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# PREFACE

*The Central Directorate for Antidrug Services, like every year, published its “Annual Report” (based on 2020 data), providing a summary of the activities carried out and the results achieved by Italy in the fight against illicit drug trafficking. The emerging situation reveals new characteristics with respect to previous years. Like any other legal or criminal sector, drug trafficking has been affected by the global health crisis linked to the spread of Covid-19. Drug trafficking, as a transnational phenomenon, has always relied on legal trade to conceal its illicit activities and, at least in the early part of the pandemic, it was inevitably affected by the global slowdown in commercial transactions. The impact of Covid-19 control measures impacted on drug cultivation and production, disrupting precursors supply and affecting the necessary labour force, as well as the drug transport, due to restrictions on movements of people and goods, both in border areas and within the countries’ territory. This situation modified the distribution patterns in the consumption markets, as well, resulting in a decrease in drug demand, in particular for the most widely abused substances.*

*However, these were temporary effects, especially limited to the first phase of the pandemic crisis. In fact, criminal organisations have shown extraordinary resilience and have been rapid to adapt their logistical and organisational structures to the new economic and social dynamics, by developing innovative operational schemes, both in the management of large-scale trafficking and in small-scale drug retail activities.*

*In the second half of the year such a capacity of adaptation and flexibility of criminal networks was confirmed by a strong upsurge of drug imports into the storage areas and, above all, of drug smuggling to final destination countries. For this reason, the Law Enforcement Agencies further raised their level of response, operating numerous huge seizures that counterbalanced the initial gap.*

*At national level, the final evaluation of law enforcement activities has reflected the irregular trend of drug trafficking during the Covid-19 period: both the number of antidrug operations (-12.80%) and the number of reports to the Judicial Authorities (-11.21%) decreased with respect to the previous year. 22,695 antidrug operations were carried out in 2020: the figure is substantially in line with the average value of the last ten years (about 23,000 per year), while the number of reports to the Judicial Authority (a total of 31,335), although the lowest in the last five years, is still well above 30,000, that is slightly below the average threshold in the ten-year series.*

*However, data on overall drug seizures show a slight increase compared to the previous year: from 54,771 kg discovered in 2019 to 58,827 kg in 2020, with a 7.41% increase which, due to some very large seizures, seems to reverse the negative trend started last year.*

*In absolute terms, as in the last Annual Report, about 60-70 tonnes of drugs are missing with respect to 2017-2018, when the quantities of drugs seized exceeded 120 tonnes on average.*

*Except for cocaine, synthetic drugs and cannabis plants, the seizures of almost all other substances declined. In particular, the most significant decreases relate to cannabis derivatives, both hashish (-53.70%) and marijuana (-16.05%), as well as to heroin (-17.17%).*

*As to hashish and marijuana, a downward trend continues to be registered; in fact, while last year, the seizure threshold stood at 44.7 tonnes, in 2020, these figures further dropped to 29.6 tonnes. On the contrary, data on cannabis plants shows a positive trend, doubling (414,396) with respect to the previous year.*

*Despite the above-mentioned decreases, cannabis remains the most widely seized drug in the Country, accounting for about half of all drugs detected by the Law Enforcement Agencies, demonstrating a remarkably high level of demand.*

*A more detailed analysis on cannabis derivatives = apart from some important seizures, one of hashish totalling about 2.8 tons and three of marijuana for a total of 1.6 tons, in the port of Salerno in June, and, at sea, in the waters off the Apulian ports of Bari, Brindisi and Lecce between April and August = shows a significant decrease in the seizures of these substances in the national and international waters (both in the Tyrrhenian and Adriatic waters), with a 69.45% reduction at the maritime border.*

*In 2019, the cannabis amount intercepted at sea and in ports accounted for 29.96% of all drugs seized in Italy, while in 2020 the incidence fell to 8.52%. This downward trend is a completely new element in the dynamics of this specific trafficking and, in particular, in the illicit flows routing and management.*

*Further analysis together with the trend of seizures operated during the current year will explain whether we are facing a period of transition, probably influenced by the restrictions to maritime circulation connected to the pandemic, or whether there is a possible “reshaping” of routes and strategies for this specific type of drug as a consequence of the counter-narcotic actions carried out by the national Law Enforcement Forces and by the Authorities of coastal Countries, from which the drugs originate.*

*For the second consecutive year, a negative trend in heroin seizures was registered, with a significant reduction (-17.17%) with respect to 2019. As pointed out in the previous edition of the Annual Report and after an analysis of the results attained for each year and of the average multi-annual trend, the heroin situation overview becomes more coherent and the recent downward trend appears less significant and indicates the reduction of this phenomenon. In quantitative terms, data on seizures recorded in 2020 (equal to 512.3 kg), are in line with the average of the last five years when, with the exception of 2018, the heroin seizures have always accounted for around half a tonne. The extraordinary surveillance measures due to the pandemic have disrupted the illicit drug movements and led to a percentage reduction in heroin seizures made in the border areas, from 29.97% to 14.02% of the national total, and to an emblematic*

0.39% representing the land borders which are the most widely used to introduce heroin into Italy from the producing and transit Countries (the so-called Balkan Route).

The year 2020 marked an outright record in cocaine seizures, that reached the unprecedented amount of 13.4 tonnes. This percentage increase (+62.29%) compared to the previous year = which had already marked a huge increase with respect to 2018 (+127.79%) = and the data relating to the first months of this year seem to confirm the vertiginous rise in the drug volumes removed from the illicit market. Again in this case, it will be necessary to analyse future data and understand whether this exponential growth is only temporary and attributable to the consequences of the pandemic which has caused a sort of “stop and go” and a strong upsurge of imports from South America (primarily from Colombia), or whether we are facing a concrete “reshaping” of the trafficking routes involving Italy, which is at the crossroads towards other consumer markets, due to the increasingly evident presence of Balkan organisations in the lucrative drug trafficking business.

The analysis of major seizures = 78.7% performed in the border areas (of which 98.1% in the maritime area) = seems to support the first above-mentioned consideration: seizures are mainly concentrated in the months of January-February (3,330 kg in the port of Livorno, 338 kg in the port of La Spezia and 1,128 kg in the port of Gioia Tauro), i.e. in the pre-lockdown phase and then, in the period October-December, at the resumption of large-scale commercial activities (2,862 kg in four separate operations, three in the port of Gioia Tauro and one in the port of Ancona).

The final destination of cocaine (which is the subject of numerous controlled deliveries in France, Croatia, Montenegro and Slovenia) confirms the hypothesis of the presence, in our Country, of ethnic crime groups, in particular Albanian and Serbian-Montenegrin networks, closely cooperating both with the criminal cartels of the producer areas and with the more structured Italian criminal syndicates.

Due attention must be given to synthetic drugs, both in relation to the effects of the pandemic and the amount of seizures. The data on seizures show a massive increase (+13,896%), mainly due to two major hauls made in June 2020 in the port of Salerno, for a total of 14,191 kg of amphetamine, probably destined for foreign markets.

On the whole, apart from these two record busts, the quantity of synthetic drugs intercepted in Italy is still limited. By deducting from the totals the huge quantity indicated above, the percentage indices show a substantial balance, with respect to the previous year, for the synthetic substances in powder form (-0.12%) and a significant decrease for those in doses or tablets (-68.76%).

However, after an analysis of the data concerned, the phenomenon of synthetic drugs consumption should not be underestimated; in absolute terms, net of the exceptional seizures mentioned above,

*about 18,000 tablets and a little more than 100 kg of these substances were seized. Nonetheless, the synthetic products (both stimulants and depressants of the Central Nervous System) are increasingly spreading, especially among young people also thanks to the Internet which is used to get illicit substances produced in laboratory, as well as counterfeit pharmaceutical products or medicines diverted from legal circuits.*

*Notwithstanding a gradual involvement of criminal organisations attracted by the constant increase in demand (and the consequent rising profits), the synthetic drugs threat is not yet at the level of other substances. However, it is expected that in the next few years, the Law Enforcement Agencies will enhance their capacity to operate over the Internet so to tackle the virtual illicit drug markets, web orders and transactions which exploit the increasingly complex mail system of the e-commerce era to deliver the illicit drugs.*

*In this context, the health restrictions imposed by the pandemic have created new drug distribution techniques: the illicit drugs are trafficked online, taking advantage of dark and surface websites, and are then sold through social networks and home delivery. In this regard, door-to-door distribution activities have been documented: they were carried out by pushers “disguised” as delivery men, runners or dog walkers or through the use of “car sharing”.*

*The phenomenon of the so-called New Psychoactive Substances is very similar to that of the above-mentioned synthetic drugs. The NPS are of synthetic origin and are 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 91 NPS, of which 33 were not scheduled (mainly cannabinoids, cathinones and opioids). These will be added to other 50 substances included in 2020 on the Lists of prohibited substances in consequence of specific provisions issued by the competent Minister. At present, the NPS are not so pervasive in our country, but it is necessary to keep a high level of attention so to avoid being taken by surprise by these new drugs which, in some overseas countries, are representing a real problem to public health.*

*In 2020, data regarding the foreigners involved in drug trafficking and distribution showed a considerable reduction (-26.56%) with respect to the previous year and reached the lowest level in the ten-year series: their number, 10,192 units, of which over 6,950 under arrest, still represents about one third (32.52%) of all those reported to the Judicial Authority for this type of crime (31,335). They are mainly non-EU labourers = as in the previous years, for a large part, of Moroccan, Albanian, Nigerian, Tunisian, Gambian and Senegalese origin = employed for the street retail pushing on the domestic drug markets. Taking into consideration the offence of criminal conspiracy to drug trafficking, the number of foreigners reported to the Judicial Authority showed a significant percentage decrease (-58%) if compared to 2019, accounting for approximately 374 units.*



*In 2020, after three years of continuous growth, the trend of overdose deaths was interrupted (308) and decreased by 66 units. In percentage terms, it shows a 17.65% reduction with respect to 2019, when drug-related deaths were 374.*

*There is concern about the reasons for this result, which is so sharply in contrast with the trend. The analysis of data pertaining to individual substances causing the overdose deaths suggests some considerations. The number of heroin-related deaths declined by 32 units compared to 168 of 2019. However, this figure was “balanced” by the number of deaths due to methadone overdose, which rose from 16 in 2019 to 35 in 2020. These overdose deaths could be related to persons who were not necessarily drug addicts and who, during the pandemic, were taking methadone because they could not be supplied with their drug of choice or with other substance of abuse. As to cocaine, the number of overdose deaths shows a slight increase (+ 5 units) compared with 2019 but the most remarkable gap is found among those deaths for which it was not possible to identify the substance causing the overdose (-55). In this case, the slight variation which roughly corresponds to that registered in the last two years, might indicate that in 2020 it was more difficult to identify with certainty the causes of death (the abuse of narcotic drugs or the overdose) in the absence of a clear diagnosis of overdose. This is a possible explanation, but we will have to wait for next year’s report (or probably the next two years figures), to see whether this is a provisional situation or whether there is a variation or reverse trend in overdoses.*

*Since 1973, when the overdose deaths statistical survey started in Italy, 26,154 persons died due to drug abuse.*

*In the period under examination, no significant changes in the drug importation routes have been identified. However, the complexity of the relational systems connecting the numerous criminal groups involved = making alliances among themselves in order to manage logistics and maximise profits = is contributing to set up numerous ramifications of the main traffic routes. In this regard, the analysis of seizures and of some international controlled deliveries show an interesting variation in cocaine transit routes and in the intermediate and final ports of call. This led to the creation of a new route which, through the Southern region of the European continent, moves the drugs coming from South America towards the hubs of Greece and of the countries facing the Black Sea, such as Bulgaria, Romania and Ukraine.*

*This route probably responds to the need of criminal networks of using safer circuits, so to exploit their collusive contacts working at departure and arrival seaports and have storage areas near the final destination markets.*

*In this operational context, the Gioia Tauro Port continues to play a major role: this is a strategic port due to its geographical position and to the volume of goods in transit. Again in 2020, it strengthened its important role in cocaine trafficking; only in this area, there were 24 operations leading to the seizure of 6 tonnes of cocaine, corresponding to 45% of the global volume of seizures made at domestic level.*

*Also for 2020, the analysis of drug trafficking criminal organizations confirmed that organised crime still finds in this sector its most lucrative source of financing. Trafficking in drugs is still “the main driving force for all the illicit activities carried out by the great criminal syndicates”. Its profits are not only the most important among those generated by any other human activity, both legal and illicit, but they also represent the easiest self-financing system allowing the development of further criminal activities.*

*The extraordinary profits derived from drugs have encouraged the most aggressive international criminal networks to manage illicit trafficking through impressive organisational and logistical structures, as well as to invest huge capital to finance the development and expansion of activities. The phenomenological observation and the consequent analysis of the indicators offered by the antidrug actions performed in 2020 by the Italian local services and investigative Units, under the coordination of the Central Directorate for Antidrug Services, revealed how globalization has facilitated a closer interaction between criminal groups operating in different areas and continents and belonging to different cultures.*

*On the one hand, traditional criminal organisations have merged into transnational joint ventures, which ensure production and supply from source areas to consumer markets; on the other hand, geopolitical, economic and social conditions in the different regions of the world have differentiated the work and behaviour of local crime groups, which have progressively assumed more flexible and dynamic organisational patterns, structured like a net, becoming multifaceted associations no longer anchored only to the territory or to subcultural factors of reference.*

*In this complex scenario, the leading role of the Calabrian ‘Ndrangheta is strengthened. It has maintained a privileged position in the global drug trafficking scenario, thanks to the presence of its own operational cells and brokers, established in the producing Countries and in the temporary storage areas located not only on the national territory, but also at a European level, in particular in The Netherlands and Spain. Information available have confirmed that the ‘Ndrangheta connections with members of Cosa Nostra, Camorra, Apulian criminal organizations as well as with foreign criminal networks are stable and useful to the management of drug trafficking activities.*

*Cosa Nostra, in particular, shows a renewed interest in drug trafficking thanks to its ability to adapt to the changing context and to a pragmatic approach to this lucrative crime business. In relation to the ever-growing needs of preserving the affiliates (a part of these subjects are in prison), members of Cosa Nostra have tried to recover a major role in the drug trafficking sector. In the reporting year, also the Camorra continued its drug import activities, exploiting its operational bases located in other European countries, such as Spain and The Netherlands.*

*More than other crime networks, it has been able to negotiate and collaborate with other foreign criminal syndicates, expanding its range of action internationally, in particular in Eastern European Countries.*

*The Apulian criminal organisations, exploiting their geographical position, close to the Balkan coastline, were fully involved in the management of drug trafficking along the routes from Albania. In 2020, also ethnic criminal structures developed an increasing capacity and operational autonomy in controlling the drug trafficking trade, including the retail distribution in many Italian regions.*

*Among the foreign organizations, there is an ever-increasing involvement of the Balkan, Kosovan-Albanian, North African and South American cartels, in particular, the Colombian, Mexican and Dominican as well as the Nigerian ones, which exploit the ethnic communities settled in Italy and in other EU Countries, with the support of a complex and effective logistic structure.*

*The investigative results revealed that the criminal capacity of these criminal groups appears in different ways in the southern regions, where they are subordinated to the local criminal networks, if compared to the central-northern regions, where, on the contrary, they have progressively acquired such a degree of independence, as to conquer, in certain urban areas, a leading position, above all, in the drug distribution activities.*

*Despite the restrictions related to the pandemic, which often forced meetings to be held “remotely”, the development of international relations will be noted for the participation of the DCSA representatives in some important events on the planning of strategic guidelines to curb drug trafficking and other phenomena related to drug abuse.*

*In particular, the work of the 63rd Session of the United Nations Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND), held in Vienna from 2 to 6 March (Ordinary Session) and from 2 to 4 December (Intermediate Session) in 2020, in which important decisions on the use of cannabis for medical purposes were taken. In particular, the World Health Organisation (WHO) Recommendations were voted without modifying the international control system and removing the above-mentioned substance from Schedule IV of the 1961 UN Convention on Narcotic Drugs, which allowed it to be used for medical purposes.*

*At European level, DCSA took part in the work of the Horizontal Drugs Group (HDG), which promotes the activities of the EU Council on Drugs, where representatives of Member States analyse general and legislative strategies on supply and demand reduction. In the reporting period, during the Croatian and German Presidencies, activities continued for the preparation of the expected “EU Drug Strategy 2021/2025”, which, after approval by the EU Council, will lead to the subsequent definition of the relevant “Action Plan”.*

*At bilateral level, the Central Directorate for Antidrug Services showed its dynamism on the*

*international stage by starting negotiations to sign pacts and technical agreements on the fight against illicit drug trafficking, at the request of foreign counterparts or on the initiative of the DCSA itself, with Canada, the Russian Federation, Iran, Tajikistan and Senegal.*

*Negotiations were undertaken or further developed, also thanks to the qualified action of the Law Enforcement Attachés, with Albania, Brazil, Bulgaria, Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Georgia, Greece, Iran, Israel, North Macedonia, Morocco, Moldova, Montenegro, Panama, Romania, Serbia, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, aimed at the preparation of Antidrug Operational Memoranda (MOA), focused on the promotion of joint investigative initiatives against drug trafficking and its precursors.*

*In 2020, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed in Santo Domingo by the Director for Antidrug Services pro tempore, on behalf of the Chief of Police = Director General of Public Security, between the Italian Department of Public Security and the National Directorate for Drug Control of the Dominican Republic on police cooperation against illicit trafficking in narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and their precursors.*

*Furthermore, initiatives for the realization of the objectives regarding projects "ICARUS" and "HERMES" have continued. These projects were signed by the DCSA and the Department for Antidrug Policies of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, aimed at improving the synergies between these two Offices and increasing their effectiveness in the common areas in accordance with the 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-narcotics activities and the processing of useful data for a more comprehensive analysis of relevant phenomena. In this context, the "Southern Route" project was launched, aimed at strengthening police cooperation with the Countries of South East Africa and with the transit Countries of the Afghan heroin destined for Italy and Europe.*

*Notwithstanding the restrictions related to the health crisis = which has prevented the activities to be organised in person = some initiatives relating to prevention in schools were also carried out, both through the collaboration with the Italian Ministry of University and Research and by identifying the stakeholders for the development of antidrug information campaigns in schools. In February 2020, in the framework of the dissemination and promotion activities of the above-mentioned project, a conference dedicated to "Antidrug policies: prevention and fight against international phenomena and routes. Cooperation strategies in the fight against drug trafficking" was also organised. Two hundred and fifty delegates from Italy and abroad attended the event. It was opened by the Chief of Police = Director General of Public Security, the Commanders General of the Carabinieri and of the Guardia di Finanza, the Head of the Department for Antidrug Policies and the pro tempore Director for Antidrug Services; this Conference was*

*attended by the Italian National Prosecutor and District Anti-Mafia Prosecutors, top-level foreign Magistrates, the heads of the Antidrug Agencies of fifty-three foreign States and of six leading international anti-drug organisations, as well as numerous experts in the sector from Italian and foreign Police Forces. At the end of the meeting, a “Outcome Declaration” on police cooperation was shared and the start of bilateral negotiations aimed at signing operational antidrug memoranda was promoted.*

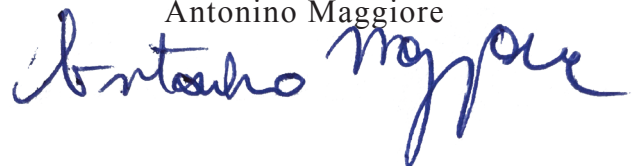
*The second project (the above-mentioned project Hermes), signed in November 2019, aims to identify operational methods to face more effectively drug import and trade (especially synthetic drugs), through the monitoring and control of postal shipments by public and private couriers. This is an ambitious objective, given the impressive extent of e-commerce and of the strict legal regulations to which these specific controls are subject. However, the progressive spread of this trafficking method requires a qualitative improvement in the field of prevention and fight against this threat, by means of more rapid and effective inspections. During 2020, guidelines were outlined for the development of a new expertise to cope with this insidious phenomenon and for the training of a group of police operators able to make specific controls, to be performed with the use of advanced technologies and software. The results of these control campaigns will contribute to the strengthening of the National Early Warning System, in order to prevent the spread of new drug abuse phenomena potentially dangerous for public health.*

*Following an initiative that led to the substitution of the paper version with an electronic version, the 2021 Annual Report is published in the form of a flash memory card only and translated into English and Spanish, in order to promote its dissemination also beyond national borders.*

*The Annual Report can also be consulted on the DCSA website, an IT platform allowing not only a wider knowledge of the tasks and competencies of this Agency, but also an extensive diffusion of data, initiatives, reports and news concerning the drug sector.*

THE DIRECTOR

Antonino Maggiore



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# SECOND PART

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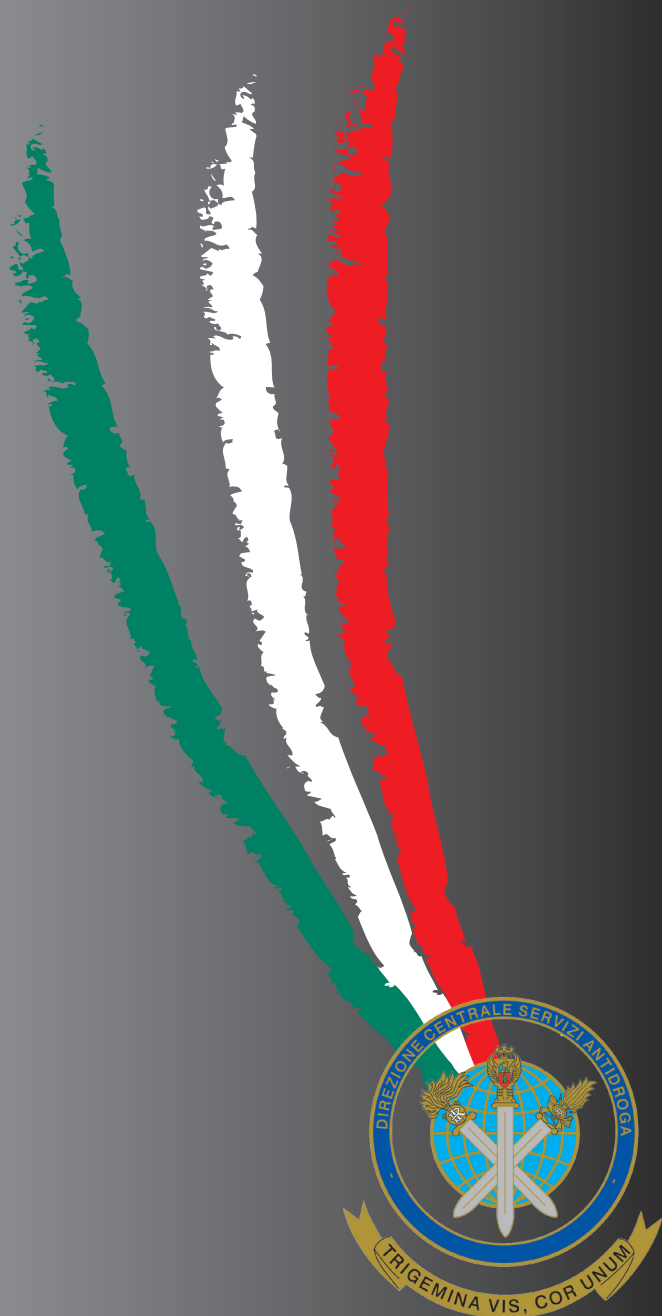
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# 1

## STATUS AND TRENDS OF DRUG TRAFFICKING IN ITALY





## ITALY'S ROLE IN THE FIGHT AGAINST DRUG TRAFFICKING

### FOREWORD

The Covid-19 pandemic that broke out in 2020 had an impact on almost every aspect of social life across the planet. By the end of that year, over 80 million people had been infected. In the face of this situation, governments took aggressive action to contain the spread of the virus<sup>1</sup>. During the pandemic emergency, criminal threats became more sophisticated and complicated, affecting economies and influencing geopolitical developments and international relations. The extraordinary emergency situation that emerged exacerbated structural vulnerabilities and social tensions while creating new opportunities for organised crime to attack and infiltrate the world of legitimate businesses<sup>2</sup>. Criminal organisations continued to re-invest the illicit profits they derive from traditional illegal activities, such as drug trafficking, with the help of colluding professionals or entrepreneurs and have improved their skills in hiding and moving their proceeds<sup>3</sup>.

In this context, criminal organisations have directed their attention towards businesses at risk of failure, in particular businesses and companies in need of cash or investment, which risk being “infiltrated” by illicit money or acquired by organised crime groups even though their organisational and management framework remains apparently unchanged.

Drug trafficking, which has always relied on legal trade to camouflage its illegal activities, was inevitably affected by the pandemic, at least at its onset when there was a slowdown in international commercial transactions. Measures adopted to contain Covid-19 affected illicit trade according to the different criminal models used, from production to transport and distribution in destination markets, taking into account the anti-narcotic response in various countries.

Criminal organisations quickly exploited new opportunities created by the crisis and were able to adapt and develop new operational methods for drug-trafficking management.

Their adaptability and flexibility, which arose as a response to a dynamic and rapidly evolving global threat, prompted law enforcement agencies to respond with appropriate countermeasures.

Throughout 2020, an upward trend was observed in crimes related to the sale of drugs over the Internet, so the DCSA decided to dedicate some of its own resources and a specific operational unit called *Drug@online* to design operational counteraction, coordination and staff training<sup>4</sup>.

In its analysis report on the evolution of drug trafficking in 2020, the DCSA also outlined the characteristics of drug supply on the domestic market, highlighting both the constraints imposed by the pandemic and the new approaches adopted by criminal organisations as well as law enforcement activities.

### THE ROLE OF THE DCSA CENTRALE PER I SERVIZI ANTIDROGA

As mentioned briefly above, the DCSA has continued to fully exercise its institutional prerogatives in coordinating law enforcement agencies engaged in the fight against drug trafficking.

1 Cf. the weekly epidemiological update published by the WHO Regional Office for Europe on 16 April 2020 <https://unric.org/it/covid-19-aggiornamento-settimanale-dellufficio-regionale-europeo-del-who/> (available in Italian).

2 Cf. Italy's Internal Intelligence and Security Agency's "Report on Information Policy for Security in the year 2020" (available in Italian).

3 Cf. Italy's Internal Intelligence and Security Agency's "Report on Information Policy for Security in the year 2020" (available in Italian).

4 The newly introduced Article 12 of Legislative Decree No. 130/2020 requires the DCSA's Drug@online Unit to report the drug-selling websites to the Postal Police so that the latter can ask internet service providers to take them down. This measure adds to the initiatives already taken by the Judicial Authority.

At national level, the DCSA has supported all its internal units through a synergic collaboration by setting up a number of "*special operations*"<sup>5</sup>, identifying investigative overlaps and promoting multiple "investigations"<sup>6</sup>, using intelligence from different sources, including from qualified sources provided by the network of law enforcement attachés posted abroad.

In addition to the above activities, technical and logistical support was constantly provided to the investigations carried out by all law enforcement units, using high-tech equipment made available to them along with personnel specifically trained in its use.

As for investigations of a transnational nature, the DCSA relied on intelligence activities to effectively support a wide range of law enforcement operations against drug trafficking which as a rule led to significant drug seizures and to the arrest of numerous traffickers.

In this context, the DCSA harmonised the information stream and investigative outcomes provided by the network of *law enforcement attachés* and it implemented projects against drug trafficking, at times with the collaboration of *corresponding foreign agencies*. As for more complex investigations, the DCSA provided elements and analysis reports aimed at sustaining further development and progress.

The DCSA authorised and approved a total of 45 "*special operations*", i.e. "*undercover activities*" and "*national and international controlled deliveries*", and it coordinated several, both incoming and outgoing requests to "*board vessels*" suspected of carrying narcotic substances in international waters<sup>7</sup>.

In 2020 high-level investigations revealed that drug trafficking continues to be the key or one of the key illicit activities for the highly structured criminal organisations, which often create criminal cartels that cut across ethnic and geographical boundaries.

In this framework, the analysis of data and information gathered and processed by the DCSA established that in 2020 the most frequent drug concealment methods still matched a known pattern that repeats itself in time and were the following:

- as for "*maritime routes*", the favourite modus operandi is the "*contamination of containers*". Drug traffickers may conceal the drugs:
  - inside containers alongside legitimate goods,
  - inside the container's structural frame or refrigeration system,
  - in large bags left near the container doors where they can be easily recovered by insiders ("*rip-off method*");
  - by moving the drugs ("*switch method*") from a container arriving from a well-known drug-producing country – and therefore more likely to draw attention and undergo customs checks – to another container coming from a "less risky" country – which is less likely to be subjected to a thorough inspection,
  - with the help of colluding crew members, inside certain metal structures gripped by strong magnets attached to the hull of the ship
- As for "*air routes*", the drugs may be concealed:

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Article 9 of Law No. 146/2006 amended by Article 8 of Law No. 136/2010

<sup>6</sup> Cf. the Decree of the Chief of Police – Director General of Public Security dated 7 August 2019.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Article 17 of the 1988 Vienna Convention and Article 110(d) of the 1982 Montego Bay Convention.

- inside the luggage of couriers who often hold EU passports to avoid police attention. They intentionally board intercontinental flights with intermediate stopovers in order to confuse the so-called “analysis of risk factors” performed by checking officers at arrival airports;
- inside the bodies of the so-called “body packers” who swallow packets of drugs.

Leghorn - seizure of 3,330 kg of cocaine, concealed in a container, coming from Colombia and destined for France - February 2020



The analysis carried out by the DCSA established that the

COVID-19 crisis produced rapid changes in the economic and social fabric but did not reduce drug trafficking throughout its chain, except in the early stages of this health emergency.

In this transitional phase, drug trafficking on Italian territory continued to be controlled by conventional crime syndicates, namely the ‘Ndrangheta, the Cosa Nostra, the Camorra and the Apulian criminal organisations, which keep mutual relationships with ethnically-based clans living all over Italy.

Drug trafficking crime syndicates are increasingly organised into a “modular network”. Their criminal dynamics no longer follow predefined models, but rather advanced forms of so-to-speak “more changeable” structures and create collaborations and synergies, at times only occasional and temporary, adopting unusual and unexpected approaches which are more difficult to identify.

Italy’s geographical location at the centre of the Mediterranean area renders it an ideal gateway for introducing drugs onto the European destination markets<sup>8</sup> and conventional criminal organisations have been able to exploit maritime routes and ports already used in the past for *hashish* and *marijuana* trafficking and for the movement of *cocaine* and *synthetic drugs*<sup>9</sup>.

The scenario analysed so far will be described in the light of the types of criminal organisations involved in drug trafficking and of the various individual types of drugs.

### DRUG TRAFFICKING: TYPES OF ILLICIT TRAFFICKING AND ANTI-NARCOTIC ACTION

Drug trafficking still remains the most typical form of *globalisation* of organised crime, in which groups and clans are characterised by their *transnational* dimension. This leads to mutual cooperation and

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Verso un Mediterraneo integrato (Towards an Integrated Mediterranean), published in 2019 by the Centro Militare Studi Strategici (Military Centre for Strategic Studies).

<sup>9</sup> This statement is confirmed by the following:

- on 24 Feb. 2020, the Carabinieri Provincial Command in Livorno seized more than 3 tons of cocaine destined for the French market on board a vessel flying the Marshall Islands flag arriving from Colombia. An international controlled delivery was therefore organised and the ship was allowed to continue its journey first to the port of Genoa and then to the port of Marseille, where the shipment was recovered by three individuals, who were placed under arrest.
- in 2020, five more international controlled deliveries were coordinated by units of the Guardia di Finanza (in Gioia Tauro and Catania). They ended with a total seizure of 2,343 kg of cocaine and with 12 people being reported to the judicial authority.
- on 29 June 2020, in the port of Salerno, the Economic and Financial Unit of the Guardia di Finanza in Naples seized 14 tons of amphetamines, totalling 84 million pills with the Captagon logo, which were most probably destined for foreign markets.

support, even outside their own national borders, with a view to managing their drug business in the most effective, lucrative and safe way along the lines of real entrepreneurial criteria.

The drugs trade has expanded, diversified and become more complex not only as a result of the proliferation of new illicit psychoactive substances and the opening of new markets and routes<sup>10</sup>, but above all due to the interrelationships connecting the criminal groups involved, which join forces to maximise their profits.

During the reporting period, it was documented that transnational criminal networks are highly active and, as was previously mentioned, they manage drug production, transport and distribution through a “*modular network*” that differs from conventional criminal models and uses new methods by relying on real brokerage structures to organise their drug trafficking.

An effective anti-narcotic action must be based on a thorough analysis of the characteristics, operation, dynamics, strategies and development trends in drug trafficking, which is managed by complex, interconnected *criminal networks* which control the various segments of the trafficking chain, from production to street-level dealing and the subsequent laundering of *drug proceeds*.

The fight against drug trafficking during the reporting period showed the need to carry out “*special operations*” and, in particular, “*international controlled deliveries*”, as they allow the authorities to establish the final destinations of the drugs and to dismantle criminal organisations. “*Undercover operations*” are equally productive and disruptive. These investigative and intelligence activities are conducted with the primary aim of outlining the entire criminal structure, identifying the members of the criminal groups involved, including their top bosses, and uncovering the channels used to launder illegal profits. Critical requirements for conducting these operations include:

- knowing every single detail about people involved, means of transport and drug trafficking routes,
- requesting and obtaining approval from the relevant judicial authorities in departure and transit countries in accordance with the judicial procedures in place,
- monitoring the trafficked drugs with “*electronic surveillance and tracking devices*” and observation and control systems, by employing specialised law enforcement staff<sup>11</sup>.

The coordination activity performed by the DCSA continued to be of crucial importance in many ways, including setting clear, unequivocal objectives for antidrug operations. It also avoided investigative overlaps, which may compromise the proper conduct of the investigations or even endanger the safety of undercover agents engaged in *special operations*.

The DCSA also continued to play a central role in consolidating the antidrug strategy, in planning how to carry out investigations and in consolidating the network of *law enforcement attachés* posted abroad who liaise with *corresponding foreign law enforcement agencies*.

Also in 2020 this network of “*privileged contacts*” was a bonus for international police cooperation in the fight against drug trafficking, to which the DCSA devoted extensive efforts, also with the aim of identifying “*best investigation practices*” and the most effective “*courses of action*” to combat international drug trafficking.

### **Cocaine**

During the reporting period, conventional and ethnically-based criminal organisations confirmed their consolidated role in drug trafficking in Italy.

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<sup>10</sup> Cf. Europol’s EU SOCTA 2021 report.

<sup>11</sup> For example, electronic surveillance is allowed in the Netherlands but not in Italy, where it is subject to authorization by the judicial authority.

The *'Ndrangheta* still holds a privileged position in the global drug economy thanks to its branches and operational *brokers* in drug-producing countries. The *'Ndrine* still keep a close watch on maritime commercial trade and national seaports, especially in Gioia Tauro, which plays a strategic role due to its geographical position and to the large volumes of goods in transit. The *Camorra* continued to traffic in drugs using its operational headquarters in other European countries, for example Spain and the Netherlands, negotiating and cooperating with other foreign criminal groups.

Piacenza - seizure of 43.72 kg of cocaine - December 2020



*Cosa Nostra* renewed its interest in being involved in the running of drug trafficking and played a dynamic role thanks to its adaptability to the changing context and a pragmatic approach to the lucrative criminal business.

*Apulian criminal organisations*, facilitated by their geographical proximity to the Balkan coastline, are actively involved in the management of drug trafficking along the routes originating from Albania. It is worth mentioning in this respect that in 2020 ethnically-based criminal groups continued to develop their skills and independence in the management of cocaine trafficking up to retail distribution in large areas across Italy.

The most active and dangerous foreign crime syndicates include: the *Balkan cartels*, *Kosovo-Albanian* and *South-American* groups, notably *Colombian*, *Mexican* and *Dominican* as well as *Nigerian* groups. All of these groups rely on their ethnic communities living in Italy and in other EU Member States and are supported by a diffuse and effective logistical structure.

Law enforcement activity identified the main countries in which cocaine is produced (Colombia, Peru and Bolivia) and concealed before being shipped by sea to Europe, for example *Venezuela*, *Ecuador*, *Panama*, *Brazil* and *Argentina*. From these geographical areas of initial concentration, cocaine reaches four main hubs of transit, storage and later distribution, which were identified in *Central America*, the *Caribbean*, *West Africa* and, for drugs whose final destination is Europe, in West-Central European countries. To be more specific, key countries in this regard are *Costa Rica*, *Mexico*, *Jamaica*, the *Dominican Republic*, *Spain* and the *Netherlands*.

During the reporting period there was an increase in the seizures and recovery of huge quantities of cocaine at seaports. Flights were used to transport small quantities of cocaine; air travel restrictions imposed worldwide due to COVID-19 reduced scheduled flights and consequently the supply of drugs by air.

A consolidation of the routes most commonly used to bring cocaine to Europe was noted also during the reporting period and includes:

- the "*South-American*" route which comprises five main itineraries: from "*Bolivia towards Central*

America, Paraguay, Argentina and Brazil”; from “Brazil towards Spain, Portugal and the Netherland; from “Colombia towards Mexico, the United States, Canada, Spain and the Netherlands”; from “Venezuela towards West Africa and Europe”; and from “Peru towards Brazil, Bolivia, Colombia, Venezuela and Mexico”<sup>12</sup>;

- the “African” route which after an intermediate stopover moves from the West-African countries bordering the “Gulf of Guinea”,

i.e. “Guinea, Guinea Bissau, the Gambia, Senegal, Ghana, Togo, Benin and Nigeria”. This route allows South-American criminal organisations to receive logistical support from local criminal gangs and to take advantage of porous and poorly controlled borders. These factors, combined with the criminal skills of the gangs that control the Sahel and Sahara regions, allow drug traffickers to transport large quantities of drugs to Europe, by sea and land<sup>13</sup>;

- the “Balkan” route, which is traditionally used for heroin destined for Central and Eastern Europe. A large number of cocaine consignments reach the Balkans from South America by sea, directly to the ports in that area or after intermediate calls in other European ports, as is evidenced by the significant seizures made in “Albania, Bulgaria, Romania, Serbia, Greece and Hungary”.

During the reporting period an interesting diversification of cocaine flows as well as of intermediate and final arrival points was documented<sup>14</sup>, which gives grounds to assume that a new route was opened up across Eastern and Southern Europe<sup>15</sup>. This assumption is confirmed by the analysis of the DCSA, in which seizures traditionally made in ports of Spain and North Europe (Belgium, the Netherlands and Germany) were compared with growing seizures in ports of Greece and of the countries bordering the *Black Sea*, such as *Bulgaria, Romania and Ukraine*.

*On 24 February 2020, the Carabinieri Provincial Command in Livorno made a record seizure of more than 3 tons of cocaine destined for the French market on board a vessel flying the Marshall Islands flag arriving from Colombia. An anti-narcotic special operation of controlled delivery was started and the vessel was allowed to continue its journey to the ports of Genoa and Marseille, where the drug consignment was recovered by three people who were arrested. The international antidrug operation, which was initiated by a European Investigation Order issued by the Public Prosecutor’s Office of Marseille and sent to the Public Prosecutor’s Office of Florence, was carried out in close cooperation*

Reggio Calabria - seizure of 16.70 kg of cocaine - November 2020



<sup>12</sup> Cf. UNODC, World Drug Report 2019, booklet 1.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. UNODC, World Drug Report 2019, booklet 1.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. UNODC, World Drug Report 2019, booklet 1.

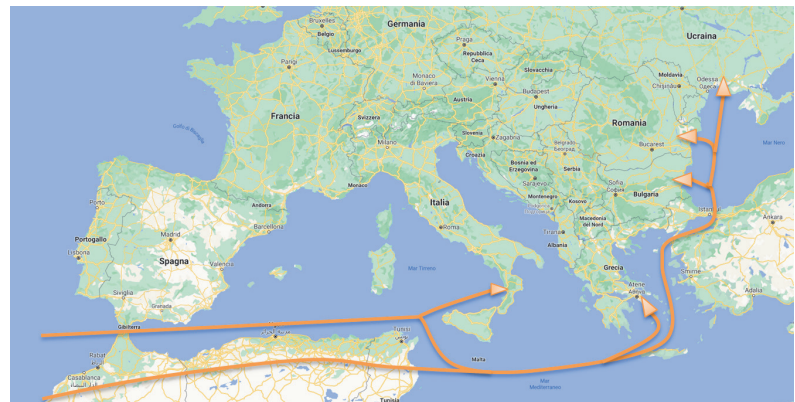
<sup>15</sup> Cf. UNODC, World Drug Report 2019, booklet 1.



between Italian, Spanish and French law enforcement and judicial authorities. This is the second largest cocaine seizure recorded in Italy for an estimated value of 400 million euros.

The numerous seizures carried out at the ports in Gioia Tauro<sup>16</sup>, La Spezia<sup>17</sup> and Ancona<sup>18</sup> highlight that criminal organisations choose the arrival port of the trafficked drugs regardless of their territorial

New cocaine route through Southern and Eastern Europe



interests or main storage areas, taking into account wider considerations, such as established connections as well as logistical and organisational arrangements for each shipment. In 2020 the Gioia Tauro port was confirmed as having a central role in drug trafficking. This is demonstrated by the fact that 24 operations were carried out in that area, resulting in the seizure of 6 tons of cocaine, corresponding to 45% of total of national seizures amounting to more than 13 tons.

*Operation HALCON, conducted by the Economic and Financial Unit of the Guardia di Finanza in Catania and coordinated by the DCSA, ended on 4 February 2020 with the execution of preventive measures ordered by the local judicial authority against the members of a criminal network operating in Italy, Spain, Mexico and Colombia and involved in the importation and international trafficking of huge quantities of cocaine.*

Operation HALCON - press conference



*The investigation led to the seizure of approximately 386 kg of cocaine, which resulted from a controlled delivery from Bogota (Colombia) to Catania requested with letters rogatory to the Colombian judicial authority by the District Prosecutor's Office attached to the Court of Catania for evidentiary purposes under Article 18 of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime signed in Palermo in 2000, which provides for mutual legal assistance between States.*

During the reporting period, cocaine production was mostly concentrated – as in the last few years – in Colombia, Peru and Bolivia, where a considerable number of refining labs were uncovered. This again clearly demonstrates that local criminal organisations are capable of running the entire production chain, which increases profit margins<sup>19</sup>.

<sup>16</sup> On 02.11.2020 in the port area of Gioia Tauro, 932 kg of cocaine packaged in bricks were discovered inside a container and seized.

<sup>17</sup> On 04.01.2020 in the port in La Spezia, 300 bricks of cocaine, equal to 338.520 kg, were discovered inside a container and seized.

<sup>18</sup> On 01.10.2020 at the port in Ancona, 216 kg of cocaine packaged in bricks were discovered on a ship and seized.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. UNODC, World Drug Report 2019, booklet 1.

*Operation PACIFIC FREESTYLE, conducted by the Economic and Financial Unit of the Guardia di Finanza in Rome and concluded in May 2020, led to the execution of preventive custody orders against seven leaders of a drug-trafficking organisation involved in the importation of huge quantities of cocaine originating from Peru and transiting through Chile. Investigations started in March 2018 following the arrest of five fellow South-American citizens at the border between Chile and Peru. They were found in possession of 120 kg of cocaine, which was cleverly concealed behind the bulkheads of two jet skis. Further investigations revealed a crime syndicate connected to the underworld in Rome and based along the coast between Ostia and Fiumicino. The criminals arrested in South America were the “executive arm” of the Italian syndicate.*

*On 20 October 2020 Operation LETHAL COCAINE, conducted by the Carabinieri Company in Marcianise (CE) led to the execution of a preventive custody order against 38 members of a local Camorra clan who were involved in running a thriving drug pushing activity, in particular cocaine, in the province of Caserta, namely in the municipal territories of Marcianise, Orta di Atella, Gricignano di Aversa, Sant’Arpino, Succivo e Cesa.*

*On 16 July 2020 Operation PATRIOT, conducted by the State Police Investigating Unit in Salerno, led to the execution of a preventive custody order against 25 individuals who were suspected, under different charges, of conspiracy to traffic drugs. The investigation highlighted a crime syndicate led by Raffaele IAVARONE, who was closely linked to the D’Agostino-Panella Camorra clan, which is one of the channels supplying large quantities of hashish and cocaine to different criminal groups who were pushing drugs in Salerno and in the surrounding province. It was also ascertained that large quantities of cocaine and hashish concealed in containers arriving from Spain reached the port in Salerno to be sold on by local dealers.*

## Heroin

In 2020, Italy served both as a destination country and as a transit country for heroin heading to Northern European markets. Heroin originating from Afghanistan, its main producing country, was shipped to Europe via Turkey and other alternative routes.

Heroin trafficking in Italy continues to be mostly controlled by the Camorra clans which generally “do business” with Albanian or Nigerian syndicates. The latter are in charge of importation and street-level dealing. Investigations revealed that

foreign criminal organisations can import significant amounts of heroin of extremely high purity. They hire “body stuffers” and avail themselves of a tightly-knit network of transnational contacts.

Ancona - seizure of 16.30 kg of heroin - January 2020



The packaged doses ready for use are sometimes mixed with synthetic opioids. Combined with heroin, these adulterants can amplify its effects.

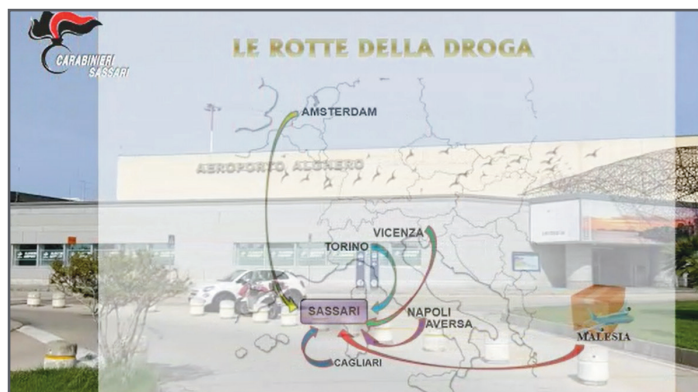
As already mentioned, heroin mainly originates from Afghanistan and is trafficked to Europe along the following routes<sup>20</sup>:

- the “Balkan” route, which goes through *Iran, Turkey, Bulgaria, Romania, Greece* and other peninsular countries<sup>21</sup>,
- the “Southern” route, which is used for consignments entering Europe by sea or air directly from *Iran and Pakistan* or through Eastern African countries down to *South Africa*<sup>22</sup>,
- the “Caucasian” route, which goes through Caucasus and in particular through *South Caucasus* and the *Black Sea*, reconnecting with the “Balkan route”<sup>23</sup>,
- the “Northern” route, which goes through *Central Asia* and the *Russian Federation*<sup>24</sup>.

Investigations conducted in 2020 confirmed that the drugs are trafficked by air by the so-called “body packers”. As already mentioned, these are individuals who travel on EU passports and take intercontinental flights with intermediate stopovers in order to confuse or avoid the analysis of risk factors. Once they arrive in Europe, they normally move around the *Schengen* area using other means of transport.

On 10 July 2020 Operation MALESIA, launched in early 2019 by the Carabinieri Provincial Command in Sassari, ended with the execution of a preventive custody order issued by the Judicial Authority in Sassari against 39 individuals accused of drug trafficking and possession. The investigations identified a transnational organisation composed of Nigerian nationals who engaged in large, systematic and lucrative trafficking of heroin using body stuffers. The investigation also reconstructed the strategies for shipping, recovering and selling the drugs on illicit markets and the large flow of money between Italy and Nigeria which was the proceeds of drug dealing.

Operation MALESIA



During the reporting period it was ascertained that heroin refining labs, traditionally located along the traditional trafficking routes, namely in *Pakistan, Iran* and *Turkey*, were springing up also in *opium* producing countries, as is shown by the numerous labs shut down in *Afghanistan*<sup>25</sup>.

In December 2020, Operation DARAGA, conducted by the Carabinieri Provincial Command in Macerata, dismantled a criminal organisation composed of *Pakistani* and *Afghan* nationals who supplied heroin

20 Cf. UNODC, World Drug Report 2019, booklet 1.

21 Cf. UNODC, World Drug Report 2019, booklet 1.

22 Cf. UNODC, World Drug Report 2019, booklet 1.

23 Cf. UNODC, World Drug Report 2019, booklet 1.

24 Cf. UNODC, World Drug Report 2019, booklet 1.

25 Cf. UNODC, World Drug Report 2019, booklet 1.

smuggled from Pakistan to Italy to drug dealers in the province of Macerata. The operation led to the arrest and preventive custody of 16 people and to the seizure of more than 6 kg of heroin.

On 17 March 2020 an operation conducted by the State Police Investigating Unit of the Police Headquarters of Naples led to the execution of a preventive custody order against 13 individuals suspected of being members of a Camorra group called the "NOTTURNO clan", which was playing a dominant role in the Neapolitan district of Scampia in the control of drug trafficking and dealing, of heroin in particular.

Operation DARAGA - press conference



### Hashish

In 2020, investigations confirmed that *cannabis resin* or *hashish* arriving in Europe is almost entirely produced in *Morocco* and that it reaches destination countries via long-established routes and modes of transport. The preferred route for the transfer and storage of drugs involves moving drug consignments to *Spain* and from here the drugs leave for final markets, including those in Italy, usually concealed in specially modified vehicles<sup>26</sup>.

In addition to those outlined above, there are additional *hashish* transit routes which traverse countries that are minor producers:

- the "Indian" route, which from *Afghanistan* and *Nepal* crosses *India* heading to *Europe* and the Eastern coasts of *Africa*<sup>27</sup>,
- the "Syrian" route, which moves along two directions, one southwards to *Jordan* and *Saudi Arabia* and one westwards to *Lebanon*<sup>28</sup>,
- The "Balkan" route, which from *Afghanistan* and *Pakistan* crosses *Turkey* and the *Balkan Republics* and moves to *Europe*<sup>29</sup>,
- the "Mediterranean" route, which threads through in the following directions:
  - from *Lebanon* to *Cyprus*, *Greece*, *Italy*, *France* and *Spain*;
  - from *Morocco* to the *Iberian peninsula* and via the Atlantic ocean to *Northern Europe*<sup>30</sup>.

In June 2020 Operation YGARA, conducted by the Spanish Guardia Civil and by the Economic and Financial Unit of the Guardia di Finanza in Rome with the support and coordination of the DCSA, focused on a transnational criminal organisation trafficking large quantities of hashish across the Mediterranean. The organisation operated in several Spanish cities and other countries, including Italy,

<sup>26</sup> On 09.07.2020 in the province of Pavia, 321 kg of hashish were discovered inside a car and seized. On 07.08.2020 in the province of Milan, 210 kg of hashish were seized. They were concealed in a hidden floor compartment of a van.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. UNODC, World Drug Report 2019, booklet 1.

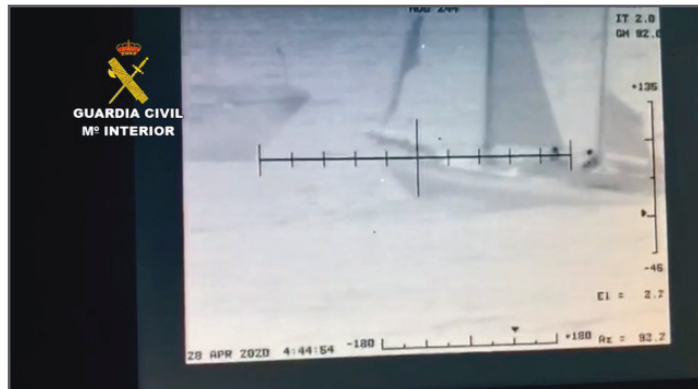
<sup>28</sup> Cf. UNODC, World Drug Report 2019, booklet 1.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. UNODC, World Drug Report 2019, booklet 1.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. UNODC, World Drug Report 2019, booklet 1.

*Libya, Morocco, Guinea Bissau, Senegal and Tunisia. During the investigation, the Guardia Civil arrested 19 members of the criminal organisation. In particular, thanks to the cooperation of the Senegalese authorities and the operational support of FRONTEX, a sailing vessel was intercepted and boarded in international waters near the Senegalese coast. 5.1 tonnes of hashish were found and seized and the three crew members, two Colombians and one Spaniard, were arrested.*

Operation YGARA



*Given the transnational context, the international cooperation between the above-mentioned Economic and Financial Unit of the Guardia di Finanza in Rome and its counterparts from the Guardia Civil, effectively supported by the coordination of the DCSA and by Law Enforcement attachés in Madrid (Spain) and Dakar (Senegal), was of fundamental importance for the investigation. At the time of counteraction, the ease of the suspects' relocation was effectively countered by a continuous and collaborative information exchange between law enforcement agencies as well as by the execution of joint technical activities with the involvement of the Armed Forces and of the Senegalese Central Office for the Repression of Illicit Traffic in Narcotics.*

### **Marijuana**

*Marijuana* continued to be transported to Italy via the Adriatic from *Albania* and *Greece*. These routes have lost their past importance in recent years, as is shown by the steady decrease in seizure figures<sup>31</sup>.

Italy is not only at the crossroads of transit routes, but also a producing country; crops, which are very profitable, are concentrated in the southern regions due to favourable climate conditions for cultivation<sup>32</sup>.

In 2020, Italy confirmed its economic and operational support to Albania in its fight against *cannabis* cultivation. Italy provided support with aircraft and technology to detect and locate plantations in order to eradicate them. Following the "*Operational Protocol*" signed in 2012 between the Italian Department of Public Security and the Albanian Police and which has recently been renewed, a complex aerial surveillance was carried out by aircraft of the Guardia di Finanza with the aim of locating plantations of cannabis on Albanian territory and allowing the local authorities to eradicate the crops.

Between May and October 2020, the overflight campaign led to a considerable increase in the number of detected and eradicated plantations. More specifically, in the three-year period from 2018 to 2020, the number of detected crops was constantly on the increase. Taking into account only

<sup>31</sup> Cf. European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction, 2019 Annual Report: the State of the Drugs Problem in Europe.

<sup>32</sup> On 03.09.2020 in Vibo Valencia, 600 kg of marijuana were seized after they were found concealed on a farm. On 16.12.2020 in Giave (SS), 320 kg of marijuana were found concealed inside a stable on a farm and they were seized.

the statistics for that period, the number of detected plantations was 675 in 2018, 1,109 in 2019 and 1,964 in 2020<sup>33</sup>

These data testify to the effectiveness of law enforcement activities, shown by a decrease in the amount of *marijuana* coming directly from Albania via the Adriatic and seized in Italy. The decreasing figure is clearly evident if we consider the last 10 years, which have shown a steady drop in seizures<sup>34</sup>.

*On 15 December 2020 Operation METALBA, Operation METALBA - press conference*

*conducted by the Carabinieri R.O.S. and by the Carabinieri Company in Policoro, led to the execution of a preventive custody order issued by the Preliminary Investigation Judge of the Court in Potenza against 18 members of a criminal group involved in drug trafficking and distribution of marijuana and other narcotic substances. The crime syndicate operated on the Ionian coast in Basilicata, mostly in Tursi and Policoro, and bought the drugs from*



*Albanian suppliers who, in turn, received the drugs from their own country.*

*On 15 June 2020, Operation BABY, conducted by the Carabinieri in Bari, ended with the execution of a preventive custody order against 10 persons closely affiliated with the Palermiti and Carpriati criminal clans operating in a number of districts in Bari. The complex investigation documented the creation of a crime syndicate involved in the purchase, transport and detention of large quantities of drugs, mainly marijuana. During the operation, drugs such as marijuana and hashish were found and seized for a total weight of approximately 52 kg.*

*On 2 September 2020, the Economic and Financial Unit of the Guardia di Finanza in Reggio Calabria found and seized 640 kg of dried marijuana and 5,260 cannabis plants in Pizzo (VV) inside some greenhouses and sheds where – officially – flowers were being grown under protected conditions. Four persons were arrested in connection with this.*

### Synthetic drugs

The year 2020 confirmed the upward trend in seizures of synthetic drugs and new psychoactive substances<sup>35</sup> (NPS<sup>36</sup>) recorded in recent years.

The NPS that have appeared on the national market belong mainly to the families (or classes)

33 Cf. the press release of the Italian Embassy in Tirana on the fight against cannabis cultivation in Albania, 14 December 2020.

34 Marijuana from Albania seized in Italy over the last 10 years: 2,828 kg (in 2011) – 4,035 kg (in 2012) – 5,711 kg (in 2013) – 7,835 kg (in 2014) – 2,698 kg (in 2015) – 16,686 kg (in 2016) – 26,425 kg (in 2017) – 6,586 kg (in 2018) – 1,447 kg (in 2019) – 1,063 kg (in 2020).

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

36 These substances are referred to with the English acronym NPS.

of synthetic cathinones<sup>37</sup>, synthetic cannabinoids<sup>38</sup>, synthetic opioids<sup>39</sup>, tryptamines<sup>40</sup>, arylcyclohexylamines<sup>41</sup> and phenethylamines<sup>42</sup>. They are produced in illegal laboratories by modifying the basic chemical structure of the synthetic drug in order to circumvent antidrug legislation, with serious risks to the health of consumers, who are often unwitting guinea pigs on whom the effects are tested. It is often the case that user does not know what he is taking.

Rome - synthetic drugs seizure - October 2020



Both at international level and within EU institutions, NPS are considered a real emergency, which must be tackled with new strategies and appropriate technical and legal means<sup>43</sup>.

The European Union has approved regulatory and procedural initiatives so that Member States can be more efficient and timely in including NPS into the Tables of Scheduled Substances as soon as they first appear on the illegal market<sup>44</sup>. The emergence of NPS is reported by EU Member States<sup>45</sup> to the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA) based in Lisbon (Portugal) and, after a rapid investigation, it is forwarded to the European Commission for updating of EU legislation. In line with EU decisions, in 2009 a National Focal Point was established at the Department for Anti-Drug Policies of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, thus launching the National Early Warning System (NEWS). The system is designed to detect at an early stage potentially dangerous phenomena for public health following the detection of NPS in Italy and the discovery of new methods of using classic drugs, such as heroin, cocaine, cannabis and amphetamine. NEWS is coordinated by the

37 Synthetic cathinones are structural analogues of cathinone (a psychoactive molecule found in the leaves of khat) and they are marketed in tablets of various colours and shapes, in capsules and powder/crystal form. They are usually presented as "bath salts" or "plant fertilizers". These products often contain more than one cathinone and/or they are associated with other psychoactive substances (*New Drugs. Update e Piano di Azione Nazionale*, 2013 edition).

38 In Europe, synthetic cannabinoids were first identified in 2008 in different vegetable mixtures, going under the name of "herbal mixture" or "herbal blend", and sold as incense or air fresheners. Consumers often consider them as a natural alternative to cannabis, but with similar psychotropic activity, although they are actually produced in labs. These molecules (JWH-018, JWH-073, JWH-122, JWH-200, JWH-250, JWH-251, JWH-081, JWH-398, JWH-019, HU-210 etc.) act on CB1 receptors responsible for the psychoactive effects of cannabis, mimicking its effects. Synthetic cannabinoids are usually smoked by adding the synthetic molecules to cigarettes containing herbal substances.

39 Synthetic opioids include a number of laboratory-produced chemicals (fentanyl, tramadol, methadone, oxycodone, etc.). They were developed and are currently used mainly for medical purposes, but are widely used among drug addicts for their heroin-like effects.

40 Arylcyclohexylamines are a group of molecules in which the main chemical skeleton consists of a tryptamine, a natural alkaloid, and they have hallucinogenic compounds found in some plants and fungi, such as *N,N*-dimethyltryptamine (DMT) psilocybin. Natural tryptamines are sold as dried herbal preparations (e.g. dried mushrooms); whereas synthetic tryptamines may be formulated as capsules, tablets, powders or liquids. They are generally ingested, snorted, smoked or injected (<http://www.politicheantidroga.gov.it/it/normativa/le-sostanze/altre-sostanze/triptamine/prodotto/>).

41 These are a group of molecules (such as ketamine, phencyclidine, etc.) with dissociative properties and hallucinogenic and sedative effects.

42 Phenethylamines refer to a class of substances with a fairly wide psychoactive and stimulant effects along with amphetamine, methamphetamine and 3,4-Methylenedioxymethamphetamine (or MDMA, commonly known as ecstasy), all of which are controlled under the 1971 Convention (*New Drugs. Update e Piano di Azione Nazionale*, 2013 edition).

43 Cf. <http://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/covid/Covid-19-and-drug-supply-chain-Mai2020.pdf>.

44 Directive (EU) 2017/2103 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 November 2017 amending Council Framework Decision 2004/757/JHA in order to include new psychoactive substances in the definition of 'drug' and repealing Council Decision 2005/387/JHA.

45 Regulation (EC) No. 1920/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 12 December 2006 on the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (recast).

National Centre for Addiction and Doping of the Italian Health Institute and supported by:

- the Poison Control Centre of the Maugeri Scientific Clinical Institutes in Pavia for clinical-toxicological cases, including those of acute intoxication,
- the Forensic Toxicology Research Unit of the Sapienza University in Rome for bio-toxicological matters concerning the qualitative/quantitative identification of substances;
- the DCSA for the coordination of law enforcement activities in the field of narcotics, for information on NPS seizures or drugs on the market that may pose an imminent health threat to consumers.

In this context, particular mention should be made of *fentanyl*<sup>46</sup>. The sale of this powerful synthetic opioid continues to cause alarm, especially in North-Eastern Europe, because of the serious risks<sup>47</sup> it may pose not only to users, but also to unsuspecting workers<sup>48</sup> if they come into unintentional contact with this substance. Studies carried out, among others, in our forensic police laboratories, have shown that just a few can be sufficient to make many thousands of doses. Although this synthetic opiate is still not widespread in Italy, as can be seen from the limited number of seizures made in our country<sup>49</sup>, it is used by drug addicts and is mainly supplied by post<sup>50</sup>. *The International Narcotics Control Board*<sup>51</sup> published a document<sup>52</sup> listing 144 *fentanyl*-related substances with no currently known legitimate uses, and authoritative sources estimate that there may be over a thousand chemical variations. In this regard, the DCSA, in its role of coordinating antidrug activities, is the national contact point for the online communication platform called IONICS<sup>53</sup>, managed by the INCB, dedicated to real-time communication of seizures of NPS, including *fentanyl*-related substances; in 2020, the DCSA entered 29 NPS seizures onto this platform<sup>54</sup>.

Synthetic drugs are increasingly sold through sites operating on the *Dark Web*<sup>55</sup>, accessible only through secure and functional *encryption* systems, in ways that make it extremely difficult to identify those involved and to trace their payments<sup>56</sup>.

Despite the highlighted problems and the numerous law enforcement interventions, the drugs market on the *Dark Web* seems destined to grow.

In this regard, sellers and webmasters of the so-called "*digital drug markets*" use sales strategies to build customer loyalty which they copy from marketing strategies and they also post reviews of website reliability and drug quality. In this regard, it should be noted that they are increasingly taking sophisticated digital precautions, like using *encryption* and *anonymization* methods, and

46 Fentanyl is a powerful synthetic opioid pain reliever that has been used medically since the 1960s. It is used in pharmaceutical preparations as an analgesic or anaesthetic. Being approximately 80 to 100 times more potent than morphine, it creates addiction in users.

47 In some cases death is also possible. Naloxone is currently the only antidote currently available to reverse an opioid overdose.

48 As is the case for law enforcement or customs officers, postal workers and couriers.

49 There were only five seizures in 2019 and three in 2020.

50 The National Early Warning System repeatedly reported overdoses.

51 The International Narcotics Control Board (INCB), established in 1968 in accordance with the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs of 1961, is the independent monitoring body for the implementation of the United Nations international drug control conventions.

52 [https://www.incb.org/documents/Global\\_Projects\\_OPIOIDS/INCB.GRIDS.OPIOIDS.Fentanyl-Rel\\_Subst\\_list.pdf](https://www.incb.org/documents/Global_Projects_OPIOIDS/INCB.GRIDS.OPIOIDS.Fentanyl-Rel_Subst_list.pdf)

53 [https://www.incb.org/incb/en/project\\_ion/ionics.html](https://www.incb.org/incb/en/project_ion/ionics.html)

54 Data are entered onto the IONICS platform when they concern transnational seizures.

55 They include Agora, Evolution, Silkroad, Silkroad2, Pandora and Deutschland im Deepweb.

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



physical precautions, like paying particular attention to *packaging*, in order to conceal the drugs sent to customers' homes.

In this regard, there have been significant increases in seizures of synthetic drugs, including that of 14 tons<sup>57</sup> of *amphetamines* seized in the port of Salerno in June 2020. The production of *methamphetamines* continues to be concentrated in *Mexico*, as well as in south-east Asia, and in particular in *China*, the *Philippines* and, above all, *Myanmar*.

Europe maintained its leadership in the production of synthetic drugs, considering

the number of laboratories shut down in *Belgium*, the *Netherlands*, *Poland* and *Czech Republic*, which are the main European producing areas of these illicit substances destined for both the domestic demand and the international markets, including the European ones<sup>58</sup>.

The absence of a connection between synthetic drugs and a certain geographical area, unlike what happens with traditional drugs which are connected to specific locations in cultivation areas, continued to make it difficult to estimate total production also in 2020.

During the reporting period, there was an increasing trend in the use of *GHB*<sup>59</sup> and *GBL*<sup>60</sup>, better known as "*date rape drugs*", which usually come in the form of colourless, odourless liquid or white crystalline powder. Their characteristics make these substances difficult to detect during normal police checks, not least because they are so easy to conceal. Moreover, even small quantities of these drugs can be used to make a considerable number of doses given the high potency of the basic active ingredients<sup>61</sup>.

In this context, *ketamine*<sup>62</sup>, a commonly used general anaesthetic, was also found to be increasingly used as a "*recreational drug of abuse*" in 2020. It was found in both liquid and powder form, making it easy to mix with other drugs.

*In the summer of 2020, the State Police Investigating Unit in Lodi seized approximately 30 kg of ketamine (and 70 kg of hashish) found in the possession of a local Italian resident.*

Finally, increasing attention was paid during the reporting period to the spread of the so-called "*pink*

Linate (MI) - antidrug check of sacks containing post deliveries



57 Approximately 84 million pills with the Captagon logo.

58 Cf. *Relazione europea sulla droga 2020* (European Drug Report 2020) by the Department of Anti-Drug Policies of the Italian Presidency of the Council of Ministers.

59 GHB (Gamma Hydroxybutyrate) stimulates the GABA receptor in the central nervous system, which in the brain regulates waking states and sleep and stimulates growth hormone.

60 GBL (Gamma Butyrolactone) and BDO (1.4 Butanediol) are both GHB precursors. Once ingested, the human organism metabolizes them into GHB. GBL and GHB are classified as narcotic drugs in the Italian legal system.

61 By way of example only, one litre of GBL is sufficient to produce around 2,000 doses.

62 Ketamine is an anaesthetic drug and the only compound of the arylcyclohexylamine class approved for medical use, but used up to now to induce and maintain anaesthesia, mostly in veterinary medicine.

*cocaine*” in Italy. This is 2C-B<sup>63</sup>, as shown by analyses carried out by the police in the rare cases of seizure.

In this regard, it should be pointed out that, in some cases, the seized drug was believed by users to be “pink cocaine” but in fact it was a potent mixture of several synthetic substances, including *ketamine*, *amphetamine*<sup>64</sup> and *MDMA*<sup>65</sup>, which were dyed pink<sup>66</sup>.

*In June 2020 the Economic and Financial Unit of the Guardia di Finanza in Naples seized 14 tons of amphetamines coming from Syria, equivalent to 84 million pills with the “Captagon” logo, along with almost 3,000 kg of hashish. The drugs were concealed in a container inside industrial paper cylinders and machinery constructed in such a way as to prevent scanners from detecting the contents. This was the world’s biggest seizure of amphetamines worth more than 1 billion euros.*

In 2020 law enforcement agencies seized 91<sup>67</sup> NPS in Italy, 33 of which were not included in the Tables of psychotropic substances contained in Consolidated Law No. 309/1990. In 2019 only 15 NPS were seized.

Although few criminal organisations used to be involved in synthetic drug trafficking in the past, with time they have shown a growing interest in this business in the light of the market expansion and the expected high profits.

With regard to national data, it is interesting to note that, in August 2020, in a garage in Conversano (BA), the Carabinieri Tenenza in Mola di Bari found and seized a laboratory with equipment and precursors<sup>68</sup> capable of starting production of several kilos of “amphetamines”.

Although this is an isolated case, it suggests an expansion of trafficking in synthetic drugs and a growing interest in these substances.

Material for the production of amphetamines seized in Conversano



## THE ROLE OF ITALIAN CRIMINAL ORGANIZATIONS IN THE DRUG TRAFFICKING

Drug trafficking is the main source of wealth for criminal organisations, regardless of the type of drugs. Attracted by extraordinary profit margins, the most aggressive *international criminal networks* engage in the management of illicit trafficking by setting up impressive organisational and logistical structures and using huge amounts of capital to finance the continuation and expansion of their activity.

63 2C-B is a psychoactive substance belonging to the “2C-phenylethylamine” family with predominantly psychedelic or entactogenic effects. In the 1980s, it was marketed as an aphrodisiac and used in psychiatry as an adjuvant to psychological therapy.

64 Many psychological effects of amphetamines are similar to cocaine and they include increased attention and concentration, euphoria and feelings of well-being and grandiosity. Palpitations, tremors, sweating, and mydriasis may also occur during intoxication.

65 3,4-Methylenedioxyamphetamine, more commonly known as MDMA, is a psychoactive substance belonging to the phenylethylamine family. It has strong stimulant and entactogenic effects, although not exactly psychedelic.

66 Cf. the data published in 2020 by the Central Anticrime Directorate of the State Police – Forensic Science Police Service.

67 See note 13 at p. 123.

68 These chemicals are essential for manufacturing synthetic and semi-synthetic drugs referred to in Article 70 of Presidential Decree No. 309/90, which in turn makes reference to EU Regulations.

Drug trade was also considered a source of revenue by the most influential *terrorist networks and liberation movements* operating in drug-producing regions, such as the “*Taliban*” in Afghanistan, the “*FARC*” in Colombia and the “*Al Qaeda*” groups in the Sahel<sup>69</sup>.

Traditional criminal organisations have therefore merged into transnational joint ventures, which ensure drug production and supply on one continent and transport to another, and even a third if necessary, right down to the target consumers.

The choice of concealment techniques and international routes is not based so much on the economic convenience of transport but on the chances of arriving at the intended destination by eluding checks as much as possible.

Globalisation has led to closer interaction between criminal groups operating in different areas and continents and belonging to different cultures. The geopolitical, economic and social conditions on the different continents have differentiated the operations and behaviour of local criminal groups, which have progressively adopted more flexible and dynamic “*modular network*” organisational models, becoming multifaceted aggregations no longer anchored only to the territory or to sub-cultural reference factors.

The international drug trafficking scenario has continued to evolve, favouring the search for “*reliable*” partners and “*safe*” routes, so as to minimize the risk of shipments being seized. The route changes documented in 2020 were closely linked to the constant search for safer routes, the possibility of exploiting insiders at ports of departure and arrival, and the need for storage areas close to port locations.

### ***‘Ndrangheta***

During the reporting period, the *‘Ndrangheta* continued to play a dominant role in the management of transnational cocaine trafficking to Europe. The constant expansion of the Calabrian Mafia-type organisation confirmed its position of prominence among Italian criminal organisations as a result of the absolute control it exercises over the territory combined with the vitality of its transnational branches, which borrowed the traditional structures and rules of the original *‘Ndrine*<sup>70</sup>.

The basic cell of the entire criminal organisation can be traced back to the *‘Ndrina*, whose members are tied by close family ties, and it enjoys a high degree of autonomy in the control of its territory of interest. These peculiarities make it difficult for law enforcement to investigate the branches established by the entire Calabrian criminal organisation throughout the country. They also favour the renewal of top-ranking leaders and avoid the risk of criminal organisation being “*damaged*” by members who later collaborate with the criminal justice system.

For a long historical period, the *‘Ndrangheta* did not have a unitary chain of command and control similar to the “*Provincial Commission*” of *Cosa Nostra*. Following a strengthening of the investigations and the dismantling of high-ranking leadership structure combined with the search for solutions to internal disagreements and *feuds*, the leading figures of the Calabrian criminal organisation transformed their structure in order to make it less vulnerable and more easily manageable<sup>71</sup>.

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69 Cf. *Legami tra traffici di droghe e terrorismo* (Connections between drug trafficking and terrorism) published in 2016 by the Centro Militare Studi Strategici (Military Centre for Strategic Studies).

70 Cf. the Half-Yearly Report January-June 2020 of the Anti-Mafia Investigation Directorate (available in Italian).

71 Cf. the Half-Yearly Report January-June 2020 of the Anti-Mafia Investigation Directorate (available in Italian).

In the areas of origin, the *'Ndrangheta* divided the province of Reggio Calabria into "*mandamenti*" (districts) and the other major provinces into "*federazioni*" (federations) and it adopted a top-down structure that favoured leaner and more centralised management and control models.

In territorial terms, the province of Reggio Calabria was divided into three districts corresponding to the *Ionian*<sup>72</sup>, *Central*<sup>73</sup> and *Tyrrhenian*<sup>74</sup> areas and an authoritative body was established, called the "*Province*" whose members have coordination and senior management roles to ensure area balances, which are instrumental in guaranteeing the vitality of the entire structure.

In summary, also for 2020, from its work carried out within its institutional remit, the DCSA confirmed that these remain the most powerful clans<sup>75</sup>:

- in the "*central district*", the *Condello, De Stefano, Tegano* and *Libri* clans; in the "*Ionian district*" the *Pelle-Vottari* and *Nirta-Strangio* clans in San Luca; the *Barbaro-Trimboli* clan in Platì; the *Morabito-Palamara-Bruzzaniti* clan in Africo; the *Commisso* clan in Siderno and the *Aquino* clan in Marina di Gioiosa Jonica; in the "*Tyrrhenian district*" the *Piomalli* and *Molè* clans in Gioia Tauro as well as the *Bellocco* clan in San Ferdinando di Rosarno and the *Pesce* clan in Rosarno,
- in Crotona, the *Megna* clan, originally from Papanice, and in the rest of the province the *Arena* and *Nicoscia* clans from Isola Capo Rizzuto, the *Grande Aracri* clan from Cutro and the *Farao-Marincola* clan from Cirò,
- in Catanzaro, the *Costanzo* and the *Catanzariti* syndicates. In the rest of the province, the *Giampà-Iannazzo-Cannizzaro-Da Ponte* clan and the *Cerra-Torcasio-Gualtieri* clan from Lamezia Terme and the *Gallace* clan from Guardavalle,
- in Vibo Valentia the *Lo Bianco-Barba* clan and in the rest of the province the *Mancuso* clan;
- in Cosenza the *Ruà-Lanzino-Patitucci*, the *Perna-Pranno-Cicero* and the *Bruni* clans. On the Tyrrhenian side of the province, the *Muto* clans, while in the Ionian side some *Roma families*.

The information available to the DCSA confirms that there are stable drug trafficking relations between *'Ndrangheta* and members of *Cosa Nostra*, the *Camorra*, *Apulian criminal organisations* and with *foreign criminal organisations*<sup>76</sup>.

In this context, *Calabrian brokers* living in the traditional cocaine-producing areas were used along with consolidated criminal branches in *South America, Canada, Australia* and *Europe*<sup>77</sup>.

With regard to Europe, it was demonstrated that the *'Ndrangheta* is well-rooted in *Germany, the Netherlands* and *Belgium* where it directly runs the arrival, storage and distribution of cocaine through local branches.

72 The Ionian district stretches over the South-Eastern side, between Monasterace in the north and Bova Marina in the South. The main population centres in the Locride are Roccella Jonica, Siderno, Locri, Bovalino and Bianco. The regional boundary crosses the following towns in Aspromonte: Stilo, Caulonia Superiore, Grotteria, Mammola, Canolo, Antonimina, Ciminà, Platì, Careri, San Luca, Samo, Africo Vecchio, Roghudi Vecchio and Bova.

73 The Central district stretches over the South-Western side, between the coastal towns of Scilla and Condofuri Marina and it crosses Reggio Calabria. In the inner area it borders on Roccaforte del Greco and Condofuri.

74 The Tyrrhenian district stretches over the North-Western side, between the coastal towns of Rosarno in the North and Seminara in the South and it crosses San Ferdinando, Gioia Tauro and Palmi, while the towns of Candidoni, Serrata, San Pietro di Caridà, Galatro, Giffone, Cinquefrondi, San Giorgio Morgeto, Cittanova, Molochio, Oppido Mamertina, Santa Cristina d'Aspromonte, Scido, Delianuova, Cosoleto, Sinopoli, Sant'Eufemia d'Aspromonte and Melicuccà are located in the foothill area.

75 Cf. the Half-Yearly Report January-June 2020 of the Anti-Mafia Investigation Directorate (available in Italian).

76 Cf. the hearing of the Chief of Police – Director General of Public Security before the Parliamentary Committee of Inquiry into mafia-related and other criminal organisations, including foreign organisations, held on 29 April 2021.

77 Cf. the Half-Yearly Report January-June 2020 of the Anti-Mafia Investigation Directorate (available in Italian).

On 30 June 2002 Italy started the “I-CAN” project. Promoted alongside *Interpol*, this project brings together law enforcement agencies from *Australia, Canada, the United States, Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Uruguay, France, Germany and Switzerland* with the support of the relevant judicial authorities. Italy set up a hub at the *Central Directorate of Criminal Police*, with the strategic involvement of Law Enforcement agencies, the Anti-Mafia Investigation Directorate and the DCSA with the aim of:

Conference for the launch of the Project I-Can



- implementing a global awareness programme to bridge the gap of detailed information on the methods used by the *'Ndrangheta* to infiltrate social and entrepreneurial contexts,
- employing and developing the latest technology for operational and predictive analysis,
- coordinating joint investigations in order to arrest fugitives, seize and later confiscate illicitly acquired assets.

*Europol* recently assessed the *'Ndrangheta* as the most threatening organized crime group and defined it as one of the most powerful criminal organisations in the world, capable of expanding outside its areas of origin and replicating abroad the structures it established in Calabria<sup>78</sup>.

Its strong roots in Calabria based on family ties, the almost total absence of ex members who turn state witness and its weaponry and economic clout were key factors for the expansion of the *'Ndrangheta* into new territories.

This was confirmed by the Supreme Court of Cassation, which drew an analogy between a franchise agreement and the ability to replicate the Calabrian criminal model in the world and stated that *"... the offence of Mafia-type association is recognisable in the presence of a silent mafia as long as clear organisation located within the territory, role earmarking, affiliation membership rites, the organisational and programming levels achieved tangibly point [...] to the forthcoming commission of target crimes bearing the hallmark of the ('Ndrangheta) brand in a sort of franchise of "provinces" and "locali"*<sup>79</sup>.

Investigation outcomes gathered by the DCSA in 2020 confirmed that the *'Ndrine* are well-rooted outside their Calabrian territory and have also honed their criminal skills in the area of reinvesting drug trafficking proceeds using sophisticated money laundering techniques.

The Preventive Custody Sections of the Court in Milan seized assets<sup>80</sup> worth several million euros from *'Ndrangheta* members, highlighting that Calabrian clan members can resort to a network of front companies and dummy figures to reinvest their drug trafficking profits into other economic activities.

78 Cf. *Europol's Working Group meeting held in Rome on 15 September 2020.*

79 Cf. Judgment No. 778, 5<sup>th</sup> Section, of 3 March 2015, passed by the Criminal Section of the Italian Supreme Court of Cassation.

80 Cf. Decree No. 125/2020 M.P. of the Autonomous Preventive Measure Section of the Court in Milan dated 21.09.2020.

It should also be noted that the United States decided in 2008 to put the 'Ndrangheta criminal cells on the notorious drug trafficking "black list" in order to prevent Calabrian clans from infiltrating the US economic and financial systems<sup>81</sup>.

*Operation FREELAND, conducted by the State Police Investigating Unit of the Police Headquarters in Trento, led in June 2020 to the arrest of 20 Italians from the provinces of Reggio Calabria and Cosenza in execution of a preventive custody order. They were suspected of Mafia-type association, extortion, kidnapping, illicit sale of narcotic substances, illegal possession of firearms and more.*

Operation FREELAND - press conference



*The investigation shed light on the escalation, which started in the 1990s, of a*

*"locale" in Bolzano using methods similar to those of the Calabrian 'Ndrine, and in particular of the Italiano-Papalia group from Delianuova (Reggio Calabria), of which it was direct offshoot. Over the years, the Mafia-type organisation became stronger and took the place of local criminal gangs in drug trafficking management, thus becoming a point of reference for the supply of drugs in Trentino Alto Adige. The investigation also revealed that this organisation was doing business with the Colombian cartels who supplied cocaine that was trafficked to Italy, stored and distributed in various areas.*

*Operation MAGMA, conducted by the Investigative Unit on Organized Crime (GICO) of the Guardia di Finanza in Reggio Calabria and by the Central Organized Crime Investigation Service (SCICO) in Rome, ended with the execution of 45 preventive custody measures for Mafia-type association, international drug trafficking and illegal possession of firearms. The operation dismantled a group linked to the Bellocco family from Rosarno (RC) and its branches outside Calabria. All top-ranking*

Operation MAGMA - press conference



*members of the group, which belonged to the "Tyrrhenian district" and operated in the Gioia Tauro plain, in Emilia-Romagna, Lazio and Lombardy, were arrested. The criminal group, which featured a multi-tier structure and had vast financial resources, identified suppliers of huge quantities of cocaine in South America, especially Argentina and Costa Rica. The cocaine was smuggled into Italy concealed inside large bags placed inside shipping containers.*

- **Focus: "Expansion of the 'Ndrangheta in Germany"**

Since the early 1990s, several criminal proceedings have been instituted in Germany and Italy

<sup>81</sup> Cf. the Foreign Narcotics Kingpin Designation Act passed by the George W. Bush administration in 2008.

against members of Calabrian criminal groups on charges of criminal association and breaches of the law on drugs and firearms. The accused were linked to powerful criminal groups operating in San Luca. The investigations conducted by the Bundeskriminalamt and by other German law enforcement agencies<sup>82</sup> established that the Calabrian criminal organisation was deeply rooted in the German cities of *Duisburg*, *Erfurt*, *Munich*, *Leipzig*, *Neukirchen-Vluyn*, *Deizisau*, *Bous* and *Bochum*<sup>83</sup>.

Only the well-known “*Duisburg massacre*” in 2007 revealed how dangerous and pervasive the Calabrian criminality was and highlighted the extent of the ‘*Ndrangheta*’s infiltration of Germany where, many years before, it had bought retail outlets, businesses and other financial concerns. In 2020 the German government claimed that between 18 and 20 Calabrian criminal groups were active across Germany, consisting of approximately 800 to 1,000 members. The German authorities also underlined that the Calabrian criminal organisation had increased its territorial branches by emplacing abroad perfect copies of the structures it had in its region of origin and with whom it kept close links<sup>84</sup>.

The investigation outcomes, analysed by the DCSA over the reporting period, showed that the Calabrian criminal clans still repeatedly used Germany to hide their members and, above all, to trade large quantities of drugs.

Germany continues to be one of the preferred countries for storage of cocaine arriving from South America by sea. The port in Hamburg, one of the major European ports by freight volumes, is currently used by Calabrian criminal clans to smuggle large quantities of drugs into Germany.

The present threat posed by the Calabrian criminal phenomenon in Germany was confirmed by a *joint investigation team between Italy and Germany* with the participation of staff from this DCSA. The JIT documented that the *Romeo-Pelle-Vottari* and the *Nirta-Strangio* ‘drine from San Luca (RC) are firmly emplaced in Germany, along with members of the Pesce and Bellocco clans from Rosarno (RC) and of the *Farao-Marincola* clan from Cirò (KR).

Investigation outcomes from law enforcement activities against drug trafficking coordinated by this DCSA and a consolidated exchange of information within the *JIT between Italy and Germany* confirmed the pervasive control exerted by these ‘*ndrine* in Germany and provided an updated overall drug trafficking picture which highlighted the following features:

- ‘*Ndrangheta* members under investigation living in Germany were running the entire trafficking chain using encrypted communication platforms to conceal their criminal activities<sup>85</sup>;
- top-ranking members of the Calabrian clans and of the “*Balkan cartel*” living in Germany had mutual dealings and established productive cooperation channels, thus creating a wide-ranging joint venture<sup>86</sup>.

82 Involved in the investigations were the Police in Duisburg and Bochum, the Landeskriminalamt in Erfurt, the Police in Munich, the Bundeskriminalamt in Wiesbaden, the Landeskriminalamt in Stuttgart, the Landeskriminalamt in Saarbrücken and the Saxon Landeskriminalamt.

83 Cf. “The ‘*Ndrangheta* in Germany”, BKA Report 2020 labeled as classified information – only for official use.

84 Cf. Answers of the German Federal Ministry of Interior to a parliamentary question, published in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* in 2020.

85 Cf. the Joint Investigation Team set up on 10 December 2020 between Italy and Germany.

86 Cf. Preventive Custody Order No. 2109/2016 R.G. GIP and Preventive Custody Order No. 6089 R.G.N.R. DDA issued in 2016 by the Preliminary Investigation Judge in Reggio Calabria.

### **Cosa Nostra**

During the reporting period, despite the aggressive judicial attack aimed at dismantling the criminal structures and freezing illicit financial assets, this historic Mafia organisation showed signs of renewed vitality thanks to emerging new recruits, a general ability to regenerate itself and replace leaders and members<sup>87</sup>. Structures at *district* and *provincial level* provide for the continuation of criminal operations and preserve internal balances and stability of the command structure.

To date, *Cosa Nostra* is a unitary and top-down criminal organisation shaped around a hierarchical pyramid based on *families* and *districts (Mandamenti)*, each with its own *Provincial Commission*. Each level is ruled by bosses and, in case they are imprisoned, by “reggenti” (stand-ins)<sup>88</sup>.

The context analysis carried out by the DCSA confirmed that, during the reporting period, the traditional *Cosa Nostra* organisation is present in the provinces of *Palermo, Trapani, Agrigento, Caltanissetta* and *Enna*. In the eastern provinces of the island, criminal groups with more changeable structures have been established. Well organised in the territory, they continued to compete with local *Cosa Nostra* criminal groups<sup>89</sup>.

Faced with the growing need to support the families of members, mostly detained in prison, important *Cosa Nostra* leaders attempted to carve out a primary position in drug trafficking. An analysis of investigation results highlighted that the Sicilian Mafia started fruitful negotiations with the most prominent crime syndicates engaged in drug trafficking, for example with the Campanian criminal groups<sup>90</sup> and also with the Calabrian underworld, in order to reach specific agreements regarding the port of Gioia Tauro which is considered a major hub for drug trafficking towards Sicily.

Significant in this respect is the Report of the General Prosecutor of the Republic in Palermo who, on the opening of the 2020 judicial year, stated: “... *Drug trafficking is currently the main source of income for Cosa Nostra. Drugs are usually purchased from and with Calabrian and Campanian criminal organisations and traded through drug-dealing organisations with no direct connection with Cosa Nostra, although the latter usually has a trusted contact within those organisations. This criminal activity is frequently managed at district level ...*”.

*On 21 July 2020, Operation ERIDE, conducted by the Carabinieri Provincial Command in Palermo, ended with the execution of a preventive custody order issued by the local Preliminary Investigation Judge against 15 people suspected of trafficking and selling drugs with the aggravating circumstance of the Mafia-type method.*

*This complex operation dismantled the Corso Calatafimi Mafia family, identifying the structures and methods used in the trafficking and sale of drugs in the area under the family’s control and outlining the role played by the “reggente”.*

*On 23 November 2020, Operation SKANDERBEG, conducted by the Carabinieri Company in Catania, led to the execution of a preventive custody order issued by the local Preliminary Investigation Judge against 101 individuals suspected of drug trafficking and sale with the aggravating circumstance of the Mafia-type method.*

<sup>87</sup> Cf. the Half-Yearly Report January-June 2020 of the Anti-Mafia Investigation Directorate (available in Italian).

<sup>88</sup> Cf. the Half-Yearly Report January-June 2020 of the Anti-Mafia Investigation Directorate (available in Italian).

<sup>89</sup> Cf. the Half-Yearly Report January-June 2020 of the Anti-Mafia Investigation Directorate (available in Italian).

<sup>90</sup> Cf. Italy’s Internal Intelligence and Security Agency’s “Report on Information Policy for Security in the year 2020” (available in Italian).



*The investigations pinpointed positions, roles and responsibilities of the suspects in the management of 12 “distribution areas” in Catania’s run-down neighbourhood of San Giovanni Galermo and gathered evidence of the involvement of members of the Santapaola-Ercolano Mafia family from Catania in this business.*

**Operation DINASTIA - press conference**



*In February 2020, Operation DINASTIA, conducted by the Carabinieri Provincial Command and R.O.S. in Messina, led to the execution of a preventive custody order issued by the Preliminary Investigation Judge in Messina against 59 individuals suspected, under different charges, of Mafia-type association, conspiracy to traffic drugs, drug possession with intent to supply, extortion, illegal possession and carrying of firearms, use of violence*

*and threats with the aggravating circumstance of the Mafia-type method. Further investigations ascertained that a Mafia family living in Barcelona engaged in extortion against shopkeepers and business owners and revealed that the Mafia-type method was used in the trafficking and distribution of large quantities of cocaine, hashish and marijuana in the Tyrrhenian area of the province of Messina.*

**Camorra**

The *Camorra* still has no vertical structure capable of running the activity of criminal branches in Italy. This fundamental characteristic is often the cause of disputes between criminal groups, especially in the provinces of Naples and Caserta where a higher profitability of the financial interests at stake intensifies competition for control of drug trafficking<sup>91</sup>.

The critical difficulties faced by the main *Camorra* clans led to a significant shattering of minor groups who sometimes revert to gangsterish methods. As a consequence, the traditional *Camorra* more closely resembles small-scale crime, which is very active and features the ready use of excessive violence and is engaged in predatory crime, thefts, mugging, robberies, receiving stolen goods and small-scale street dealing<sup>92</sup>.

The main features of the larger Neapolitan organised crime groups also include a clear ambition to expand internationally, especially towards Eastern European countries<sup>93</sup>.

During the reporting period, it was noted that in Naples and on its outskirts the Contini, *Di Lauro*, *Amato-Pagano*, *Licciardi* and *Mazzarella* clans continue to run large-scale illicit activities, such as international drug trafficking, like the notorious *Secondigliano Alliance*, sharing with it common strategic objectives, but working independently<sup>94</sup>.

91 Cf. the Half-Yearly Report January-June 2020 of the Anti-Mafia Investigation Directorate (available in Italian).

92 Cf. the Half-Yearly Report January-June 2020 of the Anti-Mafia Investigation Directorate (available in Italian).

93 Cf. the Half-Yearly Report January-June 2020 of the Anti-Mafia Investigation Directorate (available in Italian).

94 Cf. the Half-Yearly Report January-June 2020 of the Anti-Mafia Investigation Directorate (available in Italian).

In the province of Caserta, the *"Casalesi family cartel"*, connected with the *Zagaria, Bldognetti* and *Schiavone* clans, continues to play a predominant role.

In the province of Salerno there are *"federations of criminal groups"* and independent criminal organisations fighting for control of the territory and often in contact with other groups linked to the *'Ndrangheta* and to *Apulian criminal organisations*.

In the province of Avellino, strategically located between Campania and Apulia, local criminal organisations frequently forge alliances with *Camorra* syndicates and Apulian criminal groups mainly involved in drug trafficking.

In the province of Benevento crime syndicates operate in the *"Caudina Valley"*, in the *"Vitulanesse Valley"* and in the area of *"Sant'Agata dei Goti"*.

On 4 February 2020, the Economic and Financial Unit of the Guardia di Finanza in Naples concluded the TUFÒ investigation into 24 members of a drug trafficking organisation whose bosses were close to the breakaway members of *Scampia*. A company operating in the restaurant sector was seized along with real estate properties worth more than one million euros.

In March 2020, an investigation carried out by the State Police Investigating Unit in Naples ended with the execution of a detention order issued by the local Court against 13 members of the *"Notturmo clan"* dominant in *Scampia*. They were suspected, under different charges, of Mafia-type criminal association and conspiracy to traffic and deal drugs.

In January 2020, the Carabinieri Tenenza in Pagani (SA) concluded the BORA investigation into a criminal group engaged in running a drug dealing marketplace in part of Pagani's historical town centre. The investigation revealed an organized structure made up of individuals linked to the *Camorra* syndicate controlling the area (the *Fezza-Petrosino D'Auria* clan) who were constant suppliers of cocaine, hashish and marijuana to dealers in the Salerno area. On 20 January 2020, personal precautionary measures were ordered against 12 individuals.

Operation BORA - press conference



In July 2020, Operation PATRIOT, conducted by the State Police Investigating Unit in Salerno, led to the arrest of 25 people in the provinces of Salerno, Naples, Verbania and Cosenza. They were suspected, under a range of charges, of conspiracy to traffic illegal drugs. The investigation revealed a crime syndicate engaged in supplying other criminal groups from the Salerno area with large quantities of hashish and cocaine. A total of around 60 kg of hashish and more than 2 kg of cocaine were seized.

### **Apulian criminal organizations**

The Apulian criminal scenario shows one single criminal phenomenon with two sides coexisting or rather alternating like a pendulum. The result is a combination of *"ambitious criminal patterns emulating the traditional Mafia"* and *"new local criminal visions"* which often translate into different and more sophisticated operational styles.

The key to understanding Apulian organized crime lies in a close examination of these two entities, which are complementary rather than in opposition<sup>95</sup>.

This type of crime greatly differs from *Cosa Nostra*, the *'Ndrangheta* and the *Camorra*, which are deeply rooted in the history of their regions of origin.

Apulian criminal organisations are transnational and flexible. They capitalized on the political instability in the Balkan countries and the abolition of internal borders in Europe after the Schengen Agreement to smuggle migrants and illicit goods across the Adriatic into Europe.

In Apulia the most important criminal organisations are located in:

- the “*Gargano area*”, where the *Li Bergolis* clan operates in competition with the *Romito-Lombardi-Ricucci*<sup>96</sup> clan,
- the “*Apulian Tavoliere*”, where crime syndicates from San Severo and Cerignola operate,
- the “*capital cities of the provinces*”, where the “*società foggiana*”<sup>97</sup> has come to the fore. This is a criminal structure of a *federal nature* consisting of numerous branches called “*batteries*”, such as the *Moretti-Pellegrino-Lanza*, the *Sinesi-Francavilla* and the *Trisciuaglio-Tolonese-Prencipe*.

The above organisations have a solid internal structure, based on a family clan system typical of the *'Ndrangheta*, combined with an uncanny ability to plan and implement criminal strategies, forge alliances among different locally active groups and with Campanian and Calabrian Mafia syndicates<sup>98</sup>. *Criminal organisations from Foggia* continued during the reporting period to stand out for their structural solidity<sup>99</sup> which stems from an impervious social context marked by cultural backwardness, omertà (code of silence) and widespread criminality. Despite that, they learnt from the business-orientated Mafia to be adaptable and flexible in their criminal activities<sup>100</sup>. Both inside and outside the clans, criminal organisations from Foggia impose their rules forcibly, at times even ruthlessly, with vendettas and punishments more typical of ancient agricultural and pastoral societies and from Cutolo’s *Camorra*<sup>101</sup>.

After the failure of Rogoli-project, the historic criminal organisation called “*Sacra Corona Unita*” continued to evolve by adopting a unitary model. Nowadays the criminal scene is very fragmented and there is no single leadership. As a result, during the reporting period the various groups adopted different strategies according to the circumstances, shifting between cooperation and conflict among themselves as dictated by a 30-year-old tradition, and by flaunting their own criminal achievements they tightened their hold over the territory and perpetuated a sense of fear, omertà (i.e. code of silence) and submission in the local population<sup>102</sup>.

In 2020, the synergy between Apulian criminal organisations and *Albanian cartels* was confirmed.

95 Cf. Judgment No. 878 of the Court of Appeal in Lecce dated 26 March 1990 which recognized the “*Sacra Corona Unita*” as a Mafia-type association.

96 Cf. the Half-Yearly Report January-June 2020 of the Anti-Mafia Investigation Directorate (available in Italian).

97 Cf. Operation “*Decima Bis*” of 16 November 2020, coordinated by the District Anti-Mafia Directorate in Bari.

98 Cf. the Final Report of the Parliamentary Committee of Inquiry into Mafia-related and other criminal organisations, including foreign organisations, 17<sup>th</sup> Parliament, approved on 7 Feb. 2018 (T.N. Some chapters of the final report are available online in English as an annex to the report in Italian).

99 Cf. the hearing of the Chief of Police – Director General of Public Security held on 29 April 2021.

99 Cf. the Half-Yearly Report January-June 2020 of the Anti-Mafia Investigation Directorate (available in Italian).

101 Cf. the Half-Yearly Report January-June 2020 of the Anti-Mafia Investigation Directorate (available in Italian).

102 Cf. the Half-Yearly Report January-June 2020 of the Anti-Mafia Investigation Directorate (available in Italian).

On 30 June 2020 through the Operation KULMI, the Anti-Mafia District Directorate and the Albanian authorities executed preventive measures against 37 individuals suspected of international drug trafficking and seized assets worth 4 million euros. The investigation targeted a drug trafficking activity organized by two criminal groups, one active in the area of Andria, Barletta and Cerignola, and the other in the provinces of Foggia, Chieti, Pescara and the Netherlands. Both groups were purchasing drugs from an Albanian citizen who was in contact with suppliers in Albania, Macedonia, Belgium and the Netherlands. The investigation revealed that ocean-going rubber dinghies and specially equipped motorhomes were used for the international drug transport, “by sea” and “by land” respectively, from Albania to Apulia.

On 14 October 2020, Operation CUPOLA, conducted by the State Police Investigating Unit of the Police Headquarters in Taranto, ended with the execution of preventive measures against 23 members of a criminal organisation engaged in drug trafficking and distribution in the province of Taranto, resulting from the “merger” of two Mafia-type criminal groups, who used to be in conflict, led by Vincenzo STRANIERI and Massimo CINIERI and also linked to Giuseppe ROGOLI from Mesagne.

Operation BROKERS, carried out by the Investigating Unit in Bari after the murder of an Italian citizen in Trani in January 2015, revealed that the murder was related to drug trafficking.

Extensive investigations established that two criminal organisations linked to each other were active in two separate areas North of Bari, one between Cerignola and Foggia and the other between Andria and Barletta. They trafficked large quantities of cocaine, heroin, marijuana and hashish from the Netherlands, Germany and Albania with the support of an Albanian criminal group based in Northern Europe that organized the transport of drugs hidden in secret vehicle compartments.

Operation BEACHED, completed last June by the Economic and Financial Unit of the Guardia di Finanza in Brindisi, shed light on a well-structured Italian-Albanian crime syndicate involved in the importation, transport, detention and distribution of marijuana in large quantities. The drugs reached Italy through the “Balkan route”, i.e. by crossing the Adriatic in rubber dinghies, and were dealt in part on the streets in the provinces of Brindisi and Taranto and in part to buyers living in Northern and Central Italian regions. The investigation resulted in

Marijuana seized in operation BEACHED



17 individuals being arrested based on preventive measures and 4 tons of marijuana being seized.

### **THE ROLE OF FOREIGN CRIMINAL ORGANIZATIONS IN DRUG TRAFFICKING SECTOR**

Institutional monitoring activities confirmed that *foreign criminal organisations* are active in Italy in a wide range of illicit businesses, including drug trafficking, in which they play an increasingly important role.

Foreign criminal groups, for the most part defined by ethnic distinctions, consolidated their presence both in major cities Northern-Central Italy and in large rural areas in the South.

They strengthened their operational independence and consequently their local size, gradually expanding their criminal range from minor illicit businesses to more complex ones, which required them to establish new connections with local drug trafficking organisations.

Tight, often family-based relations between foreign criminals and their fellow nationals living (often illegally) in Italy facilitated their penetration into large segments of the population of the same ethnic origin where new members were recruited<sup>103</sup>.

This sharpened the operational skills of ethnically-based criminal organisations, which committed to establishing close cooperation, sometimes on an equal basis, with the most important local crime syndicates. This evolution took place especially in the Italy's wealthier central and northern regions, such as *Lazio*, *Tuscany*, *Emilia-Romagna*, *Lombardy*, *Piedmont* and *Veneto*, where the above criminal organisations progressively invaded areas that used to be controlled by local organisations more attracted to infiltrating financial environments.

Also in this context, during the reporting period, foreign criminal organisations consolidated, slowly evolving from ethnic gangs with embryonic structures, scattered all over the country and organized in small groups or cells, into well-structured and highly organised entities which pursued their illicit activities within the framework of a criminal network operating transnationally and capable of managing multi-trafficking activities, including drug trafficking<sup>104</sup>, throughout all its stages.

The info-operational surveillance coordinated by the DCSA in 2020 focused on ethnically-based organisations more actively involved in the management of drug trafficking in Italy, as they are becoming as dangerous as conventional Mafia-type organisations; and not by chance, some judgments of the Supreme Court of Cassation recognised that certain ethnically-based syndicates display typical Mafia traits<sup>105</sup>.

Investigations carried out in 2020 continued to indicate that these organisations demonstrate their criminal abilities in different ways:

- in the Southern regions they hold a subordinate position to local criminal organisations or, in any case, they operate with their consent, as a sign of respect for the latter's territorial sovereignty;
- in the Central and Northern regions, they have gradually gained independence and have a domineering position in some urban areas where criminal activities require a street-level presence of members, for example the dealing of drugs at street level<sup>106</sup>.

The most important foreign criminal organisations engaging specifically in drug trafficking in Italy and on the European continent are:

- *Nigerian criminal groups* – despite successful counteractions, they remain the best structured foreign criminal groups, with branches all over Italy. They have undergone internal reorganisation and there have been fierce disputes over the division of operational areas, but they continue to be very dynamic in traditional illicit contexts, including international drug trafficking.
- *Albanian criminal groups* – they are structurally organised in *gangs* based on family ties which replicate the typical patterns adopted in their country of origin. Based on their structural models

103 Cf. Italy's Internal Intelligence and Security Agency's "Report on Information Policy for Security in the year 2020" (available in Italian).

104 Cf. *La situazione della criminalità organizzata in Italia* (The Organised Crime Situation in Italy), report presented to Parliament by the Ministry of Interior in 2004 during the 14<sup>th</sup> Parliament.

105 Cf. "Cass. 30 maggio 2001, Hsiang Khe Zi, in Foro it., 2004, p. 6; Cass. 13 marzo 2007, I.E.I, in Dir. Imm. e citt., 2008, p. 209; Trib. Bari 28 marzo 2003, Chen Jan Zhong, in Foro it., 2004; Trib. Rimini, 14 marzo 2006, in Foro it., 2007, II, p. 510; Cass. Sezione VI 27 marzo 2007, Tarlev".

106 Cf. the hearing of the Chief of Police – Director General of Public Security held on 29 April 2021.

and methods backed up by their characteristically hard-headed approach, these organisations resemble some Italian Mafia-type syndicates, like the *'Ndrangheta* and *Cosa Nostra*.

- *Balkan criminal organisations* – these are particularly prominent in the management of drug trafficking. Worth mentioning are the *Serbian-Montenegrin criminal organisations* which have considerable financial resources at their disposal, a paramilitary-style organisation and structure, and important connections with suppliers in South America. These organisations managed to win the trust of Italian ones by demonstrating their reliability, also as possible alternative suppliers of drugs within Europe.
- *Bulgarian cartels* – linked by an unprecedented complicity to Italian criminal groups, they have access to important drug supply channels and invest considerable funds in ocean-going vessels specially modified to transport cocaine from South American countries to Europe<sup>107</sup>.
- *South-American criminal groups* – their marked gangster-like attitude triggered intense internal disputes for control over distribution areas in the major Italian cities, and attempts at reorganisation have been reported after law enforcement agencies disrupted their structures.
- *Chinese crime syndicates* – they maintained a significant presence in logistics, transport and street dealing of drugs within their communities.

In summary, *foreign criminal organisations* have identified ways to rebuild their structures after harsh internal conflicts originating from the need to redistribute specific illicit segments, above all drug management and money laundering of drug-related proceeds which were transferred to online financial platforms in their countries of origin as an alternative to more traditional methods of moving money via money transfer services.

Ultimately, investigations focused on *Nigerian, North-African, Albanian* and *Turkish* criminal organisations which managed to regenerate well-structured branches across Italy even though they had been seriously damaged by law enforcement action.

### **Nigerian criminality**

*Nigerian criminal groups* are characterised by a horizontal rather than pyramidal organisation divided into so-called “blocks”, by extreme secrecy and by a deeply-rooted “magical-religious” factor which is used to exert a powerful influence over members in order to push them into performing any action<sup>108</sup>.

In the selection of *members*, preference is given to family members, members of the same tribe, fellow nationals and non-Nigerian individuals<sup>109</sup>. The latter are normally used in marginal but high-risk tasks, for example as drug couriers.

The high organisational level and 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 activities<sup>110</sup>.

107 Located on the “Balkan route”, Bulgaria is a good alternative to Turkey as a supply source of heroin from Afghanistan and of precursors from South-East Asia, used in Northern Europe for synthetic drug production.

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

109 These are normally people from Black Africa countries like Kenya, Tanzania, Mali and Senegal.

110 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.

Nigerian groups are widely present especially in the territory along the Northern half of the Campanian coast, in the province of Caserta and on the outskirts of Rome; however they are active in almost all regions, except Apulia, Calabria and Sicily.

In 2020, Nigerian criminal structures continued to display the characteristics typical of Italian organisations, i.e. tight control over parts of the territory, omertà (code of silence) and strong association ties<sup>111</sup>.

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 the most active in drug transport using *body packers*. 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 revealed that Nigerian criminal organisations have created a network of transnational contacts which include a “human reservoir” of body packers, often comprising even EU citizens, who have been “trained” to carry packets of drugs by eating food of the same size and texture as the drug capsules they swallow. This was confirmed by *Operation “Church 2012”* conducted by the State Police Investigating Unit of the Police Headquarters in Turin.

*On 28 July 2020, Operation WARNING, conducted by the State Police Investigating Unit in Vicenza, led to the execution of 27 preventive measures against drug dealers, mainly of Nigerian and Gambian origin, suspected of dealing vast quantities of drugs in urban areas. This operation cleared public parks in Vicenza – namely, Campo Marzio and Parco Fornaci – of drug dealers. In order to document the drug sales, the police employed not only traditional routine investigation methods, but also undercover agents, which made it possible to reconstruct in detail the extensive network of street-level drug dealers.*

Operation WARNING - press conference



### **Albanian criminality**

The *Albanian Mafia* is expanding its presence in Italy by gradually establishing closer relations with local Mafia-type organisations.

*Albanian crime syndicates* have enormously evolved in terms of both structural organisation and their methods and have significantly enhanced their capabilities and criminal skills.

*Albanian criminal organisations* are very similar to typical Mafia-type organisations and they are gaining specialised expertise in drug trafficking management and more importance internationally. The numerous seizures made by different police forces clearly show that Albanian criminal groups have extended control over cocaine traffic and maintained constant contacts with *Turkish organisations* as well as with *Colombian cartels*.

<sup>111</sup> Cf. the hearing of the Chief of Police – Director General of Public Security held on 29 April 2021.

## Operation LOS BLANCOS - press conference



The experience gained at the very start by working for various *narco* groups allowed Albanian groups to develop an agile and highly diffuse operational model and to introduce it into the European Community.

Albanian syndicates in Italy are mainly engaged in moving *marijuana* produced in their own country all over the world. For some years now the Albanian police have been cooperating with Italian law enforcement agencies within the framework of the “SANCAS project”<sup>112</sup> aimed at locating cannabis plantations with aircraft and consequently eradicating them. This police cooperation was extended in Rome on 16 February 2021.

*In a joint Eurojust–Europol press release, Operation LOS BLANCOS was defined as “an unprecedented international operation”. It involved judicial and law enforcement authorities in 10 countries and resulted in the complete takedown of the Albanian-speaking “Kompania Bello” criminal group, one of the most active cocaine-trafficking networks in Europe.*

*The investigation was initiated in 2015 by the State Police Investigating Unit of Florence after a nasty brawl in the streets of Florence among Albanian nationals known to be involved in the exploitation of prostitution. The investigation ascertained that the criminal group composed of ethnic Albanian nationals was based in the area of Bari but had branches in Europe and South America. For the management of the illicit trafficking the group was equipped with encrypted communication means and used messaging services offered by various online platforms.*

*In December 2016 a Joint Investigation Team was set up between the Italian and Dutch judicial authorities, with the participation of the State Police Investigating Unit of the Police Headquarters in Florence and with the assistance and financing of Eurojust and Europol.*

*The investigation revealed that the criminal organisation had accomplices based in strategic locations, in particular Antwerp, Rotterdam and Bremen, and in these ports huge quantities of cocaine were*

<sup>112</sup> Cf. the Operational Protocol between the Italian Department of Public Security and the General Directorate of State Police of the Republic of Albania signed in Tirana on 16 May 2012.



seized. The drug was shipped to Europe via maritime trade routes from South America and then taken to its final destination countries in lorries and cars equipped with hidden compartments and electronically controlled concealment devices.

The investigation resulted in the arrest of 81 individuals in Italy, Switzerland, Great Britain, Germany, Belgium, France, Malta, the Netherlands and Ecuador and in the seizure of 4 tons of cocaine, military-grade weapons and 5.5 million euros.

In March 2020, within Operation BESA 2018, the Economic and Financial Unit of the Guardia di Finanza in Trento concluded a complex drug trafficking investigation which made extensive use of international cooperation procedures with several countries. The investigation uncovered and dismantled an aggressive criminal association, mostly composed of persons of Albanian origin, active in Alto Adige. The group had control over local drug distribution and important branches in Veneto. The investigation led to the execution of preventive measures against 25 individuals.

Operation BESA 2018 - press conference



### Northafrican criminality

North-African crime syndicates operating in Italy mainly come from the *Maghreb* region, namely Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, Mauritania and Western Sahara

These criminal groups are involved in transnational management of multiple forms of illicit trafficking, mostly of drugs, in collaboration with the most important Italian criminal groups, such as the *Camorra*, the *'Ndrangheta* and other main ethnically-based groups, such as the *Nigerian* and *South-American cartels*.

Nowadays North-African syndicates are generally settled and well-rooted 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.

Investigations have shown that North-African criminal groups are present in the following geographical areas:

- in the North of Italy, in particular in *Piedmont, Liguria, Lombardy, Veneto, Friuli-Venezia Giulia* and *Trentino Alto-Adige*,
- in Central Italy, more specifically in *Emilia-Romagna, Tuscany, Marche* and *Abruzzo*,
- in the South, in *Campania, Apulia, Calabria, Sicily* and *Sardinia*.

North-African criminal groups in Italy are linked to criminal counterparts based in *Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, Libya* and *Mauritania*<sup>113</sup>.

Like other criminal organisations, such as the Albanian and Nigerian ones, the organisational and

113 Cf. the Report of the Interior Minister to Parliament, 2020 (available in Italian).

operational structure of *North-African* criminal groups has evolved and, although it is characterized by a so-called “cellular” organisational structure<sup>114</sup>, it has gradually become an *integrated criminal network*<sup>115</sup> as regards:

- the presence of complex and well-structured groups especially in drug trafficking;
- their ability to provide legal assistance to their members;
- the occupation of leadership roles in transnational and multi-ethnic organisations;
- the ability to “infiltrate” the economic fabric and engage in corruption practices,
- advancement and access to leadership roles by female members.

*In January 2020 through Operation BATTINARNO, the Carabinieri in Bologna dismantled an Italian-Tunisian organisation involved in drug dealing, mainly of heroin, in Bologna. The operation ended with the execution of preventive measures against 14 individuals and with the seizure of 4 kg of heroina.*

Operation BATTINARNO - press conference



### Turkish criminality

*Turkish criminal gangs* have, over time, played an increasingly important role in drug trafficking, especially of heroin and opium derivatives. To this end they have always entered into mutually advantageous arrangements with criminal organisations in each of the countries they had dealings. Unlike other Mafia-type criminal organisations, the modus operandi of *Turkish criminal groups* was always difficult to pinpoint because of their so-called “satellite” structure. Their units are traditionally 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.

*Turkish criminal groups* purchase drugs from producing countries and sell them to other criminal organisations, especially *Albanian* and *Nigerian* ones, which then distribute them on the European markets.

In Turkey it has been documented that over the last few years organized crime has set up real heroin supermarkets which do not provide transport and delivery services – buyers have to make their own arrangements.

Due to its geographical position, Turkey is a strategically important area for opiates en route from producing countries, such as *Afghanistan* and *Pakistan*, to European destination countries passing through *Romania*, *Bulgaria* and *Hungary*. In this context the commonly used route for importing drugs to Italy is the so-called “*Balkan route*”. The main itineraries for transporting heroin from Turkey

<sup>114</sup> More specifically, this is neither a well-structured, stable organisation which unites members nor an integrated criminal network. Each individual may easily join the criminal group based on expertise and availability, but may also stop working actively and leave. This structure has weak control over the territory, which means that it supervises only those areas where criminal activities are perpetrated. There is no supervision of or control over the social lives of other fellow nationals either. These groups show a high level of aggressiveness which results in outbursts of violence (fights and disputes) both internally and externally with other groups.

<sup>115</sup> Cf. *Quarto rapporto sulle aree settentrionali per la Presidenza della Commissione parlamentare di inchiesta sul fenomeno mafioso* published in 2017 by the Osservatorio sulla Criminalità Organizzata.

to Europe are the following:

- the route through *Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary and Austria* whose final destination is *Germany*;
- the most frequently used route goes through *southern Bulgaria*, along the Greek-Bulgarian border and into *Macedonia*, then on to *Albania* where the drug is loaded on ships bound for Italian ports of the Adriatic.

In Italy it was reported that Turkish criminal organisations are involved in illicit activities in certain well-defined geographical areas, like *Veneto*<sup>116</sup>, *Lombardy* and *Emilia-Romagna*.

### DRUG TRAFFICKING ON THE WEB

During the Covid-19 pandemic, research groups were set up across the European Union in order to understand the changes, scope and nature of drug trafficking on the web markets, in particular in the darknet, so to collect and process useful information and operational insights through systematic monitoring of the numerous virtual networks, including social media and apps.

To this regard, also the EMCDDA and Europol have highlighted in their reports the remarkable increase in the number of consumers who have purchased drugs online in Europe. In order to document and update online drug trafficking, the DCSA, through its Drug@online Section, has strengthened its coordination and support activities for monitoring the web, both in the “*surface web*”<sup>117</sup> and in the “*dark web*”<sup>118</sup>.

These monitoring and analysis activities have revealed that:

- There was an upsurge in the trade of synthetic drugs, such as amphetamine<sup>119</sup>, MDMA<sup>120</sup>, ecstasy<sup>121</sup>, but also of “traditional” drugs such as marijuana, hashish, heroin and cocaine, concealed inside various types of packages for home delivery<sup>122</sup>;
- the consumers increasingly use encrypted messaging services for their illicit transactions: these methods are difficult to decode and provide a higher level of protection from law enforcement monitoring<sup>123</sup>;
- the sellers promise discounts and new supplies in case the drugs are not delivered, thus increasing the confidence in purchasers<sup>124</sup>;
- the drug sales mainly arise from the UK, Germany and the Netherlands<sup>125</sup>.

<sup>116</sup> Veneto in particular is a trading hub with the Middle East because the ports of Venice and Chioggia have regular connections with ports in the Middle East, in particular with Istanbul.

<sup>117</sup> All webpages and documents which are indexed by search engines. The other side of the web is the so-called “deep web”, that refers to parts of the Internet not fully accessible through standard search engines (like Google, Bing etc.). The deep web includes new sites, web software, private databases, peer-to-peer networks.

<sup>118</sup> It is a part of the “deep web” that is not accessible through conventional search engines; specific browsers are required to reach the dark web. It is the part of the Internet which is intentionally hidden from search engines, using masked IP addresses.

<sup>119</sup> Many psychological effects of amphetamines are similar to those of cocaine. They include: increased alertness, concentration, euphoria and self-confidence and grandiosity. During the intoxication other side effects include tachycardia, shivers, sweating and mydriasis.

<sup>120</sup> “3,4-methylenedioxymethamphetamine”, commonly known as MDMA is a psychoactive substance belonging to the phenylethylamine class, having stimulant and entactogenic effects, not specifically psychedelic.

<sup>121</sup> It is a psychoactive substance acting both as a stimulant and hallucinogenic drug. It increases energy as well as empathy with others and alters the sense of time.

<sup>122</sup> As reported by the competent crime investigation Units, numerous small bags containing narcotic drugs (mainly MDMA) were seized. The drugs were concealed inside cosmetic boxes, toys and small appliances..

<sup>123</sup> Encrypted communication is also used on the retail websites, where the vendors invite the potential clients to download instant messaging apps.

<sup>124</sup> These forms of advertisement are usually included in the submission page of each vendor or in the summary sheet accompanying the product offered for sale.

<sup>125</sup> This information comes from the analysis of the Darknet sales websites: in fact, the place of dispatch or the sender are often specified on the vendor’s page.

The increased use of the web for drug trafficking has also been confirmed by the rise in the number of seizures of parcels containing drugs, at Italian airports. The origin of these online purchases is also proved by the type of content and by their packaging<sup>126</sup>.

The team of experts of the DCSA Drug@online Section has pointed out that these specific websites, which are dedicated to drug sales, are liable to change rapidly. The access addresses and their denomination can quickly vary and, similarly, the actual bargaining can take place either within the same site or by re-directing the users to instant messaging apps, in a "face to face" form.

Therefore, the collection of information on online drug trade includes the combined analysis of several elements and factors, including the content of the chats and forums, dedicated to the exchange of views on the products and on the shipping methods of the substances themselves.

Moreover, the analysis of the phenomenon carried out by the DCSA in 2020 highlighted a significant rise in the use of social media for illicit drug trade by the youngest. In particular, the reports from the local law enforcement units operating all over the Italian territory have revealed the frequent use of instant messaging applications, such as Instagram, Telegram, Snapchat, Wickr and Kik, which allow encrypted communications and offering specific online platforms through which the users can exchange messages which are then automatically deleted. In this way, communication apps can be described as something between the online drug market and the street pushing, facilitating contacts between consumer and dealer.

The two services on the web, that associated with the social media or "Surface web" and the other connected with the deep web or "Dark web", are an effective integrated system for the narcotic illicit markets. The first, ensures the sale of small quantities of drugs and, once verified the interest in the customers, the detailed transactions are moved to Telegram, WhatsApp or Instagram; the second web service guarantees the sale of more significant quantities of narcotic drugs, ensuring anonymity. In 2020, according to the DCSA, the purchases via Apps continued to be simple and widely advertised by the vendors who also provided specific instructions and indications, such as:

- the use of a safe address where to deliver the drugs;
- the cryptocurrency payments, so to ensure protection and anonymity. Sometimes, payments via PayPal are allowed, using the ID details of friends and family members in order to elude possible controls on transactions;
- the special attention given to packages which had to be perfectly sealed in order to prevent the spread of odours and to the use of carbon paper so to neutralise any scans.

On 7 November 2020, a complex investigation, initiated in 2017 by the Nucleo Speciale Tutela Privacy e Frodi Tecnologiche (Special Unit for the Protection of Privacy and Technological Fraud) of the

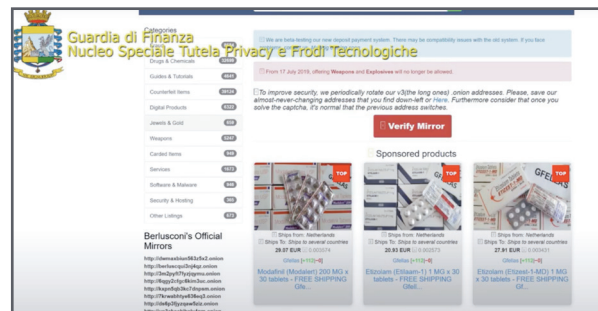
Drug@online Section



<sup>126</sup> The indicators suggesting a possible purchase on the Internet are: the type of substance (above all MDMA), the small quantity, the origin (usually Northern Europe), the packaging (small plastic bags concealed inside letter envelopes or inside small appliances and cosmetics).

Guardia di Finanza and coordinated by the DCSA, was concluded. It resulted in the dismantlement of one of the main black markets on the web dubbed "Berlusconi Market", as well as in the arrest of 3 Italian nationals. All kinds of weapons, explosives, forged passports and documents, as well as drugs, in particular methamphetamine, cannabis products and cocaine were sold on this illegal website. Undercover agents were also employed to carry out this investigation: they made simulated online purchases, identifying the origin of the parcels and the members of the organisation.

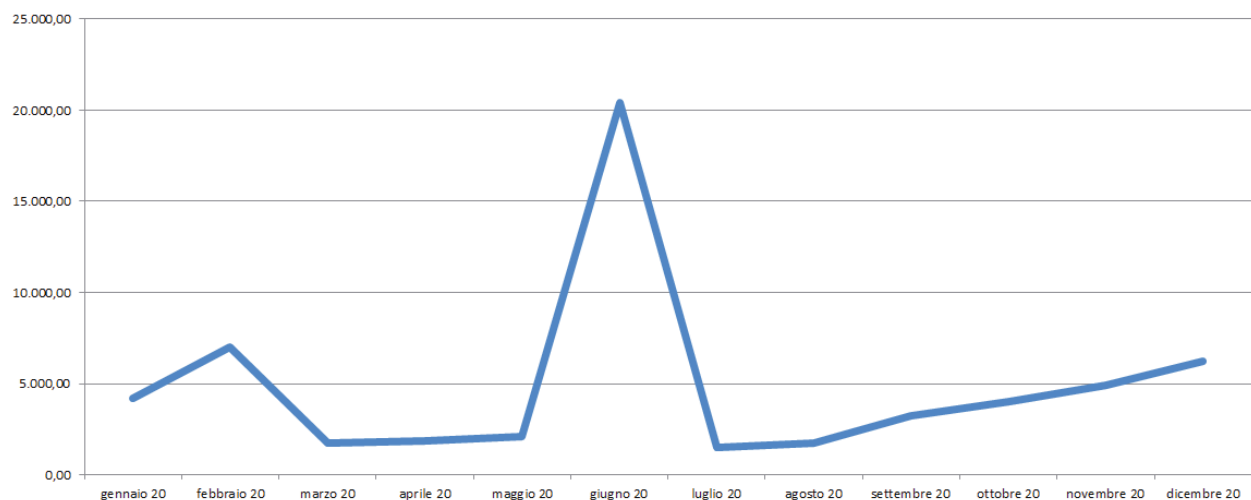
Page of the clandestine website "Berlusconi Market"



## FACT SHEETS

### Drug trafficking during the COVID-19 pandemic

Monthly trend of seizures (kg) during the COVID-19 pandemic - 2020



During the health restrictions due to the pandemic crisis, criminal organizations have continued their illicit drug trafficking activities at national and international levels. These groups are extremely flexible and adaptable to all situations, constantly trying to modify their *structures and modus operandi*. In 2020, the DCSA and other international Agencies pointed out some critical points in the counter-narcotic actions, such as the involvement of dock workers in the exfiltration of illicit drugs from containers.

Within this framework, it must be stressed that these individuals, in exchange for generous compensation can open the containers concerned or pick up the illegal load. The national data show a significant increase in the seizures made at port areas<sup>127</sup>. Therefore, we can assume that the

127 Cfr. "Organismo permanente di monitoraggio ed analisi sul rischio di infiltrazione nell'economia da parte della criminalità organizzata di tipo mafioso"/ Permanent monitoring and analysis body on the risk of infiltration of the economy by mafia-type organised crime, May 2021. An increase by 119.16% with respect to the same period of the previous year was registered.

criminal syndicates have their corrupt contact persons within the port labour force, although they are not necessarily affiliates.

Drug trafficking organisations have sought to adopt new ways of transporting drugs so to reduce the risk of detection and limit the loss of profits, as follows:

- container contamination, using basic necessities or foodstuff to cover the illicit cargo;
- use of aircraft, submersibles, sailing vessels and offshore boats.

In 2020, the wholesale trade indicators showed signs of a clear recovery in maritime drug trafficking via the traditional commercial routes. The DCSA has analysed the data on seizures and operations conducted in recent months. Figures have shown a renewed vitality of the traditional drug trafficking chain: on the domestic statistical level the cocaine quantities are much larger than those of the previous year.

With a few exceptions, the situation as described by the investigative outcomes and information from the *Law Enforcement Attachés* network, has proved, also for 2020, a resurgence of the traffic in traditional drugs.

With respect to 2019, the following updated information must be stressed:

- the seizures (5,437 kg)<sup>128</sup> made at Gioia Tauro Port from March 2020 to February 2021), showing the renewed dynamism of the Mafia syndicates active in that area;
- information from *Law Enforcement Attachés* in the main cocaine producing and transit countries, concerning modi operandi and methods of concealment. In particular, according to the:
- *Law Enforcement Attaché* in Bogota the operational methods used by drug traffickers are similar to those employed in Europe. Small submersibles are used once again to directly reach the coasts of Central American Countries. Despite the difficulties arising from the consequences of the pandemic, the seizures operated as of 31 August 2020, showed a sharply upward trend even comparing them to the whole of 2019;
- *Law Enforcement Attaché* in Lima, drug traffickers exploited the wholesale market for health products to cover and conceal cocaine shipments to foreign Countries<sup>129</sup>. In the reporting period, the cocaine loads were transported to Bolivia and Brazil through the Central-Eastern region of “Ucayali”, bordering Brazil and an important strategic junction for the movement of cocaine loads, both by air and by river. The North-Eastern area of this Country (*department of Loreto*), near the so-called “*tripla frontera*” with Peru, Colombia and Brazil, was affected by a remarkable intensification of the drug trafficking towards Brazil, along the *Amazon River*;
- *Law Enforcement Attaché* in *Santo Domingo*, drug traffickers continued to use container ships, able to transport large quantities of cocaine from the *Bocas del Toro* archipelago in North-Western Panama to the Costa Rican border onto the European continent. The use of semi-submersibles in the Caribbean Sea was also pointed out<sup>130</sup>, as well as of fast boats departing from the coasts of both Colombia and Venezuela. In 2020, the “*Dirección Nacional de Control de Drogas*” (*D.N.C.D.*)

128 Cfr. “Organismo permanente di monitoraggio ed analisi sul rischio di infiltrazione nell’economia da parte della criminalità organizzata di tipo mafioso”, May 2021. An increase by 28.75% with respect to the same period of the previous year was registered.

129 The Peruvian Antidrug Directorate (DIRANDRO) has seized cocaine concealed inside packets of surgical masks bound for Asia.

130 The Dominican Air-Naval National Service “SENAN”, in February 2020, intercepted a submersible that, in the area of Bocas del Toro, was transporting 5 tonnes of cocaine, ten years after the last detections.

and the Navy, reported a marked increase in cocaine trafficking<sup>131</sup>;

- *Law Enforcement Attaché in Buenos Aires*, after the quarantine in October 2020, a rise in drug trafficking was registered, in particular, the one directly coming from Paraguay, by light aircraft, exploiting the traditional air routes of Northern borders, or by lorries or private passengers cars, driven by individuals having no criminal records;
- *Law Enforcement Attaché in Rabat*, trucks were used to transport foodstuffs (especially fruit and vegetables) concealing drug loads<sup>132</sup>.

In 2020, the DCSA continued to promote, under the aegis of the Department of Public Security, the conclusion of special operational memorandum with the competent Authorities of the Countries affected by the drug routes.

“Undercover operations” and “international controlled deliveries” were planned thanks to these agreements, through an adherent and fruitful intelligence activity which is a necessary tool to infiltrate criminal organisations and gather evidence to be used during the trial.

In this context, the DCSA has pointed out that:

- in Europe, there has been an increased use of the so-called “joint investigation teams” and of the “European investigation order”, a judicial cooperation tool which has become increasingly crucial for an effective investigative coordination;
- in agreement with the *Department for Antidrug Policies of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers*, the project “Southern Route” was launched<sup>133</sup>, aimed at strengthening the police cooperation with the South-East African Countries. Heroin originating in Afghanistan crosses these African Countries, reaching Italy and Europe.

The DCSA, under the coordination of the Department of Public Security and in agreement with the Department for Antidrug Policies, has also developed a project aimed to the monitoring of postal shipments, operated by the most important national shipping companies, exploiting the use of new technologies to identify the presence of synthetic drugs concealed in the parcels.

In this context, during the health restrictions period, new “entrepreneurial” forms were developed, allowing new drug distribution activities. In several cases, the drug dealers were “disguised” as food distribution *riders*, and made drug deliveries using the “door-to-door” service or the “car sharing” service<sup>134</sup>. Drugs were also sold in parks by drug dealers disguised as runners or dog walkers.

In the reporting period, the law enforcement services have enhanced their actions against the drug retail sales, as proved by the use of effective investigative tools implemented in the Drug Legislation in the field of undercover operations that were applied to the so-called “street investigations”<sup>135</sup>,

131 An increase by 260% of cocaine seized with respect to the same time-period of 2019 was registered.

132 In some cases the arrested drivers have forged the travel authorizations, by using scanners and fake stamps, to elude the movement restrictions, or they stated to be completely unaware of the illicit drug trafficking activity.

133 Cfr. “Audizione in Commissione Antimafia del Capo della Polizia– Direttore Generale della Pubblica Sicurezza”/Hearing of the Chief of Police – Director General of Public Security in the Anti-Mafia Commission, on 29.04.2021. This programme, which was launched in the framework of cooperation with the “Dipartimento per le politiche antidroga” della Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri/Department for Antidrug Policies of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, aims at exchanging information, through special training modules in favour of the law enforcement services of the African Countries concerned.

134 Cfr. “Organismo permanente di monitoraggio ed analisi sul rischio di infiltrazione nell'economia da parte della criminalità organizzata di tipo mafioso”/ Permanent monitoring and analysis body on the risk of infiltration of the economy by mafia-type organised crime, May 2021.

135 Cfr. “Audizione in Commissione Antimafia del Capo della Polizia– Direttore Generale della Pubblica Sicurezza”/Hearing of the Chief of Police – Director General of Public Security in the Anti-Mafia Commission, on 29.04.2021.

successfully coordinated by the DCSA. In particular, the use of a special operation based on the authorization to make drug purchases by one or more undercover agents and on the possibility to delay the arrest of the drug dealers. As one would expect, the repetition of this mechanism has allowed, in the framework of Operation "Pusher" - conducted by the Crime Investigation Units of the most important Italian cities and coordinated by the DCSA - to gather sound evidence against more persons in a short time, strengthening the counter-narcotic actions against retail drug trafficking, if compared to the results achieved with the traditional methods of observation, control and shadowing.

As already said, an increasing trend in the use of online markets by drug abusers and pushers has been noted. In particular:

- the "Dark Web", to trade remarkable quantities of synthetic drugs;
- the "Surface Web" (through social media) used to negotiate smaller quantities and for home delivery.

#### **The use of encrypted communication by criminal groups**

The investigative activities coordinated by the DCSA have shown the increased trend of criminal syndicates active in online drug trafficking, to resort and use sophisticated technological instruments to avoid monitoring activities.

Adequate countermeasures were applied to face this threat, through the adoption of special technical countermeasures, which are increasingly refined and applied to web world.

Trying to elude every control, the members of the criminal organizations often change their vehicles (which are frequently rented or leased), and use fake identities. In the web world, drug traffickers are increasingly using IT support tools to ensure protected communication against surveillance and catching activities, such as encryption, foreign SIM cards, prepaid SIM cards and satellite telephones. For this reason, again in 2020, the DCSA elaborated an effective counter-strategy taking into account the new investigative methods. In this regard, we focus on the possibility of using the instruments provided for by Article 12 of the Decree Law 130/2020, with particular regard to the reports to the Postal and Communications Police in order to ask the providers, the obscuring of the websites used to commit one or more drug related-crimes.

This new rule has allowed the *Drug@online* Section to monitor the web in a more incisive way, providing the Law Enforcement Forces with an effective coordination and operational connection for the requests websites shutdown, to be sent to the Postal and Communications Police.

*In July 2020, the French and Dutch law enforcement services (supported by Europol) started "operation*

Video frame recorded during operation "PUSHER"





*26Lemont” which led to the decryption of “EncroChat” communications network.*

*In particular, more than 20 million messages were decrypted in real time, before being encrypted and anonymised. In this framework, investigators were able to follow the criminal dynamics in a direct and cover capacities.*

Finally, again in 2020, the growing use of cryptographic technology by drug trafficking criminal syndicates has created a decisive obstacle to the development of investigations and the fight against drug trafficking.

According to the DCSA, the capacity to protect communications and retain sensitive data represents the threat posed by near future and a challenge for its specialized units. They have already created innovative methodologies of intelligence and played their role of coordination, support and training to the full.



## 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 2020, 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 the neighbouring international waters.

Considering only the interventions for criminal acts, in 2020, 22,695 operations were conducted (-12.80% with respect to 2019). Such operations led to 31,335 persons being reported to the Judicial Authorities (-11,21%), of whom 10,192 foreign nationals (-26.56%) and 915 minors (-29.01%), as well as to the seizure of 58,827.66 kg (+7.41%) of drugs.

As to drug abuse deaths, a decrease of 17.65% was registered.

The most significant seizures were made:

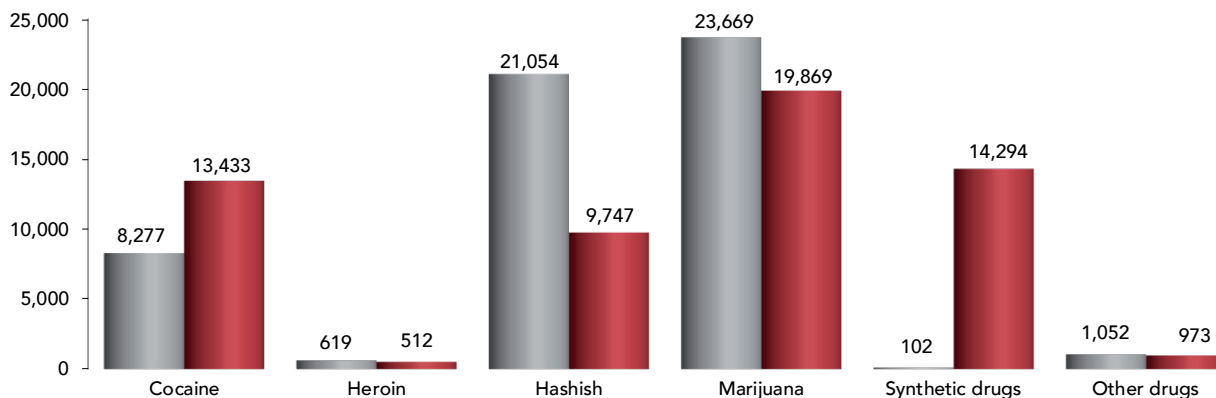
- for cocaine , 3,330 kg in the port of Leghorn;
- for heroin, 59.56 kg in Tradate (VA);
- for hashish, 2,844.50 kg in the port of Salerno;
- for marijuana, 1,034.58 kg in Pernumia (PD);
- for synthetic drugs, 14,005 kg of amphetamine in the port of Salerno.

Mention must also be made of the data on major seizures of other psychoactive substances, whose consumption is not commonly widespread in our country: 131.80 kg of khat (or Qat, 112 kg of poppy bulbs and 11,544 doses/tablets of oxycodone. –The table below shows in detail the quantities seized for each substance.

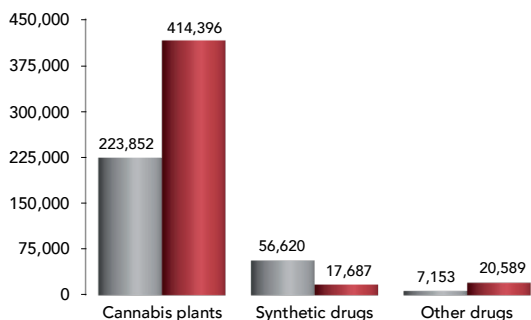
Substances drugs seized 2019/2020 with % variation		2019	2020	% variation 2019
Cannabis	Cocaine (kg)	8,277.03	13,432.77	62.29%
	Heroin (kg)	618.59	512.39	-17.17%
	Hashish (kg)	21,053.84	9,747.42	-53.70%
	Marijuana (kg)	23,668.51	19,868.69	-16.05%
	Cannabis plants (Plants no)	223,852	414,396	85.12%
Synthetic drugs	tablets/doses (no)	56,620	17,687	-68.76%
	kg	102.13	14,293.88	13,896.18%
Other drugs	tablets/doses (no)	7,153	20,589	187.84%
	kg	1,051.72	972.50	-7.53
Total	(kg)	54,771.81	58,827.66	7.41%
	tablets/doses (no)	63,773	38,276	-39.98%
	Plants (no)	223,852	414,396	85.12%
Drug operations		26,025	22,695	-12.80%
Persons reported to the Judicial Authority		35,292	31,335	-11.21%
Drug abuse deaths		374	308	-17.65%

Comparison between the drugs seized in the two-year period 2019/2020

Kilograms ■ 2019 ■ 2020



Doses/plants/tablets ■ 2019 ■ 2020



The cocaine imported to Italy mainly comes from Colombia, either directly or transiting through other South American countries, such as Chili, Ecuador, Venezuela, Brazil and Dominican Republic. This drug presumably arrives in Spain and The Netherlands.

The heroin seized in Italy is mainly produced in Afghanistan and is brought to our country through Turkey and the Balkan peninsula. Trafficking by airliners along the Southern Route (directly from

Pakistan or via West or South Africa) is on the rise.

Instead, the routes involving Morocco, Spain and France are used by the criminal networks to transport hashish. Such drug is also moved, in large quantities, along maritime routes involving the Italian ports on the Western coast. As to synthetic drugs, the Dutch market is still playing a significant role for our country.

Most marijuana shipments are transported through the routes from Albania and Greece. The criminal groups mainly involved in large-scale trafficking are, as usual, the following:

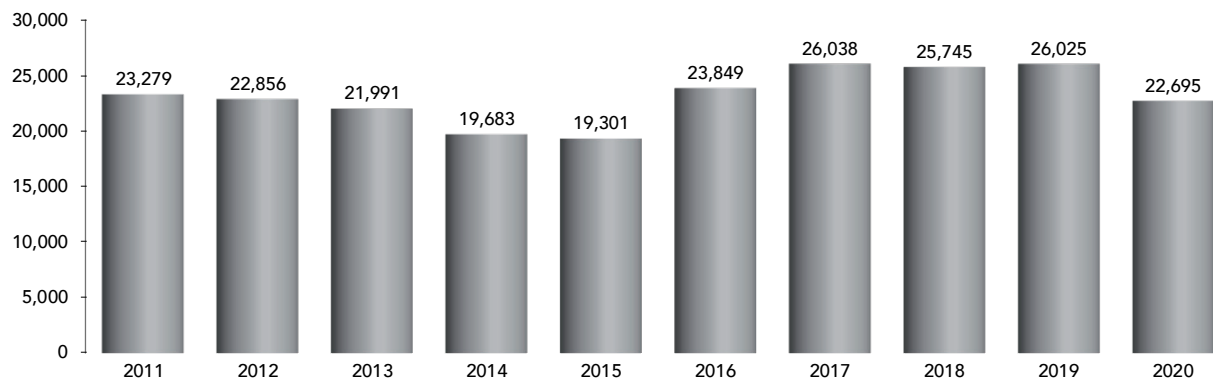
- for cocaine: the 'ndrangheta, the camorra and the Balkan and South American organizations;
- for heroin: organized crime from Campania and Apulia that are in close contact with the Albanian and Balkan organizations;
- for cannabis derivatives: organized crime from Lazio, Apulia and Sicily, along with groups from Maghreb, Spain and Albania.

Ten-year trend

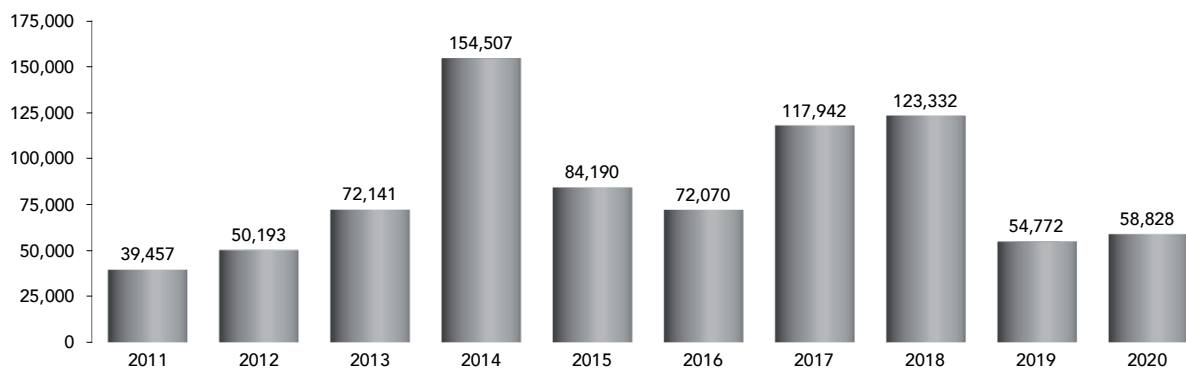
Since 2011, the average value regarding antidrug operations has always been around 23,000, with a peak of 26,038 in 2017 and the lowest level of 19,301 in 2015.

Since 2011, the total quantity of drug seizures has been over 39 tons, with a peak of 154,507 kg in 2014 and the lowest level of 39,457 kg in 2011. Such significant results are mainly due to the cannabis derivatives seizures, which, in the last decade, on average led to 74,000 kg of cannabis seized per year. In the last decade an average of 33,000 reports has been made to the Judicial Authorities. The peak was registered in 2011 (37,225), while the lowest level was reached in 2015 (28,055).

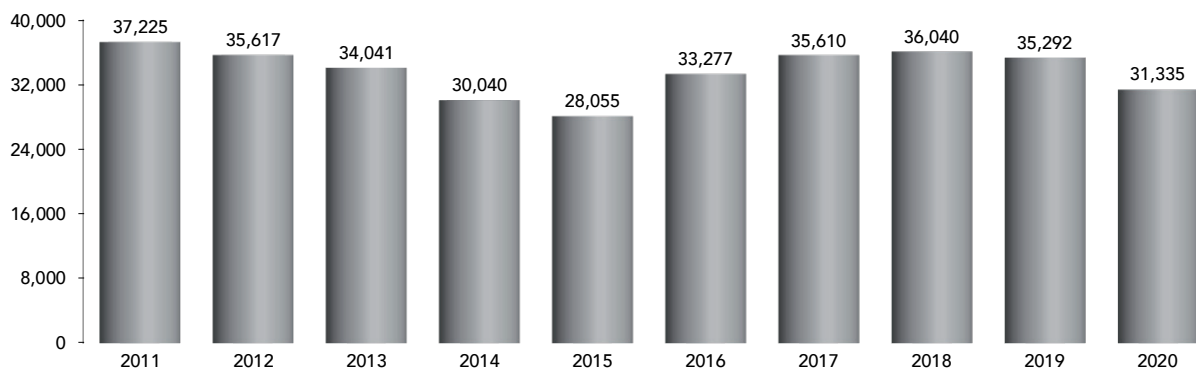
■ Drug operations - ten-year trend



■ 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 (4,332), followed by Lazio, Campania, Sicily, Apulia, Emilia Romagna and Piedmont.

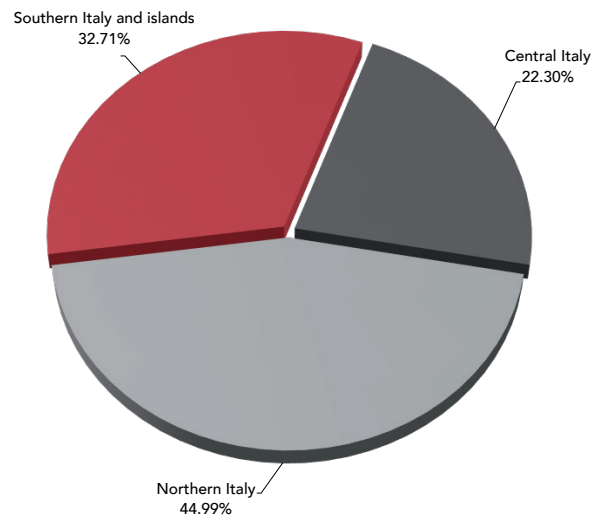
The lowest records were registered in Molise and Valle d'Aosta.

Regional distribution - drug operations

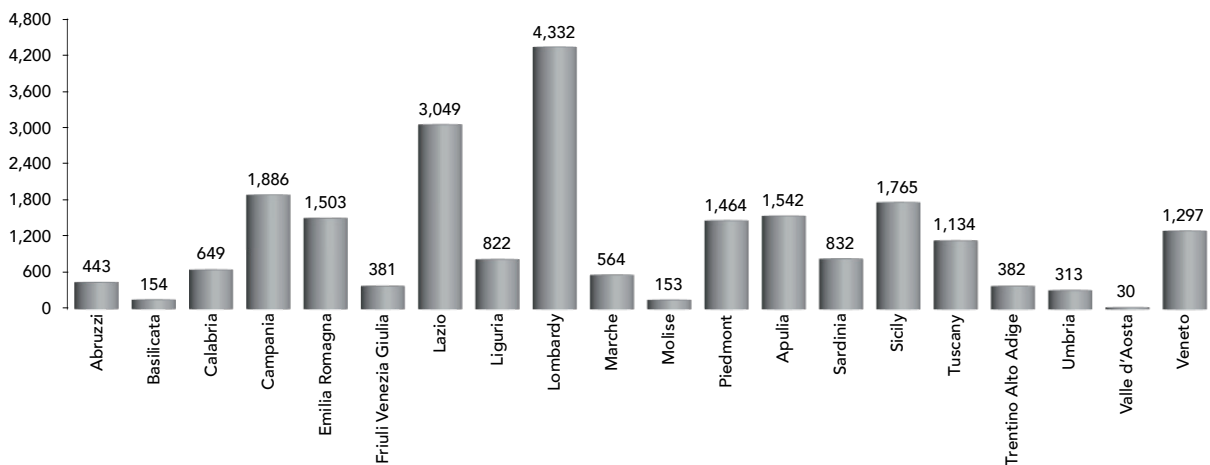
Regions	2019	2020	%variation 2019
Abruzzi	514	443	-13.81%
Basilicata	222	154	-30.63%
Calabria	661	649	-1.82%
Campania	1,886	1,886	0.00%
Emilia Romagna	1,827	1,503	-17.73%
Friuli Venezia Giulia	415	381	-8.19%
Lazio	3,838	3,049	-20.56%
Liguria	1,178	822	-30.22%
Lombardy	4,929	4,332	-12.11%
Marche	632	564	-10.76%
Molise	135	153	13.33%
Piedmont	1,771	1,464	-17.33%
Apulia	1,588	1,542	-2.90%
Sardinia	850	832	-2.12%
Sicily	1,831	1,765	-3.60%
Tuscany	1,451	1,134	-21.85%
Trentino Alto Adige	452	382	-15.49%
Umbria	282	313	10.99%
Valle d'Aosta	32	30	-6.25%
Veneto	1,527	1,297	-15.06%
<b>Regional total</b>	<b>26,021</b>	<b>22,695</b>	<b>-12.78%</b>
International waters	4	-	-100.00%
<b>National total</b>	<b>26,025</b>	<b>22,695</b>	<b>-12.80%</b>

In comparison with 2019, police activities mainly increased in Molise and Umbria, while the most significant percentage decreases were registered in Basilicata, Liguria, Tuscany, Lazio, Emilia Romagna, Piedmont, Trentino Alto Adige and Veneto.

The review of macro-areas revealed that, in 2020 the highest number of operations was carried out in Northern Italy, with 44.99%, followed by Southern Italy and Islands with 32.71% and by Central Italy with 22.30%.



Regional distribution - drug operations in 2020



### Drug seizures – regional distribution

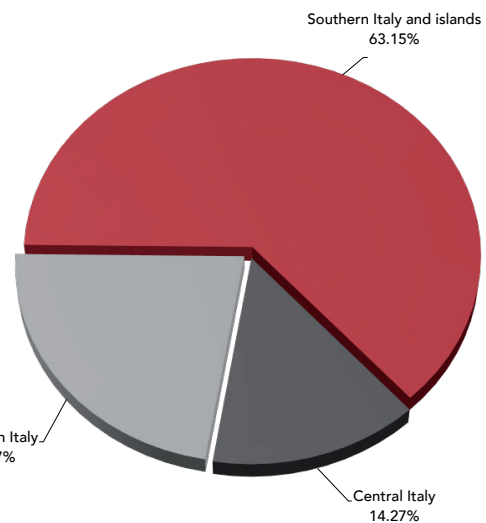
Campania, with 18,610.53 kg of drugs and 17,968 cannabis plants seized, registered the highest amount of seizures with respect to the other regions, followed by Calabria, Lombardy, Tuscany, Sardinia, Apulia, Lazio and Veneto. We should specify that the figure concerning Campania is due to an extraordinary seizure, an absolute world record, of 14,005 kg of amphetamines probably destined for various international markets.

The lowest records were reached in Molise and Basilicata.

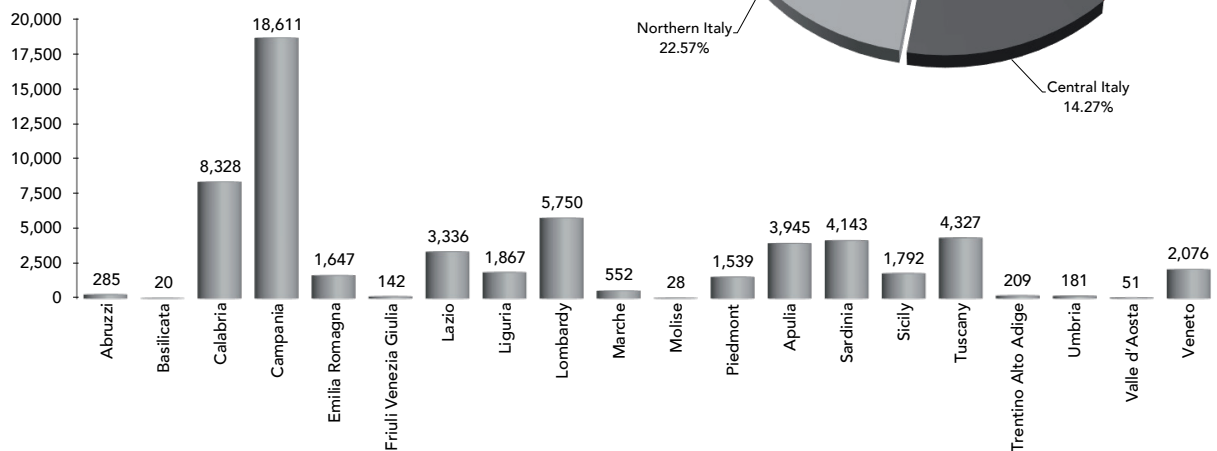
With respect to 2019, drug seizures, in percentage, were on the increase in Campania, Valle d'Aosta, Calabria, Veneto, Sardinia Lombardy and Tuscany, while the most considerable decreases were registered in Basilicata, Molise, Abruzzi, Sicily, Liguria and Apulia.

The review of macro-areas revealed that, in 2020, the highest quantities of seizures were carried out in Southern Italy and Islands (63.15%), followed by Northern Italy (22.57%) and Central Italy (14.27%).

Regions	2019	2020	%variation 2019
Abruzzi	921.28	285.40	-69.02%
Basilicata	157.03	20.13	-87.18%
Calabria	3,164.52	8,328.44	163.18%
Campania	2,686.68	18,610.53	592.70%
Emilia Romagna	2,044.01	1,646.63	-19.44%
Friuli Venezia Giulia	163.65	142.23	-13.09%
Lazio	3,692.13	3,335.75	-9.65%
Liguria	4,296.09	1,866.55	-56.55%
Lombardy	4,142.68	5,750.05	38.80%
Marche	653.89	551.81	-15.61%
Molise	106.10	28.33	-73.30%
Piedmont	2,075.57	1,538.52	-25.88%
Apulia	6,243.68	3,944.60	-36.82%
Sardinia	2,656.51	4,142.89	55.95%
Sicily	4,391.62	1,791.80	-59.20%
Tuscany	3,308.96	4,327.38	30.78%
Trentino Alto Adige	275.84	209.38	-24.09%
Umbria	166.18	180.64	8.70%
Valle d'Aosta	15.51	50.88	228.09%
Veneto	835.53	2,075.73	148.43%
<b>Regional total</b>	<b>41,997.46</b>	<b>58,827.66</b>	<b>40.07%</b>
International waters	12,774.35	-	-100.00%
<b>National total</b>	<b>54,771.81</b>	<b>58,827.66</b>	<b>7.41%</b>



Regional distribution - drug seized in 2020

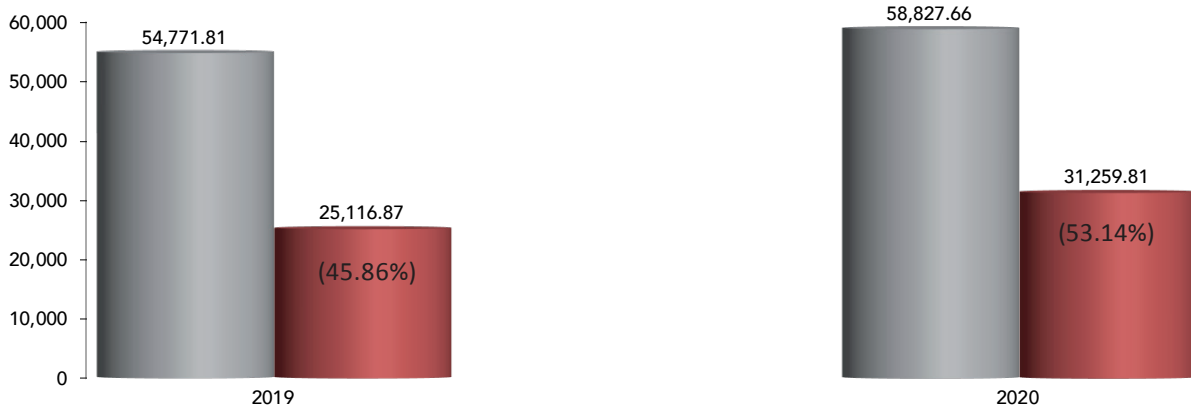


**DRUG TRAFFICKING TOWARDS ITALY**

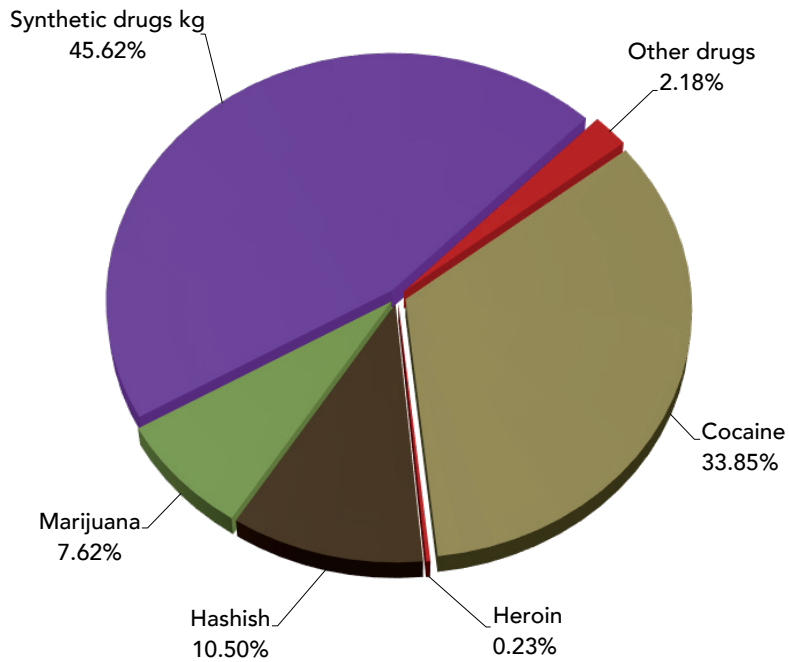
In 2020, 58,827.66 kg of drugs were seized in Italy, 31,259.81kg (53.14%) of which at borders, compared to 54,771.81 kg seized in 2019, with 25,116.87 (45.86%) at borders. In 2020, the total amount of intercepted drug at borders increased by 24.46% with respect to 2019.

Drug seizures (kg) total of drug seizures at borders in kg 2019 - 2020

■ Territory ■ at borders



In 2020, synthetic drugs, with 14,259.41 kg, and cocaine, with 10,574.76 kg, were the most seized drugs at borders, accounting, respectively for 45.62% and 33.85% of the total intercepted quantity. We would like to remind that, as already mentioned, the figure concerning synthetic drugs (in kg) is influenced by a single seizure made at the port of Salerno (14,005 kg).

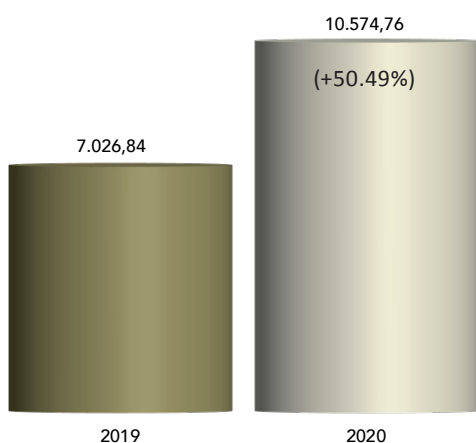




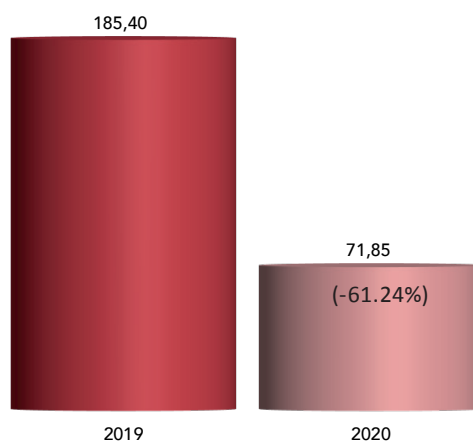
As indicated below in the chapter devoted to each substance, the following results achieved at borders in 2020 can be highlighted:

- the quantity of cocaine, equal to 10,574.76 kg (of which 10,377.24 kg at sea borders), increased by 50.49% with respect to 7,026.84 kg of 2019;
- the quantity of heroin shifted from 185.40 kg seized in 2019 to 71.85 kg in 2020, (-61.24%), thus showing an evident drop;
- the quantity of hashish shifted from 13,073.25 kg in 2019 to 3,285.16 kg in 2020 (-74.87%), registering a sharp decrease;
- the quantities of synthetic drugs seized recorded a considerable increase almost exclusively at sea borders, passing from 42.33 kg in 2019 to 14,259.41 kg in 2020 (+33,589.31%). Such striking increase is linked, as already mentioned, to the seizure of 14,005 kg occurred in June 2020 at the Salerno port; however, even excluding this record seizure, the remaining 254.41 kg intercepted represent a significant increase (+ 501.02%) .

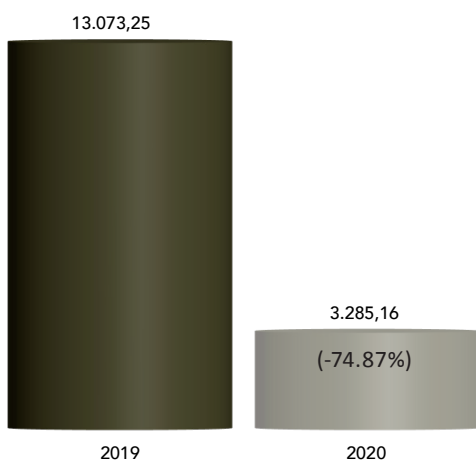
Cocaine (kg) seized at borders ■ 2019 ■ 2020



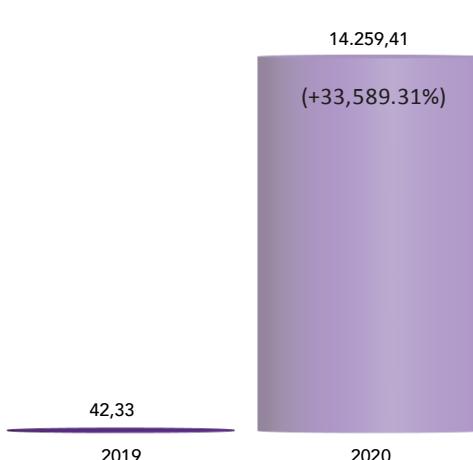
Heroin (kg) seized at borders ■ 2019 ■ 2020



Hashish (kg) seized at borders ■ 2019 ■ 2020



Synthetic drugs (kg) seized at borders ■ 2019 ■ 2020



### THE FIGHT AGAINST COCAINE

In 2020, the operations against cocaine trade were 7,766 (-9.02% with respect to 2019), showing a significant increase in the quantities seized, from 8.277kg in 2019 to 13,432 kg in 2020 (+62.29%). The persons reported for cocaine-related offences were 12,974 (-7,04%), 9,313 of them were arrested. The most important seizures occurred at Leghorn port in February ( 3,330 kg), at Gioia Tauro (RC) port in February (1,128.40 kg), in December (994.44 kg), in November (932.22 kg and 719.93 kg). 4,559 foreign nationals were reported to the Judicial Authorities, 3,264 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, 1,139 were women (8.78%) and 11,835 men (91.22%).

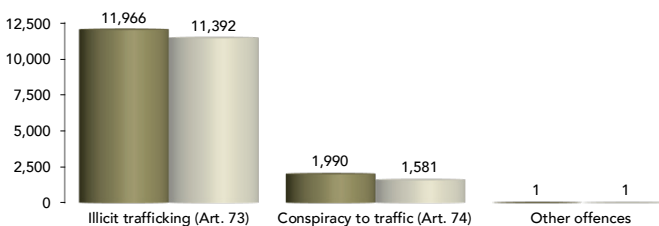
#### Persons reported to the J.A. for cocaine

	2019	2020	% variation 2019
<b>Type of report</b>			
Arrested	10,322	9,313	-9.78 %
Reported but not arrested	3,493	3,484	-0.26 %
At large	142	177	24.65 %
<b>Type of offence</b>			
Illicit trafficking (Art.73)	11,966	11,392	-4.80 %
Conspiracy to traffic (Art.74)	1,990	1,581	-20.55 %
Other offences	1	1	0.00 %
<b>Nationality</b>			
Italy	8,511	8,415	-1.13 %
Other countries of which:	5,446	4,559	-16.29 %
Morocco	1,472	1,335	-9.31 %
Albania	1,458	1,315	-9.81 %
Tunisia	455	438	-3.74 %
Nigeria	371	274	-26.15 %
Senegal	347	230	-33.72 %
<b>Gender</b>			
Males	12,815	11,835	-7.65 %
Females	1,142	1,139	-0.26 %
<b>Age</b>			
Of age	13,735	12,818	-6.68 %
Minors	222	156	-29.73 %
<b>Age groups</b>			
< 15	9	7	-22.22 %
15 ÷ 19	715	557	-22.10 %
20 ÷ 24	2,190	1,878	-14.25 %
25 ÷ 29	2,529	2,306	-8.82 %
30 ÷ 34	2,374	2,175	-8.38 %
35 ÷ 39	1,849	1,857	0.43 %
≥ 40	4,291	4,194	-2.26 %
<b>Total</b>	<b>13,957</b>	<b>12,974</b>	<b>-7.04 %</b>

Among the 156 minors (1.20%) reported for cocaine-related offences, 78 (50%) are foreign nationals, in particular from Senegal, Tunisia, Mali, Gabon and Morocco.

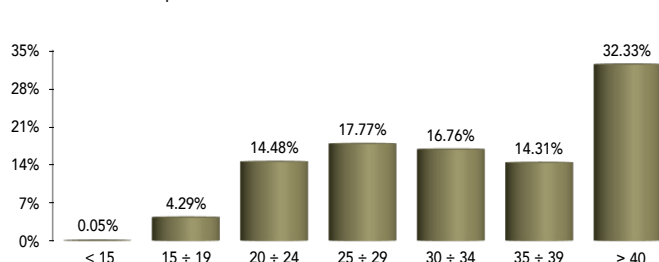
As to the type of offence, 87.81% of the reports concerned drug trafficking/pushing and 12.19% conspiracy to drug trafficking.

Cocaine - type of offence



32.33% of the total number of persons reported to the Judicial Authorities for cocaine trafficking are in the 40/over age group; il 17.77% in the 25 - 29 age group and 16.76% in the 30 - 34 age group. The youngest (<18) represent 1.20% of the total number of the persons reported at national level.

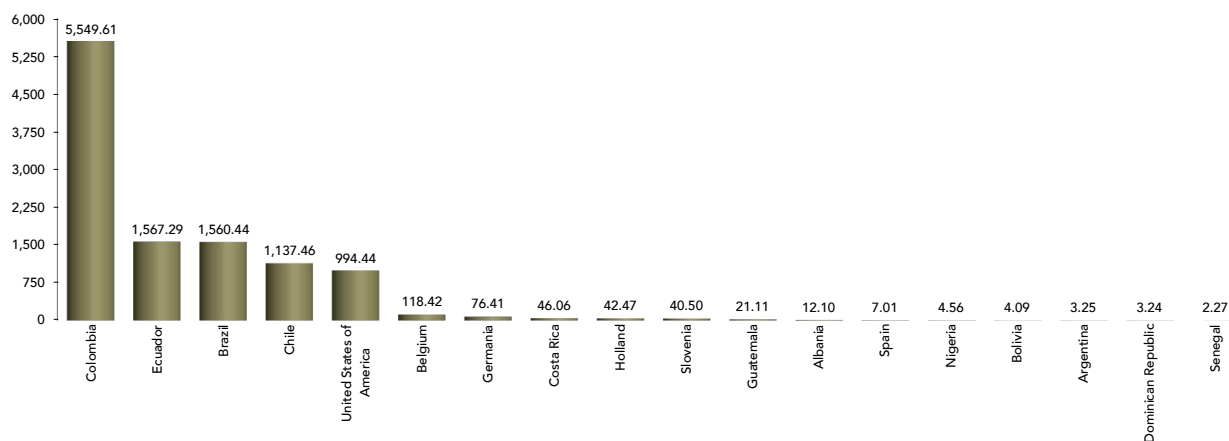
Percentage incidence of age groups in the total amount of the reports to the J.A. in cocaine offences



The cocaine seized was mainly concealed on the persons (1,602 cases), in body cavities (41 cases), in houses (1,306 cases), in cars (484 cases), and in parcels or letters (67 cases).

The analysis of cases in which the drug origin was thoroughly ascertained, shows that the cocaine mainly came from Colombia, Ecuador, Brazil, Chile, United States of America, Belgium, Germany, Costa Rica, The Netherlands, Slovenia, Guatemala and Albania.

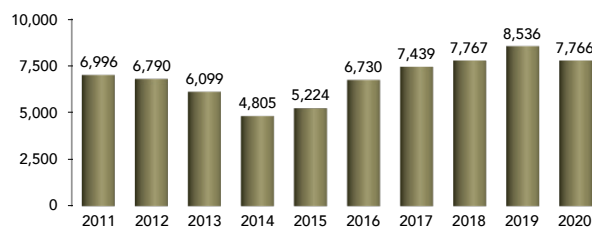
Main cocaine origin countries (kg) - cases reported in 2020



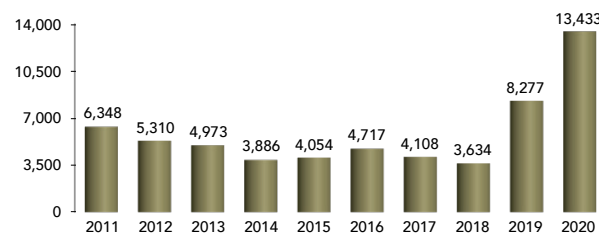
### Ten-year trend

From 2011 to 2014, the trend pertaining to cocaine operations and persons reported to the judicial authorities for cocaine constantly decreased, while these values have been constantly growing since 2015. The ten-year average amount of seizures was about 5,800 kg, with a peak in the reporting year and in the previous one, with 13,433 and 8,277 kg respectively.

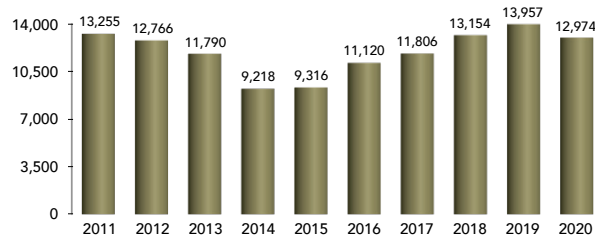
Cocaine operations



Seizures (kg) of cocaine



Persons reported to the J. A. for cocaine offences



Ardore (RC) 16.70 kg of cocaine November 2020 (Carabinieri)



**Cocaine seizures – regional distribution**

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

In comparison with 2019, a significant percentage increase in seizures was registered in Valle d'Aosta,

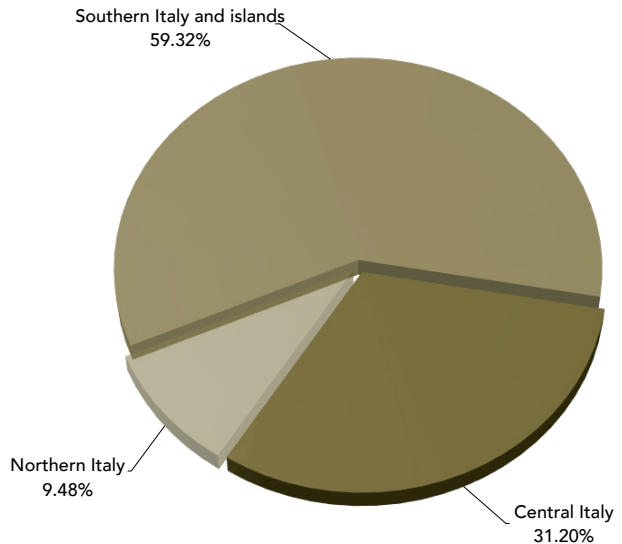
Marche, Friuli Venezia Giulia, Umbria, Sicily, Calabria, Tuscany, Trentino Alto Adige and Molise.

The most considerable percentage decreases were registered in Liguria, Basilicata, Sardinia, Lombardy, Abruzzi and Lazio.

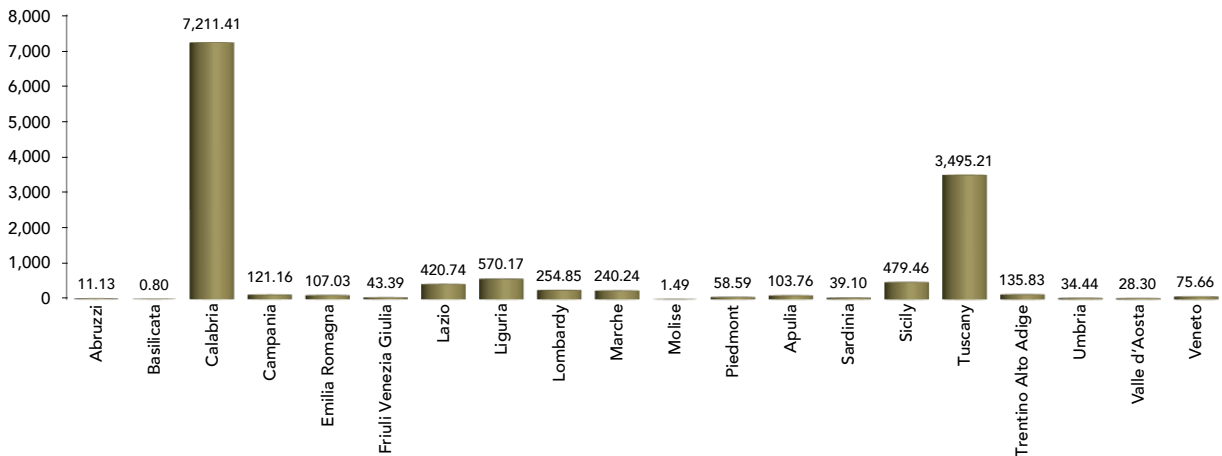
Considering the macro-areas, 59.32% of cocaine seizures occurred in the South and Islands, 31.20% in Central Italy and 9.48% in the North.

Regional distribution - cocaine seizures (kg)

Regions	2019	2020	% variation 2019
Abruzzi	14.89	11.13	-25.28%
Basilicata	4.10	0.80	-80.48%
Calabria	2,224.17	7,211.41	224.23%
Campania	128.06	121.16	-5.39%
Emilia Romagna	112.77	107.03	-5.08%
Friuli Venezia Giulia	3.18	43.39	1,265.32%
Lazio	490.37	420.74	-14.20%
Liguria	3,280.25	570.17	-82.62%
Lombardy	409.84	254.85	-37.82%
Marche	13.32	240.24	1,704.18%
Molise	0.79	1.49	89.68%
Piedmont	38.03	58.59	54.06%
Apulia	67.20	103.76	54.41%
Sardinia	76.20	39.10	-48.69%
Sicily	137.62	479.46	248.40%
Tuscany	1,166.93	3,495.21	199.52%
Trentino Alto Adige	47.87	135.83	183.75%
Umbria	3.80	34.44	806.82%
Valle d'Aosta	0.15	28.30	19,022.97%
Veneto	57.51	75.66	31.55%
<b>Regional total</b>	<b>8,277.03</b>	<b>13,432.77</b>	<b>62.29%</b>
International waters	-	-	--
<b>National Total</b>	<b>8,277.03</b>	<b>13,432.77</b>	<b>62.29%</b>



Regional distribution - cocaine seizures in 2020



### COCAINE FLOWS TOWARDS ITALY

In the two-year period 2019/2020 the incidence of seizures at borders, with respect to the total seizures at national level, shifted from 84.90% to 78.72%.

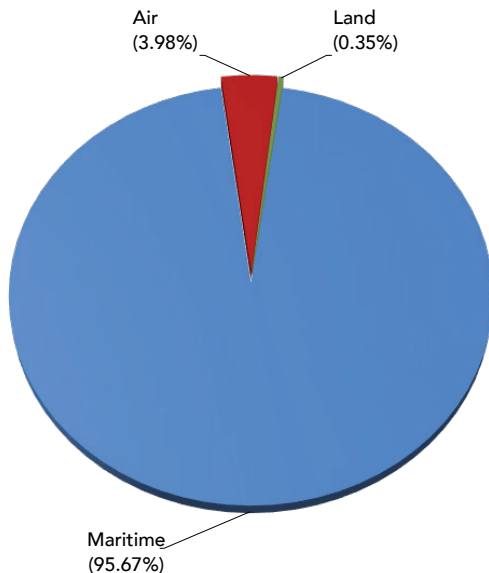
Total of cocaine national seizures (kg) total of seizures at borders 2019 - 2020 ■ Territory ■ at borders



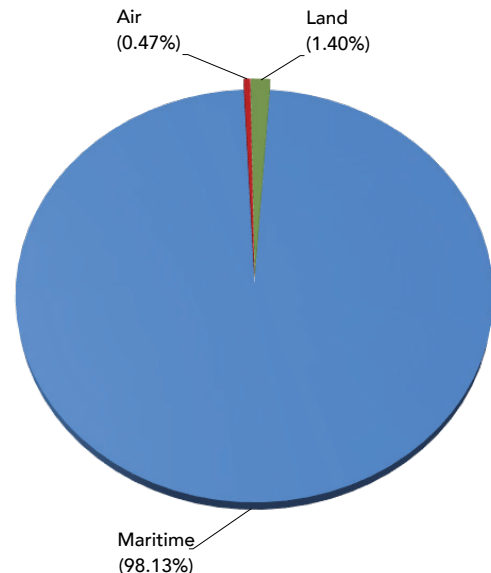
In 2020:

- 13,432.77 kg of cocaine were seized at national level, with an increase of 62.29% in comparison with 8,277.03 in 2019;
- seizures at borders amounted to 10,574.76 kg, with an increase of 50.49% in comparison with 7,026.84 kg in 2019.

■ Cocaine seizures at borders (kg) 2019



■ Cocaine seizures at borders (kg) 2020



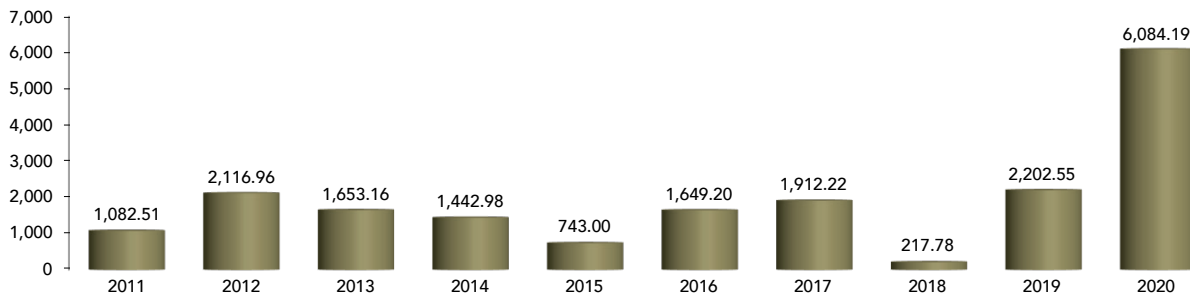
The largest quantities of cocaine were seized at maritime borders, with a further incidence increase in relation to the total quantities intercepted at borders, shifting from 95.67% in 2019 to 98.13% in 2020.

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

Most cocaine shipments were seized at Gioia Tauro port (6,084.19 kg), followed by Leghorn ( 3,370.79 kg) and La Spezia ( 333.95 kg).

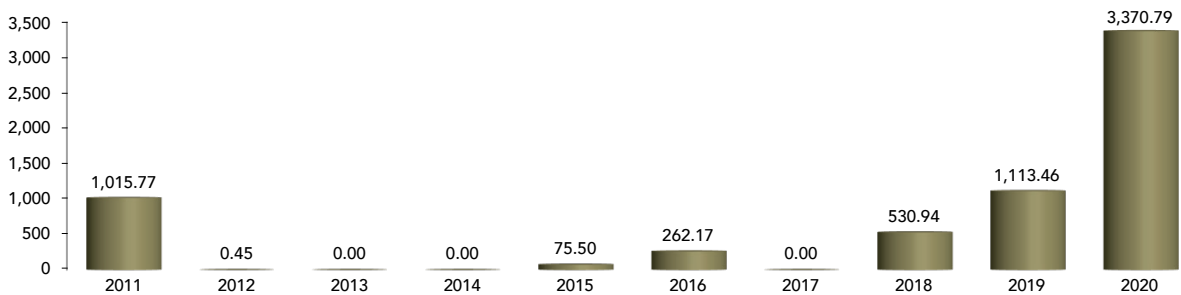
The histogram below indicates the trend of cocaine seizures made at Gioia Tauro port; such sharp increase was registered in the current year as well.

Cocaine seizures at Gioia Tauro port (RC) (kg) ■ 2011 - 2020



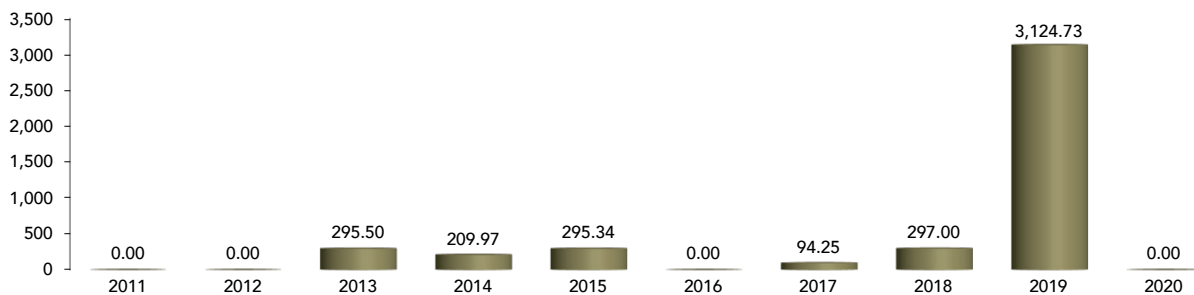
In 2020, as you can see in the graph below, the Leghorn port reached its peak of seizures if compared to the last ten year values.

Cocaine seizures at Livorno port (kg) ■ 2011 - 2020



The following histogram shows the trend of cocaine seizures at the Genoa port.

Cocaine seizures at Genoa port (kg) ■ 2011 - 2020



According to information available, in 2020 the countries of origin of the cocaine seized at sea borders were:

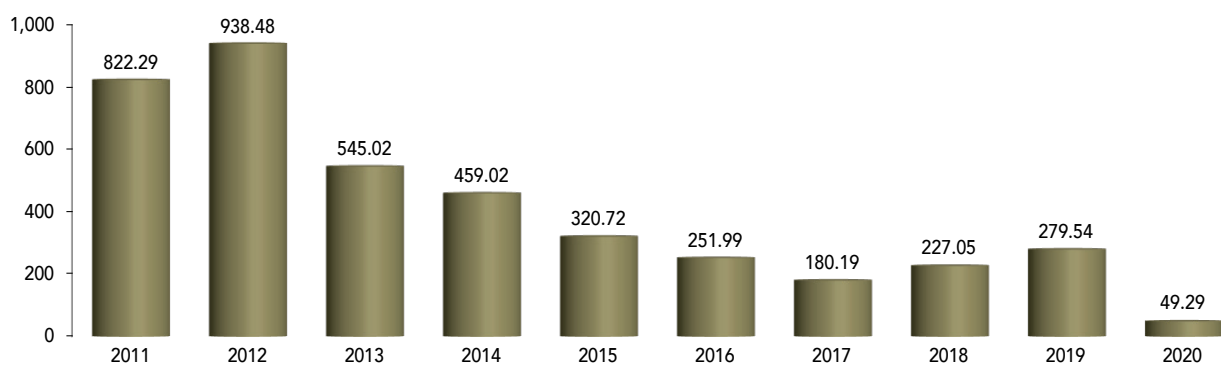
- Colombia, 5,163.47 kg;
- Ecuador, 1,564.22 kg;
- Chile, 1,130.52 kg.

The incidence of cocaine consignments coming from Colombia represent 49.76% with respect to the total quantity intercepted at sea borders (10,377.24 kg).

The persons reported to the Judicial Authorities for operations conducted in maritime areas globally concerned 17 subjects, 13 of which were Italian nationals.

In 2020, cocaine seizures at air borders were equal to 49.29 kg, with a decrease of 82.37% in comparison with 279.54 kg in 2019. The graph below shows the seizure trend of cocaine transported by air carrier.

Cocaine seizures at air borders (kg) ■ 2011 - 2020



The Italian airport where the largest quantities of cocaine were seized was Rome/Fiumicino, with 31.78 kg ( 64.49%of the total quantity seized at air borders), followed by Milano Malpensa (VA) airport, with 13.18 kg, and Genoa Cristoforo Colombo airport, with 1.42kg. These three airports have accounted for 94.10% of the total of cocaine seized at the Italian airports.

Among the main countries of origin of the largest cocaine quantities transported by air, Brazil and Chile are still in a leading position, followed by Nigeria, Bolivia and Dominican Republic, with the following quantities:

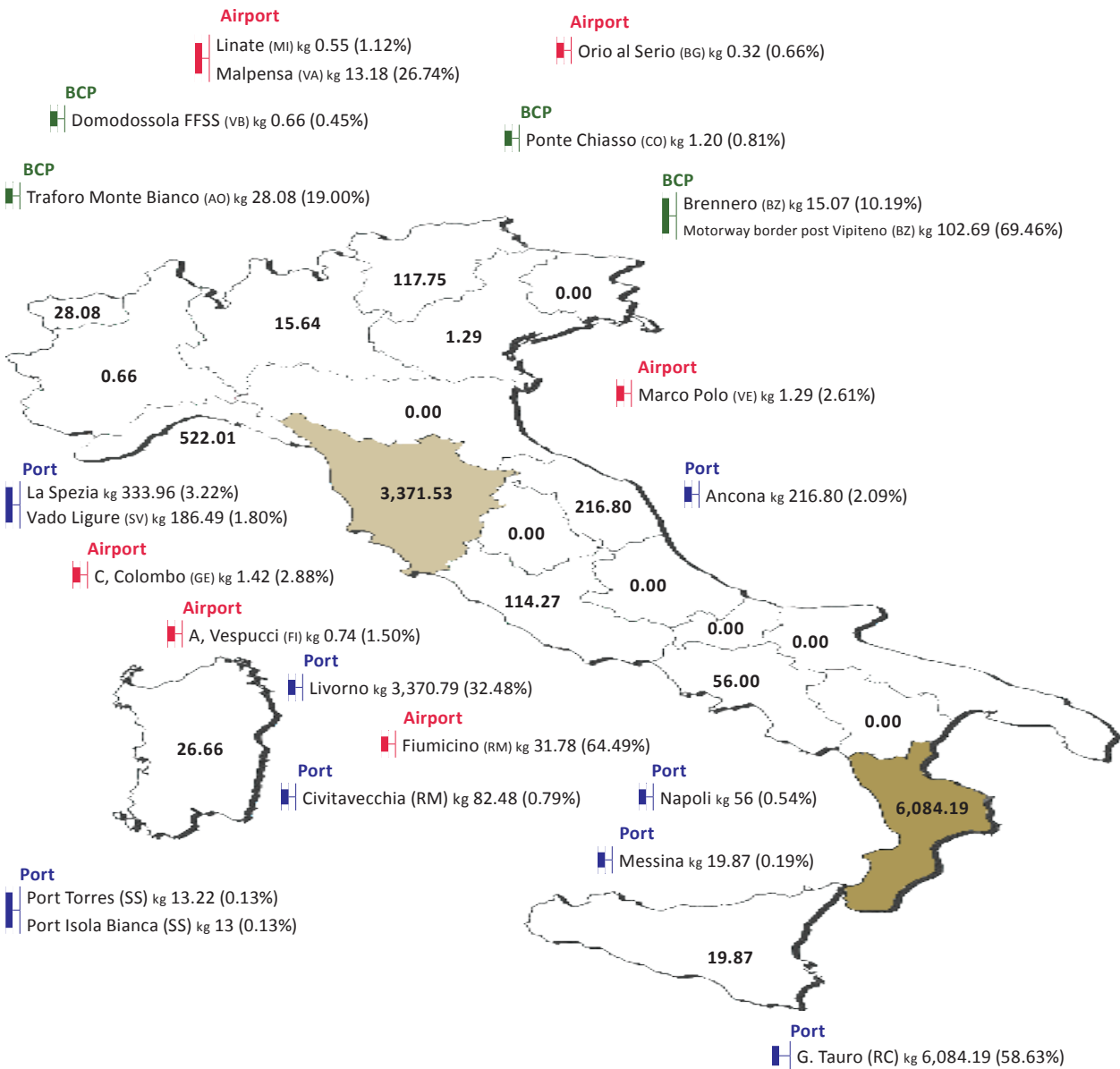
- Brazil, 17.19 kg;
- Chile, 6.95 kg;
- Nigeria, 4.56 kg;
- Bolivia, 4.09 kg;
- Dominican Republic, 3.24 kg.

In the airport areas 36 subjects were reported:most of them were Nigerians (6), Italians (6), Brazilians (5), Albanians (4), Ukrainians (3) and Argentinians (2).

In 2020, 147.85 kg of cocaine were seized at land borders. It is a significant increase, amounting to 502.92%, in comparison with 24.52 kg seized in 2019.

Major seizures were made at the motorway border post of Vipiteno (BZ) with 102.69 kg, followed by Mont Blanc Tunnel, with 28.08 and by the Brenner Pass, with 15.07 kg.

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



**Persons reported**  
to the J.A. at borders for **cocaine** (64 persons, of whom 36 Italians and 28 foreigners)

- |               |               |                        |
|---------------|---------------|------------------------|
| Nigeria (7)   | Spain (1)     | Portugal (1)           |
| Brazil (6)    | Senegal (1)   | Dominican Republic (1) |
| Albania (4)   | Germany (1)   | Philippines (1)        |
| Ukraine (3)   | Boliviana (1) | Colombia (1)           |
| Argentina (2) | English (1)   | Sierra Leone (1)       |
| Paraguay (1)  | Tnusia (1)    | Mali (1)               |
|               |               | Latvia (1)             |



SUMMARY TABLE ON COCAINE SEIZURES AND ON PERSONS  
REPORTED TO THE JUDICIAL AUTHORITY FOR **COCAINE** - RELATED OFFENCES

	Five-year trend					2020 data - Geographical subdivision		
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Central Italy	Northern Italy	Southern Italy and Islands
<b>Cocaine seizures (kg)</b>	4,716.77	4,107.82	3,633.60	8,277.03	13,432.77	4,190.64	1,273.83	7,968.31
<b>Persons reported to the Judicial Authority for cocaine</b>								
<b>Type of report</b>								
Arrested	8,619	9,258	9,856	10,322	9,313	2,490	3,622	3,201
Reported but not arrested	2,362	2,450	3,174	3,493	3,484	918	1,400	1,166
At large	139	98	124	142	177	51	52	74
<b>Type of offence</b>								
Illicit trafficking (Art.73)	9,939	10,548	11,179	11,966	11,392	3,146	4,806	3,440
Conspiracy to traffic (Art.74)	1,181	1,255	1,973	1,990	1,581	313	267	1,001
Other offences	-	3	2	1	1	-	1	-
<b>Nationality</b>								
Italy	6,824	7,233	8,312	8,511	8,415	2,151	2,111	4,153
Other countries	4,296	4,573	4,842	5,446	4,559	1,308	2,963	288
<b>Gender</b>								
Males	10,275	10,880	12,014	12,815	11,835	3,139	4,722	3,974
Females	845	926	1,140	1,142	1,139	320	352	467
<b>Age</b>								
Of age	10,975	11,639	12,979	13,735	12,818	3,417	5,000	4,401
Minors	145	167	175	222	156	42	74	40
<b>Age groups</b>								
< 15	1	11	10	9	7	2	4	1
15 ÷ 19	582	611	659	715	557	160	231	166
20 ÷ 24	1,791	1,915	2,040	2,190	1,878	505	724	649
25 ÷ 29	2,172	2,225	2,418	2,529	2,306	618	924	764
30 ÷ 34	1,837	2,003	2,210	2,374	2,175	547	885	743
35 ÷ 39	1,578	1,604	1,855	1,849	1,857	503	752	602
≥ 40	3,159	3,437	3,962	4,291	4,194	1,124	1,554	1,516

**THE FIGHT AGAINST HEROIN**

In 2020, the heroin seized in Italy decreased by 17.17%, shifting from 618.59 kg in 2019, to 512.39kg in 2020. The operations and the number of persons reported to the Judicial Authorities with regard to this illicit substance decreased as well, in comparison with 2019, accounting for 1,806 (-19.45%) and 2,829 (-16.82) respectively, resulting in the arrest of 2,136 subjects (-13.06%).

The foreign nationals reported were 1,359. 1,085 of them were arrested, which corresponds to 48.04% of the total persons reported.

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, 317 (11.21%) were women and 2,512 (88.79%) men.

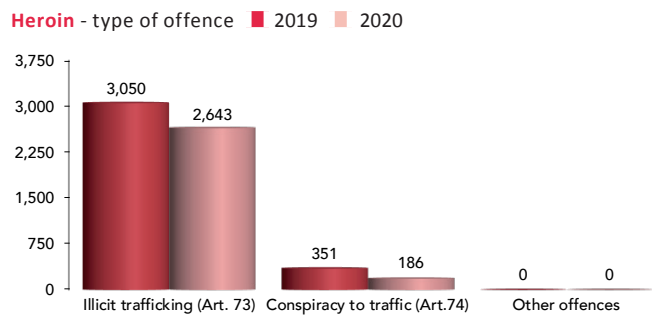
Among 15 (0.53%) minors reported for heroin-related offences, 7 (46.67%) were foreign nationals,

in particular from Tunisia, Gabon, Senegal, Morocco and Pakistan.

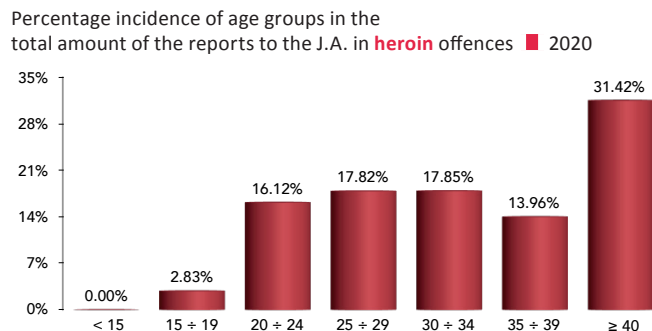
As to the type of offence, 93.43% of subjects were reported for trafficking/pushing and 6.57% conspiracy to drug trafficking.

**Persons reported to the J. A. for heroin**

	2019	2020	% variation 2019
<b>Type of report</b>			
Arrested	2,457	2,136	-13.06%
Reported but not arrested	882	661	-25.06%
At large	62	32	-48.39%
<b>Type of offence</b>			
Illicit trafficking (Art. 73)	3,050	2,643	-13.34%
Conspiracy to traffic (Art.74)	351	186	-47.01%
Other offences	-	-	--%
<b>Nationality</b>			
Italy	1,559	1,470	-5.71%
Other countries	1,842	1,359	-26.22%
of which:			
Nigeria	548	432	-21.17%
Tunisia	266	238	-10.53%
Morocco	231	170	-26.41%
Albania	166	90	-45.78%
Pakistan	112	83	-25.89%
<b>Gender</b>			
Males	3,069	2,512	-18.15%
Females	332	317	-4.52%
<b>Age</b>			
Of age	3,373	2,814	-16.57%
Minors	28	15	-46.43%
<b>Age groups</b>			
< 15	3	0	-100.00%
15 ÷ 19	116	80	-31.03%
20 ÷ 24	590	456	-22.71%
25 ÷ 29	674	504	-25.22%
30 ÷ 34	584	505	-13.53%
35 ÷ 39	447	395	-11.63%
≥ 40	987	889	-9.93%
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,401</b>	<b>2,829</b>	<b>-16.82%</b>



Out of the total number of persons reported to the Judicial Authorities for heroin-related offences, 31.42% are in the 40/over age group, 17.85% in the 30- 34 age group and 17.82% in the 25-29 age group. The youngest (< 18) represent 0.53% of the total number of the persons reported for this substance at national level.

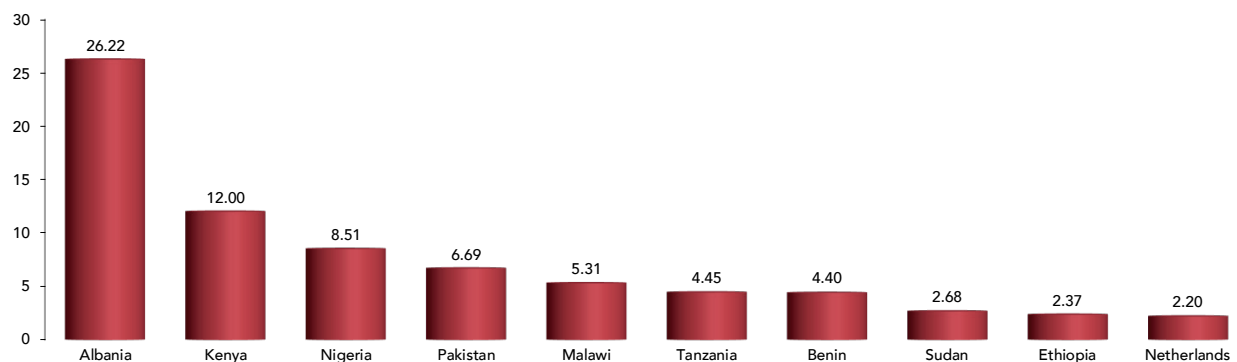


The most significant seizures were made in Tradate (VA) in October ( 59.56kg), in Montesilvano (PE) in May (34kg), in Padova in October (30.18 kg) and in Milan in September ( 20.72 kg).

Heroin seized during antidrug operations was mainly concealed on the person (499 cases), in corpore (39 cases), inside houses (285 cases), in cars (97 cases) and in parcels or letters (49 cases).

The analysis of cases carried out by the competent investigating authorities proved that most heroin was coming from Albania, Kenya, Nigeria, Pakistan, Malawi, Tanzania, Benin, Sudan, Ethiopia and The Netherlands.

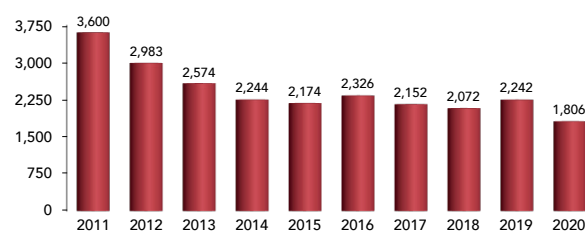
Main heroin origin countries (kg) – cases reported in 2020



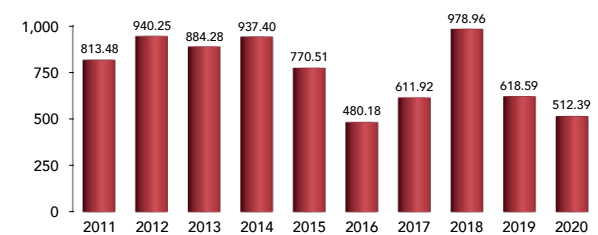
### Ten-year trend

Over the last 10 years the trend of operations and of the number of persons reported to the Judicial Authorities for heroin-related offences have declined, with an average of 2,400 operations and 4,000 persons reported. As to the heroin seizures data, the peak was reached in 2018, when 978.96 kg were seized. Since 2011 a fluctuating trend has been registered.

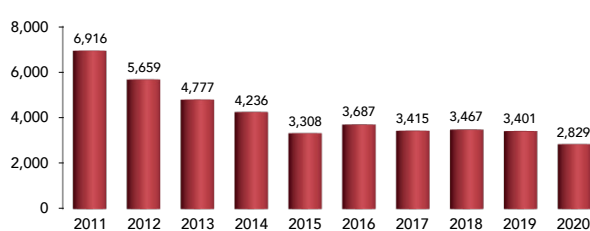
Heroin operations



Heroin seizures (kg)



Persons reported to the J.A. for heroin



Padua 30.30 kg of heroin, October 2020 (Polizia di Stato)



### Heroin seizures – regional distribution

The regions where the largest quantities of heroin were seized are Lombardy, Veneto, Lazio, Apulia, Abruzzi, Tuscany, Marche, Emilia Romagna and Liguria, while the lowest quantities were registered in Molise and Valle d'Aosta.

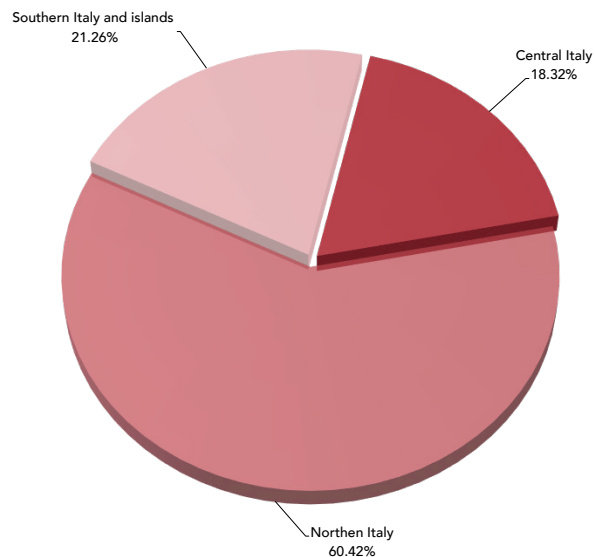
Regional distribution of **heroin seizures**

Regions	2019	2020	% variation 2020
Abruzzi	15.60	40.73	161.09%
Basilicata	2.30	1.86	-19.05%
Calabria	3.56	5.45	52.88%
Campania	31.31	9.16	-70.74%
Emilia Romagna	29.63	16.41	-44.61%
Friuli Venezia Giulia	8.26	1.68	-79.67%
Lazio	89.93	44.52	-50.49%
Liguria	24.63	10.89	-55.81%
Lombardy	174.97	205.42	17.40%
Marche	6.73	20.58	205.69%
Molise	0.66	0.53	-20.06%
Piedmont	17.99	8.88	-50.66%
Apulia	47.72	42.30	-11.35%
Sardinia	27.88	4.30	-84.56%
Sicily	7.43	4.58	-38.35%
Tuscany	26.46	26.97	1.92%
Trentino Alto Adige	18.74	4.16	-77.82%
Umbria	6.77	1.82	-73.08%
Valle d'Aosta	10.53	0.99	-90.60%
Veneto	67.50	61.18	-9.37%
<b>Regional total</b>	<b>618.59</b>	<b>512.39</b>	<b>-17.17%</b>
International waters	-	-	--
<b>National total</b>	<b>618.59</b>	<b>512.39</b>	<b>-17.17%</b>

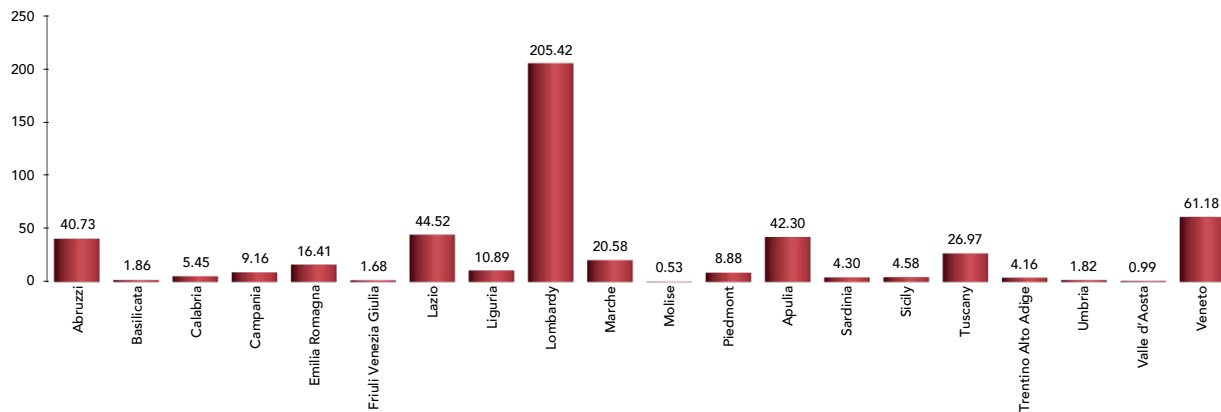
In comparison with 2019, a significant percentage increase in seizures was registered in Marche and in Abruzzi, Calabria and Lombardy.

The most considerable decreases were registered in Valle d'Aosta, Sardinia, Friuli Venezia Giulia, Trentino Alto Adige, Umbria, Campania, Liguria, Piedmont and Emilia Romagna.

Considering the macro-areas, 60.42% of heroin was seized in the North, 21.26% in the South and Islands and 18.32% in Central Italy.



Regional distribution - **heroin seizures** in 2020

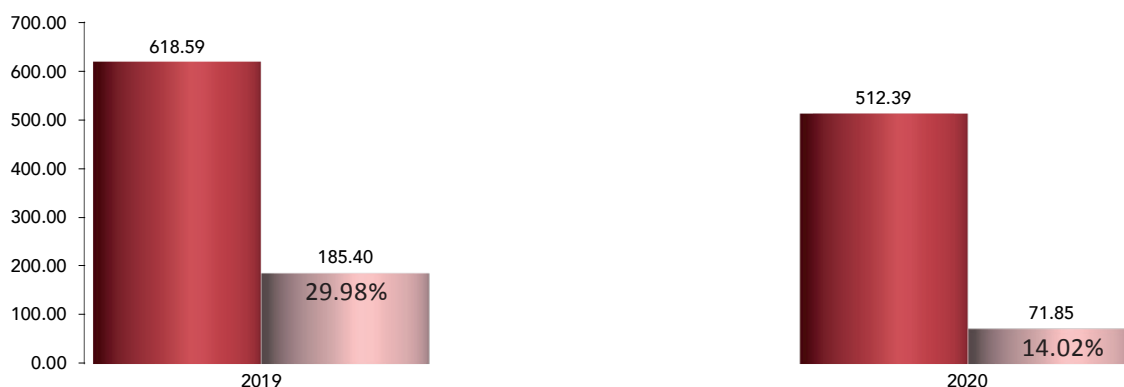


### HEROIN FLOWS TOWARDS ITALY

In the two-year period examined there was a decrease in seizures at borders, if compared with the overall percentage of seizures in Italy, shifting from 29.98% in 2019, to 14.02% in 2020.

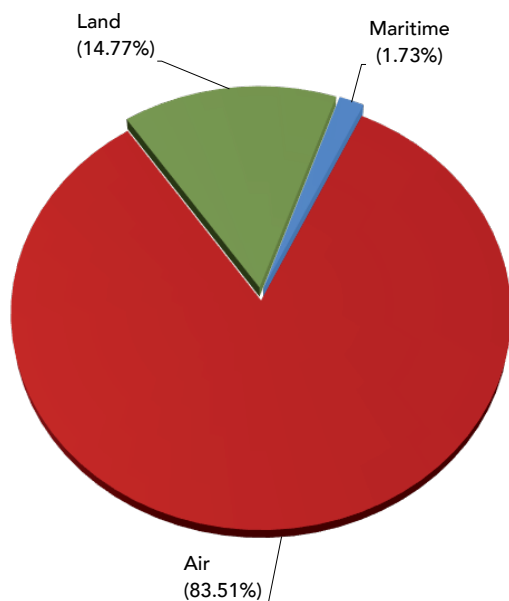
In 2020, heroin seized at national level amounted to 512.39 kg, with a decrease of 17.17% in comparison

Total of **heroin** national seizures (kg) /total of seizures at borders 2019 - 2020 ■ territory ■ at borders

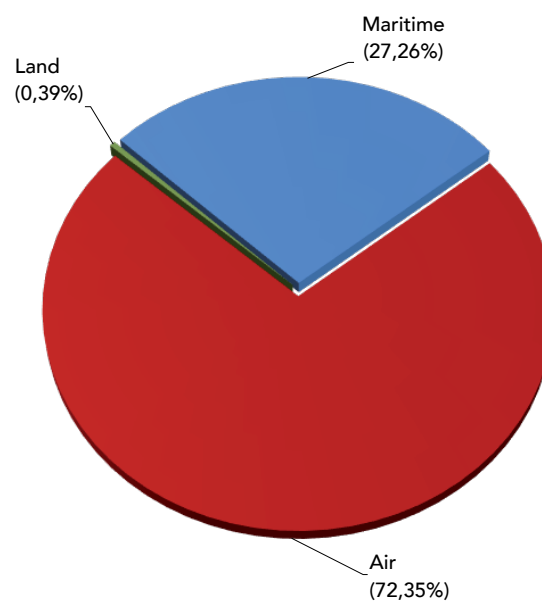


to 2019 (618.59 kg). The below graphs highlight the percentage incidence of drug seizures, subdivided according to the type of borders.

■ Heroin seizures at borders in 2019



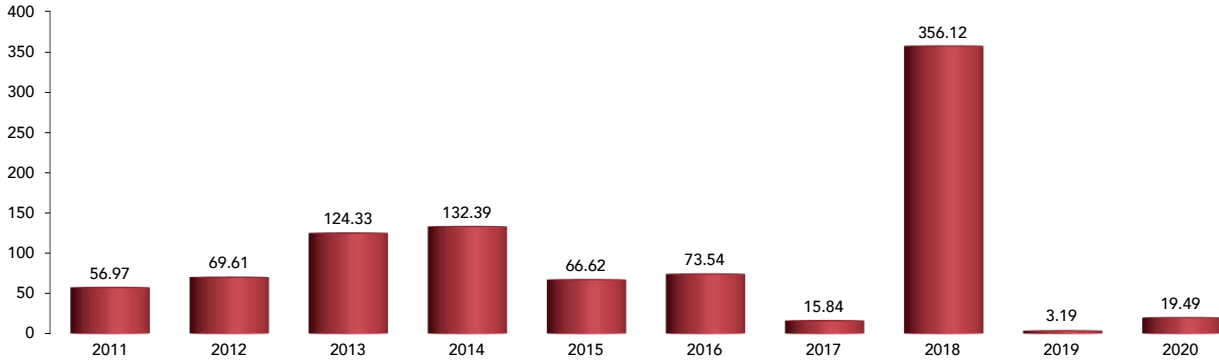
■ Heroin seizures at borders in 2020



In the period 2019/2020, heroin intercepted at sea borders remarkably increased (+510.10%). The graph at the following page shows that the 2019 data are the lowest in the ten-year period.

In 2020, the port areas most involved in heroin trafficking were Ancona, with 17.42 kg; Porto Torres (SS), with 1.92 kg and Olbia (SS), with 0.15 kg.

Heroin seizures at maritime borders kg ■ 2011 ■ 2020



In 2020, the incidence rate of heroin seizures at air borders was 71.99%, with respect to the total of border seizures (in 2019 it was 83.51%).

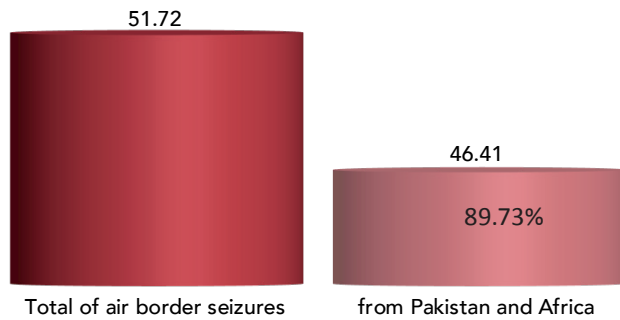
In the reporting year the airports mostly involved in heroin trafficking were Roma Fiumicino, with 41.90 kg, Milano Malpensa with 4.16 kg and Naples Capodichino with 1.57kg; together they represent 92.09% of the total seizures made at airports.

As to the heroin trafficked by air routes, the Southern Route both straight from Pakistan (6.69 kg) and through the African<sup>135</sup> countries (39.67 kg) played a major role and had an incidence rate of 89.73% in the overall quantity of the heroin seized at air borders.

The persons reported to the Judicial Authorities at the Italian airports were mainly Nigerian (15), Albanian (5), Spanish, Dutch, Italian and Malian (2) nationals.

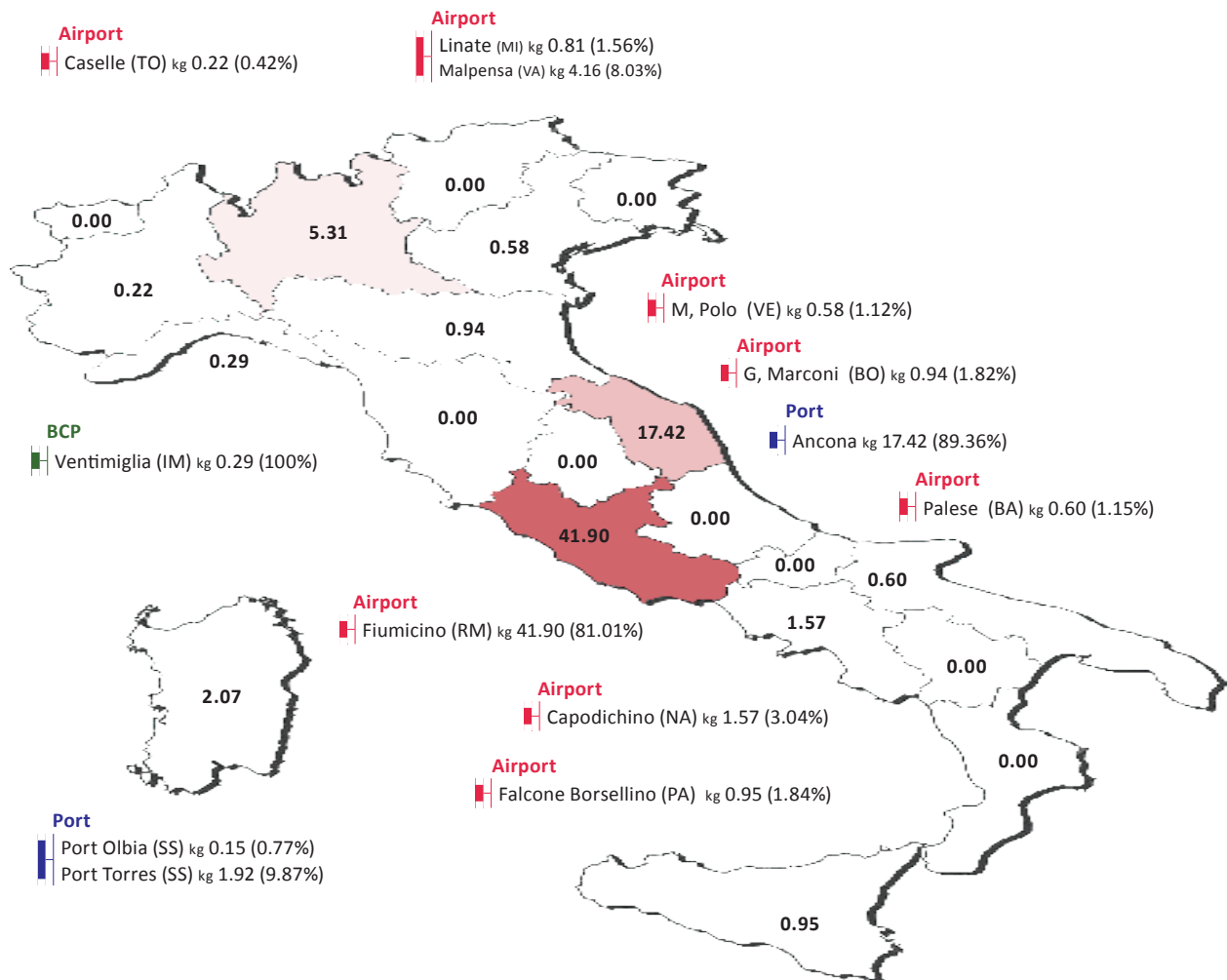
In 2020, the quantity of heroin intercepted at land borders, amounting to 0.28 kg, sharply decreased in comparison to 2019, when 27.38 kg were seized (-98.96%).

Incidence of heroin seizures from Pakistan and East Africa countries as compared to the total of seizures at borders (kg) in 2020



135 Kenya, 12.00 kg; Nigeria, 8.51 kg; Malawi, 5.31 kg; Tanzania, 4.45 kg; Benin, 4.40 kg; Sudan, 2.68 kg; Ethiopia, 2,37 kg.

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



Persons reported to the J. A. at borders for **heroin** (39 persons, of whom 36 Italians and 3 foreigners)

- Nigeria (18)
- Albania (8)
- Mali (2)
- Pakistan (1)
- The Netherlands (2)
- Spain (2)
- Portugal (1)
- Gambia (1)
- Ivory Coast (1)

**SUMMARY TABLE ON HEROIN SEIZURES AND ON PERSONS REPORTED TO THE JUDICIAL AUTHORITY FOR HEROIN-RELATED OFFENCES**

	Five-year trend					2020 data - Geographical subdivision		
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Central Italy	Northern Italy	Southern Italy and Islands
<b>Heroin seizures (kg)</b>	480.18	611.92	978.96	618.59	512.39	93.89	309.60	108.91
<b>Persons reported to the J. A. for heroin</b>								
<b>Type of report</b>								
Arrested	2,769	2,479	2,450	2,457	2,136	540	922	674
Reported but not arrested	876	900	973	882	661	165	289	207
At large	42	36	44	62	32	7	16	9
<b>Type of offence</b>								
Illicit trafficking (Art.73)	3,295	3,240	3,120	3,050	2,643	691	1,143	809
Conspiracy to traffic (Art.74)	392	175	347	351	186	21	84	81
Other offences	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Nationality</b>								
Italy	1,702	1,550	1,436	1,559	1,470	224	525	721
Other countries	1,985	1,865	2,031	1,842	1,359	488	702	169
<b>Gender</b>								
Males	3,352	3,097	3,168	3,069	2,512	653	1,080	779
Females	335	318	299	332	317	59	147	111
<b>Age</b>								
Of age	3,640	3,381	3,442	3,373	2,814	711	1,219	884
Minors	47	34	25	28	15	1	8	6
<b>Age groups</b>								
< 15	1	2	2	3	0	-	-	-
15 ÷ 19	157	130	140	116	80	11	47	22
20 ÷ 24	519	521	563	590	456	116	195	145
25 ÷ 29	763	652	755	674	504	146	210	148
30 ÷ 34	698	649	612	584	505	138	219	148
35 ÷ 39	543	529	495	447	395	98	183	114
≥ 40	1,006	932	900	987	889	203	373	313



### THE FIGHT AGAINST CANNABIS

In 2020 the seizures of hashish and marijuana remarkably decreased (-53.70% and -16.05% respectively). As to hashish this negative trend concerned both the operations (-34.71%) and the reports to the Judicial Authorities (-33.51%). As far as marijuana is concerned operations decreased only by 2.62%. As a whole the police operations carried out in the fight against cannabis derivatives amounted to 12,066, there were 4,654 reports for hashish, with 2,874 persons arrested; 7,581 reports for marijuana offences were made, with 4,531 persons arrested ; the reports for cannabis plants cultivation were 1,351, with 689 subjects arrested.

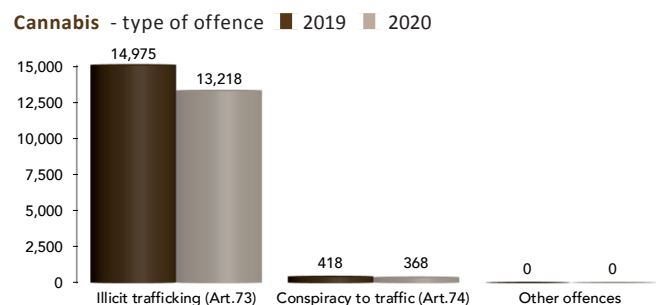
Out of the total reports for cannabis derivatives related offences, 3.566 (26.25%) concerned foreign nationals, mostly Gambian, Moroccan, Nigerian, Albanian and Tunisian nationals; among them, 1,318 (61.39%) were arrested.

Out of 712 minors reported for cannabis related offences, 93 (13.06%) were foreign nationals, in particular Romanian, Moroccan, Tunisian, Moldavian and Egyptian nationals.

**Persons reported to the J.A. for cannabis offences**

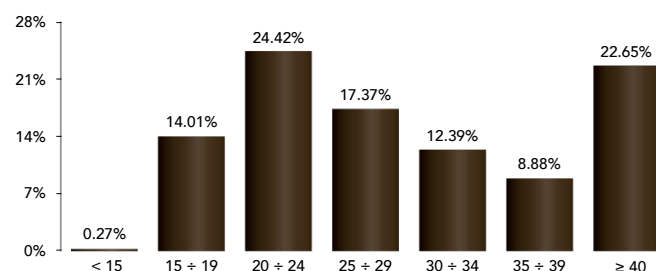
Type of report	2019	2020	% variation 2019
Arrested	9,946	8,094	-18.62%
Reported but not arrested	5,388	5,449	1.13%
At large	59	43	-27.12%
<b>Type of offence</b>			
Illicit trafficking (Art.73)	14,975	13,218	-11.73%
Conspiracy to traffic (Art.74)	418	368	-11.96%
Other offences	-	-	--%
<b>Nationality</b>			
Italy	9,775	10,020	2.51%
Other countries of which:	5,618	3,566	-36.53%
Gambia	1,021	638	-37.51%
Morocco	828	528	-36.23%
Nigeria	923	393	-57.42%
Albania	358	284	-20.67%
Tunisia	298	205	-31.21%
<b>Gender</b>			
Males	14,593	12,775	-12.46%
Females	800	811	1.38%
<b>Age</b>			
Of age	14,416	12,874	-10.70%
Minors	977	712	-27.12%
<b>Age groups</b>			
< 15	42	37	-11.90%
15 ÷ 19	2,523	1,904	-24.53%
20 ÷ 24	3,888	3,318	-14.66%
25 ÷ 29	2,576	2,360	-8.39%
30 ÷ 34	1,874	1,683	-10.19%
35 ÷ 39	1,420	1,207	-15.00%
≥ 40	3,070	3,077	0.23%
<b>Total</b>	<b>15,393</b>	<b>13,586</b>	<b>-11.74%</b>

97.29% of the reports concerned the offence of trafficking/pushing, while 2.71% the conspiracy to drug trafficking.



24.42% of the persons reported to the Judicial Authorities for cannabis offences are aged between 20 and 24, 22.65% are aged 40 or more and 17.37% aged between 25 and 29. The youngest (<18), represent 5.24 of the total of the persons reported for cannabis offences at national level.

Percentage incidence by age groups in the total number of the reports to the J.A. for cannabis offences ■ 2020

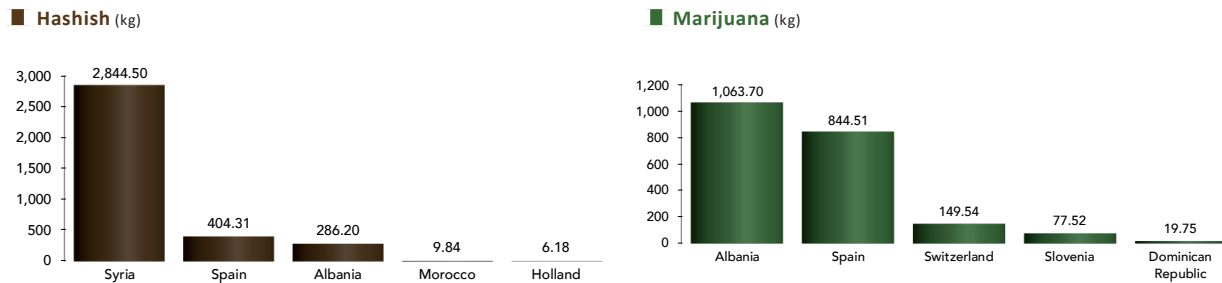


As to seizures, hashish seizures reached the total amount of 9,747.42 kg and marijuana 19,868.69 kg. The largest hashish seizures were carried out in the port of Salerno (2,844.50 kg in June), in Rho (MI) (350 kg in June) and in Landriano (PV) (321kg in July); the largest marijuana seizures were made in Pernumia (PD) (1,034.58 in December), Genoa (780 kg in January) and in Macomer (NU) (772.89 kg in October).

Most of the cannabis seized was found in houses (3,389 cases), on the person (2,273 cases), in cars (553 cases) and inside postal parcels or letters (384 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, Syria, Spain and Albania, while marijuana mainly came from Spain and Albania.

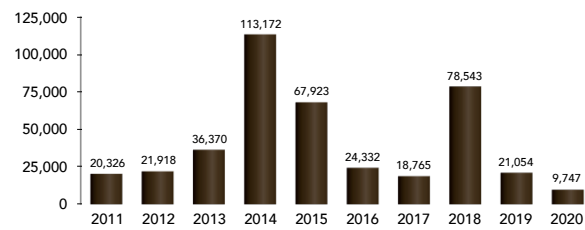
Main hashish and marijuana origin countries (kg) /cases reported in 2020



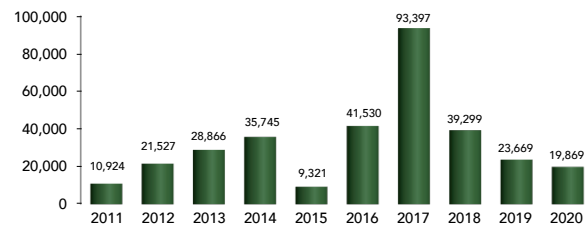
### Ten-year trend

Cannabis, in its different forms, (hashish e marijuana), is the most seized drug on the Italian illegal market; in the ten-year period it has been approximately 90% of the total of drug seizures in Italy. The highest peak in seizures was reached in 2014 as to hashish ( 113,172 kg) and in 2017 as to marijuana (93.397 kg); the lowest rate was reached in 2017 (18,765 kg) as to hashish and in 2015 as to marijuana (9,321kg).

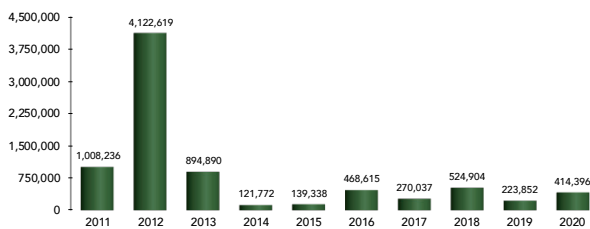
Hashish seizures (kg)



Marijuana seizures (kg)



Seizures of cannabis plants (no.)



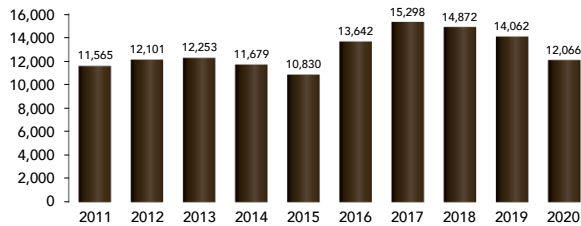
Pollena Trocchia (NA) 255.50 kg of hashish - May 2020 (Carabinieri)



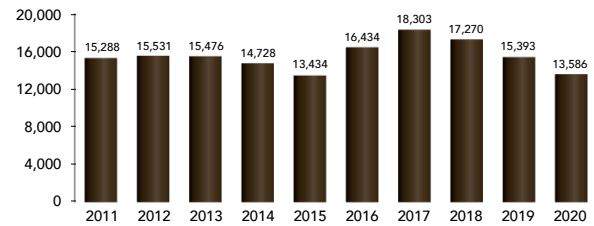
As of 2011 the average of cannabis derivatives operations has always been around 12,000, reaching a peak in 2017, with 15,298 operations.

In the last ten years an average of 15,000 persons have been reported to the Judicial Authorities. The peak was reached in 2017 (18,303), and the lowest level in 2015 (13,434).

■ Total of cannabis operations



■ Total number of people reported to the J.A. for cannabis



■ Rimini 160 kg of hashish and 115 kg marijuana December 2020 (Polizia di Stato)



■ Landriano (PV) 321 kg of hashish April 2020 (Guardia di Finanza)



### Hashish seizures – regional distribution

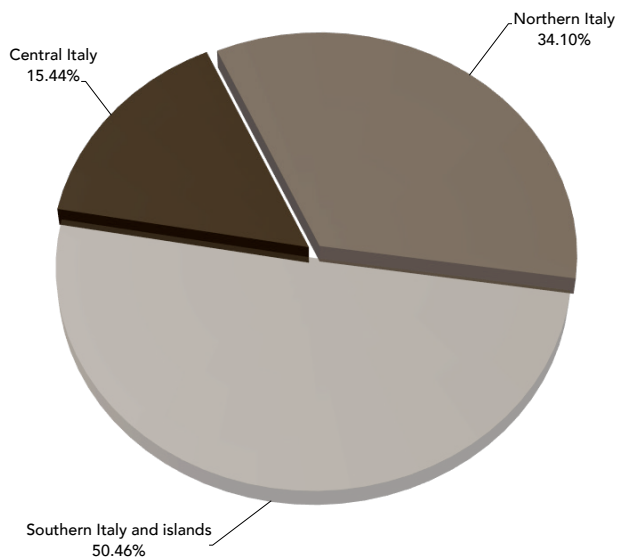
The largest hashish seizures were carried out in Campania, Lombardy, Lazio, Sicily, Apulia, Emilia Romagna, Tuscany and Piedmont, while the lowest amounts were seized in Valle d'Aosta and Molise. In comparison to 2019, significant increases in percentage terms occurred in Umbria, Valle d'Aosta, Lombardy, Campania, Marche and Apulia.

The most notable decreases were registered in Molise, Friuli Venezia Giulia, Sardinia, Tuscany, Liguria, Piedmont, Trentino Alto Adige, Calabria, Basilicata and Veneto.

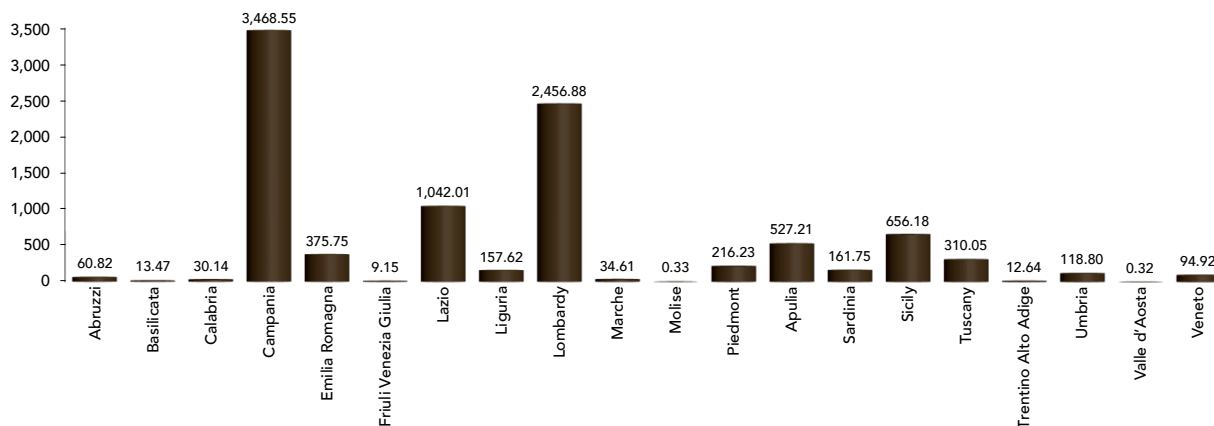
Analyzing the macro-areas, hashish seizures were distributed as follows: 50.46% in the South and Islands, 34.10% in the North and 15.44% in the Centre.

Regional distribution of hashish seizures kg

Regions	2019	2020	% variation 2019
Abruzzi	54.25	60.82	12.12%
Basilicata	27.67	13.47	-51.31%
Calabria	73.81	30.14	-59.17%
Campania	1,889.13	3,468.55	83.61%
Emilia Romagna	456.13	375.75	-17.62%
Friuli Venezia Giulia	50.92	9.15	-82.03%
Lazio	1,369.86	1,042.01	-23.93%
Liguria	463.45	157.62	-65.99%
Lombardy	1,269.56	2,456.88	93.52%
Marche	22.28	34.61	55.33%
Molise	5.74	0.33	-94.21%
Piedmont	613.84	216.23	-64.78%
Apulia	369.57	527.21	42.65%
Sardinia	547.36	161.75	-70.45%
Sicily	904.22	656.18	-27.43%
Tuscany	994.86	310.05	-68.83%
Trentino Alto Adige	32.69	12.64	-61.35%
Umbria	29.47	118.80	303.19%
Valle d'Aosta	0.16	0.32	100.00%
Veneto	173.53	94.92	-45.30%
<b>Regional total</b>	<b>9,348.49</b>	<b>9,747.42</b>	<b>4.27%</b>
International waters	11,705.35	-	-100%
<b>National total</b>	<b>21,053.84</b>	<b>9,747.42</b>	<b>-53.70%</b>



Regional distribution of hashish seizures in 2020



### Marijuana seizures – regional distribution

The largest marijuana seizures were carried out in Sardinia, Apulia, Lombardy, Veneto, Lazio, Piedmont, Emilia Romagna, Liguria and Calabria, while the lowest seizures occurred in Basilicata and Valle d'Aosta.

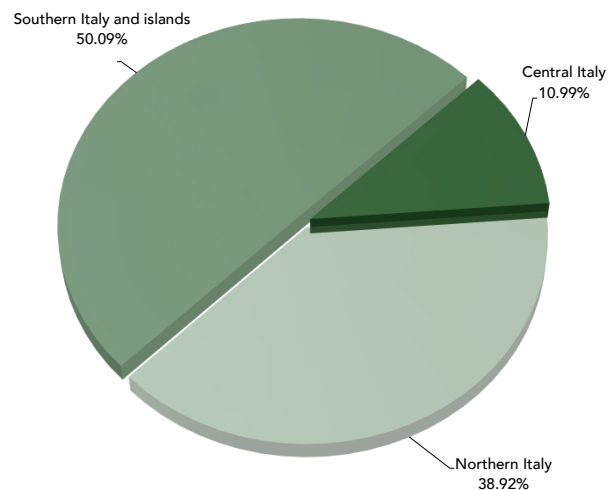
Regional distribution of **marijuana** seizures kg

Regions	2019	2020	var, %
Abruzzi	825.44	172.72	-79.08 %
Basilicata	122.72	3.92	-96.81 %
Calabria	860.10	1,081.45	25.73 %
Campania	632.93	812.47	28.37 %
Emilia Romagna	1,442.11	1,139.92	-20.95 %
Friuli Venezia Giulia	72.68	78.38	7.84 %
Lazio	1,424.98	1,413.76	-0.79 %
Liguria	526.19	1,126.19	114.03 %
Lombardy	1,561.91	2,221.15	42.21 %
Marche	611.06	255.76	-58.15 %
Molise	98.92	25.98	-73.73 %
Piedmont	1,400.55	1,253.31	-10.51 %
Apulia	5,756.17	3,271.06	-43.17 %
Sardinia	2,001.44	3,934.32	96.57 %
Sicily	3,330.08	650.82	-80.46 %
Tuscany	1,102.07	488.66	-55.66 %
Trentino Alto Adige	175.82	56.56	-67.83 %
Umbria	126.07	25.52	-79.76 %
Valle d'Aosta	4.67	21.27	355.63 %
Veneto	523.62	1,835.49	250.54 %
<b>Regional total</b>	<b>22,599.51</b>	<b>19,868.69</b>	<b>-12.08 %</b>
International waters	1,069.00	-	-100 %
<b>National total</b>	<b>23,668.51</b>	<b>19,868.69</b>	<b>-16.05 %</b>

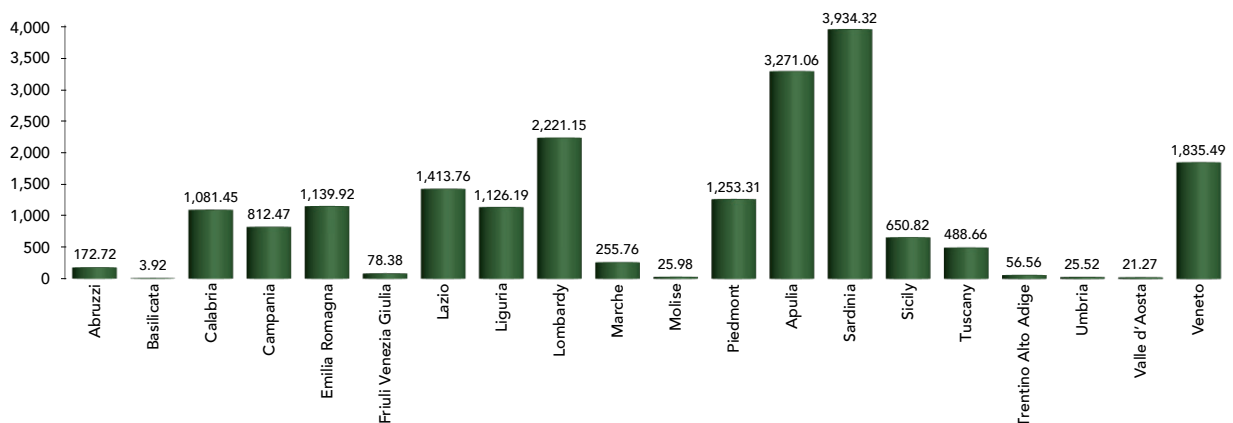
In comparison to 2019, significant increases in seizures in percentage terms were registered in Valle d'Aosta, Veneto, Liguria, Sardinia, Lombardy, Campania and Calabria.

The most notable decreases were registered in Basilicata, Sicily, Umbria, Abruzzi, Molise, Trentino Alto Adige, Marche, Tuscany and Apulia.

Analyzing the macro-areas, marijuana seizures were distributed as follows: 50.09% in the South and Islands, 38.92% in the North and 10.99% in the Centre.



Regional distribution of **marijuana** seizures in 2020



### Cannabis plants seizures – regional distribution

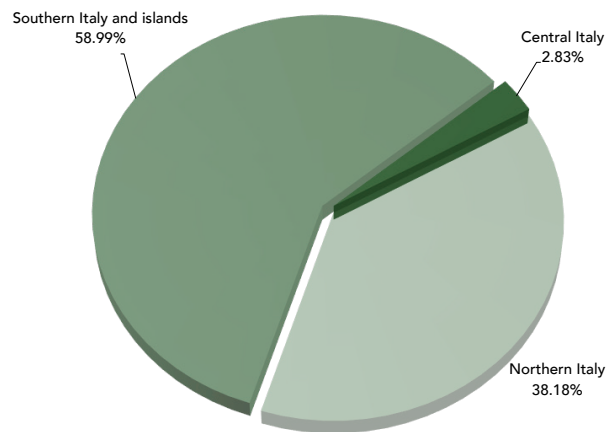
The largest cannabis plants seizures were carried out in Lombardy, Apulia, Calabria, Sardinia, Sicily, Veneto and Campania, while the smallest seizures occurred in Valle d'Aosta and Umbria.

In comparison to 2019, significant increases in seizures in percentage terms were registered in Molise, Lombardy, Veneto, Marche, Apulia, Lazio, Abruzzi and Campania.

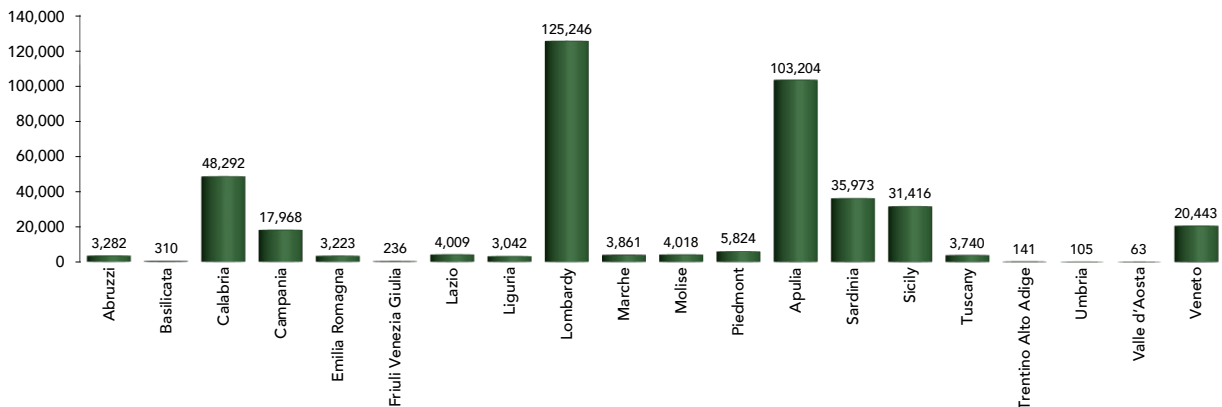
The most notable decreases were registered in Basilicata, Umbria, Sicily, Emilia Romagna, Trentino Alto Adige, Piedmont, Friuli Venezia Giulia and Sardinia.

Analyzing the macro-areas, cannabis plants seizures were distributed as follows: 58.99% in the South and Islands, 38.18% in the North and 2.83% in the Centre.

Regions	2019	2020	var, %
Abruzzi	1,936	3,282	69.52 %
Basilicata	11,157	310	-97.22 %
Calabria	46,577	48,292	3.68 %
Campania	13,081	17,968	37.36 %
Emilia Romagna	4,960	3,223	-35.02 %
Friuli Venezia Giulia	274	236	-13.87 %
Lazio	2,340	4,009	71.32 %
Liguria	3,270	3,042	-6.97 %
Lombardy	8,925	125,246	1,303.32 %
Marche	715	3,861	440.00 %
Molise	33	4,018	12,075.76 %
Piedmont	7,329	5,824	-20.53 %
Apulia	22,474	103,204	359.22 %
Sardinia	41,359	35,973	-13.02 %
Sicily	52,502	31,416	-40.16 %
Tuscany	3,036	3,740	23.19 %
Trentino Alto Adige	209	141	-32.54 %
Umbria	795	105	-86.79 %
Valle d'Aosta	-	63	-- %
Veneto	2,880	20,443	609.83 %
<b>Regional total</b>	<b>223,852</b>	<b>414,396</b>	<b>85.12 %</b>
International waters	-	-	--
<b>National total</b>	<b>223,852</b>	<b>414,396</b>	<b>85.12 %</b>



Regional distribution of cannabis plants seizures in 2020



## CANNABIS FLOWS TOWARDS ITALY

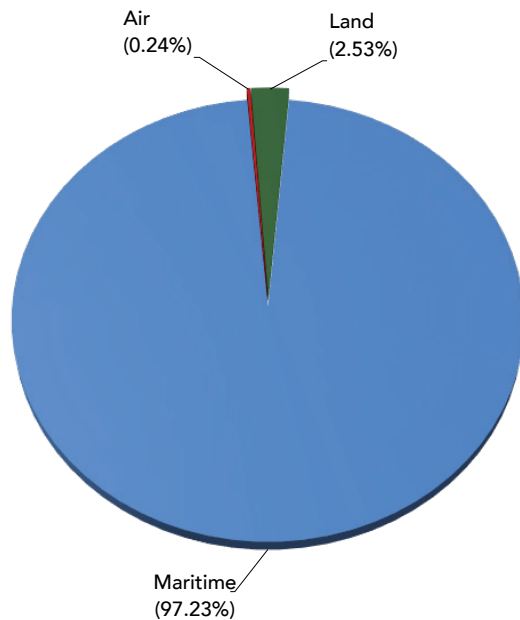
### HASHISH

Total of hashish national seizures (kg) / total of seizures at borders 2019/2020 ■ territory ■ at borders

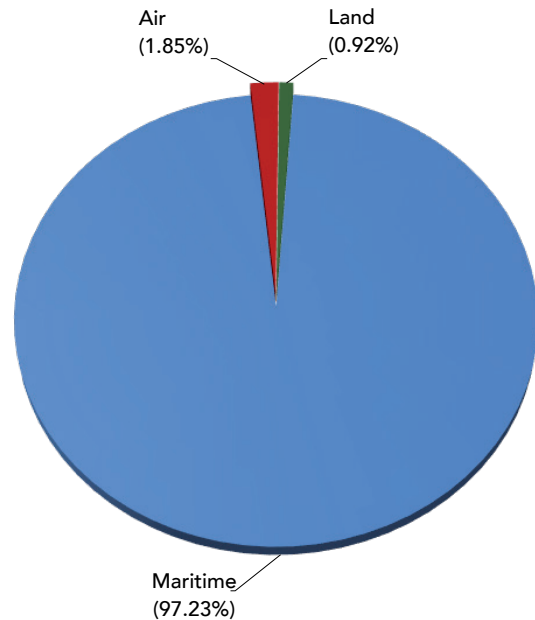


In 2020, hashish seizures in Italy amounted to 9,747.42 kg as a whole (-53.70%, in comparison to 2019). The incidence rate of seizures at borders in the total amount of seizures in Italy was 33.70%. The graphs below show the percentage incidence of the hashish seizures according to the type of border.

■ Hashish seizures at borders (kg) 2019

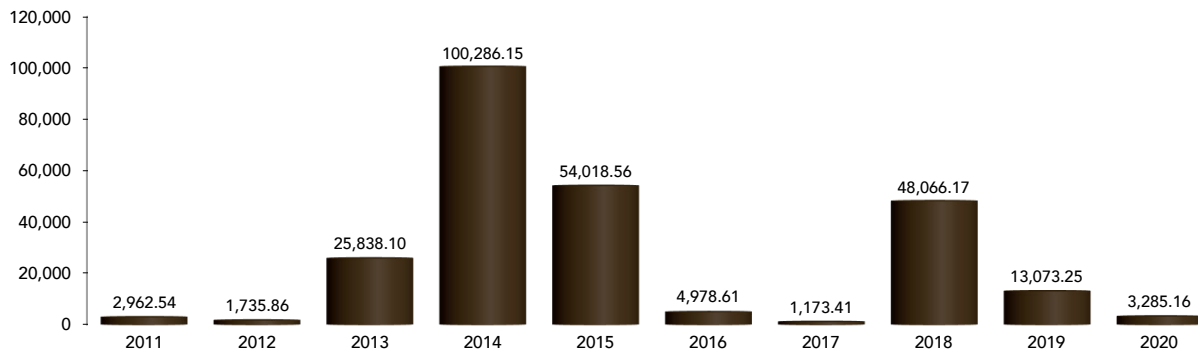


■ Hashish seizures at borders (kg) 2020



The following graph shows the trend of hashish seizures at the Italian borders in the period 2011/2020, with fluctuating, though, sharply decreasing figures. 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 at borders (kg) ■ 2011 - 2020



In 2020, hashish seizures at sea ( 3,191.04 kg) were carried out:

- at the port of Salerno, with the seizure of 2,844.50 kg;
- in the waters bordering the Italian coasts , with the seizure of 303.20 kg.

The persons reported were mainly Italian (13) and Moroccan (3) nationals.

As to land borders, the main crossing point used was Ventimiglia (IM), through the highway “Autofiori”, where 30.03 kg were seized, 99.38% of the total quantity seized at borders. 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 60.60 kg, although there was an increase in comparison to 2019 ( 30.90 kg). Air borders are marginally used to transport cannabis derivatives, since traffickers need to move huge quantities to get remarkable profits.

In 2020, the most significant seizures occurred at Malpensa (VA) airport (28.89 kg) followed by Ciampino (RM) with 15.67 kg, Orio al Serio (BG), with 5.98 kg, Linate (MI), with 3.62 kg and Falconara (AN), with 3.37 kg.



**MARIJUANA**

Total of **marijuana** national seizures (kg)/ total of seizures at borders 2019/2020 ■ territory ■ at borders

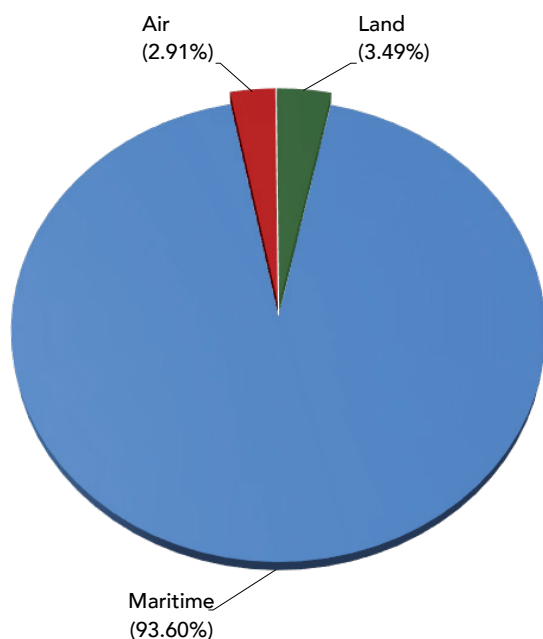


The subjects mainly involved in such illicit drug import were Italian (10), French (6) Spanish (4) and Moroccan (2) nationals.

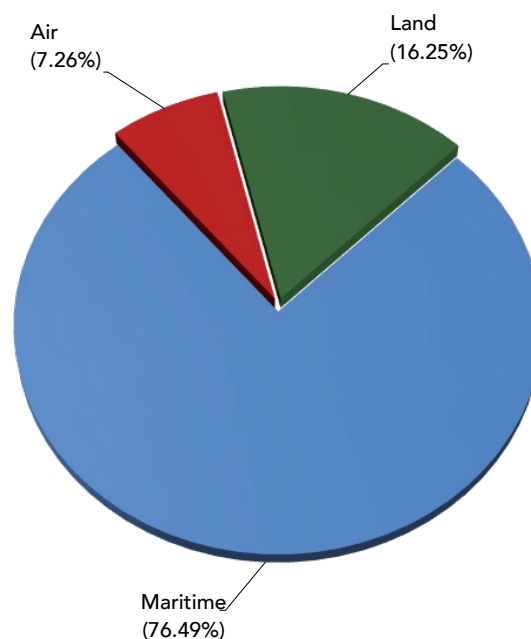
In 2020, marijuana seizures in Italy amounted to 19,868.69 kg (-16.05%, in comparison to 23,668.51 kg seized in 2019). The decrease in seizures at borders in the two-year period 2019/2020 was more significant, equal to 39.57%.

As shown by the graphs below, all the seizures at borders were carried out at sea borders; in 2020, the incidence rate in the marijuana seizures at borders decreased because of the drop in the quantities intercepted.

■ Marijuana seizures at borders (kg) 2019



■ Marijuana seizures at borders (kg) 2020



With reference to sea borders, in 2020, marijuana seizures (1,821.17 kg) were distributed as follows:  
 - in the waters close to ports (1,609.70 kg);  
 - at ports (211.47 kg).

All seizures in the waters close to the Italian ports were carried out in Apulia, specifically:

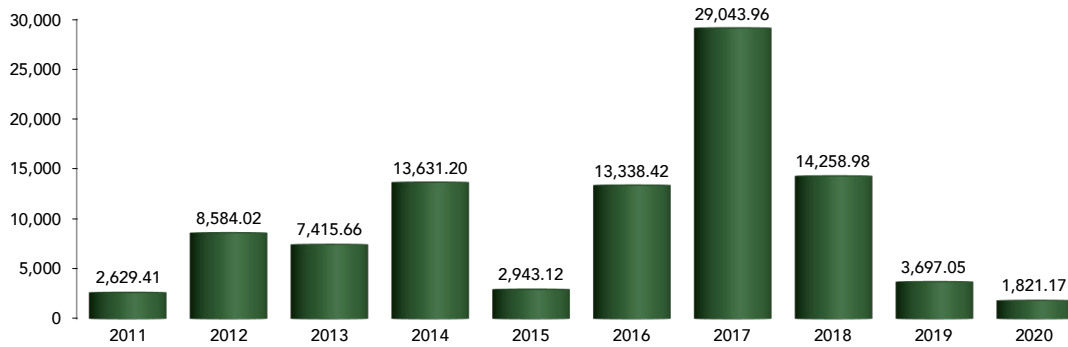
- Bari, 646.10 kg;
- Brindisi, 546 kg;
- Lecce, 417.60 kg.

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

- Civitavecchia (RM), 191.37 kg;
- Messina, 20 kg.

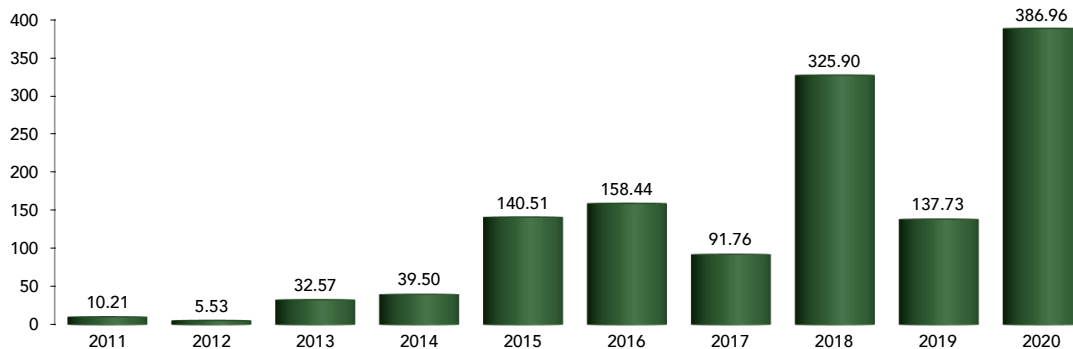
The graph below, concerning marijuana seizures at sea borders in the period 2011/2020, highlights a fluctuating, though decreasing in the last years, trend.

Marijuana - seizures at sea borders (kg) ■ 2011 - 2020



The reports at sea borders mainly concerned Italian (11) and Albanian (4) nationals. In 2020, with reference to marijuana, the seizures at land border crossing points increased by 180.95% in comparison to the previous year. The following histogram highlights an upward trend in the ten-year period.

Marijuana - seizures at land borders (kg) ■ 2011 - 2020



The largest seizures at land border crossings were carried out at Ventimiglia (IM), with 173.09 kg, with an incidence rate of 44.73% in the total amount of the marijuana intercepted at land borders (386.96kg).

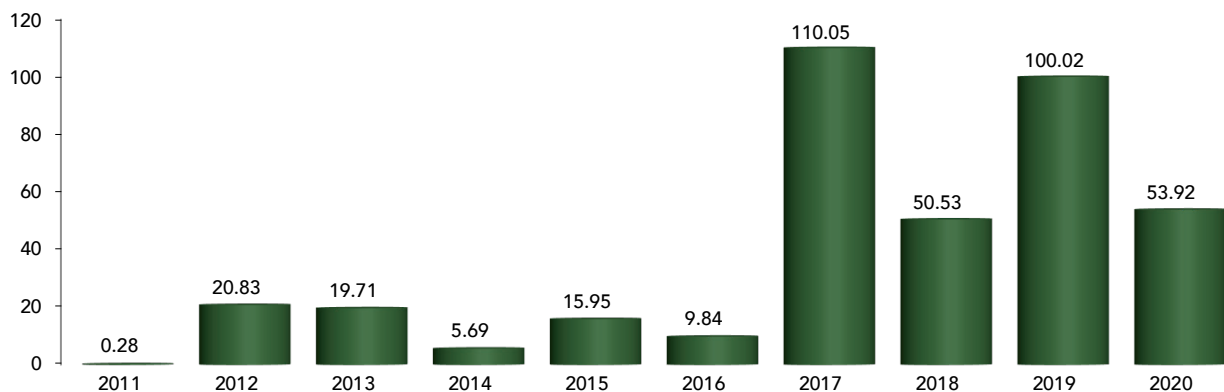
Among the identified countries of origin, Spain was at the forefront (173.06 kg).

Most of the persons reported were Italian (8), Swiss (5) and Romanian (2) nationals .

Air routes were not even largely used to transport marijuana. Nevertheless, in the two-year period 2019/2020, the seizures increased by 50.35% (from 114.91 kg to 172.76 kg). In 2020, the largest seizure was carried out at Malpensa (VA) airport, amounting to 53.92kg (representing approximately 31% of the total amount seized at Italian airports).

The following hystogram shows a remarkable increase in marijuana seizures at Malpensa airport in the last four years.

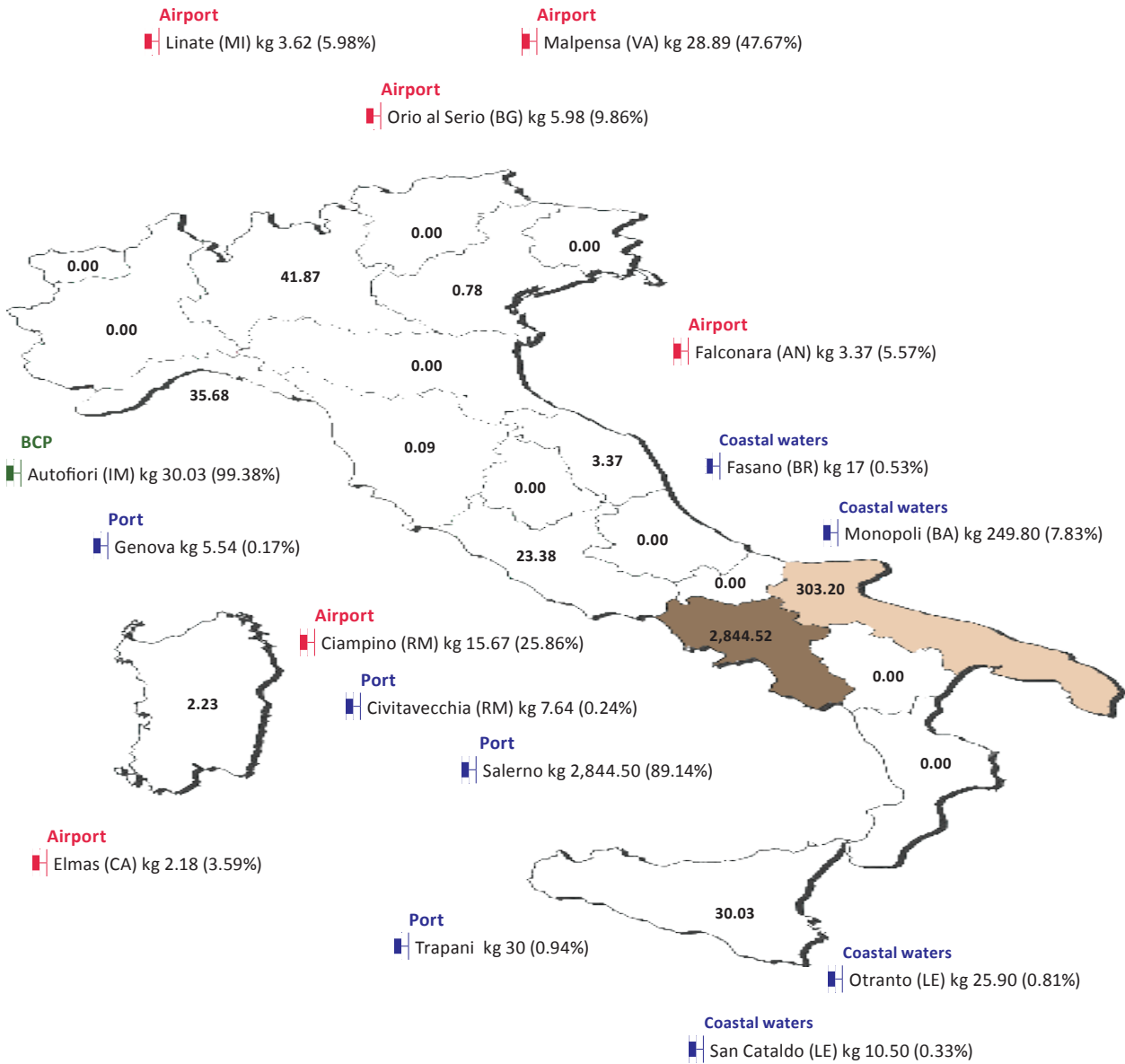
Marijuana - seizures at Malpensa airport (kg) ■ 2011 - 2020



The marijuana seized at airports mostly came from Spain (47.99kg), Dominican Republic (19.75 kg) and the United States of America (9.44 kg).

Most of the persons reported were Italian (13) and French (3) nationals.

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

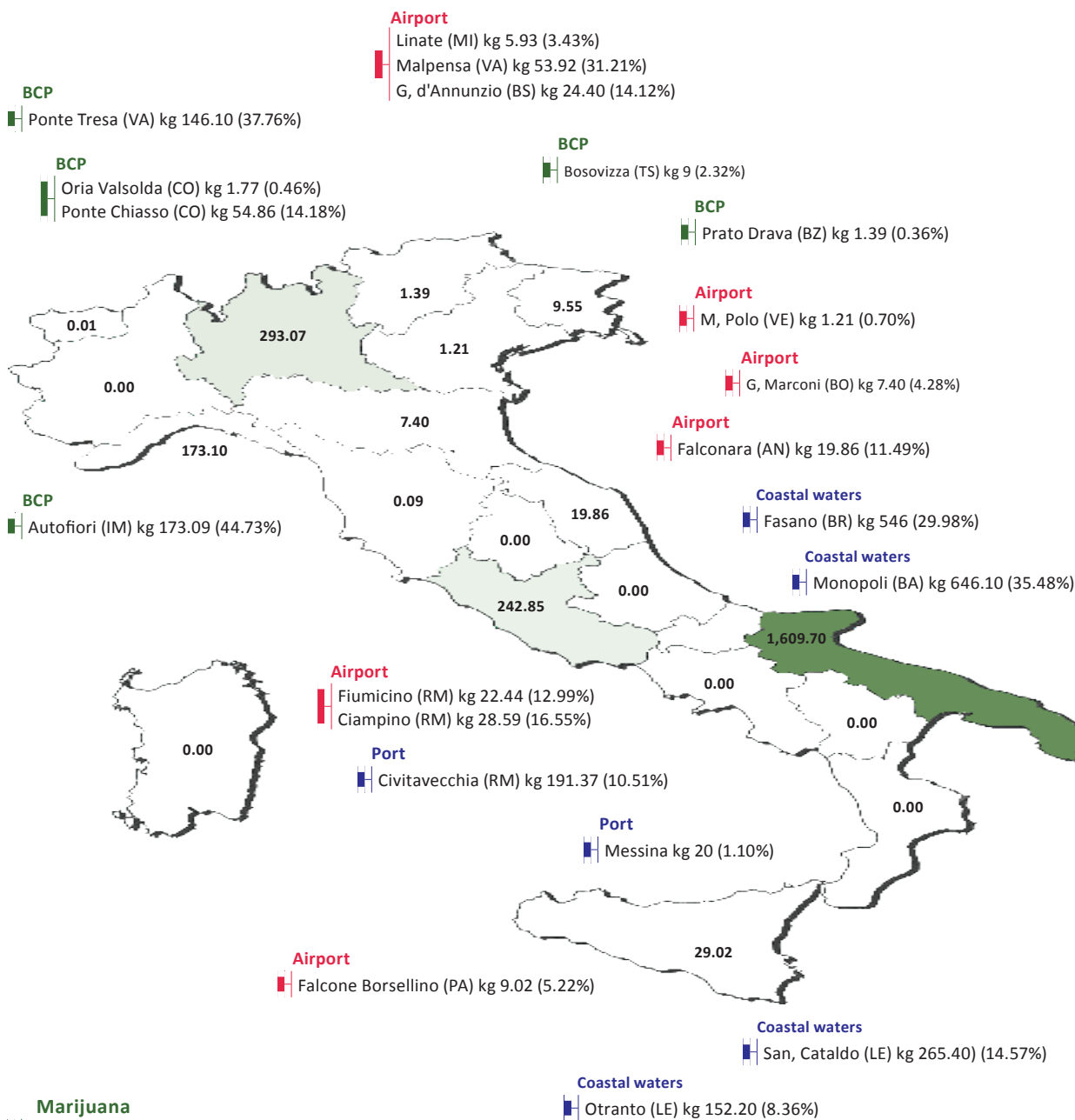


**Hashish**

Persons reported to the J.A. at borders for **hashish** (56 persons, of whom 26 Italians and 30 foreigners)

- |             |              |                 |
|-------------|--------------|-----------------|
| France (7)  | Hungary (1)  | Colombia (1)    |
| Morocco (5) | Brazil (1)   | Switzerland (1) |
| Spain (4)   | Portugal (1) | Venezuela (1)   |
| Bosnia (1)  | Belgium (1)  | Algeria (1)     |
|             |              | Nigeria (1)     |

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



**Marijuana**

Persons reported to the J.A. at borders for **marijuana** (56 persons, of whom 23 Italians and 33 foreigners)

- Switzerland (5)
- Albania (4)
- France (3)
- Romania (2)
- Syria (1)
- Germany (1)
- Russia (1)
- Greece (1)
- Slovenia (1)
- India (1)
- Belgium (1)
- United States of America (1)
- Lithuania (1)

SUMMARY TABLE ON SEIZURES AND ON PERSONS REPORTED TO THE JUDICIAL AUTHORITY FOR **HASHISH**, **MARIJUANA** AND **CANNABIS PLANTS**-RELATED OFFENCES

	Five-year trend					2020 data - Geographical subdivision		
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Central Italy	Northern Italy	Southern Italy and Islands
<b>Hashish</b> (kg)	24,331.50	18,764.88	78,543.16	21,053.84	9,747.42	1,505.48	3,323.50	4,918.44
<b>Marijuana</b> (kg)	41,529.79	93,396.59	39,299.48	23,668.51	19,868.69	2,183.69	7,732.25	9,952.75
<b>Cannabis plants</b> (Plants no.)	468,615	270,037	524,904	223,852	414,396	11,715	158,218	244,463
<b>Persons reported to the Judicial Authority for cannabis</b>								
<b>Type of report</b>								
Arrested	10,810	12,242	11,117	9,946	8,094	1,606	2,846	3,642
Reported but not arrested	5,578	6,008	6,102	5,388	5,449	951	2,684	1,814
At large	46	53	51	59	43	8	18	17
<b>Type of offence</b>								
Illicit trafficking (Art.73)	16,092	17,916	16,873	14,975	13,218	2,522	5,537	5,159
Conspiracy to traffic (Art.74)	341	385	395	418	368	43	11	314
Other offences	1	2	2	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Nationality</b>								
Italy	10,824	11,504	10,653	9,775	10,020	1,791	3,348	4,881
Other countries	5,610	6,799	6,617	5,618	3,566	774	2,200	592
<b>Gender</b>								
Males	15,517	17,337	16,242	14,593	12,775	2,392	5,266	5,117
Females	917	966	1,028	800	811	173	282	356
<b>Age</b>								
Of age	15,322	17,186	16,231	14,416	12,874	2,398	5,204	5,272
Minors	1,112	1,117	1,039	977	712	167	344	201
<b>Age groups</b>								
< 15	36	40	40	42	37	9	18	10
15 ÷ 19	2,743	3,045	2,853	2,523	1,904	389	915	600
20 ÷ 24	3,698	4,482	4,222	3,888	3,318	620	1,522	1,176
25 ÷ 29	2,869	3,193	3,051	2,576	2,360	448	973	939
30 ÷ 34	2,115	2,272	2,097	1,874	1,683	308	665	710
35 ÷ 39	1,625	1,659	1,580	1,420	1,207	233	420	554
≥ 40	3,348	3,612	3,427	3,070	3,077	558	1,035	1,484

### THE FIGHT AGAINST SYNTHETIC DRUGS

In 2020, in Italy, synthetic drug seizures in “dose form” decreased by 69%, while those in “powder form” increased by 13,896.18%. Such huge increase is due, as already mentioned in this report, to the seizure of 14,005 kg of amphetamine carried out at the Salerno port in June 2020; however, even excluding the record seizure in Salerno, the total figure is 288.88 kg, representing an increase of 182.86% in 2020.

Operations involving synthetic drugs amounted to 307 and the persons reported were 333, out of whom 241 were arrested. 17,687 doses and 14,293.88 kg were seized.

Among the persons reported for synthetic drugs offences, 186 (55.86%) were foreign nationals (143 of them were arrested), in particular Filipino, Chinese, Nigerian, Albanian and Bengali nationals.

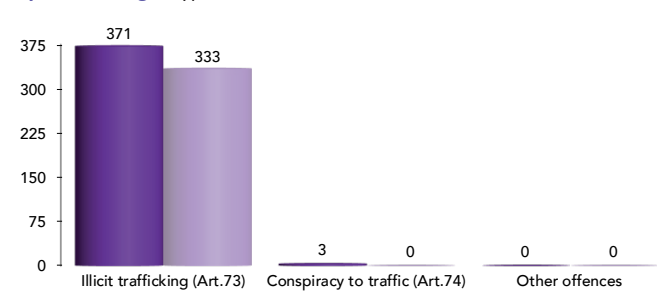
The most significant quantities were seized in Salerno ( 14,005 kg and 186.88 kg of amphetamine), in Coccaglio (BS) ( 3,915 tablets of di 4-chloro-2.5-dimethoxyamphetamine), in Prato (3,910 tablets of M.D.M.A.) and in Venice ( 1,633 tablets of M.D.M.A.). 100% of reports were connected to traffic/pushing.

#### Persons

reported to the J.A. for **synthetic drugs** offences

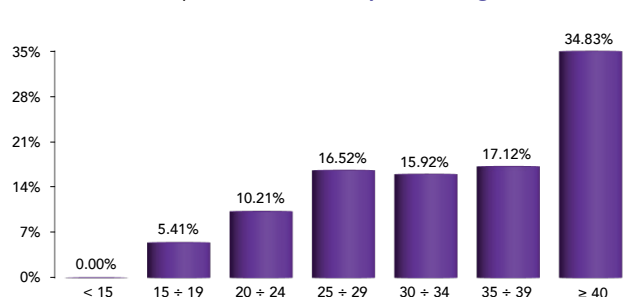
Type of report	2019	2020	% variation 2019
Arrested	282	241	-14.54 %
Reported but not arrested	88	92	4.55 %
At large	4	-	-100.00 %
<b>Type of offence</b>			
Illicit trafficking (Art.73)	371	333	-10.24 %
Conspiracy to traffic (Art.74)	3	0	-100.00 %
Other offences	-	-	--
<b>Nationality</b>			
Italy	163	147	-9.82 %
Other countries	211	186	-11.85 %
of which:			
Philippines	101	82	-18.81 %
China	51	43	-15.69 %
Nigeria	9	13	44.44 %
Bangladesh	5	5	0.00 %
Albania	2	4	100.00 %
<b>Gender</b>			
Males	322	301	-6.52 %
Females	52	32	-38.46 %
<b>Age</b>			
Of age	359	329	-8.36 %
Minors	15	4	-73.33 %
<b>Age groups</b>			
< 15	1	0	-100.00 %
15 ÷ 19	43	18	-58.14 %
20 ÷ 24	55	34	-38.18 %
25 ÷ 29	63	55	-12.70 %
30 ÷ 34	60	53	-11.67 %
35 ÷ 39	53	57	7.55 %
≥ 40	99	116	17.17 %
<b>Total</b>	<b>374</b>	<b>333</b>	<b>-10.96 %</b>

Synthetic drugs - type of offence



Out of the 333 persons reported to the Judicial Authorities for synthetic drugs offences, 34.83% were aged 40 or over, 17.12% were aged between 35 and 39 and 16.52% were between 25 and 29 years old. The youngest (<18) represent 1.20% of the persons reported for synthetic drugs offences at national level.

Percentage incidence of age groups in the total number of the reports to the J.A. for **synthetic drug** offences



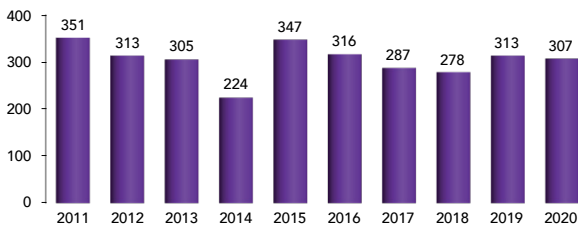
The synthetic drugs seized during antidrug operations were mostly concealed inside postal parcels or letters, in houses, on the persons and in cars.

Also in 2020, Holland was the main supplying country for the Italian market. We should consider, in fact, that such drugs mainly come from The Netherlands, together with Syria, Brazil, Perù and China. Excluding the remarkable seizure of amphetamine occurred in Salerno, ecstasy and ecstrasy like products are at the forefront in terms of amounts seized.

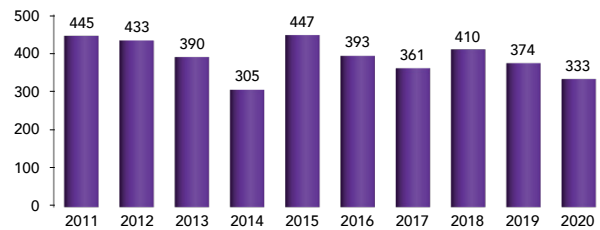
**Ten-year trend**

Since 2011, the trend of synthetic drugs operations, reports and seizures has been fluctuating, with a peak in 2019, when 56,620 doses were seized and in the reporting year, with 14,293.88 of powder products seized. In the ten-year period, the record low of 7,536 doses seized was registered in 2013, while the lowest seizures of powder products (22.84 kg) was reached in 2014.

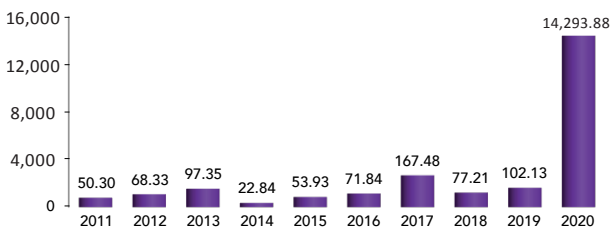
■ Synthetic drugs operations



■ Persons reported to the J.A. for Synthetic drugs



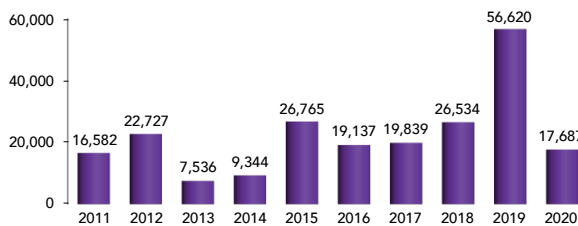
■ Synthetic drugs seizures (kg)



■ Port of Salerno 14,005 kg of Amphetamine April 2020 (Guardia di Finanza)



■ Seizures (tablets/doses no) Synthetic drugs





### Synthetic drugs seizures – regional distribution

The regions reporting major seizures of synthetic drugs in powder were: Campania, Lazio, Lombardy, Emilia Romagna, Sardinia and Veneto, while the leading regions for seizures in doses were Tuscany, Lombardy, Veneto, Lazio and Friuli Venezia Giulia.

With respect to 2019, significant increases in seizures of synthetic drugs in powder were registered in Campania, Sardinia, Lazio, Friuli Venezia Giulia, Marche and Emilia Romagna, while in terms of seizures in doses, Friuli Venezia Giulia, Veneto, Piedmont, Marche and Sardinia were in the lead.

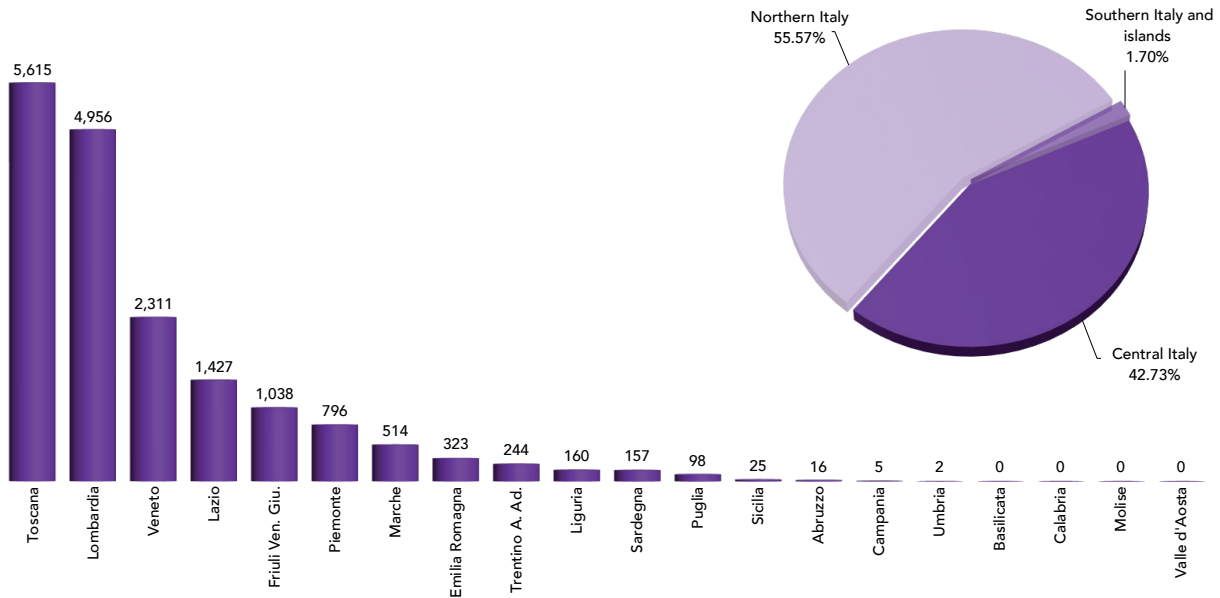
The most considerable drops were registered: in terms of seizures in powder, in Calabria, Abruzzi, Sicily, Apulia, Piedmont, Veneto, Basilicata and Liguria; in terms of seizures in doses, in Calabria, Basilicata, Apulia, Sicily, Lazio, Trentino Alto Adige, Abruzzi, Tuscany and Emilia Romagna.

#### Regional distribution of synthetic drugs seizures

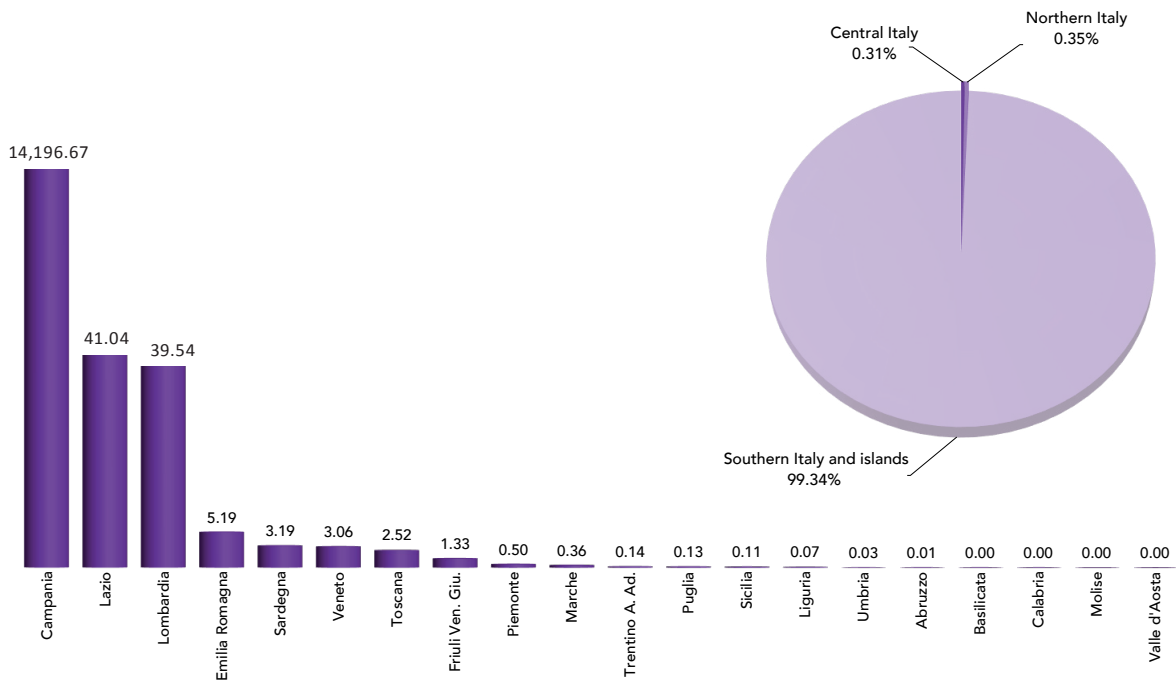
Regions	Synthetic drugs seized					
	In powder/kg)			tablets/doses (no)		
	2019	2020	% variation 2019	2019	2020	% variation 2019
Abruzzi	0.99	0.01	-99.39 %	109	16	-85.32 %
Basilicata	0.01	0.00	-66.67 %	19	-	-100.00 %
Calabria	1.95	0.00	-100.00 %	3	-	-100.00 %
Campania	0.08	14,196.67	18,679,728.95 %	4	5	25.00 %
Emilia Romagna	3.02	5.19	71.92 %	558	323	-42.11 %
Friuli Venezia Giulia	0.24	1.33	457.32 %	87	1,038	1,093.10 %
Lazio	5.31	41.04	673.57 %	32,099	1,427	-95.55 %
Liguria	0.13	0.07	-45.74 %	192	160	-16.67 %
Lombardy	59.28	39.54	-33.30 %	4,089	4,956	21.20 %
Marche	0.13	0.36	175.19 %	233	514	120.60 %
Molise	0.00	0.00	--	-	-	--
Piedmont	3.41	0.50	-85.37 %	175	796	354.86 %
Apulia	1.72	0.13	-92.54 %	5,118	98	-98.09 %
Sardinia	0.14	3.19	2,180.00 %	109	157	44.04 %
Sicily	9.84	0.11	-98.89 %	921	25	-97.29 %
Tuscany	3.10	2.52	-18.71 %	10,463	5,615	-46.33 %
Trentino Alto Adige	0.22	0.14	-35.02 %	2,171	244	-88.76 %
Umbria	0.06	0.03	-44.64 %	-	2	--
Valle d'Aosta	0.00	0.00	--	-	-	--
Veneto	12.53	3.06	-75.58 %	270	2,311	755.93 %
<b>Regional total</b>	<b>102.13</b>	<b>14,293.88</b>	<b>13,896.04 %</b>	<b>56,620</b>	<b>17,687</b>	<b>-68.76 %</b>
International waters	-	-	--	-	-	--
<b>Mational total</b>	<b>102.13</b>	<b>14,293.88</b>	<b>13,896.04 %</b>	<b>56,620</b>	<b>17,687</b>	<b>-68.76 %</b>

Examining the macro-areas, in 2020, the seizures of synthetic drugs in doses were carried out in Northern Italy (55.57%), in Central Italy (42.73%) and in Southern Italy and Islands (1.70%), while those involving substances in powder, 99.34% occurred in the South and Islands, 0.35% in the North and 0.31% in the Center.

Regional distribution **synthetic drugs seizures** (in doses/tablets) ■ 2020



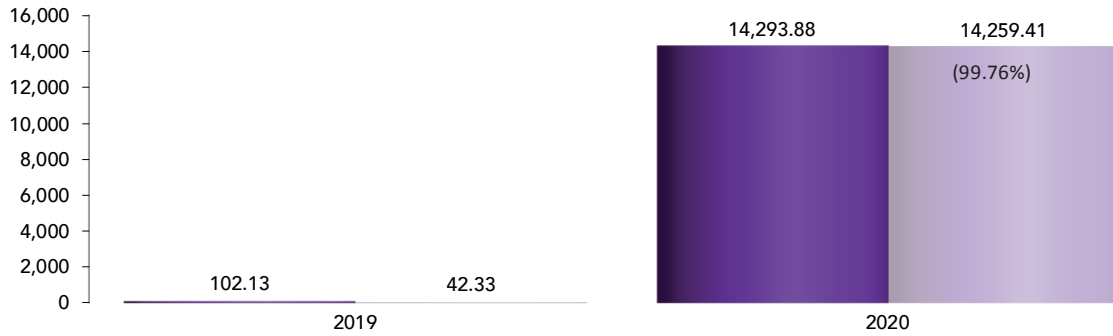
Regional distribution **synthetic drugs seizures** (in powder/kg) ■ 2020



**SYNTHETIC DRUGS FLOWS TOWARDS ITALY**

Total of **Synthetic drugs** national seizures (in powder/kg) total seizures at borders 2019/2020 ■ territory ■ at borders

Seizures in powder (kg)

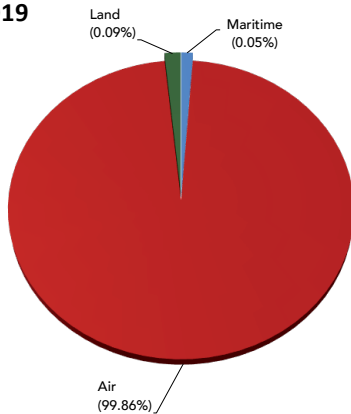


In 2020, 17,687 doses (-69% as compared to 2019) and 14,293.88 kg of synthetic drugs (+13.896,18%) were intercepted in Italy.

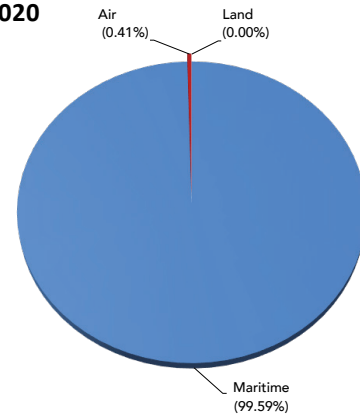
At border areas the seizures were equal to 14,259.41 kg as compared to 42.33 kg in the previous year (+33,586.30%); as already mentioned, this figure is influenced by a single seizure of amphetamine carried out in the Salerno port (14,005 kg).

■ Synthetic drugs seizures at borders (in powder/kg)

2019

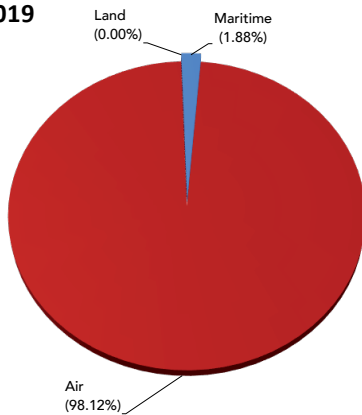


2020

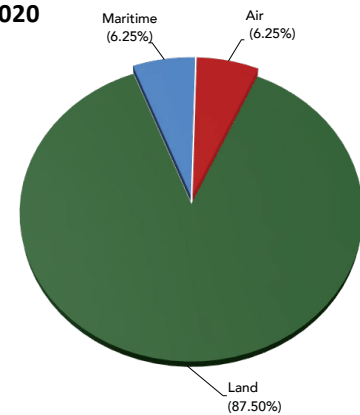


■ Synthetic drugs seizures at borders (in doses/tablets)

2019

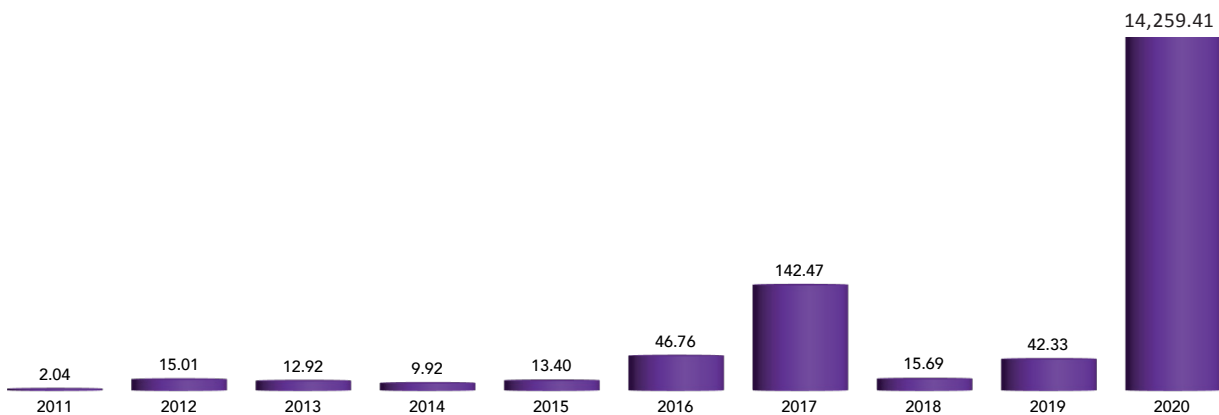


2020



The following histogram represents the seizures of synthetic drugs in powder (in kg) carried out at border areas in the period 2011/2020.

Seizures of **Synthetic drugs** at borders (kg) ■ 2011 - 2020



As to the airport areas, the airports mainly involved in synthetic drugs seizures were: Fiumicino (RM) with 30.01 kg, Malpensa (VA) with 16.24 kg and Linate (MI) with 9.54 kg. Together, such seizures represent 94.59% of the total amount seized.

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

- Ghana, 25 kg;
- The Netherlands, 10.89 kg;
- Brazil 6.67 kg;
- Perù, 5.12 kg.

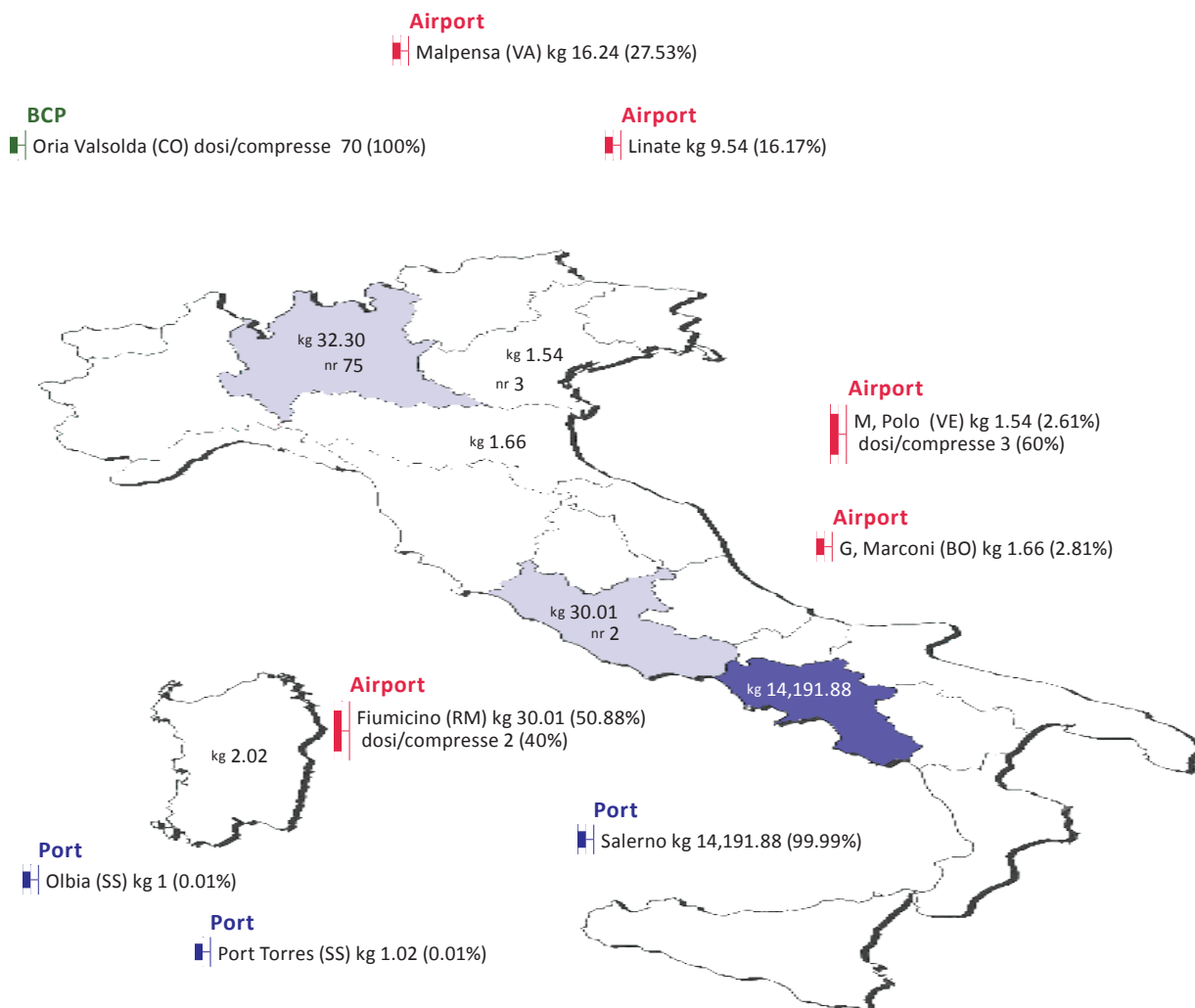
In 2020, 19 antidrug operations involving postal parcels forwarded by air containing synthetic drugs, were carried out, leading to the seizure of 23.46 kg and 8 doses.

As to the fight against the growing phenomenon of drug trafficking, especially synthetic drugs, concealed in postal and express couriers deliveries, D:C.S.A. developed a specific project, called "Hermes", in order to harmonize and strengthen the control activity carried out by the law enforcement agencies. The project was set up through an interinstitutional cooperation Agreement with the Department for Antidrug Policies of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers and is aimed at:

- equipping the law enforcement agencies with innovative technologies to detect drugs concealed in parcels;
- providing the operators with a proper technical and practical skills on synthetic drugs and New Psychoactive Substances on the illegal market, as well as on the use of the equipment received;
- organizing a common counteraction plan for the law enforcement agencies - also by using specific software programs able to steer controls - with the cooperation of companies working in this particular sector;
- promptly transmitting to the Early Warning System the reports on the new drugs detected on the market, in order to protect the consumers health.





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

Synthetic drugs seized (in powder/kg) and (in doses/tablets - no)



**Synthetic drugs**

Persons reported to the J.A. at borders for Synthetic drugs (8 persons, of whom 4 Italians and 4 foreigners)

-  United States of America (1)
-  Syria (1)
-  Ghana (1)
-  China (1)

**SUMMARY TABLE ON SEIZURES AND ON PERSONS REPORTED TO THE JUDICIAL  
AUTHORITY FOR **SYNTHETIC DRUGS** -RELATED OFFENCES**

	Five-year trend					2020 data - Geographical subdivision		
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Central Italy	Northern Italy	Southern Italy and Islands
in powder (kg)	71.84	167.48	77.21	102.13	14,293.88	43.94	49.83	14,200.11
tablets/doses (no)	19,137	19,839	26,534	56,620	17,687	7,558	9,828	301
<b>Persons reported to the J.A. for <b>synthetic drugs</b></b>								
<b>Type of report</b>								
Arrested	314	268	283	282	241	101	125	15
Reported but not arrested	77	93	125	88	92	30	59	3
At large	2	-	2	4	-	-	-	-
<b>Type of offence</b>								
Illicit trafficking (Art.73)	393	354	350	371	333	131	184	18
Conspiracy to traffic (Art.74)	-	7	60	3	-	-	-	-
Other offences	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Nationality</b>								
Italy	193	166	146	163	147	48	85	14
Other countries	200	195	264	211	186	83	99	4
<b>Gender</b>								
Males	353	324	364	322	301	113	171	17
Females	40	37	46	52	32	18	13	1
<b>Age</b>								
Of age	374	342	406	359	329	131	182	16
Minors	19	19	4	15	4	-	2	2
<b>Age groups</b>								
< 15	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
15 ÷ 19	57	42	24	43	18	4	11	3
20 ÷ 24	91	82	58	55	34	8	25	1
25 ÷ 29	73	64	56	63	55	25	25	5
30 ÷ 34	62	63	64	60	53	22	30	1
35 ÷ 39	58	46	81	53	57	18	35	4
≥ 40	51	64	127	99	116	54	58	4

### PERSONS REPORTED TO THE JUDICIAL AUTHORITIES

In 2020, the persons reported to the Judicial Authorities in Italy decreased by 11.21%, from 35,292 in 2019 to 31,335 in 2020.

Cocaine offences recorded the highest number of persons reported, 12,974 (-7.04%), followed by marijuana with 7,581 (+0.95%), hashish 4,654 (-33.51) and heroin with 2,829 persons reported (-16.82%).

Out of the minors reported to the Judicial Authorities for drug offences, 189 (20.66%) were foreigners, in particular from Tunisia, Morocco, Romania, Senegal and Mali.

10,192 (32.53% of the total) foreigners, in particular from Morocco, Albania, Nigeria, Tunisia and Gambia.

#### Persons reported to the J.A.

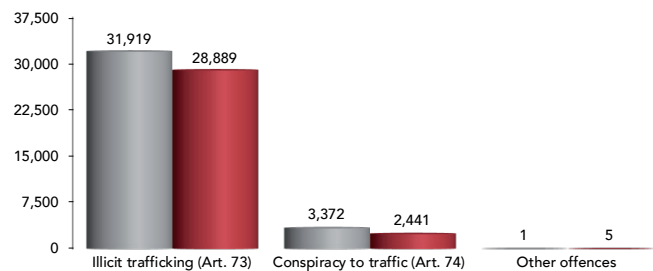
Type of report	2019	2020	% variation 2019
Arrested	24,333	20,641	-15.17%
Reported but not arrested	10,677	10,414	-2.46%
At large	282	280	-0.71%
<b>Type of offence</b>			
Illicit trafficking (Art. 73)	31,919	28,889	-9.49%
Conspiracy to traffic (Art. 74)	3,372	2,441	-27.61%
Other offences	1	5	400.00%
<b>Nationality</b>			
Italy	21,414	21,143	-1.27%
Other countries	13,878	10,192	-26.56%
of which:			
Morocco	2,698	2,172	-19.50%
Albania	2,093	1,789	-14.52%
Nigeria	1,947	1,176	-39.60%
Tunisia	1,058	928	-12.29%
Gambia	1,272	822	-35.38%
<b>Gender</b>			
Males	32,792	28,894	-11.89%
Females	2,500	2,441	-2.36%
<b>Age</b>			
Of age	34,003	30,420	-10.54%
Minors	1,289	915	-29.01%
<b>Age groups</b>			
< 15	57	44	-22.81%
15 ÷ 19	3,536	2,631	-25.59%
20 ÷ 24	7,026	5,927	-15.64%
25 ÷ 29	6,175	5,458	-11.61%
30 ÷ 34	5,227	4,690	-10.27%
35 ÷ 39	4,067	3,756	-7.65%
≥ 40	9,204	8,829	-4.07%
<b>Total</b>	<b>35,292</b>	<b>31,335</b>	<b>-11.21%</b>

403 foreign women (16.51%) were reported to the Judicial Authorities, in particular from Romania, Albania, Nigeria, Morocco and Ukraine.

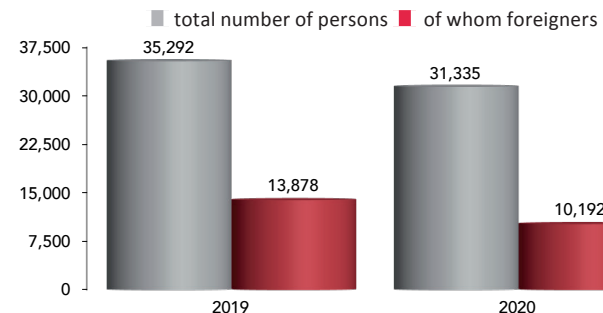
Out of the 28,894 men reported to the Judicial Authorities, 9,789 (33.88%) were foreigners, in particular from Morocco, Albania, Nigeria, Tunisia and Gambia.

Out of a total of 31,335 persons reported to the Judicial Authorities for drug-related offences, 2,441 were reported for conspiracy to drug trafficking (Art. 74 of the Consolidated Act 309/90).

Type of offence ■ 2019 ■ 2020

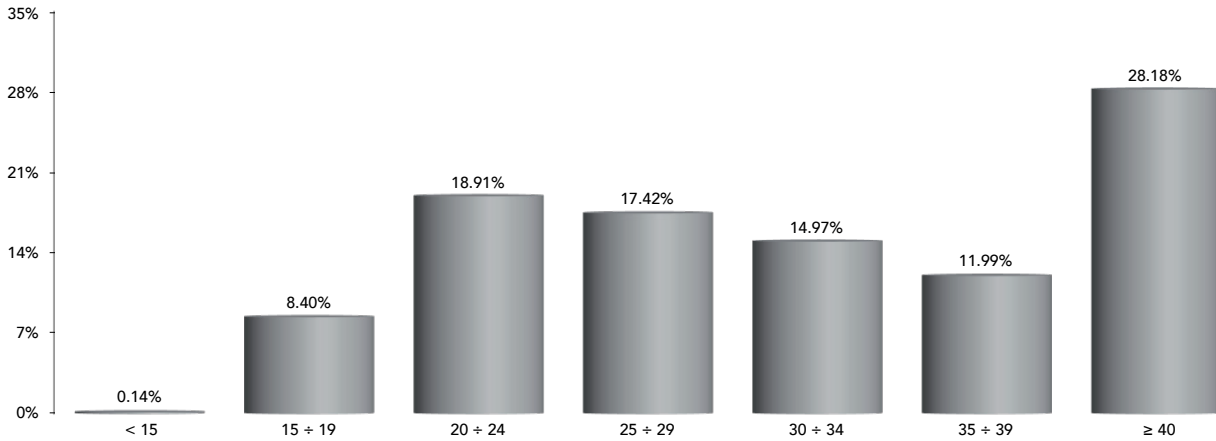


Persons reported to the J.A. total number of the persons total number of the persons reported/foreigners



Among the persons reported to the Judicial Authorities for drug offences, 28.18% were aged 40 or over, 18.91% were between 20 and 24 years and 17.42% between 25 and 29 years. The youngest (<18) represented 2.92% of the overall subjects reported at national level.

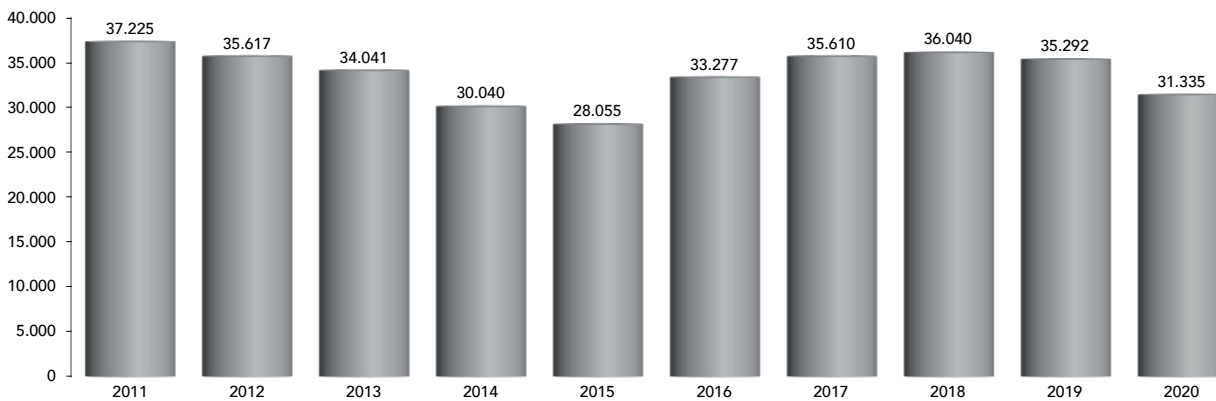
Percentage incidence of age groups in the total number of reports to the J.A. ■ 2020



### Ten-year trend

Since 2011, an average of 34,000 reports to the Judicial Authorities have been submitted. The peak of reports was registered in 2011 (37,225), while the lowest number was in 2015 (28,055).

■ Persons reported to the Judicial Authority - ten-year trend





**Persons reported to the Judicial Authorities – Regional distribution**

Lombardy, with a total of 4,645 subjects involved in drug trafficking, registered the highest value, in comparison with the other regions, followed by Lazio, Sicily, Campania, Apulia, Emilia Romagna, Piedmont, Veneto, Tuscany, Sardinia and Liguria.

Regional distribution reports the J.A.

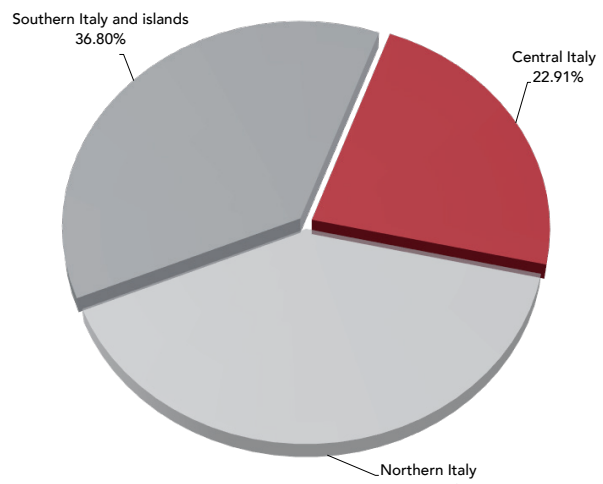
Regions	2019	2020	% variation 2019
Abruzzi	782	608	-22.25 %
Basilicata	281	311	10.68 %
Calabria	1,147	973	-15.17 %
Campania	2,910	2,810	-3.44 %
Emilia Romagna	2,461	2,097	-14.79 %
Friuli Venezia Giulia	642	570	-11.21 %
Lazio	5,566	4,309	-22.58 %
Liguria	1,365	1,138	-16.63 %
Lombardy	4,904	4,645	-5.28 %
Marche	768	735	-4.30 %
Molise	269	237	-11.90 %
Piedmont	2,445	1,915	-21.68 %
Apulia	2,375	2,374	-0.04 %
Sardinia	1,164	1,288	10.65 %
Sicily	3,063	2,931	-4.31 %
Tuscany	2,072	1,710	-17.47 %
Trentino Alto Adige	697	463	-33.57 %
Umbria	442	426	-3.62 %
Valle d'Aosta	48	56	16.67 %
Veneto	1,884	1,739	-7.70 %
<b>Regional total</b>	<b>35,285</b>	<b>31,335</b>	<b>-11.21 %</b>
International waters	7	-	-100.00 %
<b>National total</b>	<b>35,292</b>	<b>31,335</b>	<b>-11.21 %</b>

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

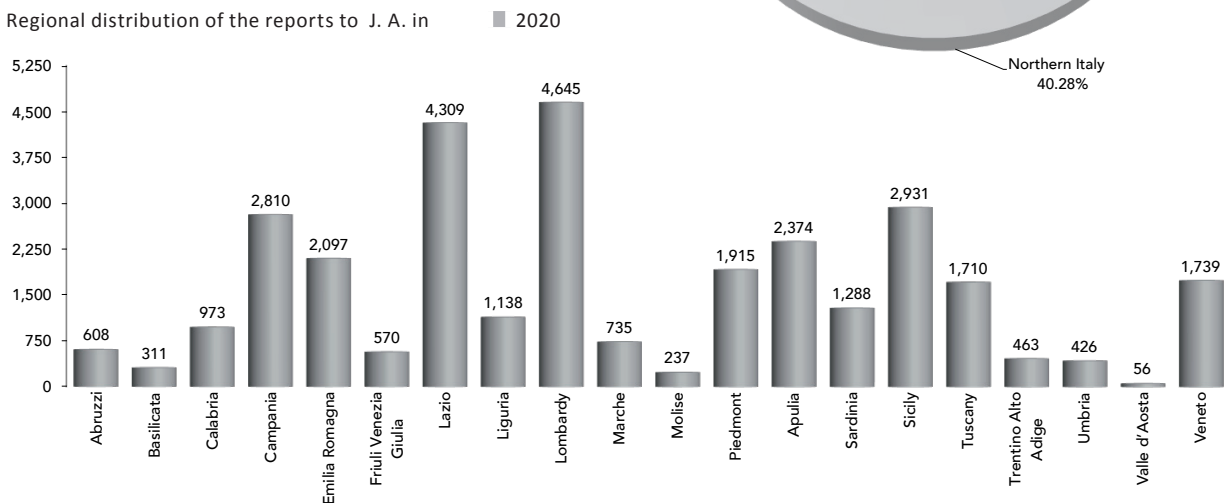
In comparison to 2019, the reports, in terms of percentage, considerably increased in Valle d'Aosta, Basilicata and Sardinia.

The most significant drops were noticed in Trentino Alto Adige, Lazio, Abruzzi, Piedmont, Tuscany, Liguria, Calabria, Emilia Romagna, Molise and Friuli Venezia Giulia.

Examining the macro-areas, 40.28% of the subjects were reported to the Judicial Authorities in Northern Italy, 36.80% in the South and Islands and 22.91% in Central Italy.



Regional distribution of the reports to J. A. in



### Foreign nationals reported to the Judicial Authorities

In 2020, 10,192 foreign nationals were reported in Italy for drug-related offences; 6,950 of them were arrested. The final figure represented 32.53% of the total number of reported persons.

The incidence of women and minors was respectively 3.95% and 1.85%.

Other nationalities reported to the J.A.

Type of report	2019	2020	% variation 2019
Arrested	9,660	6,950	-28.05%
Reported but not arrested	3,992	3,056	-23.45%
At large	226	186	-17.70%

Type of offence	2019	2020	% variation 2019
Illicit trafficking (Art.73)	12,986	9,820	-24.38%
Conspiracy to traffic (Art.74)	891	371	-58.36%
Other offences	1	1	0.00%

Nationality (first 10)	2019	2020	% variation 2019
Morocco	2,698	2,172	-19.50%
Albania	2,093	1,789	-14.52%
Nigeria	1,947	1,176	-39.60%
Tunisia	1,058	928	-12.29%
Gambia	1,272	822	-35.38%
Senegal	811	480	-40.81%
Romania	428	373	-12.85%
Egypt	298	249	-16.44%
Pakistan	228	160	-29.82%
Philippines	119	121	1.68%

Gender	2019	2020	% variation 2019
Males	13,339	9,789	-26.61%
Females	539	403	-25.23%

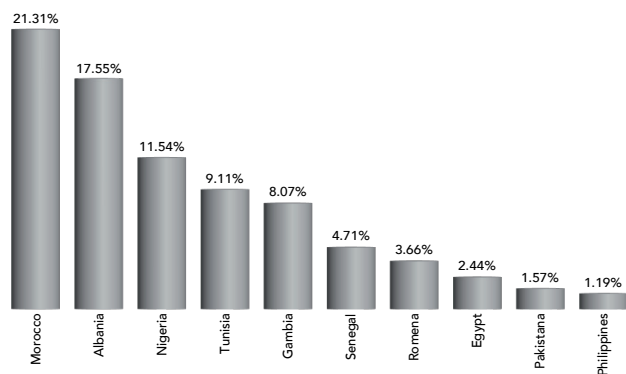
Age	2019	2020	% variation 2019
Of age	13,576	10,003	-26.32%
Minors	302	189	-37.42%

Age groups	2019	2020	% variation 2019
< 15	10	9	-10.00%
15 ÷ 19	1,050	649	-38.19%
20 ÷ 24	3,444	2,271	-34.06%
25 ÷ 29	3,077	2,346	-23.76%
30 ÷ 34	2,539	1,965	-22.61%
35 ÷ 39	1,650	1,333	-19.21%
≥ 40	2,108	1,619	-23.20%
<b>Total</b>	<b>13,878</b>	<b>10,192</b>	<b>-26.56%</b>

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

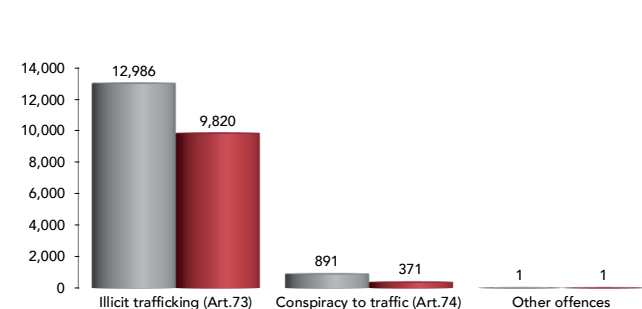
% incidence of each nationality as compared with the overall number of foreign nationals reported in 2020



In particular, the Albanian, Moroccan, Tunisian, Nigerian, Pakistani and Romanian nationals were those mostly involved in illicit drug trafficking organizations, while subjects from Morocco, Albania, Nigeria, Tunisia, Gambia and Senegal confirm their leadership in trafficking and pushing activities.

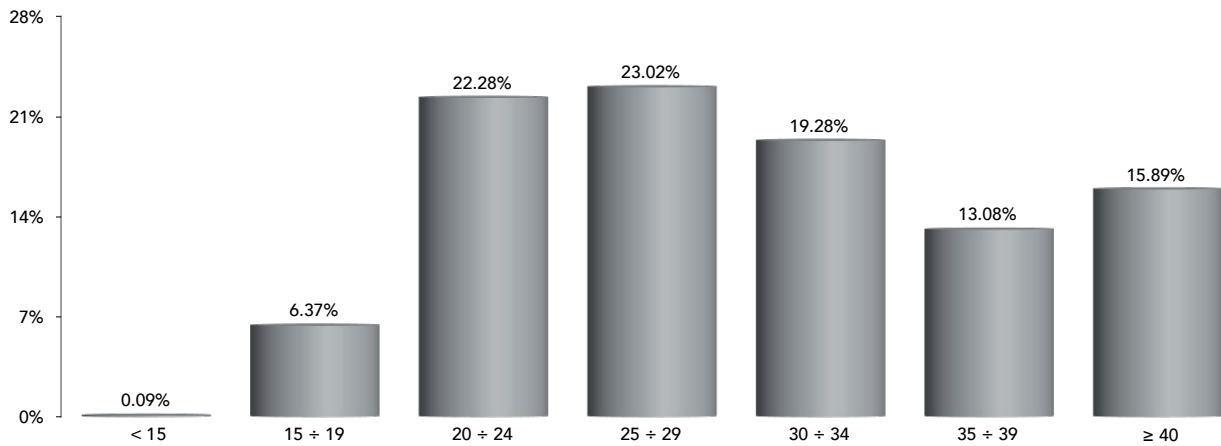
Out of a total of 10,192 reports, 371 concerned conspiracy to drug trafficking (Art. 74 of the Consolidated Act 309/90).

Foreigners reported to the judicial authority - by type of offence



23.02% of the persons reported to the Judicial Authorities for drug offences, were aged 25 to 29 years 22.28% were between 20 and 24 and 19.28% were between 30 and 34 years. The youngest (<18) represented 1.85% of the total number of persons reported at national level.

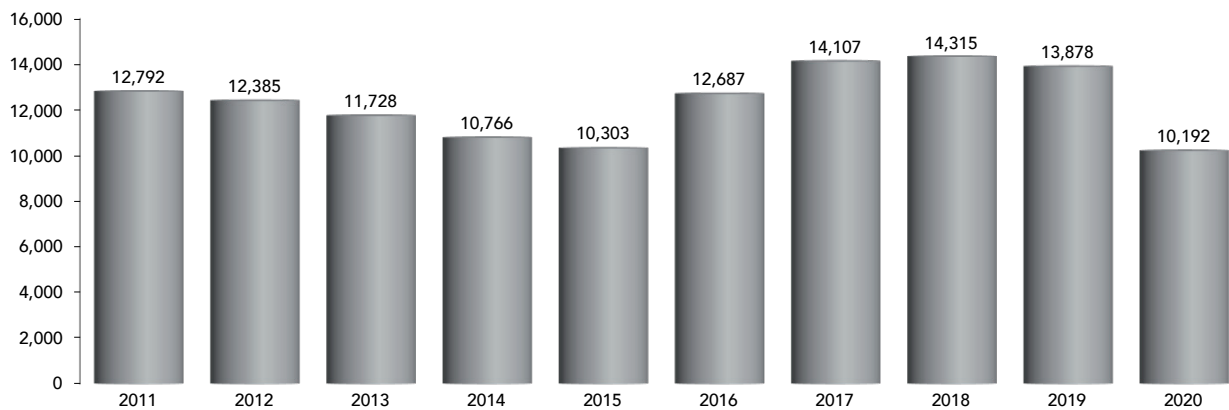
Percentage incidence of age groups in the total number of foreigners reported to the J.A. 2020



### Ten-year trend

In the last ten years, the reports to the Judicial Authorities of foreign nationals peaked in 2018 (14,315) and reached the lowest point in the reporting year (10,192).

■ Foreigners reported - ten year trend



### Foreign nationals reported to the Judicial Authorities – regional distribution

Lombardy, Lazio, Emilia Romagna, Tuscany, Piedmont, Veneto and Liguria were the regions where the highest number of foreign nationals involved in drug trafficking/pushing was registered, that is equal to 78.91% of the total.

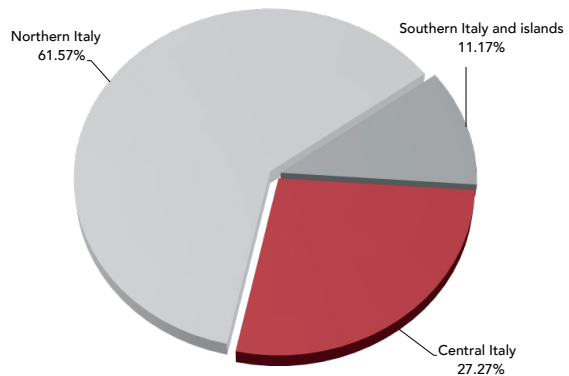
The regions that, instead, registered a lower number of foreigners reported are Valle d'Aosta, Molise and Basilicata.

Regional distribution  
Foreign nationals reported to the J.A.

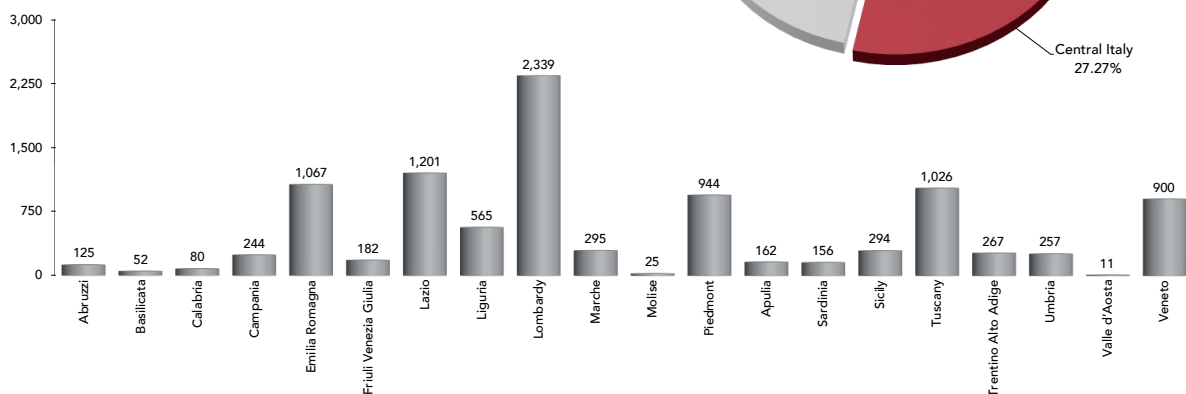
Regions	2019	2020	% variation 2019
Abruzzi	212	125	-41.04 %
Basilicata	45	52	15.56 %
Calabria	94	80	-14.89 %
Campania	268	244	-8.96 %
Emilia Romagna	1,417	1,067	-24.70 %
Friuli Venezia Giulia	321	182	-43.30 %
Lazio	1,995	1,201	-39.80 %
Liguria	814	565	-30.59 %
Lombardy	2,943	2,339	-20.52 %
Marche	335	295	-11.94 %
Molise	36	25	-30.56 %
Piedmont	1,376	944	-31.40 %
Apulia	203	162	-20.20 %
Sardinia	161	156	-3.11 %
Sicily	403	294	-27.05 %
Tuscany	1,291	1,026	-20.53 %
Trentino Alto Adige	482	267	-44.61 %
Umbria	307	257	-16.29 %
Valle d'Aosta	21	11	-47.62 %
Veneto	1,148	900	-21.60 %
<b>Regional total</b>	<b>13,872</b>	<b>10,192</b>	<b>-26.53 %</b>
International waters	6	-	-100.00 %
<b>National total</b>	<b>13,878</b>	<b>10,192</b>	<b>-26.56 %</b>

The subdivision by nationalities and regions of the foreign nationals reported, registered a high incidence of the following nationalities: Moroccans in Lombardy, Tuscany, Emilia Romagna, Liguria, Piedmont, Veneto and Lazio; Albanians in Lombardy, Lazio, Tuscany, Emilia Romagna, Piedmont, Umbria, Veneto and Marche; Nigerians in Veneto, Emilia Romagna, Tuscany, Lazio, Piedmont, Sicily, Sardinia, Lombardy and Basilicata; Tunisians in Veneto, Emilia Romagna, Lombardy, Tuscany, Trentino Alto Adige, Lazio and Sicily; Gambians in Lombardy, Lazio, Piedmont, Sicily, Trentino Alto Adige and Sardinia.

Analyzing the macro-areas, the foreign nationals reported to the Judicial Authorities in 2020, were subdivided as follows: 61.57% in Northern Italy, 27.27% in Central Italy and 11.17% in Southern Italy and Islands.



Regional distribution of foreign nationals reported to the J.A. ■ 2020



### Minors reported to the Judicial Authorities

In 2020, 915 minors were reported to the Judicial Authorities. Out of them 322 (35.19%) were arrested, with a decrease of 29.01% if compared to previous year.

As highlighted in the following table, the reports (44 of which involved 14 years-old subjects) constantly increased as the adult age threshold approached.

189 (20.66%) of the minors reported to the Judicial Authorities were foreigners, in particular from Tunisia, Morocco, Romania, Senegal and Mali.

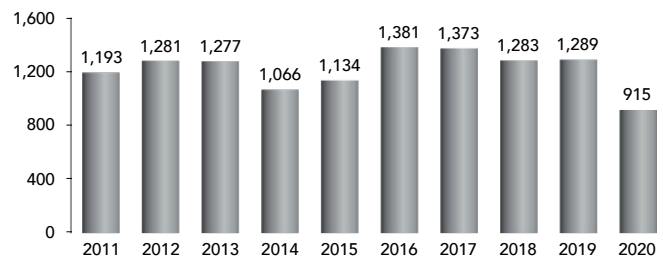
As to the type of offence, 100% of the reports involved trafficking/pushing.

Minors reported to the J.A.			
	2019	2020	% variation 2019
<b>Type of report</b>			
Arrested	528	322	-39.02%
Reported but not arrested	761	591	-22.34%
At large	-	2	--
<b>Type of offence</b>			
Illicit trafficking (Art.73)	1,280	915	-28.52%
Conspiracy to traffic (Art.74)	9	-	-100.00%
Other offences	-	-	--
<b>Nationality</b>			
Italy	987	726	-26.44%
Other countries of which:	302	189	-37.42%
Tunisia	46	34	-26.09%
Morocco	25	27	8.00%
Romania	34	24	-29.41%
Senegal	50	23	-54.00%
Mali	5	11	120.00%
<b>Gender</b>			
Males	1,218	882	-27.59%
Females	71	33	-53.52%
<b>Age</b>			
Quattordicenni	57	44	-22.81%
Quindicenni	206	128	-37.86%
Sedicenni	389	287	-26.22%
Diciassettenni	637	456	-28.41%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,289</b>	<b>915</b>	<b>-29.01%</b>

### Ten-year trend

In the last ten years the reports involving minors peaked in 2016, with 1,381 and reached the lowest point in the reporting year, with 915.

■ Minors reported - ten-year trend



### Minors reported to the judicial authority - by type of substance 2019/2020

Type of substance	2019			2020			% variation 2019
	Italiani	Stranieri	Total	Italiani	Stranieri	Total	
Cocaine	106	116	222	78	78	156	-29.73%
Heroin	12	16	28	8	7	15	-46.43%
Hashish	456	100	556	239	50	289	-48.02%
Marijuana	361	50	411	365	42	407	-0.97%
Cannabis plants	10	-	10	15	1	16	60.00%
Synthetic drugs	10	5	15	4	-	4	-73.33%
Other drugs	32	15	47	17	11	28	-40.43%
<b>Total</b>	<b>987</b>	<b>302</b>	<b>1,289</b>	<b>726</b>	<b>189</b>	<b>915</b>	<b>-29.01%</b>

### Minors reported to the Judicial Authorities – regional distribution

Lombardy, with a total number of 159 minors involved in drug trafficking and pushing, had the highest number of minors reported, followed by Lazio, Piedmont, Veneto, Sicily, Sardinia, Apulia, Campania and Tuscany.

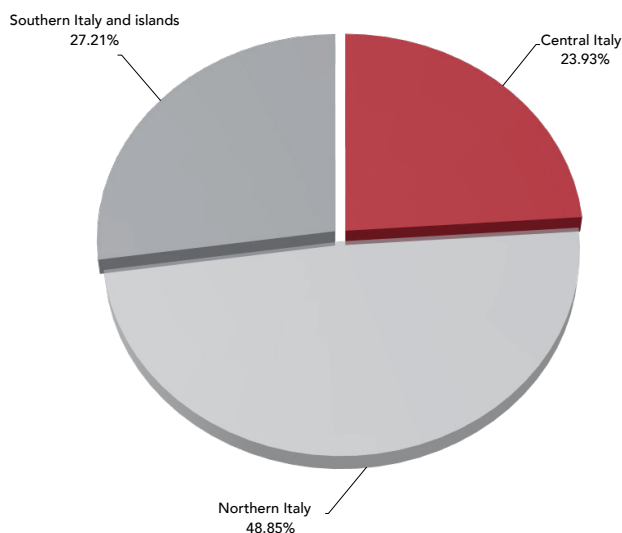
The lowest values were registered in Basilicata and Valle d'Aosta.

Regional distribution - **Minors** reported to the J.A.

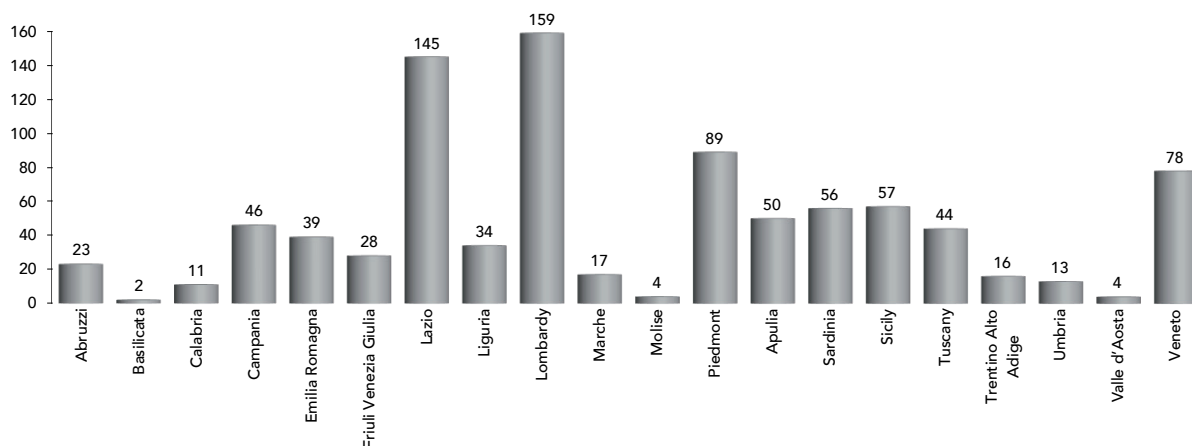
Regions	2019	2020	% variation 2019
Abruzzi	31	23	-25.81 %
Basilicata	15	2	-86.67 %
Calabria	12	11	-8.33 %
Campania	68	46	-32.35 %
Emilia Romagna	87	39	-55.17 %
Friuli Venezia Giulia	42	28	-33.33 %
Lazio	214	145	-32.24 %
Liguria	70	34	-51.43 %
Lombardy	173	159	-8.09 %
Marche	31	17	-45.16 %
Molise	12	4	-66.67 %
Piedmont	142	89	-37.32 %
Apulia	54	50	-7.41 %
Sardinia	52	56	7.69 %
Sicily	63	57	-9.52 %
Tuscany	57	44	-22.81 %
Trentino Alto Adige	30	16	-46.67 %
Umbria	13	13	0.00 %
Valle d'Aosta	4	4	0.00 %
Veneto	119	78	-34.45 %
<b>Regional total</b>	<b>1,289</b>	<b>915</b>	<b>-29.01 %</b>
International waters	-	-	--
<b>National total</b>	<b>1,289</b>	<b>915</b>	<b>-29.01 %</b>

As compared to 2019, a slight increase in reports, in terms of percentage, was registered in Sardinia.

The most striking drops occurred in Basilicata, Molise, Emilia Romagna, Liguria, Trentino Alto Adige, Marche, Piedmont, Veneto, Friuli Venezia Giulia, Campania and Lazio. Analyzing the macro-areas, in 2020, the minors reported to the Judicial Authorities were distributed as follows: 48.85% in Northern Italy, 27.21% in Southern Italy and Islands and 23.93% in Central Italy.



Regional distribution of **minors** reported to the J.A. in 2020



## DRUG ABUSE DEATHS

### National situation

In 2020<sup>136</sup>, the deaths for drug abuse recorded by the law enforcement agencies and the Prefettura were 308, with a decrease of 17.65% with respect to 2019, when drug deaths amounted to 374.

Deaths for drug abuse were first recorded in Italy in 1973 (only one case was reported that year). In the course of the following 47 years, there have been 26,154 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 267 (86.69%), while females were 41 (13.31%), which confirms that the number of females who died of drug abuse has always been lower in comparison to that of males.

Analysing the age groups, the higher levels of mortality referred to those aged 24 or over and the peak records to the age group of 40 and over.

**Drug abuse deayhs,**  
five-year trend by age group and gender

Age groups	2016		2017		2018		2019		2020	
	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males
< 15	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
15 ÷ 19	1	4	4	6	3	4	2	6	2	9
20 ÷ 24	4	9	5	13	5	15	4	16	7	19
25 ÷ 29	2	16	4	24	4	21	10	26	6	16
30 ÷ 34	5	34	7	27	6	42	11	24	6	34
35 ÷ 39	7	46	9	44	8	53	5	47	3	37
≥ 40	8	132	12	142	23	152	19	204	17	152
<b>Total</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>241</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>256</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>287</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>323</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>267</b>
	<b>268</b>		<b>297</b>		<b>336</b>		<b>374</b>		<b>308</b>	

<sup>136</sup> These figures refer to deaths due to direct drug abuse, and not to the indirect causes, for ex. road accidents caused by driving while intoxicated, or drug-related diseases. In addition, these data only refer to those deaths that were reported to the police authorities. 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 2020 the deaths were caused by heroin in 136 cases, by cocaine in 69 cases, by methadone in 35 cases, by amphetamine in 2 cases, by barbiturates in 2 cases, by ketamine in 1 case, by mephedrone mephedrone (4MMC) in 1 case and by methamphetamine in 1 case, while in 61 cases the substance was not indicated.

**National Drug-involved Overdose Deaths - by type of substance – ten-year trend**

Type of substance	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Amphetamine	-	-	5	1	2		1	1	3	2
Barbiturates	2	1	1		2	1	1		1	2
Benzodiazepines	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-
Buprenorphine	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
Crack cocaine	1	-	-	-	--	-	-	-	1	-
Cocaine	29	41	30	23	38	39	53	64	64	69
Heroin	175	164	148	147	103	100	149	156	168	136
Fentanyl	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Furanylfentanyl	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
Hashish	1	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Unspecified drugs	140	177	150	132	159	116	74	93	116	61
Ketamine	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
L.S.D.	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
MDMA Amphetamine	1	2	-	-	1	1	2	-	-	-
Mephedrone							1			1
Methadone	15	8	13	10	3	9	13	17	16	35
Methamphetamine	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	1	1
Morphine	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Ocfentanil	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Opium	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	-
Psychoactive drugs	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
U47700	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>365</b>	<b>393</b>	<b>349</b>	<b>313</b>	<b>308</b>	<b>268</b>	<b>297</b>	<b>336</b>	<b>374</b>	<b>308</b>



### Regional situation

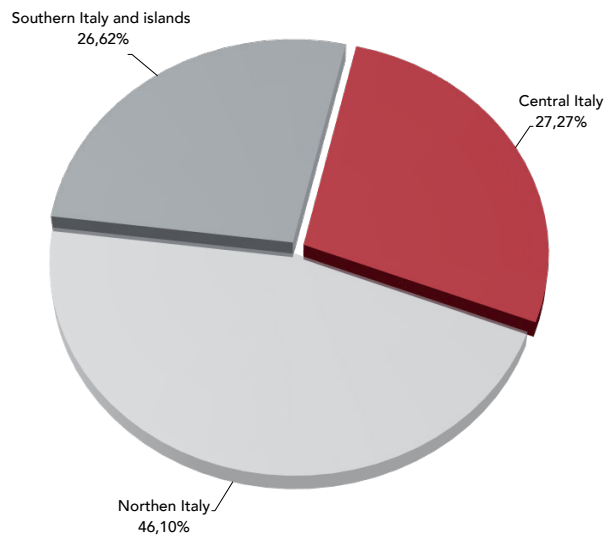
In 2020, Veneto, Emilia Romagna, Tuscany, Campania and Lombardy were the most affected regions. In respect to 2019, remarkable increases of drug abuse deaths were registered in Umbria (+111.11%), Sicily (+66.67%), Apulia (+42.86%) and Friuli Venezia Giulia (+18.18%).

The most significant percentage drops were reported in Basilicata (-50%), Lazio (-48.57%), Sardinia (-48%), Emilia Romagna (-39.62%) and Piedmont (-35.71%).

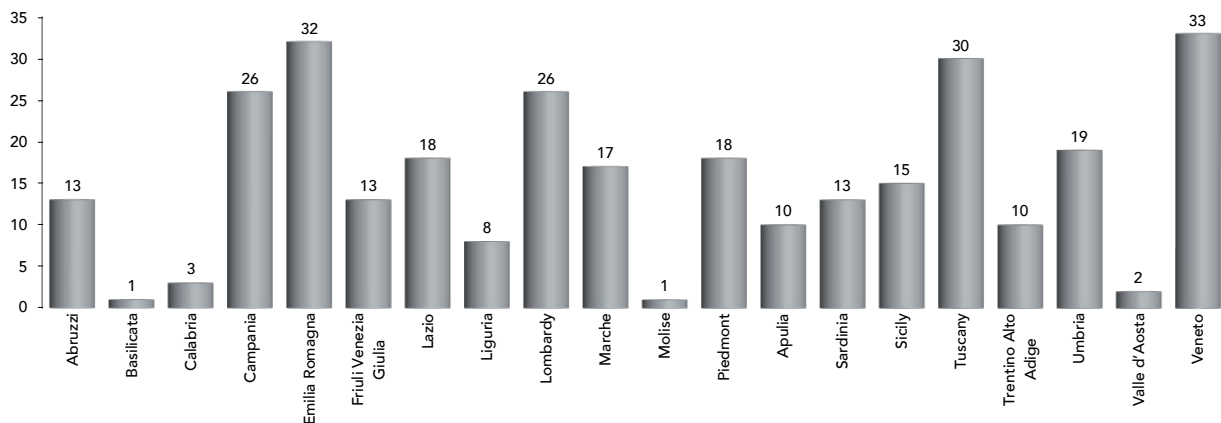
**Drug abuse deayhs**  
regional distribution ad macro-areas

Regions	2019	2020	% variation 2019
Abruzzi	14	13	-7.14 %
Basilicata	2	1	-50.00 %
Calabria	4	3	-25.00 %
Campania	26	26	0.00 %
Emilia Romagna	53	32	-39.62 %
Friuli Venezia Giulia	11	13	18.18 %
Lazio	35	18	-48.57 %
Liguria	12	8	-33.33 %
Lombardy	37	26	-29.73 %
Marche	17	17	0.00 %
Molise		1	
Piedmont	28	18	-35.71 %
Apulia	7	10	42.86 %
Sardinia	25	13	-48.00 %
Sicily	9	15	66.67 %
Tuscany	39	30	-23.08 %
Trentino Alto Adige	9	10	11.11 %
Umbria	9	19	111.11 %
Valle d'Aosta	-	2	--
Veneto	37	33	-10.81 %
<b>Total</b>	<b>374</b>	<b>308</b>	<b>-17.65 %</b>

Analyzing the macro-areas, in 2020, the deaths ascertained by the law enforcement services or reported by the Prefettura, were distributed as follows: 46.10% in Northern Italy, 27.27% in Central Italy and 26.62% in Southern Italy and Islands.



**Drug abuse deayhs, regional distribution** ■ 2020



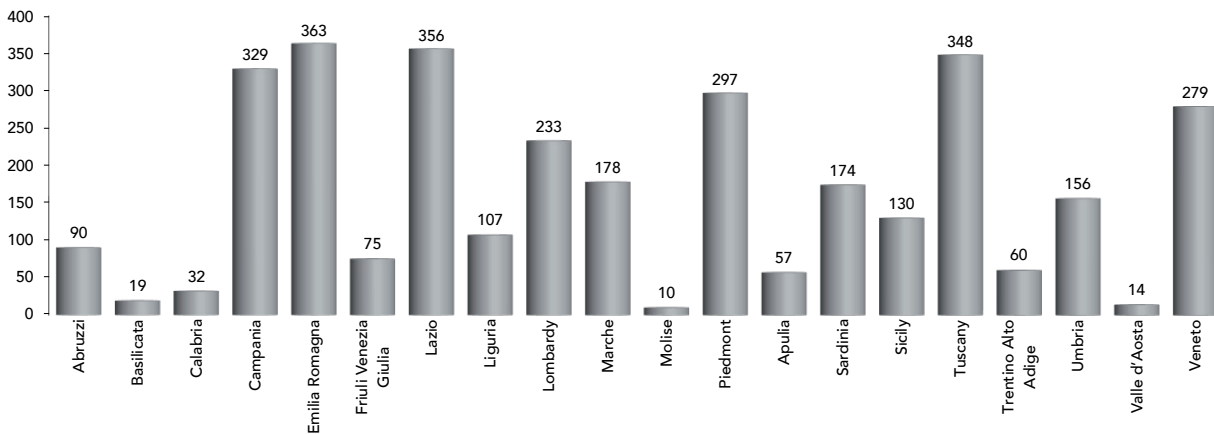
In the last ten years Emilia Romagna has been the most affected region with 363 deaths, followed by Lazio (356), Tuscany (348), Campania (329), Piedmont (297), Veneto (279) and Lombardy (233), while Molise (10), Valle d’Aosta (14) and Basilicata (19) have been the least affected ones.

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 - yar trend **2011/2020**

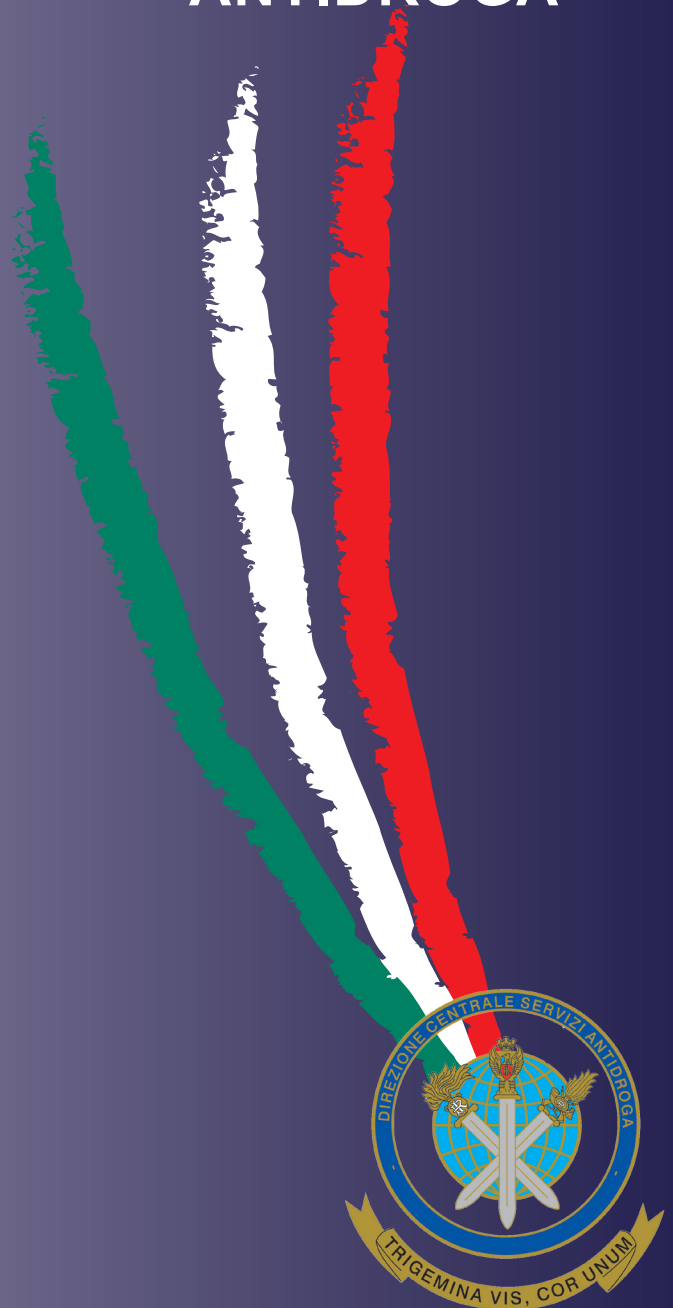
Regions	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Abruzzi	7	6	10	8	3	3	11	15	14	13
Basilicata	3	1	1	1	3	3	1	3	2	1
Calabria	5	2	1	3	4	4	3	3	4	3
Campania	61	69	31	17	37	19	22	21	26	26
Emilia Romagna	33	38	34	37	43	25	34	34	53	32
Friuli Venezia Giulia	12	7	1	5	6	4	8	8	11	13
Lazio	41	51	57	35	33	20	37	29	35	18
Liguria	9	7	18	17	9	11	7	9	12	8
Lombardy	20	24	18	16	25	21	14	32	37	26
Marche	13	26	24	19	19	17	13	13	17	17
Molise	2	1	-	1	-	-	2	3	-	1
Piedmont	39	23	27	33	32	36	25	36	28	18
Apulia	5	3	5	7	2	3	9	6	7	10
Sardinia	13	20	23	21	19	15	10	15	25	13
Sicily	12	18	19	6	12	17	4	18	9	15
Tuscany	28	43	32	37	33	28	43	35	39	30
Trentino Alto Adige	5	3	6	4	4	6	5	8	9	10
Umbria	27	25	19	17	9	9	11	11	9	19
Valle d’Aosta	1	-	2	3	-	3	2	1	-	2
Veneto	27	25	20	26	15	24	36	36	37	33
<b>Total in Italy</b>	<b>363</b>	<b>392</b>	<b>348</b>	<b>313</b>	<b>308</b>	<b>268</b>	<b>297</b>	<b>336</b>	<b>374</b>	<b>308</b>
Italians deceased abroad	2	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>365</b>	<b>393</b>	<b>349</b>	<b>313</b>	<b>308</b>	<b>268</b>	<b>297</b>	<b>336</b>	<b>374</b>	<b>308</b>

**Drug abuse deaths - regional distribution of deaths in the ten-year period** ■ 2011 - 2020

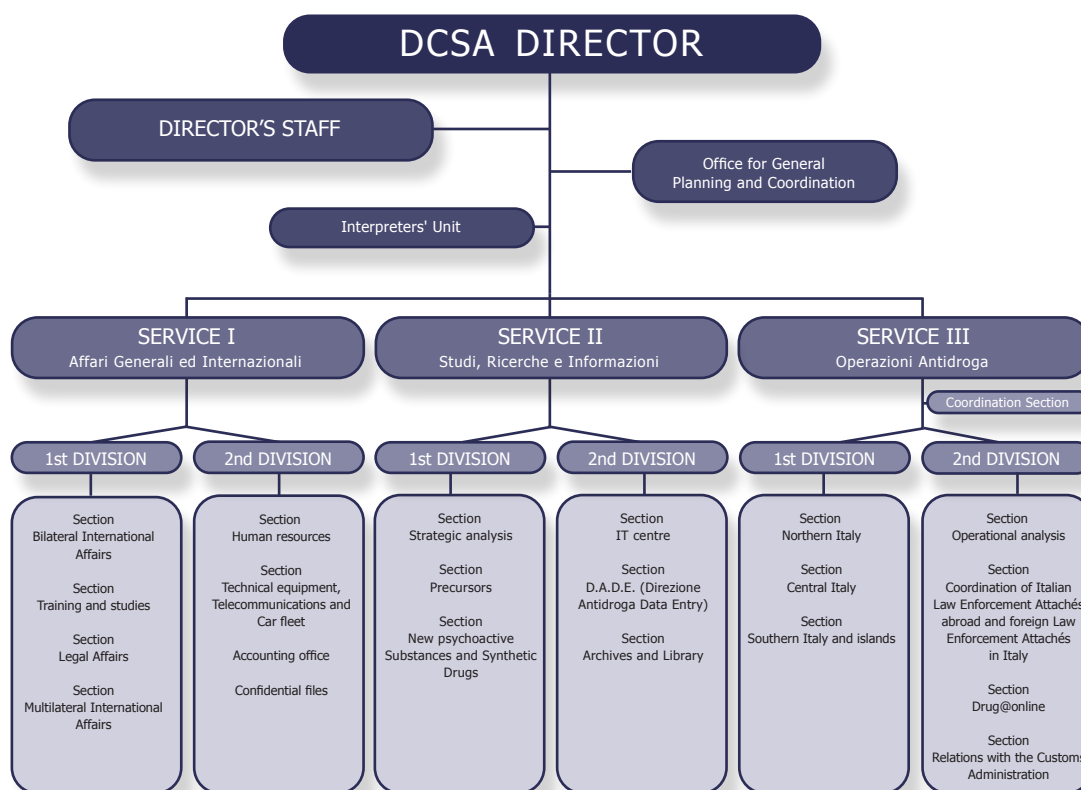


# 2

## ACTIVITIES OF THE DIREZIONE CENTRALE PER I SERVIZI ANTIDROGA



2



## INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

### Multilateral activities

In 2020, the multilateral activities carried out by the Direzione Centrale per i Servizi Antidroga, also with the support of the Law Enforcement Attachés posted to different foreign countries, were mostly developed with the **United Nations, the European Union**, and other **International Organizations** and **Regional Platforms**.

However, due to the COVID-19 sanitary emergency and the consequent restrictive measures adopted to contain it, since February 2020 some international meetings in presence have been cancelled, while others have been organized in virtual mode (*web meeting*).

Among the major activities involving DCSA at **UN** level, mention must be made of the works of the **Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND)**, the UN Central Institution on drug control which develops the drug policies and is in charge of analyzing the global phenomenon and working out proposals to strengthen the control system. The 63rd CND Ordinary Session (Vienna 2 - 6 March), was subdivided into:

- an Operational Segment, where, inter alia, administrative and budgetary activities, working methods of the Commission and issues relating to the UNODC staff working in the drug field were examined;
- a Normative Segment, where the implementation of international drug control treaties and of the commitments at national, regional and international level to counter the different aspects of the world drug problem were discussed.

From 2 to 4 December 2020, in Vienna, the 63rd CND Session was reconvened. This session was mainly focused on UNODC administrative issues (assessment of the *governance* and financial situation) and voted the WHO recommendations on cannabis and cannabis resin. The Italian delegation voted in line with the Decision of the Council of the European Union (among EU Member States only Hungary voted in a different way). In particular, Recommendation 5.1 was adopted (to delete cannabis and cannabis resin from Schedule IV<sup>1</sup> of the 1961 UN Convention on drugs). Such amendment actually does not change the international control system, since cannabis remains listed in Schedule II<sup>2</sup>.

Moreover, DCSA participated in numerous activities under the auspices of UNODC, also through the *International Narcotics Control Board* (INCB), another UN organization set up with the New York Single Convention on drugs of 1961, dedicated to the control on the implementation and actual functioning of the UN drug Conventions in the adhering countries.

The fight against drugs is still one of the **European Union** priorities, since drug trafficking in the **European Union** has reached levels never seen before.

DCSA participated in numerous events on this subject, held in 2020.

Mention must be made of the IV Conference on Drugs organized by **Europol** last December, where the organizing agency reaffirmed that the supply of different types of drugs is constantly growing at the EU level, as proven by the record seizures carried out. Moreover, information acquired suggests significant changes in trafficking trends, in particular with regard to cocaine trafficking. Indeed, around 60% of the cocaine produced in Colombia and over 90% of the cocaine shipments coming from Brazil are reportedly destined for the EU market<sup>3</sup>.

Illegal drug trafficking proceeds are huge, so that, within the European context, organized crime resorts to money laundering and infiltrates legal economy: the billions of euros gained through drug trafficking support sectors of the illegal economy and infiltrate the legal economic fabric, endangering fair competition and business, as well as the prosperity of the EU citizens, especially in the present period of recession.

In 2017, Europol, started a programme aimed at strengthening the fight against drug trafficking within a specific "*Programme Board*" – in which DCSA participates – based on an Action Plan approved during the annual conference of the Heads of the European Antidrug Agencies, that identifies the priorities for a coordinated law enforcement response to drug supply.

Furthermore, in 2020 the Direzione Centrale per i Servizi Antidroga participated in the activities of the **Horizontal Drug Group (HDG)**, which was established in 1997 and is responsible for promoting the activities of the Council of the European Union in drug matters. Within this group the representatives of the Member States analyze overall and legislative initiatives in supply and demand reduction.

In the framework of this organization Member States carried out talks on the common position to adopt with regard to the mentioned WHO recommendations on cannabis and cannabis resin. Moreover, during the Croatian and German Presidency of the Council of the European Union, DCSA participated in the consultations for the adoption of the "Drug strategy 2021/2025 of the European Union". After its approval by the EU Council, HDG will discuss and draw up the action plan under the Portuguese Presidency.

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1 It includes the particularly dangerous substances having a very low medical or therapeutic value.

2 That includes controlled drugs.

3 As reported by top level figures of the Agency during the event.

No less important is the participation of DCSA in the “**Dubling Group**”. It is an informal group set up in 1990 with the purpose of evaluating the regional cooperation policies in favour of drug producing and/or transit countries.

During the online plenary meeting held on December 7, 2020, the Group examined in depth the updates of the global drug situation through the regional situation reports by the so-called “mini-groups”, one of which – the “mini-group” on Central Asia – is headed by Italy, through DCSA Law Enforcement Attachè in Tashkent (Uzbekistan).

Among the initiatives developed by DCSA with other **International Organizations** and/or **Regional Platforms**, mention must be made of the renewed strategic and operational partnership with Interpol Lyon General Secretariat, that led to a project on heroin trafficking along the African Southern route<sup>4</sup>, developed in cooperation with the Police Cooperation Service of the Central Directorate of Criminal Police.

At the beginning of 2021, a preliminary video conference will take place to illustrate the project to the African countries involved (Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius, Mozambique, Somalia, South Africa, Tanzania and Uganda).

After the above mentioned countries have manifested interest in the project, the following activities will be carried out in presence, depending on the COVID situation:

- *briefing* in Rome to explain the project details and the action plan;
- *study visits* to Italy of the representatives of the African countries;
- visit of DCSA and Interpol Lyon representatives to the African countries, to share experience and carry out operational training;
- meetings at INTERPOL Lyon with DCSA personnel.

Finally, a *debriefing* in Rome will be carried out with all the parties involved, concerning the outcomes of the activities carried out, in order to verify the effectiveness of the counteraction system along the Southern route.

It is also useful to remind DCSA involvement in the works of **G7 - Rome – Lyon Group**, international forum<sup>5</sup> including experts and state officials from Canada, France, Germany, Japan, United Kingdom, United States of America and Italy as well as representatives of the European Union and other international organizations. In 2020, the USA took the chair of the Group. DCSA took part in the on-line meetings held in May and October in the framework of the sub-group LEPSG (*Law Enforcement Projects Sub Group*).

Through the cooperation of its Law Enforcement Attaché in Vienna, DCSA actively took part in the implementation of several institutional activities in the framework of **OSCE - Organization for Security and Cooperation in Vienna**. Among them, in particular the Annual Conference on the fight against illicit drugs and the diversion of chemical precursors, held in Vienna on 6 October, 2020. On that occasion, the OSCE Albanian Presidency focused the event on the prevention of drug use among youth.

In the framework of the multilateral initiatives developed in the reporting year, we would like to highlight the conference “*Antidrug policies: prevention of drug phenomena and fight against international drug routes. Cooperation strategies in the fight against drug trafficking*” organized by

<sup>4</sup> “Heroin trafficking through the Southern route. Proposal for the development of a project for the prevention and counteraction of heroin trafficking”.

<sup>5</sup> Working group, set up during the 2001 G8 Italian Presidency, focused on the promotion of strategies to combat terrorism and transnational crimes.

*“Antidrug policies: prevention of drug phenomena and fight against international drug routes. Cooperation strategies in the fight against drug trafficking” Rome, 20-21 February 2020*



*Speech by the Head of the Department for Antidrug Policies of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers*



*Speech by the Chief of Police – Director General of the Public Security pro tempore*

DCSA and the Department for Antidrug Policies of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, which was held in Rome on 20-21 February 2020.

The works were opened by the Chief of Police – Director General of the Public Security, by the General Commanders of the Carabinieri and of the Guardia di Finanza, by the Head of the Department for Antidrug Policies and by the Director of the DCSA. The conference was attended by Italian Antimafia National and District Prosecutors, high-level foreign Prosecutors, heads of six international antidrug organizations and of antidrug agencies from 53 countries, as well as by experts belonging to foreign and Italian law enforcement agencies.

This Conference represented an opportunity to confirm the central role of Italy at international level, since it enabled to open up a targeted dialogue between representatives of the multilateral organizations and of the countries mostly affected by drug trafficking. In particular, participants fostered the development of procedures facilitating special antidrug operations, supporting the importance of the bilateral Antidrug Operational Memorandums (AOM), as well as the exchange of best practices in the fields of preventing and combatting drug trafficking.

In conclusion, an outcome declaration was shared by the participating delegations, reaffirming their firm determination to prevent the diffusion of drug abuse, to fight against illicit phenomena linked with the cultivation, production, diffusion and illegal drug trafficking and the need for a more and more effective judicial and police cooperation. In this regard they affirmed:

- the need to devote further efforts to the investigations on drug trafficking also on the online platforms, in particular on the web, the darknet and the social networks;
- the willingness to tackle the world drug problem and to actively promote lifestyles and a society free of drug abuse;
- their commitment to solve drug abuse-related problems, which jeopardize public health.

The event was widely covered by the media at national and international levels.

### **Bilateral activities**

In 2020, international bilateral cooperation on illicit drug trafficking was mainly aimed at evaluating



and negotiating international agreements on police cooperation and security, in cooperation with the competent bureaus of the Department of Public Security.

In this regard, contributions and assessments were provided, concerning bilateral international agreements under negotiation with foreign countries, with relation to intergovernmental agreements on cooperation in the field of security (with Uruguay, Senegal, Algeria and Kyrgyzstan), and in the field of the prevention of and the fight against transnational crimes (with Malaysia, Bahrein and Georgia), and, last but not least, on police cooperation in preventing and fighting against transnational crimes with Malaysia, through a specific *Memorandum of Understanding*.

Moreover, in 2020 several negotiations were started or continued, upon initiative of DCSA. In particular:

- the Agreement on Police cooperation between the Government of the Italian Republic and the Government of the Federal State of Canada;
- the Joint Action plan between the Central Directorate for Antidrug Services of the Ministry of the Interior of the Italian Republic and the Main Directorate for Drugs Control of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Russian Federation on the fight against the drug threat in the period 2019-2022;
- the Letter of bilateral cooperation with Iran on the fight against trafficking in drugs and precursors, that is linked to an Iranian initiative aimed at signing an Action Plan for the strengthening of police cooperation;
- a technical agreement on the fight against illicit drug trafficking with Tajikistan;
- an agreement on cooperation in the field of security with Senegal.

In the reporting year negotiations were also carried out, aimed at signing bilateral Antidrug Operational Memorandums (AOM) with the following countries: Albania, Brazil, Bulgaria, Colombia, Ivory Coast, Croatia, Georgia, Greece, Iran, Israel, Northern Macedonia, Morocco, Moldova, Montenegro, Panama, Romania, Serbia, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan.

Mention must also be made of the Protocol of Understanding between the Italian Department of Public Security and the National Drug Control Directorate of the Dominican Republic on police cooperation against illicit traffic in drugs, psychotropic substances and their precursors (Santo Domingo 14 January 2020), signed by the Director of the Central Directorate for Anti-Drug Services on behalf of the Chief of the Italian Police- Director General of Public Security;

In order to strengthen cooperation and increase the effectiveness of counteraction, DCSA intensively exchanges knowledge and experiences on counteraction systems, with different Authorities, Organizations and representatives of institutions at national and international level. However, in the period under study, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Central Directorate for Antidrug Services only hosted the official visits of an Iranian and a Georgian delegation.

On the other hand, DCSA participated in several bilateral and multilateral meetings in videoconference, along with other institutional actors. Among them, we would like to mention:

- the Berlin Climate and Security Conference 2020<sup>6</sup>, organized by the German Federal Foreign Office on the growing risks caused by the effect of the climate change on peace and security at international level;

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<sup>6</sup> It was divided into two parts, one in June and one in September.

- the Jumbo Security Conference "Paving the way for stabilization in the Western Balkans: the Balkan route in the New Geopolitical order – Old and new challenges to security", held on 18-19 November 2020;
- the VI edition of the Bilateral Technical Meeting with Israel on security, held on December 15, 2020.

DCSA contribution was fundamental to draw up situation reports, which outline drug trafficking situation and police cooperation in the fight against illicit drug trafficking. Such reports were worked out, in cooperation with other Bureaus of the Department of Public Security, on the occasion of international meetings of the top-ranking authorities. The situation reports concerned the following countries: Albania, Austria, Bulgaria, China, Croatia, France, Georgia, Germany, Iran, Israel, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Mali, Malta, Morocco, Mexico, Montenegro, The Netherlands, Dominican Republic, Serbia, Slovenia, Spain, South Africa, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine, Uruguay, Uzbekistan.

## TRAINING ACTIVITIES

The organization of courses and training initiatives in the drug field is one of the DCSA main activities, recognized at international level, since they are also destined for officers of the foreign law enforcement agencies.

In 2020, due to the COVID 19 pandemic, such initiatives were carried out at national level only. The activities, that involved 86 officers of the Italian law enforcement agencies in total, covered 17 training days.

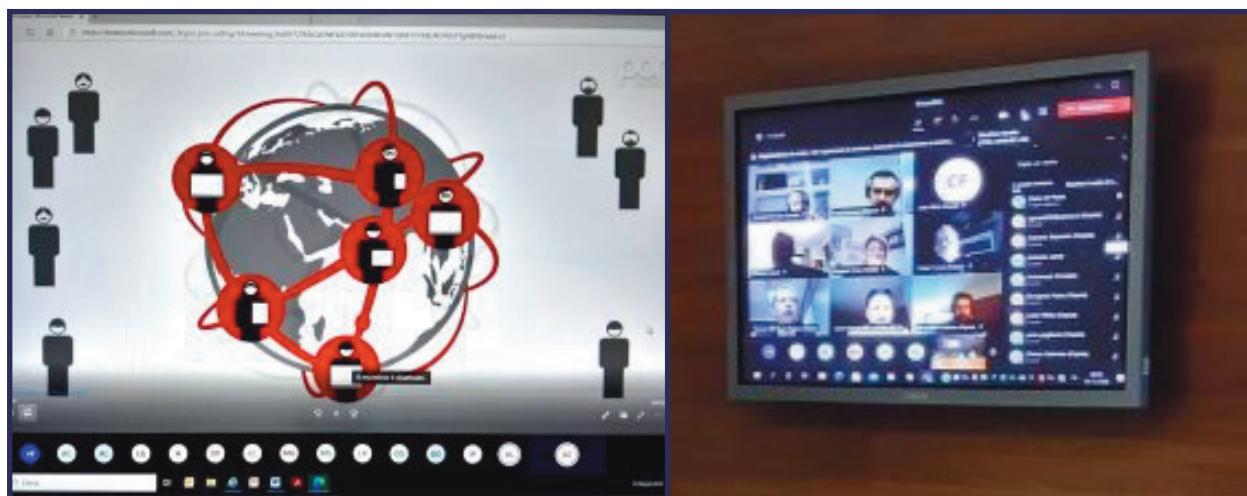
The training activities, initially planned to be carried out in presence, were held through distance learning by experts in the field, representatives of the academic sector and qualified national law enforcement officers, who exchanged with participants their professional and personal experience, encouraging and improving their professional skills and knowledge.

In particular, the following training activities, through distance learning, were carried out:

- *21st Course for "Heads of Antidrug Specialized Units"* - 8/12 June, 2020. This course, destined for 20 officers/officials of the law enforcement agencies involved in the fight against illicit narcotics and psychotropic substances;
- *4th Course for "Law Enforcement Attaché"* - 28 October/3 November 2020. This course, organized by the Multiagency College of Advanced Studies for Law Enforcement Officials, was divided into 6 modules, one of which was organized by DCSA and destined for 10 Senior Officers, Officers/Officials assigned to the Italian Diplomatic Missions, to be employed in the field of international police cooperation.
- *1st Course "Synthetic drugs and New Psychoactive Substances"* - 10/11 November, 2020, destined for 33 law enforcement Officials/Officers working in the fight against illicit trafficking in narcotics and psychotropic substances;
- *9th Course "Drug on line"* - 1/4 December," attended by 22 members of the Italian law enforcement agencies in possession of adequate professional and technical skills in this field.

Qualified representatives of DCSA also participated as teachers in many training sessions on drug matters organized by national law enforcement agencies.

9th Course "Drug on line" - 1/4 December



## LEGISLATIVE ACTIVITY

In 2020, upon request of different Bureaus of the Department of Public Security, the DCSA "Legislative Affairs" section provided its opinion as to **27** bills and draft laws to be examined by the Italian Parliament. In such a context, the text of Art. 12 of the Law-Decree No. 120<sup>7</sup> dated 21 October, 2020 was drawn up, in cooperation with the competent ministerial Bureaus, and monitored during the process of its conversion into law. The article concerned the introduction of further methods to counteract the drug trafficking carried out through the Internet<sup>8</sup>.

DCSA also provided its opinion on the launching of **10** procedures of civil action by the Ministry of the Interior in criminal proceedings concerning drugs.

Moreover, in the period under study, the Section drafted answers to **12** Parliament questions made by the Parliament inspection body (queries, requests, motions).

Moreover, mention must be made of the informal hearing of the DCSA Director, held in December before the II Legal Affairs Committee of the Chamber of Deputies, for the purpose of examining the bills AC. 2160 and AC. 2307. These latter are aimed at modifying the penal and administrative sanctions concerning drug petty crimes and the decriminalization of cannabis cultivation for personal use. The Director's hearing was focused on the analysis of the impact of the proposed changes on the counteracting action carried out by the law enforcement agencies in the drug sector.

Legislative support in the drug field was also constantly provided to institutional bodies at national and EU level and to the liaison officers of foreign counterparts.

Furthermore, opinions were provided on the projects of Protocols of understanding on drugs signed

<sup>7</sup> Concerning "Urgent provisions on immigration, international and complementary protection, amendments to articles 131-bis, 391-bis, 391-ter and 588 of the penal code, as well as measures concerning the ban of entry into commercial business and public entertainment premises, the fight against web misuse and regulation of the Authority for the protection of rights of persons deprived of liberty". The provision was converted into law, with amendments, by art.1, par. 1, of the Law no. 173 of 2020.

<sup>8</sup> It is provided that the body of the Ministry of the Interior dealing with the security of telecommunications systems under Art. 14, par.2 of the Law No. 269 of August 3, 1988, draws up a constantly updated list of the web sites that – on the basis of objective elements – are believed to be used to commit one or more crimes under D.P.R. No. 309 of 1990, on the Internet, by using IT systems or IT communication means or by using publicly available telecommunications networks. Without prejudice to the initiatives and the decisions of the Judicial Authority, upon request of the Central Directorate for Antidrug Services, the mentioned body for the security of telecommunications, includes in the above mentioned list the web sites used to commit one or more crimes foreseen in Title VIII of the a/m DPR No. 309 of 1990 and notifies them to the Internet providers, that shall impede access to the reported web sites.

by the Prefettura, as well as on the proposal for a Protocol of understanding between the Customs and Monopoly Agency and the State Police.

## DCSA SUPPORT TO CRIMINAL POLICE INVESTIGATIONS

	Operations	interventions throughout Italy	Staff employed	Days car rental
Total	63	73	140	1.255

In order carry out more and more sophisticated operational activities to combat the criminal groups that are very well organized and able to elude law enforcement police investigations, for a long time DCSA has been developing initiatives aimed at providing technical - logistic support to the investigative units of the law enforcement agencies, through a team of highly specialized operators. These latter are particularly skilled in conducting high-tech investigations involving audio-video and computer sectors. This structure is constantly updated and allowed to support, in the reporting year, 63 operations with 73 interventions throughout Italy.

## TRANSLATION AND INTERPRETATION UNIT

The Translation and Interpretation Unit translates papers and documents to and from English, Spanish, French, German and Russian, including the Annual Report.

Its staff also participates in meetings and courses held at DCSA Headquarters, offering simultaneous and consecutive interpreting and, where necessary, cooperates with other Offices of the Department of Public Security.

## NEW PSYCHOACTIVE SUBSTANCES (NPS)

At international level, New Psychoactive Substances<sup>9</sup> (NPS) are<sup>10</sup> " *substances of abuse, either in a pure form or a preparation, that are not controlled by the 1961 UN Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs or the 1971 Convention on Psychotropic Substances, but may pose health and social risks, similar to those posed by the substances covered by those Conventions*". 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 and variants of those causing similar narcotic effects. Up to December 2019, more than 950 substances have been reported to the UNODC Early Warning Advisory (EWA)<sup>11</sup>.

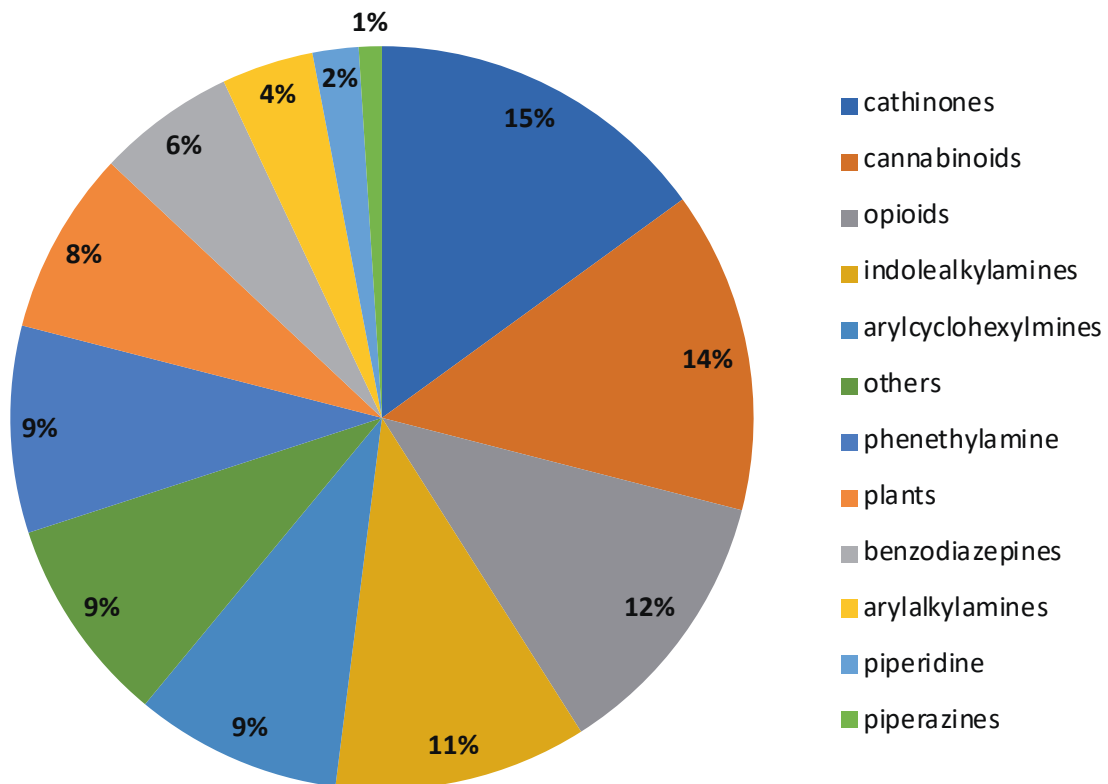
As to Italy, Art. 14 (Criteria to form the schedules) of D.P.R. 09/10/1990, No. 309 defines NPS as "(...) *any other plant or natural or synthetic substance which may cause hallucinations or severe sensory distortions as well as all substances obtained by extraction or chemical synthesis that cause the same type of effects on the central nervous system*". As a result, if an NPS has such characteristics, it will be included in the schedule and legally classified as narcotic drug. Moreover, in order to better fight

<sup>9</sup> Also known as NPS (Source UNODC).

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.unodc.org/LSS/Home/NPS>.

<sup>11</sup> Source UNODC.

Percentage incidence of each class of substance seized



against *designer drugs* - synthetic drugs chemically modified in order to elude controls imposed by the national legislations - the Italian legislation in some specific cases makes reference to the structural analog encompassing chemical variations of a psychoactive compound.

Therefore, the fight against NPS is carried out by the law enforcement agencies also at regulatory level, through a constant update of the drug schedules. In this regard the Ministry of Health issued, in the reporting year, six decrees signed by the Minister of Health, including over 50 new psychoactive substances<sup>12</sup>. The decree of 30 June, 2020, included all fentanyls - very powerful synthetic opioids- in the antidrug legislation, on the basis of the above mentioned structural analog principle. As to the operational results achieved in 2020, the law enforcement agencies detected and seized 91<sup>13</sup> different types of psychoactive substances in over 230 operations at national level.

DCSA actively cooperates in the field of New Psychoactive Substances with the National Early Warning System<sup>14</sup> (SNAP) directed by the Department for Antidrug Policies of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, with the scientific support of the Italian Institute of Health. On the one side, the System is

12 Source Ministry of Health, [http://www.salute.gov.it/portale/temi/p2\\_6jsp?lingua=italiano&id=3279%area=sostanzeStupefacenti&menu=vuoto](http://www.salute.gov.it/portale/temi/p2_6jsp?lingua=italiano&id=3279%area=sostanzeStupefacenti&menu=vuoto).

13 Out of which, 33 are not included in the schedules of D.P.R. 309/1990 and for which the inclusion procedures are ongoing.

14 <http://www.politicheantidroga.gov.it/it/dpa-in-sintesi/sistema-nazionale-allerta-precoce/sistema-nazionale-di-allerta-precoce>.

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**Examination of the substances seized during police operation**

aimed at the early identification of potential risks for public health connected to the detection, in our country, of new psychoactive substances or new consumption methods of the substances included in the drug schedules. On the other side, it should promptly transmit alerts to the institutions and bodies in charge of health protection, that should carry out adequate response measures. The SNAP is the result of a synergical work made in cooperation with different state bodies and administrations, among which the Ministry of Health, the Forensic Toxicology Research Unit of Human Anatomy, Histology, Forensic medicine and Orthopedics of La Sapienza University in Rome, the Poison Control Service at the Salvatore Maugeri Foundation in Pavia, the forensic laboratories of the State Police and Carabinieri, as well as other Italian centers.

At the international level, DCSA is the national point of reference of the *International Narcotics Control Board* (I.N.C.B.) of the United Nations, within the dedicated IT platform called I.O.N.I.C.S.<sup>15</sup>, that receives/transmits all information on the seizures and operations carried out by the national law enforcement agencies concerning new psychoactive substances at transnational level. In 2020 DCSA uploaded 29 incidents on transnational antidrug activities that led to the detection and seizure of new psychoactive substances and exchanged intelligence concerning international trafficking in synthetic drugs (for example on new concealment methods, new routes, etc.) through alerts issued by INCB and transmitted to the central offices of the law enforcement agencies and the Customs and Monopolies Agency.

## **CONTROL OVER PRECURSORS AND ESSENTIAL CHEMICALS**

Controlled chemical substances, which are usually called “Drug Precursors”, are chemicals which are used to produce narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances. They are primarily used for a wide range of legitimate purposes, as for example to produce plastic materials, medicines, cosmetics, detergents and perfumes. Acetic anhydride or potassium permanganate are both used in the chemical industry as bleaches. Moreover, acetic anhydride is needed to transform morphine into

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<sup>15</sup> International Operation on NPS Incident Communication System.

heroin while potassium permanganate to transform cocaine paste into cocaine. The trade in drug precursors cannot be prohibited, it is thus necessary to monitor their licit trade and guarantee that they are not diverted 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. 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/authorizations and having power of control over the “operators”, i.e. the firms involved;
- the Ministry of the Interior, through DCSA, that gathers the data on transactions and coordinates Law Enforcement Agencies in the 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 DPR 309/90 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 platforms:

- PRISM – which was 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;
- PEN-Online (Pre-Export Notification) – a fundamental tool to prevent the diversion of licitly traded precursors among the Convention’s signatory countries. In 2020 INCB informed that 165 Countries joined the system and the other 32 are constantly encouraged to adopt it;
- PICS (Precursors Incident Notification System) – which enables and promotes the sharing of information on precursors diversion and seizures among participating countries. In 2020, 285 International Police and Customs Agencies participated in it, with 123 adhering countries and

approximately 560 registered users. From 2012 to 2020, the participating countries communicated more than 3,100 "incidents" on precursors, with an average of over 340 per year<sup>16</sup>.

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 of DPR 309/1990 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 archive of precursors transactions, called G.A.Do.P. (Gestione Archivio Documentale Precursori – Management of the Precursors Documentary Archive) and coordinating local 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.

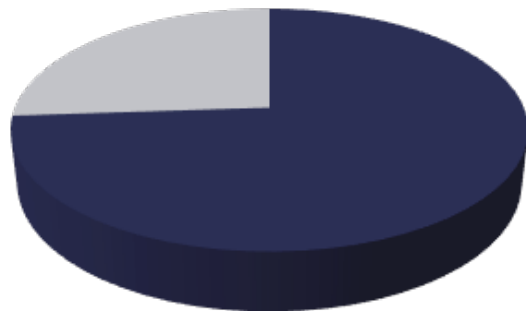
National operators holders of 102 three-year licenses Cat.1 - Number of transactions concerning precursors:			2,698
	National		1,994
		Purchase	206
		Sales	1,788
	International		704
		Import	637
		Export	67
Category 1			642
Category 2			2,061
Category 3			18
Number of transactions concerning the main traded precursors - 2020			
Acetic Anhydride (Cat. 2A) production of: aspirin, perfumes, dyes and explosives but also heroin and methaqualone			1,339
	National		898
	Import		438
	Export		3
Potassium permanganate (Cat. 2B) production of: bleaches, disinfectants, deodorants and antibacterials but also cocaine and metcatinone			913
	National		871
	Import		37
	Export		5

<sup>16</sup> Publication: "Precursors and chemicals frequently used in the illicit manufacture of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances 2020" (published by UN INCB).

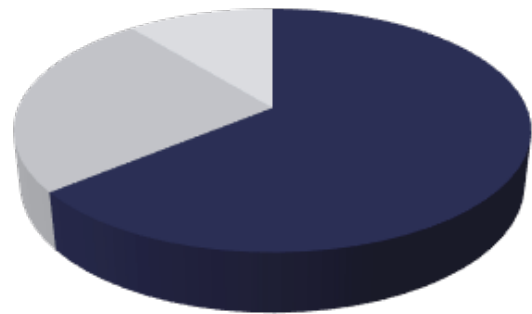


<b>Pseudoephedrine (Cat. 1)</b> production of: bronchodilators and decongestants but also metamphetamines			<b>316</b>
	National	286	
	Import	21	
	Export	9	
<b>Ephedrine (Cat. 1)</b> production of: bronchodilators and cough suppressants but also metamphetamines			<b>184</b>
	National	168	
	Import	9	
	Export	7	
<b>Piperonal (Cat. 1)</b> production of: perfumes and insect repellent liquids but also MDA, MDE, MDMA (ecstasy)			<b>108</b>
	National	52	
	Import	47	
	Export	9	
<b>Piperidine (Cat. 2)</b> production of: anesthetics, pain killers, cough suppressants, rubber and plastics but also PCP (phencyclidine)			<b>95</b>
	National	55	
	Import	36	
	Export	4	

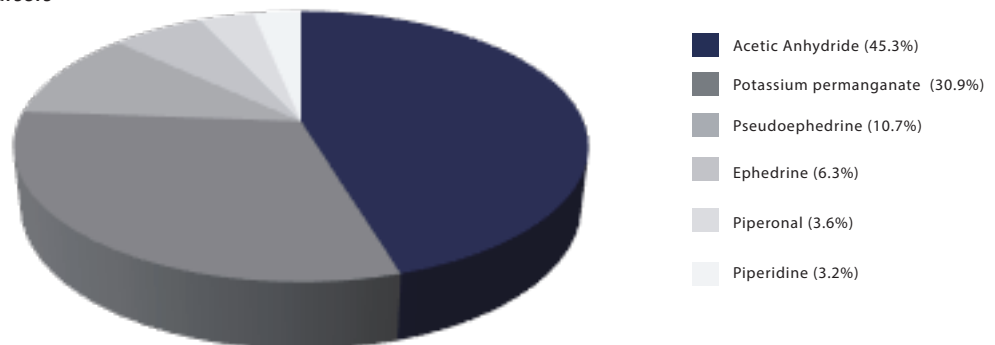
**Transactions**



**Transactions according to category**



**Transactions of main precursors**



### New Precursors in the European Union

Europe has a long tradition in the production of synthetic drugs, such as amphetamines, methamphetamines and MDMA (ecstasy). Production techniques constantly change to elude regulations and sanctions. Therefore, non scheduled substances, are used to produce synthetic drugs and their precursors. For this reason it is necessary to quickly identify the new drugs and related precursors, including them into the schedules of controlled substances. The phenomenon of "designer drugs" and "designer precursors", urges to speed up institutional procedures to update the schedules of drugs and precursors, which are the core of a proper counteraction activity. At European level, the data on the seizures of chemical substances found in clandestine laboratories confirm that traditional scheduled precursors are used along with new chemical substitutes or adjuvants, that are not controlled yet. As to amphetamines and methamphetamines, the inclusion of APAAN (alpha-phenylacetoacetonitrile), the precursor linked to BMK (benzyl-methyl-ketone) in the schedules of controlled substances, moved illicit production towards alternative, non scheduled substances. In 2018 the EU responded to designer drugs by scheduling ANPP and NPP in Category 1, as precursors of Fentanyl, and, in December 2020, including the following substances in Cat. 1 (substances subject to very strict controls):

- PMK methyl glycidate, [(1,3-benzodioxole-5-il)-2-methyl-oxirane-2-carboxylate], precursor of MDMA (ecstasy);
- PMK glycidic acid, [ (1,3-benzodioxole-5-il)-2-methyl-oxirane-2-carboxylate] precursor of MDMA (ecstasy);
- APAA, [Alpha- phenylacetoacetamide] precursor of amphetamines;
- BMK methyl glycidate, [methyl 2-methyl-3-phenyloxirane-2-carboxylate] precursor of methamphetamines;
- acid BMK glicidic, [2-methyl-3- phenyloxirane -2-carboxylic acid], precursor of methamphetamine
- MAPA, [methyl- alpha-phenylacetoacetate] precursor of amphetamines.

Later, on January 13, 2021 Red Phosphorus, catalyst used in the production of methamphetamines, was included in Category 2A (limitation to trade):

Furthermore, the European Commission asked Member States to pay more attention to all substances having unknown licit use, suggesting to reflect on the ways to improve adequacy and effectiveness of the current control system based on Schedules and Categories, as advised by a specific working group established to work out possible alternative solutions. In Europe, both the production of traditional synthetic drugs and new drugs is still ongoing; the production is destined for local and global markets and the number of laboratories and production sites detected by law enforcement agencies increases every year. This trend is partly explained by the change in the production techniques by the criminal organizations, but also by the access to production equipment as well as new and cheaper chemical precursors. Today, the production of synthetic drugs is based on a wide range of chemicals. Since they can hardly be monitored, it is difficult to control them on the

basis of the European and international laws. This is stated in the European Drug Report 2020: Key issues, published by EMCDDA – (European Monitoring Centre on Drugs and Drug Addictions).

#### **PEN (Pre-Export Notification) on-line**

Article 12 parag. 10 and 11 of the della “UN Convention on the fight against illicit traffic in narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances”, adopted by the UN Conference during its 6th plenary session, held in Vienna (A) on 20 December 1988, provides that, in signatory countries, before exporting drug precursors, the competent authorities of the forwarding country are obliged to communicate information on the transaction and the firms involved, to the authorities of the destination country. Such obligation was reaffirmed by EU Regulation of the Council, No. 111/2005 of 22 December 2004, containing: “rules for the monitoring of trade in drug precursors between the European Community and third countries”. Art. 11 (Pre-export notification) refers to the mentioned obligations imposed by the 1988 UN Convention. The national legislation on this issue, summarized by Art.70 of the D.P.R. No. 309/90, establishes that “exports of substances belonging to category 1 ... category 2 and 3 ... are preceded by a preventive notification, to be transmitted to the competent authorities of the destination country, in compliance and within the limits of the provisions established by EC regulations No. 111/2005 and No. 1277/2005.”. Up to now, 165 signatory countries of the 1988 UN Convention have fulfilled such obligations, through the PEN (Pre-Export Notification), managed by INCB through an on-line platform, in the hope that the remaining 32 non signatory countries will adhere to it. The PEN provides that the Authorities of the country of the exporting firm inform, through the IT tool provided by UN, the Authorities of the country where the importing firm is seated. Destination country can: accept the request; request for supplementary information, in case of lack of documentation; or reject the request, thus blocking the shipment. With reference to the European Union, the PEN is only applied in case of trade with non-EU countries, i.e. those subject to customs regulations. D.C.S.A., through the Precursors section of the II Service, examines the requests for authorization and promptly communicates to the Ministry of Health possible information hindering the issue of the authorization to import controlled chemical substances. In 2020, the a/m Section dealt with 33 PEN imports destined for Italy coming from: India, Switzerland, Egypt, Turkey and U.S.A., involving substances such as: Potassium permanganate (234 t), Pseudoephedrine hydrochloride (17 t), Piperonal (3 t), Acetic anhydride (1,800,000 L.), Acetone (310 t) and Pseudoephedrine (40 kg). These substances are used in the pharmaceutical field, in the research laboratories and in particular industrial processing.

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**DRUG PRECURSORS**

## ACTIVITIES OF THE OFFICE FOR GENERAL COORDINATION AND PLANNING

### Introduction

The major task of the Office for General Coordination and Planning is to ensure and manage contacts between the Direzione Centrale per i Servizi Antidroga and the other offices of the Department of Public Security of the Ministry of the Interior for the elaboration of strategic planning documents and of activities reporting.

Furthermore, this office maintains close links with the other public and private bodies involved in drug prevention and drug demand reduction.

### Planning and strategic control

The Office for General Coordination and Planning is in charge of strategic (operational objectives) and management (management objectives) planning, for the purposes of the Minister's Annual Directive, implementing the legislation under the Legislative Decree of 27 October 2009, No. 150.

Under Art. 16 of the Legislative Decree 165/2001, along with the strategic/operational goals assigned by the Minister to the Officers responsible for the implementation of the objectives, the Central and General Directors should ensure the fulfillment of further goals deriving from the institutional activities of the Department of Public Security, in compliance with the mentioned strategic objectives, in order to ensure the effectiveness, operational efficiency and cost-effectiveness of administrative activity.

In 2020, the Office for General Coordination and Planning, after gathering all information provided by the other DCSA services and sections, carried out internal planning and coordination activities, aimed at the regular monitoring of the activities implementing the fixed targets.

### Prevention initiatives

Among its institutional duties, the Office for General Coordination and Planning also collaborates with the DCSA Director in order to "elaborate programmes and projects on the fight against drugs and the prevention of drug addiction" and is competent for the "management of projects". Over the years, the Office has also elaborated measures aimed at implementing a form of "integrated" or "shared" prevention so to enhance synergies between the different law enforcement agencies, the Organizations and the various Institutions involved in the fight against the drug spreading and the negative impact on the young people.

In early 2020, 8 educational/preventive initiatives in schools were carried out in Rome and its province, with an overall audience of approximately 500 students of lower and upper secondary schools. Such initiatives are aimed at informing and raising awareness on drug abuse-related harms, at involving students, identifying the reasons leading them to the drug world.

Due to the pandemic emergency, the meetings with students planned for 2020 and conducted by DCSA qualified personnel, sharply decreased.

However, DCSA carried on the activities planned in the framework of the interinstitutional cooperation Agreement signed on November 14, 2018 between the Department of Antidrug Policies of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers and the Central Directorate for Antidrug Services, aimed at strengthening drug prevention activities:

- through DCSA participation in a project, already started by DPA with the Ministry of Education, in the framework of the Protocol of Understanding signed by the latter bodies on August 7, 2017, in order to strengthen cooperation in the field of prevention of drug and alcohol use in school- age population. The Central Directorate for Antidrug Services integrated the training project called "CUORA il Futuro" (CUORA the future) with matters within its competence. The main objective of the project is to train "teachers-points of reference" in each school, that will be the "trait d'union" among all teachers in that school, families and local institutions in preventing drug and alcohol use in school- age population.
- following a public call, a contract for the management of a training programme involving drug abuse prevention was concluded with MOIGE – Italian Parents Movement (a non-profit organization that has been working for over 20 years in our country). The project, called "Hugs not Drugs", dedicated to students, but also destined for parents and teachers, will be carried out during the 2021-2022 school year. It will be supervised by DCSA and involve institutions working in the drug demand prevention and reduction, such as the Department for Antidrug Policies of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers and the Department for Youth Policies. The project foresees a specific Web App providing a simple and direct access to correct information on drugs harmful effects, a Call Center to assist the beneficiaries of the educational activities as well as educational material for teachers in 220 schools. Furthermore, the project provides for 20 prevention and information days (open days) in 20 schools and 5 online Webinars, attended by schools selected in Municipalities with a high criminal rate.

In 2020, the Direzione Centrale per i Servizi Antidroga took part in the UNICRI (United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute) FOCUS GROUP "what are the needs of families in preventing drug use among children and adolescents?". The works of the Focus Group were preceded by a pilot survey conducted by the same International Research Institute, in cooperation with the Department for Antidrug Policies and were concluded by a final document, useful to realize a plan of universal and selective prevention, through central inter-disciplinary coordination, aimed at implementing a national strategy developing common directives and intervention procedures, by integrating and promoting networking among the services already working in the country. In particular, the work highlighted:

- the role of family as first point of contact for any kind of preventive action connected to drug consumption by young people;
- the central role of schools as privileged observers and actors. Although schools are not the natural and functional substitute of families, they are the instructive and educational environment par-excellence as well as the setting where young people feel in a comfort zone just like at home;
- the need for an inter-disciplinary coordination and a national prevention action plan adopting assessment tools, both in relation to the activities carried out (output measure) and in relation to the effectiveness observed/noticed (outcome measure).





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