302	4,131	5,310	28.54
Seizures (kg)	18,764.90	78,700.33	21,068.24	9,758.74	20,859.43	113.75
Persons reported to the J.A.	7,455	7,690	7,016	4,675	5,933	26.91
Italians	4,315	4,741	4,415	3,234	3,969	22.73
Foreigners	3,140	2,949	2,601	1,441	1,964	36.29
of whom:						
 Maroccans	1,189	891	694	395	559	41.52
 Gambians	349	288	321	173	211	21.96
 Tunisians	321	302	229	147	188	27.89
 Albanians	102	112	112	76	143	88.16
 Egyptians	187	230	154	115	110	-4.48
Males	7,060	7,190	6,630	4,407	5,568	26.34
Females	395	500	386	268	365	36.19
Of age	7,065	7,195	6,460	4,384	5,480	25.00
Minors	390	495	556	291	453	55.67
Illicit trafficking (Art.73)	7,234	7,421	6,776	4,464	5,800	29.93
Conspiracy to traffic (Art.74)	221	269	240	211	133	-36.97
Other offences	-	-	-	-	-	--
Type of report:						
Arrested	4,976	4,898	4,458	2,883	3,484	20.85
Reported but not arrested	2,446	2,763	2,523	1,773	2,432	37.17
At large	33	29	35	19	17	-10.53



Carabinieri - Seizure of 138 kg of hashish - Pantelleria (TP), December 2021








MARIJUANA - SUMMARY TABLE

	Five-year trend					Var %
	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	
Operations	8,062	7,370	6,947	6,790	4,577	-32.59
Seizures (kg)	93,398.34	41,327.92	23,701.48	19,930.38	46,853.01	135.08
Persons reported to the J.A.	9,471	8,478	7,522	7,638	5,367	-29.73
Italians	5,897	4,884	4,536	5,589	4,357	-22.04
Foreigners	3,574	3,594	2,986	2,049	1,010	-50.71
<i>of whom:</i>						
 Nigerians	846	1,035	832	331	152	-54.08
 Gambians	660	751	700	469	149	-68.23
 Albanians	432	295	238	190	128	-32.63
 Romanians	148	111	87	106	72	-32.07
 Maroccans	185	137	137	126	62	-50.79
Males	9,025	8,038	7,160	7,161	4,978	-30.48
Females	446	440	362	477	389	-18.45
Of age	8,764	7,951	7,111	7,228	5,099	-29.45
Minors	707	527	411	410	268	-34.63
Illicit trafficking (Art.73)	9,305	8,356	7,352	7,476	5,167	-30.89
Conspiracy to traffic (Art.74)	164	120	170	162	200	23.46
Other offences	2	2	-	-	-	--
<i>Type of report:</i>						
Arrested	6,366	5,534	4,920	4,558	3,105	-31.88
Reported but not arrested	3,086	2,923	2,580	3,058	2,256	-26.23
At large	19	21	22	22	6	-72.73



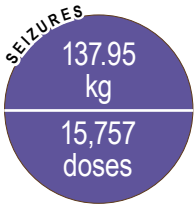
Polizia di Stato - Seizure of 2 kg of marijuana - Messina, December 2021

CANNABIS PLANTS - SUMMARY TABLE

	Five-year trend					Var %
	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	
Operations	1,242	953	826	1,197	964	-19.47
Seizures (no)	270,048	524,904	223,855	414,476	300,448	-27.51
Persons reported to the J.A.	1,381	1,123	883	1,351	1,071	-20.73
Italians	1,296	1,044	840	1,255	987	-21.35
Foreigners	85	79	43	96	84	-12.50
<i>of whom:</i>						
 Albanians	5	14	8	19	28	47.37
 Romanians	12	14	8	15	8	-46.67
 Maroccans	1	6	4	9	6	-33.33
 Tunisians	5			3	6	100.00
 Ecuadorians	2	2		1	3	200.00
Males	1,256	1,033	828	1,238	969	-21.73
Females	125	90	55	113	102	-9.73
Of age	1,361	1,105	873	1,335	1,064	-20.30
Minors	20	18	10	16	7	-56.25
Illicit trafficking (Art.73)	1,381	1,117	875	1,342	1,057	-21.24
Conspiracy to traffic (Art.74)		6	8	9	14	55.56
Other offences	-	-	-	-	-	--
<i>Type of report:</i>						
Arrested	903	700	585	689	602	-12.63
Reported but not arrested	477	422	295	660	466	-29.39
At large	1	1	3	2	3	50.00



Guardia di Finanza - Seizure of 100 cannabis plants, 850 kg of marijuana and 250 g of hashish Montegiordano (CS), August 2021



THE FIGHT AGAINST SYNTHETIC DRUGS

In 2021, in Italy, synthetic drug seizures in “dose form” decreased by 10.93%, while those in “powder form” decreased by 99.03%.

For synthetic drugs, seizures in millilitres should also be highlighted, that amounted to 95,112.80, out of which 89,472.00 ml of GBL and 5,600.00 ml of GHB.

Operations involving synthetic drugs amounted to 314 and the persons reported were 400, out of whom 295 were arrested. 15,757 doses and 137.95 kg were seized.

Among the persons reported for synthetic drugs offences, 164 (41%) were foreign nationals (135 of them were arrested), in particular Filipino, Chinese, Bengali, Nigerian and Albanian nationals.

The most significant quantities were seized in Varese (60 kg of DMT and 8.75 kg of methamphetamines) and in Rome (5,500 tablets and 2,280 tablets of methamphetamines).

As to the type of offence, 97.5% of reports were connected to the offence of trafficking/pushing and 2% conspiracy to drug trafficking.

Out of the 400 persons reported to the Judicial Authorities for synthetic drugs offences, 43.75% were aged 40 or over, 17.5% were aged between 30 and 34 years and 15% were between 35 and 39. The youngest (<18) represented 1% of the persons reported for synthetic drugs offences at national level.

The synthetic drugs seized during antidrug operations were mostly concealed inside postal parcels or letters (176), in houses (86), on the person (65).

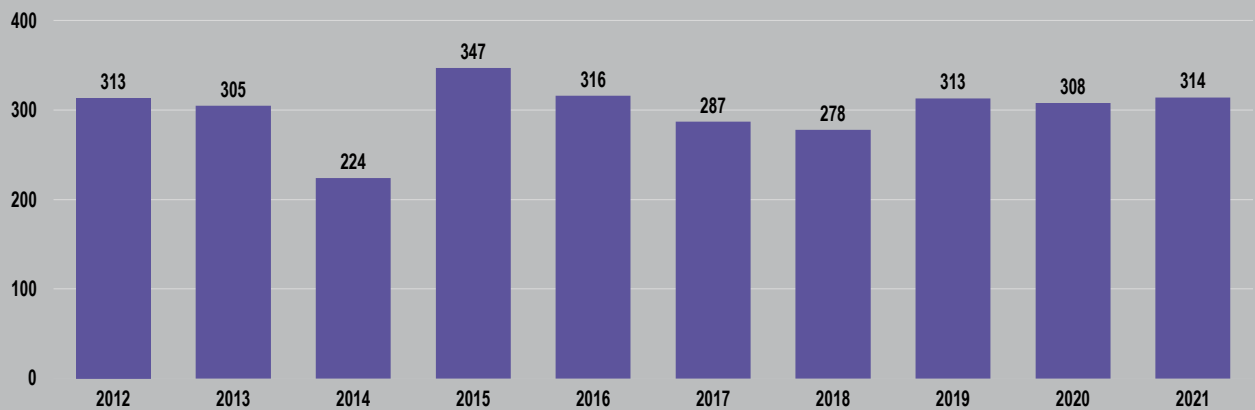
As to synthetic drugs in powder form, in 2021 the Dutch market dropped to second place, overtaken by Brazil as the most important supply area for the Italian market. Brazil and Holland were followed by Nigeria, Colombia, Peru and Costa Rica. Synthetic drugs seized in doses mainly came from Bangladesh, the Netherlands, Germany and Spain.

Persons reported to the J.A. for synthetic drugs				Nationality			
	2020	2021	var. %	2020	2021	var. %	
Type of report							
Arrested	243	295	21.40 %	Italian	149	236	58.39 %
Reported but not arrested	92	102	10.87 %	Foreign	186	164	-11.83 %
At large	-	3	-- %	of which:			
				Filipino	82	65	-20.73 %
Regional distribution of persons reported having incidence on the regional total				Chinese	43	29	-32.56 %
Illicit trafficking (Art.73)	335	390	16.42 %	Bengali	5	15	200.00 %
Conspiracy to traffic (Art.74)	-	10	-- %	Nigerian	13	14	7.69 %
Other offences	-	-	-- %	Albanian	4	4	0.00 %
Gender	2020	2021	var. %	Age groups	2020	2021	var. %
Males	303	362	19.47 %	< 15	-	-	-- %
Females	32	38	18.75 %	15 ÷ 19	18	14	-22.22 %
				20 ÷ 24	35	34	-2.86 %
Age				25 ÷ 29	55	47	-14.55 %
Of age	331	396	19.64 %	30 ÷ 34	53	70	32.08 %
Minors	4	4	0.00 %	35 ÷ 39	58	60	3.45 %
Total	335	400	19.40 %	≥ 40	116	175	50.86 %

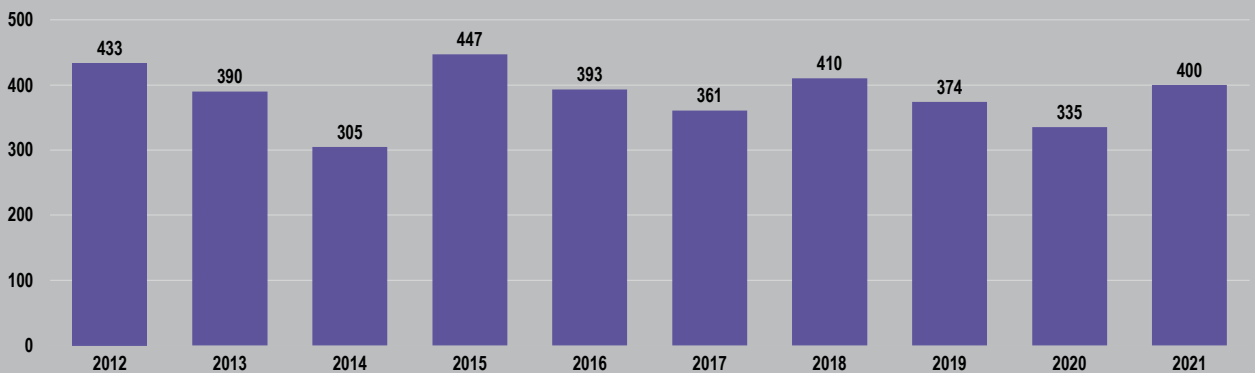
Ten-year trend

Since 2012, 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 14,293.88 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.

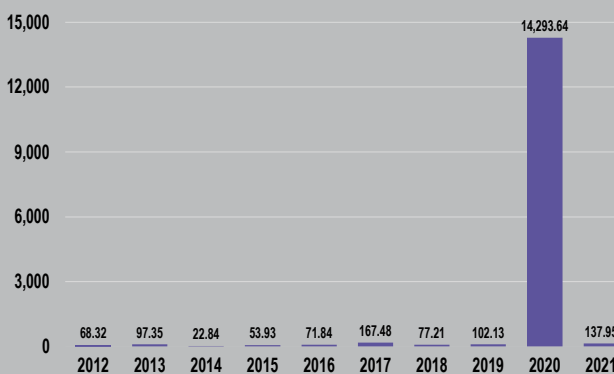
Drug operations



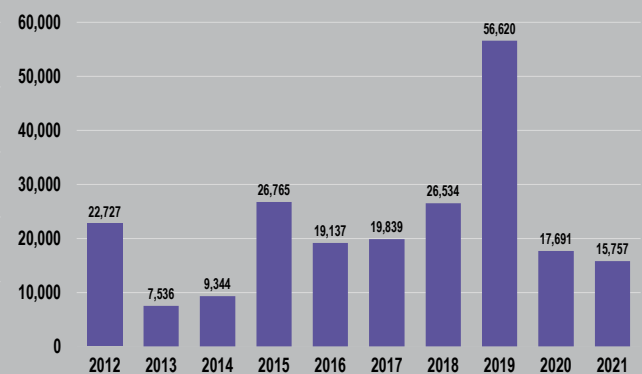
Persons reported to the J.A.

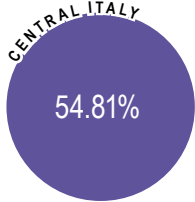
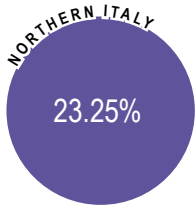


Seizures (kg)

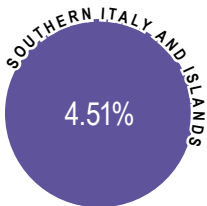
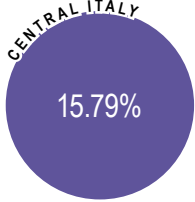
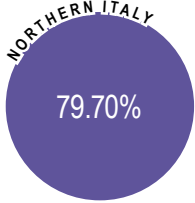


Seizures in doses/tablets





Doses/tablets



Kilograms

Synthetic drugs seizures – regional distribution

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

With respect to 2020, significant percentage increases in seizures of synthetic drugs in powder were registered in Basilicata, Abruzzi, Sicily and Trentino A.A., while in terms of seizures in doses in Campania, Sicily and Umbria.

The most considerable drops were registered: in terms of seizures in powder, in Campania, Veneto and Lazio; in terms of seizures in doses, in Marche, Tuscany and Friuli V.G..

Examining the macro-areas, in 2021, the seizures of synthetic drugs in doses were carried out in Central Italy (54.81%) in Northern Italy (23.25%) and in Southern Italy and islands (21.94%), while those involving substances in powder occurred in Northern Italy (79.70%), in Central Italy (15.79%) and in Southern Italy and islands (4.51%).

Regional distribution of synthetic drugs seized having incidence on the regional total (kg/doses)

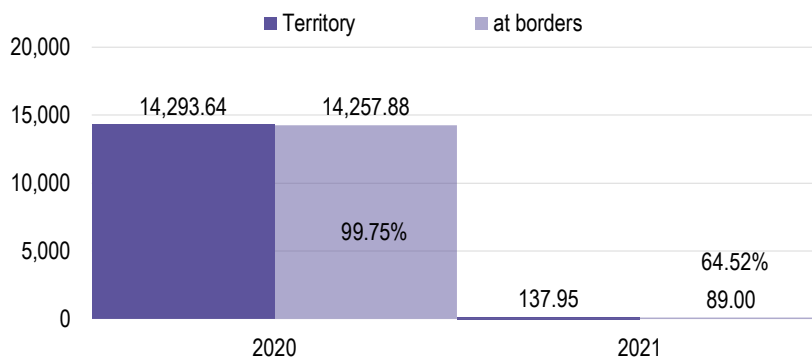
Regions	2020			2021		
	in kg	2021	var. %	in doses	2021	var. %
Abruzzi	0.01	0.13	2,050.00 %	16	5	-68.75 %
Basilicata	0.00	0.12	3,833.33 %	-	459	-- %
Calabria	-	-	-- %	-	-	-- %
Campania	14,196.68	0.02	-100.00 %	5	561	11,120.00 %
Emilia Romagna	5.19	4.99	-3.74 %	323	262	-18.89 %
Friuli Venezia Giulia	1.33	1.00	-24.92 %	1,038	106	-89.79 %
Lazio	41.04	7.52	-81.68 %	1,427	7,941	456.48 %
Liguria	0.07	0.19	170.00 %	160	95	-40.63 %
Lombardy	39.54	99.81	152.42 %	4,957	555	-88.80 %
Marche	0.36	2.05	478.31 %	514	12	-97.67 %
Molise	-	-	-- %	-	-	-- %
Piedmont	0.50	2.65	429.20 %	796	2,178	173.62 %
Apulia	0.13	0.10	-19.53 %	98	328	234.69 %
Sardinia	3.19	5.03	57.46 %	157	29	-81.53 %
Sicily	0.11	0.83	657.80 %	25	2,075	8,200.00 %
Tuscany	2.52	12.13	381.51 %	5,618	544	-90.32 %
Trentino Alto Adige	0.14	0.86	512.06 %	244	42	-82.79 %
Umbria	0.03	0.07	129.03 %	2	140	6,900.00 %
Valle d'Aosta	-	-	-- %	-	-	-- %
Veneto	2.81	0.45	-84.02 %	2,311	425	-81.61 %
Regional total	14,293.64	137.95	-99.03 %	17,691	15,757	-10.93 %
International waters	-	-	-- %	-	-	-- %
National total	14,293.64	137.95	-99.03 %	15,757	-10.93 %	

Synthetic drugs flows towards Italy

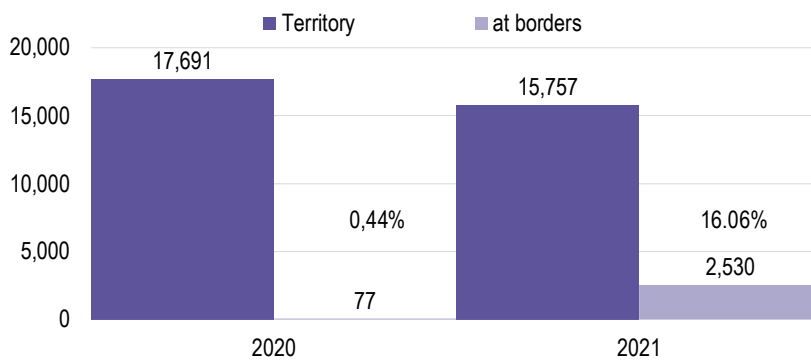
In 2021, 15,757 doses (-11% as compared to 2020) and 137.95 kg of synthetic drugs (-99.03%) were intercepted in Italy.

At border areas the seizures registered a decrease of 99.37% (89 kg as compared to 14,257.88 kg seized in the previous year). The seizures in doses increased by 3,185.71% (2,530 doses, as compared to 77 doses seized in 2020).

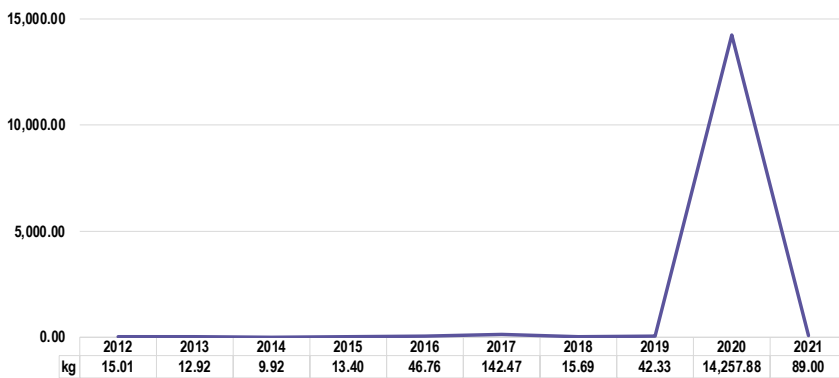
Synthetic drugs seizures, comparison between territory and borders (kg)



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



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





As to the **air borders**, the airports mainly involved in synthetic drugs seizures were Malpensa (VA) with 78.49 kg, Orio al Serio (BG) with 2.11 kg and Linate (MI) with 1.73 kg. Together, such seizures represent 99.87% of the total amount seized.






The major countries of origin of the substances seized in the above mentioned airports were:

- Brazil, 60 kg;
- Nigeria, 8.75 kg;
- Colombia and Peru, 2.15 kg;
- Costa Rica, 2.11 kg;
- The Netherlands, 1.62 kg.

As regards seizures at **land borders**, 97.11% (6.37 kg) were carried out at the Milan Internal Customs post.

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

SYNTHETIC DRUGS SUMMARY TABLE

	Five-year trend					Var %
	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	
Operations	287	278	313	308	314	1.95
Seizures						
Kilograms	167.48	77.21	102.13	14,293.64	137.95	-99.03
Doses/tablets	19,839	26,534	56,620	17,691	15,757	-10.93
Milliliters	17,194.00	316.25	13,421.00	58,830.00	95,112.80	61.67
Persons reported to the J.A. for synthetic drugs	361	410	374	335	400	19.40
Italians	166	146	163	149	236	58.39
Foreigners	195	264	211	186	164	-11.83
of whom:						
 Filipinos	64	106	101	82	65	-20.73
 Chinese	59	22	51	43	29	-32.56
 Bengali	19	17	5	5	15	200.00
 Nigerians	11	30	9	13	14	7.69
 Albanians	2	2	2	4	4	--
Males	324	364	322	303	362	19.47
Females	37	46	52	32	38	18.75
Of age	342	406	359	331	396	19.64
Minors	19	4	15	4	4	0.00
Illicit trafficking (Art.73)	354	350	371	335	390	16.42
Conspiracy to traffic (Art.74)	7	60	3	-	10	--
Other offences	-	-	-	-	-	--
Type of report:						
Arrested	268	283	282	243	295	21.40
Reported but not arrested	93	125	88	92	102	10.87
At large	-	2	4	-	3	--

PERSONS REPORTED TO THE JUDICIAL AUTHORITY

In 2021, the persons reported to the Judicial Authorities in Italy decreased by 4.70%, shifting from 31,567 in 2020 to 30,083 in 2021.

9,232 (30.69% of the total) foreign national were reported, in particular from Morocco, Albania, Tunisia, Nigeria and The Gambia.

2,459 women (8.17%) were reported to the Judicial Authorities, while the reported minors were 967 (3.21%).

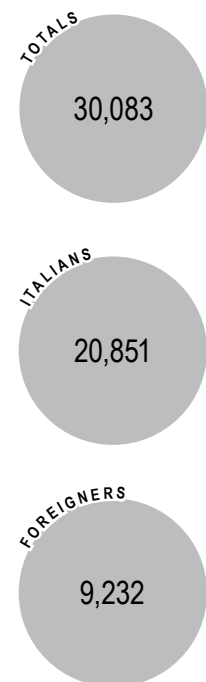
Cocaine offences recorded the highest number of persons reported, 13,378 (+2.18%), followed by hashish 5,933 (+26.91), marijuana 5,367 (-29.73%) and heroin 2,377 (-16.65%).






Out of the minors reported to the Judicial Authorities for drug offences, 170 (17.58%) were foreigners, in particular from Tunisia, Morocco, Senegal, Albania and Gabon.

Out of the 9,232 men reported for to the Judicial Authorities, 8,820 (95.54%) were foreigners, mainly from Morocco, Albania, Tunisia, Nigeria and The Gambia.

Out of the total of 30,083 persons reported to the Judicial Authorities for drug offences, 3,097 (10.29%) were reported for conspiracy to drug trafficking (Art. 74 of the Consolidated Act 309/90).

30.90% of the persons reported to the Judicial Authority for drug offences were aged 40 or over, 17.10% were between 20 and 24 and 16.34% between 25 and 29 years. The youngest (<18) represented 3.21% of the overall subjects reported at national level.

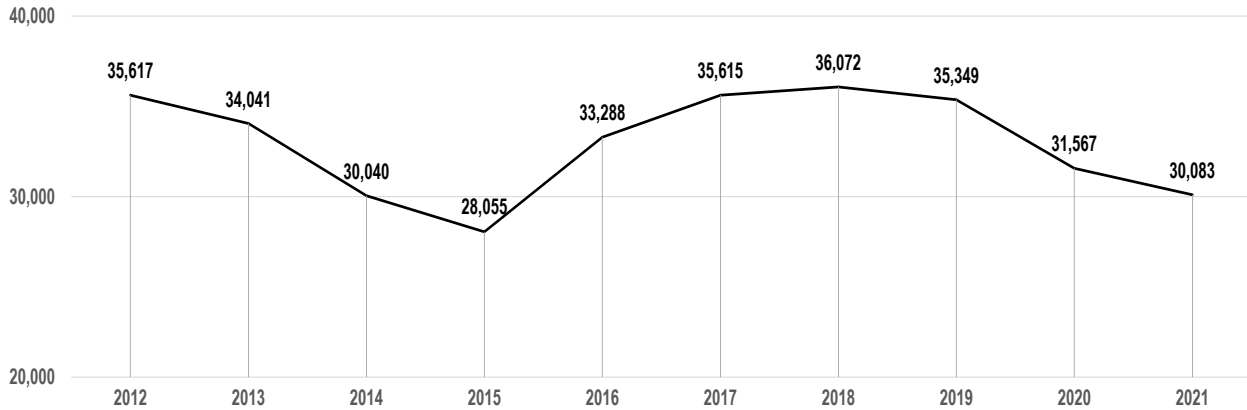


Persons reported to the Judicial Authority				Nationality			
	2020	2021	var.%		2020	2021	var.%
Type of report				Nationality			
Arrested	20,746	20,020	-3.50%	Italian	21,292	20,851	-2.07%
Reported but not arrested	10,542	9,870	-6.37%	Foreign	10,275	9,232	-10.15%
At large	279	193	-30.82%	of which:			
Type of offence - (Law No. 309/90)				 Maroccan	2,186	2,124	-2.84%
Illicit trafficking (Art.73)	29,097	26,980	-7.28%	 Albanian	1,801	1,581	-12.22%
Conspiracy to traffic (Art.74)	2,465	3,097	25.64%	 Tunisian	937	980	4.59%
Other offences	5	6	20.00%	 Nigerian	1,183	875	-26.04%
				 Gambian	828	537	-35.14%
Gender				Age groups			
	2020	2021	var.%	< 15	44	37	-15.91%
Males	29,020	27,624	-4.81%	15 ÷ 19	2,649	2,540	-4.11%
Females	2,547	2,459	-3.46%	20 ÷ 24	5,978	5,143	-13.97%
Age				25 ÷ 29	5,497	4,917	-10.55%
Of age	30,643	29,116	-4.98%	30 ÷ 34	4,725	4,552	-3.66%
Minors	924	967	4.65%	35 ÷ 39	3,790	3,599	-5.04%
Total	31,567	30,083	-4.70%	≥ 40	8,884	9,295	4.63%



Ten-year trend

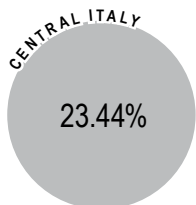
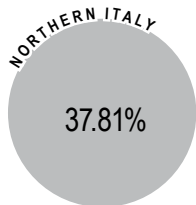
From 2012 to 2015 a downward trend had been reported, reaching the lowest value with 28,055 people reported to the Judicial Authorities. From 2016 to 2018 the growing trend had stopped, reaching 30,083 people in the reporting year.



Persons reported to the Judicial Authorities – Regional distribution

Lazio, with a total of 4,614 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, Piedmont, Veneto and Tuscany.

Regional distribution of persons reported having incidence on the regional total



Regions	2020	2021	var. %
Abruzzi	609	658	8.05%
Basilicata	312	312	0.00%
Calabria	977	1,322	35.31%
Campania	2,843	2,991	5.21%
Emilia Romagna	2,101	1,970	-6.24%
Friuli Venezia Giulia	573	523	-8.73%
Lazio	4,351	4,614	6.04%
Liguria	1,160	910	-21.55%
Lombardy	4,667	4,098	-12.19%
Marche	750	692	-7.73%
Molise	238	221	-7.14%
Piedmont	1,961	1,733	-11.63%
Apulia	2,378	2,090	-12.11%
Sardinia	1,292	1,079	-16.49%
Sicily	2,931	2,985	1.84%
Tuscany	1,730	1,359	-21.45%
Trentino Alto Adige	466	506	8.58%
Umbria	427	385	-9.84%
Valle d'Aosta	56	47	-16.07%
Veneto	1,745	1,585	-9.17%
Regional total	31,567	30,080	-4.71%
International waters	-	3	--%
National total	31,567	30,083	-4.70%

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

In comparison to 2020, the reports, in terms of percentage, considerably increased in Calabria, Trentino A.A., Abruzzi, Lazio and Campania.

The most significant drops were noticed in Liguria, Tuscany, Sardinia and Valle d'Aosta.

Examining the macro-areas, 38.75% of the subjects were reported to the Judicial Authorities in Southern Italy and islands, 37.81% in Northern Italy and 23.44% in Central Italy.

Foreign nationals reported to the Judicial Authorities

In 2021, 9,232 foreign nationals were reported in Italy for drug-related offences; 6,223 of them were arrested. The final figure represents 30.69% of the total number of reported persons.

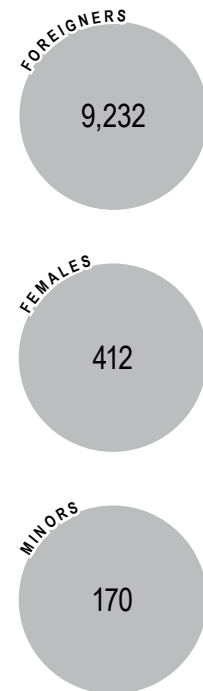
The incidence of women and minors was respectively 4.46% and 1.84%.

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

In particular, Moroccan, Albanian, Tunisian, Nigerian, Gambian, Romanian and Senegalese nationals were those mostly involved in illicit drug trafficking organizations.

Out of a total of 9,232 foreigners reported to the Judicial Authority, 428 of them (4.64%) were reported for conspiracy to drug trafficking (Art. 74 of the Consolidated Act 309/90).

21.10% of the foreigners reported for drug offences were aged 20 to 24, 21.05% were between 25 and 29 and 19.00% were in the age group 40 and over. The youngest (<18) represented 1.84% of the total number; among them, Tunisian, Moroccan, Senegalese, Albanian and Gabonese are the top five nationalities.

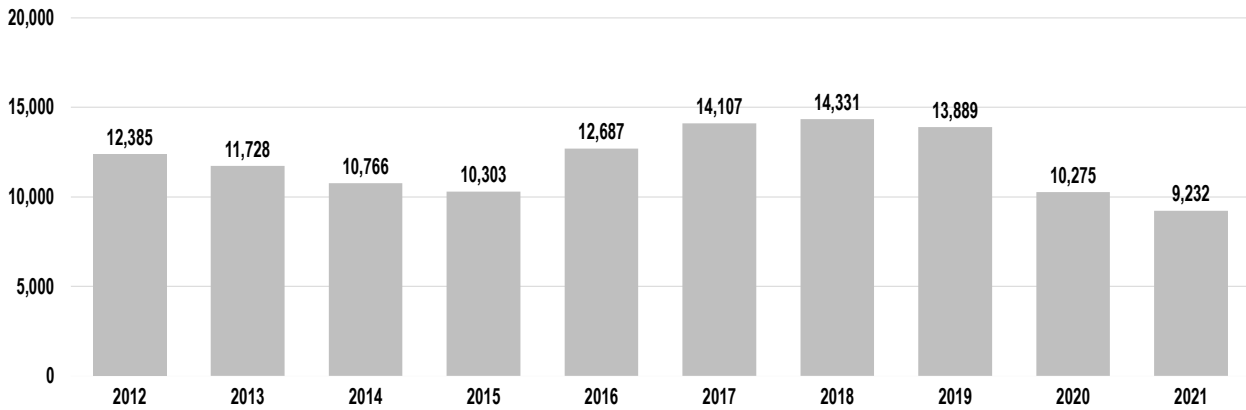


Foreigners reported to the J.A.				Nationality			
	2020	2021	var.%		2020	2021	var.%
Type of report				Nationality			
Arrested	6,998	6,223	-11.07%	Maroccan	2,186	2,124	-2.84%
Reported but not arrested	3,092	2,880	-6.86%	Albanian	1,801	1,581	-12.22%
At large	185	129	-30.27%	Tunisian	937	980	4.59%
Type of offence - (Law No. 309/90)				Nigerian	1,183	875	-26.04%
Illicit trafficking (Art.73)	9,893	8,804	-11.01%	Gambian	828	537	-35.14%
Conspiracy to traffic (Art.74)	381	428	12.34%				
Other offences	1	1	0.00%	Age groups			
Gender				< 15	9	5	-44.44%
Males	9,867	8,820	-10.61%	15 ÷ 19	655	556	-15.11%
Females	408	412	0.98%	20 ÷ 24	2,291	1,948	-14.97%
Age				25 ÷ 29	2,366	1,943	-17.88%
Of age	10,084	9,062	-10.13%	30 ÷ 34	1,978	1,746	-11.73%
Minors	191	170	-10.99%	35 ÷ 39	1,345	1,280	-4.83%
Total	10,275	9,232	-10.15%	≥ 40	1,631	1,754	7.54%



Ten -year trend

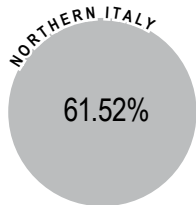
In the last ten years the reports to the Judicial Authorities of foreign nationals peaked in 2018 (14,331) and reached the lowest point in the reporting year (9,232).



Foreign nationals reported to the Judicial Authorities – regional distribution

In absolute terms, Lombardy, Lazio, Emilia Romagna, Veneto, Tuscany and Piedmont are the regions with the highest number of foreign nationals involved in trafficking/pushing.

Regional distribution of foreigners reported having incidence on the regional total



Regions	2020	2021	var. %
Abruzzi	126	195	54.76 %
Basilicata	52	36	-30.77 %
Calabria	81	60	-25.93 %
Campania	245	212	-13.47 %
Emilia Romagna	1,069	1,060	-0.84 %
Friuli Venezia Giulia	185	192	3.78 %
Lazio	1,210	1,303	7.69 %
Liguria	579	511	-11.74 %
Lombardy	2,352	2,022	-14.03 %
Marche	295	305	3.39 %
Molise	25	38	52.00 %
Piedmont	970	715	-26.29 %
Apulia	162	104	-35.80 %
Sardinia	156	95	-39.10 %
Sicily	294	258	-12.24 %
Tuscany	1,034	718	-30.56 %
Trentino Alto Adige	270	312	15.56 %
Umbria	258	227	-12.02 %
Valle d'Aosta	11	17	54.55 %
Veneto	901	849	-5.77 %
Regional total	10,275	9,229	-10.18 %
International waters	-	3	-- %
National total	10,275	9,232	-10.15 %

The regions that, instead, registered a lower number of foreigners reported were Valle d'Aosta, Basilicata and Molise.

Analyzing the macro-areas, the foreign nationals reported to the Judicial Authority in 2021, were subdivided as follows: 61.52% in Northern Italy, 27.66% in Central Italy and 10.82% in Southern Italy and islands.

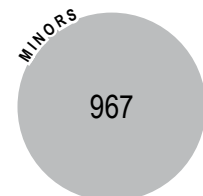
Minors reported to the Judicial Authorities

In 2021, 967 minors were reported to the Judicial Authorities. Out of them, 313 (32.37% of the total number) were arrested, with a decrease of 3.40% if compared to previous year.

As highlighted in the following table, reports decreased for 14 and 17 years-old subjects, by 15.91% and 2.60% respectively. Reports show increases among 15 and 16 years-old subjects, of 11.63% and 16.26% respectively.

Among the minors reported to the Judicial Authorities, 170 (17.58%) were foreigners, in particular from Tunisia, Morocco, Senegal, Albania and Gabon.

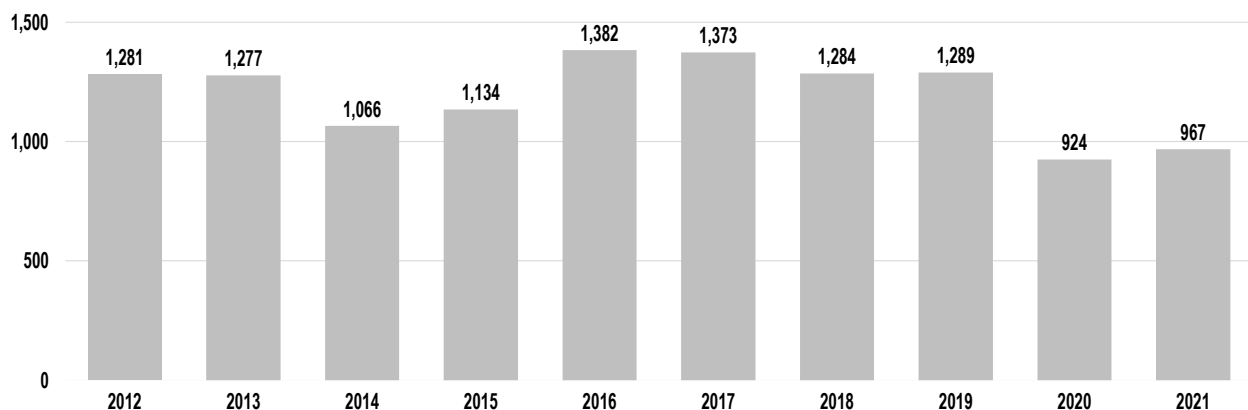
As to the type of offence, 99.99% of the reports involved trafficking/pushing.



Minors reported to the J.A.				Nationality			
	2020	2021	var.%		2020	2021	var.%
Type of report				Italian	733	797	8.73%
Arrested	324	313	-3.40%	Foreign	191	170	-10.99%
Reported but not arrested	598	654	9.36%	of which:			
At large	2	-	-100.00%	Tunisian	36	42	16.67%
Type of offence - (Law No. 309/90)				Maroccan	27	29	7.41%
Illicit trafficking (Art.73)	924	966	4.55%	Senegalese	23	20	-13.04%
Conspiracy to traffic (Art.74)	-	1	--%	Albanian	7	15	114.29%
Other offences	-	-	--%	Gabonese	9	11	22.22%
Gender							
	2020	2021	var.%	Age	2020	2021	var.%
Males	887	925	4.28%	14	44	37	-15.91%
Females	37	42	13.51%	15	129	144	11.63%
Total	924	967	4.65%	16	289	336	16.26%
				17	462	450	-2.60%

Ten-year trend

In the last ten years the reports involving minors peaked in 2016, with 1,382, and reached the lowest point (924) in 2020.





Minors reported to the Judicial Authorities – regional distribution

Lazio, with a total number of 138 minors involved in drug trafficking and pushing had the highest number of minors reported, followed by Lombardy, Veneto, Piedmont, Tuscany, Sicily, Sardinia and Emilia Romagna.

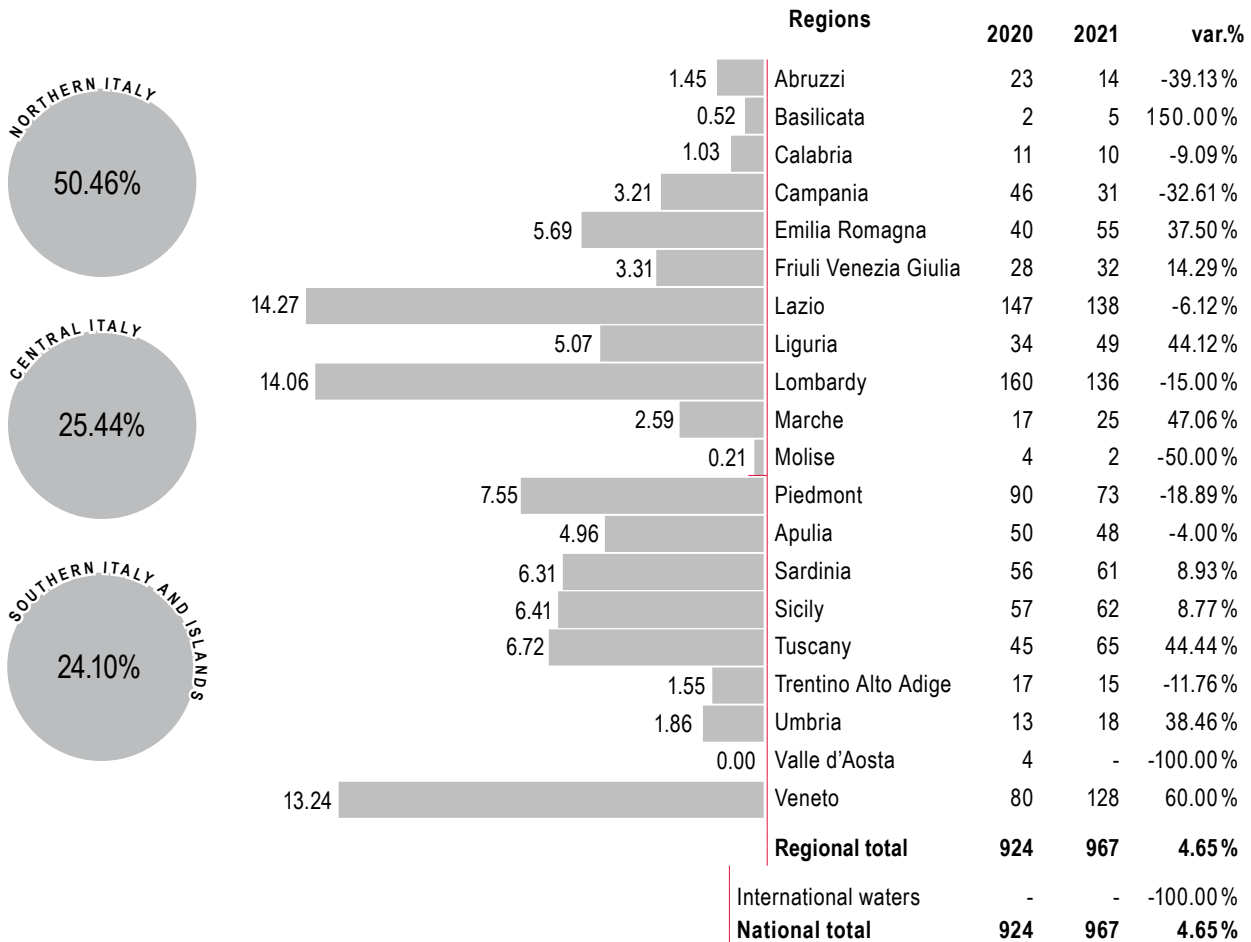
The lowest values were registered in Valle d'Aosta, Molise and Basilicata.

As compared to 2020, an increase of reports, in terms of percentage, was registered in Basilicata, Veneto and Marche.

The most striking drops occurred in Valle d'Aosta, Molise and Abruzzi.

Analysing the macro-areas, in 2021, the minors reported to the Judicial Authorities were distributed as follows: 50.46% in Northern Italy, 25.44% in Central Italy and 24.10% in Southern Italy and islands.

Regional distribution of minors reported having incidence on the regional total



DRUG ABUSE DEATHS

National situation

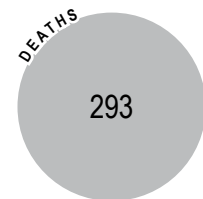
In 2021³, the deaths for drug abuse recorded by the law enforcement agencies or reported by the Prefecture were 293, with a decrease of 5.18% with respect to 2020, when drug deaths amounted to 309.

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 26,448 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 263 (89.76%), while females were 30 (10.24%), 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	2017		2018		2019		2020		2021	
	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males
< 15	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
15 ÷ 19	4	6	3	4	2	6	2	9	-	6
20 ÷ 24	5	13	5	15	4	16	7	19	2	11
25 ÷ 29	4	24	4	21	10	26	6	16	3	18
30 ÷ 34	7	27	6	42	11	24	6	34	7	27
35 ÷ 39	9	44	8	53	5	47	3	37	7	30
≥ 40	12	142	23	152	19	204	17	153	11	171
Totals	41	256	49	287	51	323	41	268	30	263
	297		336		374		309		293	

³ These figures refer to deaths due to direct drug abuse and to those deaths that were reported to the police authorities and not to the indirect causes, for ex. road accidents caused by driving while intoxicated, or deaths of drug consumers due to complications and/or to previous diseases. It must be stressed that the drug abuse deaths documentation sent by the police authorities to the DCSA are not always completed by toxicological and post-mortem examinations.



In 2021 the deaths were caused by heroin in 135 cases, by cocaine in 64 cases, by methadone in 20 cases, by morphine in 2 cases, by amphetamine in 1 case, by barbiturates in 1 case, by L.S.D. in 1 case, by psychopharmaceuticals in 1 case, while in 68 cases the substance was not indicated.

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

Type of substance	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Amphetamine	-	5	1	2	-	1	1	3	2	1
Barbiturates	1	1		2	1	1		1	2	1
Benzodiazepines	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-
Cocaine	41	30	23	38	39	53	64	64	71	64
Crack cocaine	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
Heroin	164	148	147	103	100	149	156	168	136	135
Fentanyl	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
Furanylfentanyl	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Unspecified drugs	177	152	132	158	116	74	93	116	60	68
Non precisata + alcol	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Ketamine	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
L.S.D.	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
MDMA Amphetamine	2	-	-	1	1	2	-	-	-	-
Mephedrone	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	-
Methadone	8	13	10	3	9	13	17	16	35	20
Methamphetamine	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	1	1	-
Morphine	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	2
Ocfentanil	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
Opium	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	-
Psychoactive drugs	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1
Subutex /Buprenorphine)	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
U47700	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
Total	393	349	313	308	268	297	336	374	309	293

Regional situation

In 2021, Veneto, Emilia Romagna, Lombardy, Tuscany and Campania were the most affected regions.

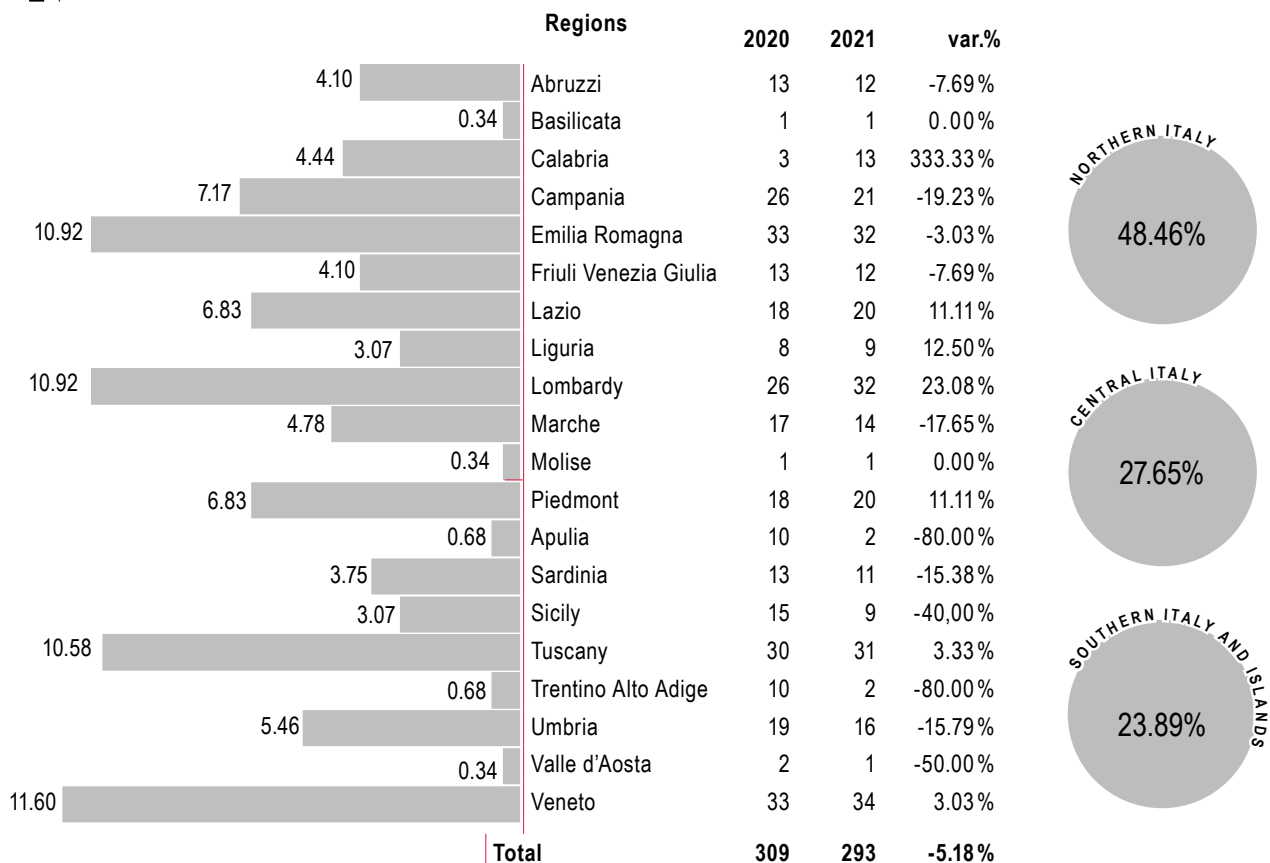
In respect to 2020, remarkable increases of drug abuse deaths were registered in Calabria (+333.33%), Lombardy (+23.08%), Liguria (+12.50%), Piedmont and Lazio (+11.11%).

The most significant percentage drops were reported in Trentino A.A. and Apulia (-80%), Valle d'Aosta (-50%), Sicily (-40%), Campania (-19.23%) and Marche (-17.65%).

Analysing the macro-areas, in 2021, the deaths ascertained by the law enforcement services or reported by the Prefetture, were distributed as follows: 48.46% in Northern Italy, 27.65% in Central Italy and 23.89% in Southern Italy and islands.

In the last ten years Emilia Romagna has been the most affected region with 363 deaths, followed by Tuscany (351), Lazio (335), Campania (289), Veneto (286), Piedmont (278) and Lombardy (245) while Molise (9), Valle d'Aosta (14) and Basilicata (17) have been the least affected ones.

Drug abuse deaths regional distribution having incidence on the regional total

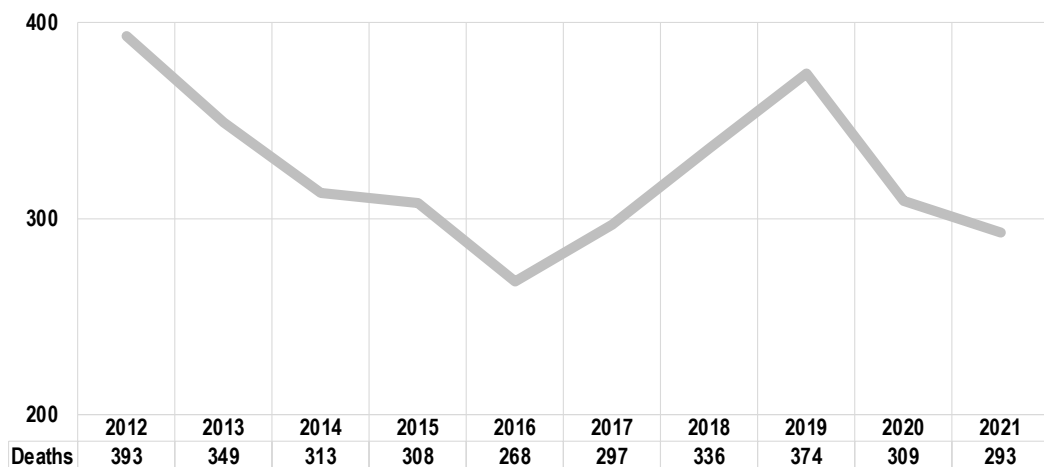




In the following table, the drug abuse deaths of the last ten years are subdivided by regions, indicating the data for each year, while the following graph describes – also at regional level – the death toll in the decade.

Drug abuse deaths
regional distribution - ten-year trend 2012/2021

Regions	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Abruzzi	6	10	8	3	3	11	15	14	13	12
Basilicata	1	1	1	3	3	1	3	2	1	1
Calabria	2	1	3	4	4	3	3	4	3	13
Campania	69	31	17	37	19	22	21	26	26	21
Emilia Romagna	38	34	37	43	25	34	34	53	33	32
Friuli V.G.	7	1	5	6	4	8	8	11	13	12
Lazio	51	57	35	33	20	37	29	35	18	20
Liguria	7	18	17	9	11	7	9	12	8	9
Lombardy	24	18	16	25	21	14	32	37	26	32
Marche	26	24	19	19	17	13	13	17	17	14
Molise	1		1			2	3		1	1
Piedmont	23	27	33	32	36	25	36	28	18	20
Apulia	3	5	7	2	3	9	6	7	10	2
Sardinia	20	23	21	19	15	10	15	25	13	11
Sicily	18	19	6	12	17	4	18	9	15	9
Tuscany	43	32	37	33	28	43	35	39	30	31
Trentino A.A.	3	6	4	4	6	5	8	9	10	2
Umbria	25	19	17	9	9	11	11	9	19	16
Valle d'Aosta		2	3		3	2	1		2	1
Veneto	25	20	26	15	24	36	36	37	33	34
Total in Italy	392	348	313	308	268	297	336	374	308	293
Italians deceased abroad	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Grand Total	393	349	313	308	268	297	336	374	309	293







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