

On-line prodej nových syntetických drog v České republice v roce 2015



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VÝCHODISKA: Od roku 2010 se v ČR ve větší míře objevují nové syntetické drogy (NSD) dostupné mimo jiné prostřednictvím internetu. V roce 2015 byla realizována pátá vlna průzkumu nabídky NSD v e-shopech cílících na českou populaci. **CÍLE:** Cílem průzkumu bylo mapování nabídky NSD a včasná identifikace látek, které dosud nebyly v ČR zaznamenány a nejsou kontrolovány. **METODY:** Internetové obchody byly cíleně vyhledávány na základě řetězců klíčových slov. Relevantní stránky byly podrobeny obsahové deskriptivní analýze. **SOUBOR:** V roce 2015 bylo identifikováno 33 e-shopů s nabídkou nových psychoaktivních

látek, z toho 9 se specializovalo na látky syntetického původu. **VÝSLEDKY:** V nabídce e-shopů specializovaných na NSD bylo 145 různých látek a 60 produktů, nejčastěji šlo o syntetické kanabinoidy a katinony. Celkem 63 % nabízených látek nebylo v ČR dosud identifikováno a kontrolováno na národní úrovni. **ZÁVĚRY:** Nabídka NSD prostřednictvím internetu roste. Monitoring internetu je užitečnou doplňkovou metodou pro sledování drogového trhu, jeho využitelnost pro Systém včasného varování před novými drogami je však bez podrobnější analýzy vzorků omezená.

KLÍČOVÁ SLOVA: NOVÉ PSYCHOAKTIVNÍ LÁTKY – NOVÉ SYNTETICKÉ DROGY – INTERNETOVÉ OBCHODY – OMAMNÉ A PSYCHOTROPNÍ LÁTKY

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Online Sales of New Synthetic Drugs in the Czech Republic in 2015



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BACKGROUND: The use of new synthetic drugs (NSD) in the Czech Republic has been on the rise since 2010. Besides other means of supply, they are available via the internet. In 2015, the fifth wave of a survey focusing on the supply of new synthetic drugs through online shops targeting the Czech population was carried out. **AIMS:** The aim of the survey was to map the supply of NSD via the internet, as well as to identify substances which have not yet been reported and put under control in the Czech Republic. **DESIGN AND METHODS:** A targeted search of online shops was performed using keyword strings. Relevant sites were subjected to content descriptive analysis. **SAMPLE:** 33 e-shops offering new psychoactive substan-

ces were identified in 2015, of which nine specialised in synthetic substances. **RESULTS:** The e-shops specialising in NSD offered 145 different substances and 60 products containing NSD; these mostly involved synthetic cannabinoids and cathinones. Altogether, 63% of the substances on offer have not yet been reported or subjected to control in the Czech Republic. **CONCLUSIONS:** The supply of NSD via the internet has been increasing. The monitoring of the internet is a useful complementary method for drug market monitoring. However, its usability for the Early Warning System used to raise alerts concerning new drugs is limited without detailed analysis of the samples.

KEY WORDS: NEW PSYCHOACTIVE SUBSTANCES – NEW SYNTHETIC DRUGS – ONLINE SHOPS – NARCOTIC AND PSYCHOTROPIC SUBSTANCES

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● 1 INTRODUCTION

In the past five years Europe has seen a significant spread of new psychoactive substances (“NPS”), particularly those of synthetic origin. NPS are substances with psychoactive effects which are not subjected to international control as narcotic and psychotropic substances, i.e. they are not included in the schedules of the UN Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs of 1961 or the UN Convention on Psychotropic Substances of 1971. They encompass both herbal and synthetic substances, as well as pharmaceuticals, including veterinary products (Council of the European Union, 2005).

101 NPS were identified within the EU in 2014: 31 cathinones, 30 synthetic cannabinoids, nine phenethylamines, five opioids, five tryptamines, four benzodiazepines, four arylalkylamines, and another 13 substances which fall into none of the above categories. In comparison with previous years, this is the largest number of substances identified and reported for the first time within a single year (81 in 2013, 73 in 2012, 49 in 2011, and 41 in 2010). Over 450 substances are currently monitored in the EU using the European Early Warning System, the main purpose of which is to ensure the early identification of NPS on the market and the exchange of information about them. Synthetic cannabinoids constitute the largest group. In terms of harm, new and highly potent synthetic opioids are of major concern (EMCDDA, 2015b; EMCDDA & Europol, 2015; Council of the European Union, 2005).

NPS are generally offered as legal alternatives to controlled drugs (“legal highs”), “research chemicals”, performance-enhancing dietary supplements, and imitations of illicit drugs, or may appear as adulterants to well-known illicit drugs (EMCDDA, 2015b). A specific group of NPS is that of pharmaceuticals which are diverted by patients or their relatives to the black market or are imported illegally. NPS of synthetic origin, also referred to as “new synthetic drugs” (NSD), are rarely manufactured in Europe. They are often imported from China and India, in particular, and they are only processed and packaged in Europe.

The internet plays a pivotal role in the shaping of the NPS market. In 2013, the year of the last pan-European monitoring of the online supply of NPS, 651 web-based shops targeting the European market were identified (EMCDDA & Europol, 2014). In recent years, however, anonymised internet networks that are hidden from standard browsers – “darknets” – are used to trade in both new and “traditional” psychoactive substances, as well as in other illegal commodities (Pompidou Group, 2013).

A greater occurrence of NPS has been observed in the Czech Republic since 2010. Approximately until mid-2011, NPS were available from both land-based retail outlets and web-based marketplaces. Following an amendment to Act No. 167/1998 Coll., on addictive substances, effective from

April 2011, land-based retail outlets were closed down. Nevertheless, NPS continue to be offered online (Grolmusová & Mravčík, 2012; Mravčík, Běláčková, Grohmannová, & Záborský, 2015). Coordinated by the National Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Addiction (the National Focal Point), the Early Warning System providing notifications about any new drugs recorded 22 new psychoactive substances in the Czech Republic in 2014. 13 of them were identified for the very first time in the Czech Republic, and for two of them it was the first time they had occurred within the EU. They were most commonly cathinones and phenethylamines. The substances seized in the largest quantities included the cathinone referred to as MDPPP (2.2 kg) and the synthetic cannabinoid 5F-PB-22 (2.0 kg) (Mravčík, Chomynová, et al., 2015).

The National Focal Point conducts a regular survey of web-based shops (in this paper referred to as “online shops” or “e-shops”) in order to map the extent of the online supply of NPS and to ensure the early identification of substances which have not yet been detected using other sources (such as law enforcement agencies and data on fatal and non-fatal intoxications). The survey has been performed since 2011 on a yearly basis. Similarly to the previous waves, the 2015 survey was particularly concerned with new synthetic drugs (NSD). Specifically, its objective was to establish: (1) how many online shops specialised in NSD at the time of data collection and what their share of the total number of shops offering NPS was, (2) what substances and products the shops specialising in NSD offered, (3) how many of the NSD on offer had not been identified by other sources, and (4) how many of the NSD on offer were not controlled narcotic and psychotropic substances.

● 2 METHODOLOGY

The survey of the online supply of NSD in 2015 was based on the “snapshot” methodology of the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA) developed for the purposes of mapping the online availability of NPS targeting EU population (Evans-Brown, 2013). Its aim was to identify online shops offering NSD and products containing them. In view of the large extent of the supply of NPS on the internet, the survey was limited exclusively to those sites targeting the Czech population, i.e. those offering products in the Czech language.

E-shop websites were searched using the three most used search engines – Google, Seznam, and Bing. Specific keyword text strings were used to perform this targeted search. They were created on the basis of keyword strings used in the 2014 survey of the web-based supply of NSD which consisted of generic terms for new psychoactive substances and names for specific herbal and synthetic substances or abbreviations, in the case of synthetic substances, generally derived from their chemical name

Table 1 / Tabulka 1

Strings of keywords used in the monitoring of the supply of NSD on the Internet in 2015

Řetězce klíčových slov použité při monitoringu nabídky NSD na internetu v roce 2015

Nr.	Strings of keywords
1.	buy ("legal highs" OR "legal high")
2.	buy ("research chemicals" OR "research chemical")
3.	buy ("herbal highs" OR "herbal high" OR "magické byliny")
4.	buy ("bath salts" OR "bath salt" OR "party pills" OR "high pills" OR "party powder")
5.	buy ("ethnobotanicals" OR "entheogens" OR "etnobotanický" OR "entheogeny")
6.	buy ("herbal incense" OR "herbal resin" OR "herbal blends" OR "incense blends" OR "vykuřovací směsi" OR "legal weed" OR "legal bud" OR "legal hash" OR "legální hašiš" OR "aroma blends" OR "herbal mix" OR "JWH-" OR "AM-" OR "bylinky" OR "vykuřovadla" OR "legální tráva" OR "5F-PB22" OR "5F-AKB48")
7.	buy ("kratom" OR "mitragyna")
8.	buy ("salvia" OR "šalvěj divotvorná" OR "šalvěj")
9.	buy ("mephedrone" OR "madcat" OR "4-MMC" OR "miaow" OR "meow meow" OR "mefedron")
10.	buy ("mdpv" OR "methylenedioxypropylone")
11.	buy ("magic mushrooms" OR "hallucinogenic mushrooms" OR "shrooms" OR "psilocybin mushrooms" OR "psilocybe" OR "cubensis" OR "magické houby" OR "lysohlávky" OR "houbičky")
12.	buy ("GHB" OR "GBL" OR "gamma hydroxybutyrate" OR "gamma butyrolactone")
13.	buy ("calea zacatechichi" OR "leonotis" OR "nymphaea" OR "kanna" OR "damiana" OR "sceletium tortuosum" OR "kalea zakatečiči")
14.	buy ("pentadron" OR "pentadron")
15.	buy ("3-FA" OR "4-FA" OR "2-FMA" OR "3-FMC" OR "MPA" OR "ethylphenidate" OR "ETH-CAT" OR "6-APB" OR "5-APB" OR "3-MMC")
16.	buy ("ketamin" OR "ketamine" OR "MDMA" OR "MXE" OR "metylon")
17.	buy ("3,4-DMMC" OR "4-FMC" OR "4-MEC" OR "MDPBP" OR "MPPP" OR "2-FMA" OR "á-PVP" OR "pyrrolidinopentiophenone")

(EMCDDA, 2011; Národní monitorovací středisko pro drogy a závislosti, 2014). In order to ascertain the proportion of online shops selling substances of synthetic origin relative to the total number of online shops offering NPS, shops marketing plants or herbal products with psychoactive effects were also looked for in the first step. The key words thus also included names for herbal substances and plants. The search strings were updated in such a way as to reflect well the latest situation with regard to the occurrence of NPS in the Czech Republic. The main source for the updating of the key words was the 2014 Czech Early Warning System Report, specifically the overview of the NPS identified in the Czech Republic during the reporting period, including only substances confirmed by laboratory tests (the sources included NPS seized by the police or the customs service, NPS identified in biological samples, and the results of the analyses of the specimens of the substances provided by users).

The keyword strings comprised (1) the search operators “”, OR, and () used for the exact formulation of the search query, (2) the word “buy” to identify an online shop, (3) generic terms for NPS such as “legal highs”, “research chemicals”, “entheogens”,¹ and “magic herbs”, and (4) the

names or denominations of various groups of specific substances such as 3,4-DMMC, 4-FMC, 4-MEC, MDPBP, kratom, salvia divinorum, and kanna. The search strings included the names or denominations of substances of both synthetic and herbal origin. The 2015 monitoring used a total of 17 keyword strings. They are summarised in *Table 1*.

The keyword strings were constructed in such a way as first to identify the maximum number of online shops offering NPS, specifically:

- online shops using generic terms for NPS to describe the products they offer,
- online shops selling products which were likely to contain synthetic cannabinoids, i.e. substances with effects that imitate those of marijuana or hashish,
- online shops selling other psychoactive substances of synthetic origin which imitate the effects of drugs such as cocaine, amphetamine, and ecstasy, and
- online shops selling psychoactive substances of herbal origin.

The keyword strings were entered into the search engine one by one. The first 100 search results were examined for content to see whether the links returned were of relevance, i.e. online markets offering NPS or other websites

1/ Psychotropic plants used in a religious context (Shanon, 2008).

containing the key words used. The following were not included in the selection of relevant search results:

- websites which contained the key words, but did not offer NPS for sale,
- websites in languages other than Czech, even though they involved online shops selling NPS,
- websites selling drug-using equipment and supplies (such as bongs, cigarette papers, and filters), cannabis or cactus seeds, mushrooms without psychoactive effects, and anabolic steroids,
- websites which only mediated seller-buyer contacts, but did not operate as a platform for carrying out the actual business transactions,
- websites featuring discussion fora, chatrooms, advertising portals, and social media such as Facebook or Twitter, and websites intended for sharing videos (YouTube).

After the content of the first 100 results had been assessed, an investigation was made of which of the results led to the next relevant link. In the event that none of the next 20 returns appeared relevant, the search using the given string was terminated. If the opposite, the results continued to be assessed until none of the next 20 links was relevant with respect to the objectives of the survey. The relevant search results were recorded in a form created in a tabular processor. Inspired by the original EMCDDA form, it contained the following items: keyword string number, search engine used, date of search, internet address, and a list of all the substances and products believed to contain new psychoactive substances on offer. The same procedure was applied to each keyword string and search engine. The data was collected in the period from 25 May to 31 May 2015. The data is both quantitative and qualitative in nature. Descriptive statistics were used to analyse the quantitative data.

● 3 RESULTS

A total of 33 online shops offering NPS in the Czech language were identified using the targeted search. Online shops with the .cz domain (21) clearly predominated among the selected e-shops. Other frequent domains were the generic domains .com (four e-shops) and .org and .eu (three each).

In terms of the nature of the products on offer, the sample of 33 online shops can be divided into four distinct categories: (i) nine shops specialising exclusively in synthetic substances, (ii) 11 shops specialising in plants with psychoactive effects or herbal products with psychoactive effects, (iii) 10 online shops offering plants with psychoactive effects or products containing them in addition to herbs with various effects and superfoods, and (iv) three shops selling plants with psychoactive effects or herbal products in addition to a wide assortment of other goods.

Online shops specialising in new synthetic drugs offered exclusively synthetic substances with psychoactive effects. The substances were generally identified by their abbreviated name or an abbreviation derived from their chemical denomination. The structural formulae of the substances or their forms, such as powder or crystals, were also often indicated. The shops which were found to offer at least one of the substances listed in the European database of substances monitored as part of the Early Warning System (EDND) were included in the sample. In certain cases, the offer was broken down into categories, the names of which implied that they encompass substances with psychoactive effects.

Online shops specialising in herbal drugs offered plants with psychoactive effects in the form of extracts, crushed or dry matter, and mixtures, or mushrooms with psychoactive effects. They were marketed under their Czech, Latin, or popular names. It was explicitly stated that the products for sale were of a herbal nature. The shops which were found to offer at least one of the plants or herbal products listed in the European database of substances monitored as part of the Early Warning System (EDND) and/or in the Encyclopaedia of Psychotropic Plants (Enpsyro), which is freely accessible via the biotox.cz website, were included in the sample. Some shops also offered articles for the growing of plants/mushrooms or articles for the administration of herbal drugs. While including e-shops that also offered NSD, this category predominantly featured the marketing of psychoactive substances of a herbal nature.

Online shops offering herbs and superfoods sold medicinal herbs and “superfoods”² in the first place, but their assortment also included plants or products with psychoactive effects. The shops which were found to offer at least one of the plants or herbal products listed in the European database of substances monitored as part of the Early Warning System and/or in the Encyclopaedia of Psychotropic Plants (Enpsyro), which is freely accessible via the biotox.cz website, were included in the sample.

Other online shops offered a wide range of products such as cosmetics, gifts, hand-made jewellery and clothes, tea, and dietary supplements. These online shops generally did not focus specifically on products intended for consumption or articles intended for the preparation or administration of substances. Plants with psychoactive effects or herbal products were only one of the product assortment categories.

In general, there was a wide range of synthetic substances with psychoactive effects, or products containing

2/ The Macmillan Dictionary defines superfood as food that is considered very good for one's health and that may even help some medical conditions (Macmillan Education, 2015)

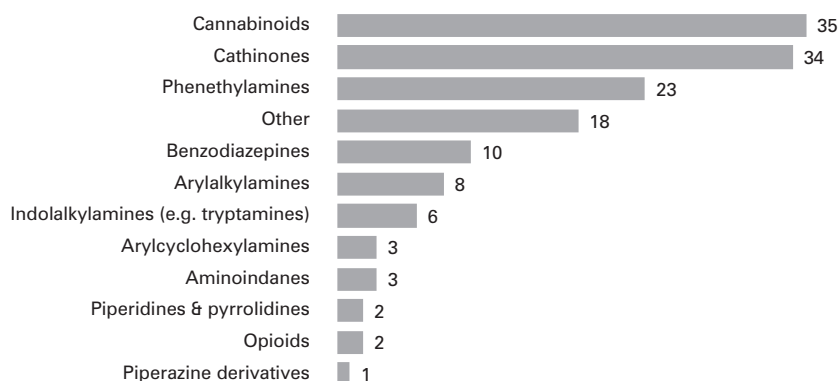


Figure 1 / Obrázek 1

Number of new synthetic drugs offered by online shops in 2015, broken down by chemical groups

Počet nových syntetických drog nabízených v internetových obchodech v roce 2015 v rozdělení podle chemických skupin

them, available in 2015. It comprised a total of 145 different NSD and 60 products containing NSD. The online shops offered 36 NSD on average. The offer of the online shops ranged from one to 106 substances, including NSD belonging to various chemical groups. As shown in *Figure 1*, synthetic cannabinoids, cathinones, and phenethylamines were the most common. NSD in these three chemical groups accounted for more than 63% of the total offer of NSD in 2015. The most common substance on offer was the synthetic cathinone alpha-PVP. In 2015 online shops also began to market synthetic opioids, namely MT-45 and butyryl fentanyl.

At the time of the survey, 63% of the substances offered by online shops in 2015 had not been identified and controlled as narcotic and psychotropic substances according to Act No. 167/1998 Coll., on addictive substances, and specified in Government Regulation No. 463/2013 Coll., on the lists of addictive substances, in the Czech Republic. As shown in *Table 2*, a total of 104 substances, i.e. almost 72% of the NSD offered by online shops in 2015, had not been demonstrably accounted for in other data sources in the Czech Republic (e.g. detected by the police or customs officers as new psychoactive substances). Out of this number, 91 substances (i.e. 88% of the substances not previously recorded in the Czech Republic) had not been listed as controlled narcotic and psychotropic substances in the Czech Republic at the time of the survey. On the other hand, NSD identified

by the Czech Early Warning System, and previously listed as controlled drugs, accounted for 17% of the NSD on offer.

● 4 DISCUSSION

In methodological terms, the monitoring of the supply of NPS by means of online markets poses a considerable challenge. In recent years NPS, particularly substances of synthetic origin, have been receiving much interest in relation to their research, public health, safety, and legal aspects. This can be expected to have a major influence on the ways NSD are offered via the internet. Indeed, the previously used and well-known generic terms for NSD such as “legal highs”, “herbal highs”, “bath salts”, or “research chemicals” have in many cases been replaced with the neutral term “products”, followed by an inventory of the individual substances referred to by their chemical names or abbreviated forms, or just a simple list of the substances on offer. The construction of keyword strings thus become a neuralgic point of the entire monitoring process, especially because of the significant changeability of the supply of NSD.

While data from seizures made by law enforcement agencies is the pivotal aspect in constructing the keyword strings, it may not necessarily reflect the actual supply on the market. Moreover, seizures mainly concern controlled narcotic and psychotropic substances rather than new psychoactive substances that may conform to any formal requirements for importation into the Czech Republic. However, access to relevant data about the importation of such

Table 2 / Tabulka 2

Number of new synthetic drugs offered by online shops in 2015, broken down by their legal status and proven occurrence in the Czech Republic

Počet nových syntetických drog nabízených v internetových obchodech v roce 2015 v rozdělení podle legálního statusu a prokázání výskytu v ČR

NSD in the Czech Republic	Controlled substances		Uncontrolled substances		Total	
	Number	Share (%)	Number	Share (%)	Number	Share (%)
Substances detected in the Czech Republic	25	65.8	16	15.0	41	28.3
Substances not yet detected in the Czech Republic	13	34.2	91	85.0	104	71.7
Total	38	100.0	107	100.0	145	100.0

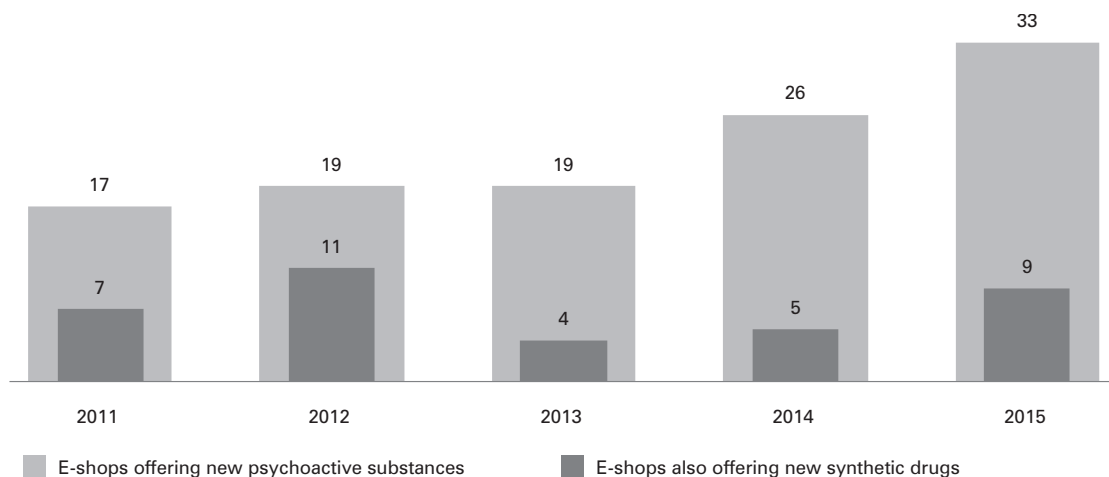


Figure 2 / Obrázek 2

Number of e-shops offering new psychoactive substances and e-shops specialising in synthetic substances, Czech Republic, 2011–2015
Počet e-shopů s nabídkou nových psychoaktivních látek a e-shopů specializovaných na syntetické látky v češtině v letech 2011–2015

legal psychoactive substances is prevented by the record-keeping system established by the customs service. The results of analyses of biological samples or unknown samples from users, i.e. relatively clear indicators of what is currently being used on the drug scene, are available only rarely, mainly because of the absence of a systematic collection of data on clinical toxicological tests. This lack of evidence is also due to the fact that the detection of substances other than those on standard screening toxicological panels is relatively rare. In view of the above, the construction of keyword strings is inevitably problematic.

It can also be assumed that online shops in languages other than Czech, especially English, may also represent quite a frequent source of NSD for the Czech population. The most recent data for this segment of the market is not available, unfortunately, as the last time comprehensive monitoring was carried out was by the EMCDDA in 2013 (EMCDDA & Europol, 2014). It is therefore difficult to estimate what proportion of the drug market in NSD in the Czech Republic is covered by online shops using languages other than Czech to communicate with their prospective customers.

Another significant segment of the drug market which represents a source for purchasing NSD is the so-called “darknet” – a network which is accessible only with special software (e.g. the TOR browser) and special configurations and authorisations and which uses non-standard communication protocols and ports. The very nature of these networks imposes great demands on any efforts to map this segment of supply and makes it very difficult indeed (Pompidou Group, 2013). The emerging supply of NSD via advertising portals is an equally unexplored area of the market.

When interpreting the results, one should therefore bear in mind that the websites offering products in Czech

that were selected and analysed represent only a segment of the total supply of NSD on the market.

In the Czech Republic the monitoring of the supply of new drugs via online marketplaces has been performed since 2011 (Mravčík et al., 2012; Mravčík, Chomynová, et al., 2015; Mravčík et al., 2013, 2014). The supply of NSD seems to expand yearly; the number of online shops specialising in NSD is growing and so is the number of NSD on offer. In 2015 these numbers more than doubled in comparison to the previous year; see *Figure 2*.

In 2015 the numbers of substances and products sold via online shops were the highest for the entire period under monitoring (since 2011). In comparison with 2014, when 64 NSD were on offer, the number of NSD sold online was more than double that in 2015. The time series featuring data on the number of substances and products offered in the individual years reveals two milestones. Until 2012 products containing NSD marketed under various commercial names such as Diablo, Afghan Fire, Blue Magic, and Rave On seemed to predominate in the offer of online marketplaces. In 2013 NSD began to be marketed under their chemical names. The year 2015 brought a change in that products with various commercial names, often with any specification of the NSD they contained, reappeared on the market; see *Table 3*.

Four years (from 2012 to 2015) was the longest period of time for which online shops selling NSD were in operation. This was the case with two online shops. The first of them was an e-shop with a very simple website structure. Throughout its operation it offered only one psychoactive substance – mephedrone, which is probably the best-known cathinone. Within the EU mephedrone was reported for the first time in 2008, in the Czech Republic two years later. The web pages of this online shop were probably launched before the first monitoring in 2011 and before mephedrone

Table 3 / Tabulka 3

Supply of new synthetic drugs through online shops, 2011–2015

Nabídka nových syntetických drog v internetových obchodech v letech 2011–2015

Indicator	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Total number of e-shops offering NSD	7	11	4	5	9
Number of newly identified e-shops	–	7	1	1	5
Number of wound-up e-shops	6	6	0	1	–
Total number of NSD on offer	5	12	42	64	145
Total number of products containing NSD on offer	16	53	1	4	60
Minimum number of substances offered by the e-shops	1	1	1	1	1
Maximum number of substances offered by the e-shops	4	12	32	37	106
Average number of substances offered by the e-shops	1	3	18	20	36

was added to the list of controlled substances in the Czech Republic on the basis of an amendment to Act No. 167/1998 Coll., on addictive substances, effective from April 2011. The website was in Czech and never offered any other language versions. Besides contact details, a postal address, an e-mail address, and a telephone number, it contained no further information. The second longest-operating online shop was more elaborate. It was created and operated in three language versions – Czech, Polish, and English. It declared that its products were of high quality, and included a list of analytical methods for testing substances. It also displayed a note that the products were intended for technical use only, were harmful to health, and that the vendor waived responsibility for any damage resulting from the use of the product for purposes other than that for which it was intended. Its “Updates” section informed customers about new products on offer, discounts, delivery dates, etc. Updates were provided 1-3 times per month. Five new online shops offering NSD which were not recorded during the previous waves of monitoring were identified in 2015. But all these cases involved e-shops where Czech was only one of many language versions created by a machine translator.

The most common substance offered for sale in 2015 was alpha-PVP, a synthetic cathinone derived from the already controlled pyrovalerone. More than 100 fatal intoxications associated with alpha-PVP have been reported in the EU, with this substance being the cause or one of the causes of death in at least 23 cases (EMCDDA, 2015a). This substance is currently undergoing the risk assessment procedure carried out by the EMCDDA and Europol which serves as the basis for decision making about the control of NPS at the EU level.

The synthetic opioids MT-45 and butyryl fentanyl represented new items in the offer of NSD in 2015. The opioid MT-45 was first reported by the European Early Warning System in Sweden in 2013. 28 deaths were reported in association with MT-45 in the EU countries (from November

2013 to July 2014), and in another 19 cases MT-45 was the cause of death or a major contributing factor (EMCDDA, 2015c). In September 2014 the risk assessment of this substance was carried out. On the basis of the results of the risk assessment, the European Commission decided in October 2014 that control measures should be taken in the EU countries. In the Czech Republic MT-45 has been controlled since October 2015, when the latest amendment to Government Regulation No. 463/2013 Coll., on the lists of addictive substances, came into effect. MT-45 has not been detected yet in the Czech Republic. Butyryl fentanyl was first reported in Poland in 2014. Apart from Sweden and Finland, it has not been identified in any other country. This substance is controlled neither on the international nor European level.

The growing supply of NSD does not necessarily imply a growth in the prevalence of the use of these substances among the Czech population. The level of the current use (i.e. use in the last 12 months or 30 days) of NSD in the general population has been close to zero for several years now. A higher level of current experience with NSD has been recorded among problem drug users or dance partygoers. Problem drug users mainly show experience with cathinones, which became known as “Funky” on the black market. However, they are rarely the primary drug. As regards dance partygoers, a survey conducted in 2014 indicated that 16.9% and 7.2% of the respondents had used NSD at any point in their lives and in the past 12 months, respectively. The most common substances reported by the respondents were mephedrone and products referred to as “Funky” or “Turbo TDI” (Mravčík, Běláčková, et al., 2015; Mravčík, Chomynová, et al., 2015).

● 5 CONCLUSION

An increase in the occurrence of new synthetic drugs in the Czech Republic has been observed since approximately 2010. Since their supply through land-based retail outlets

was significantly curtailed in April 2011, NSD have been available particularly, and increasingly so, via the internet. To a limited extent, however, they can also be obtained on the black market in traditional illegal drugs. The offer of NSD on the internet is growing. In 2015 the numbers of e-shops and substances and products reached their highest levels since 2012. The NSD on offer in 2015 included especially new substances which had not come under control in the Czech Republic. The NSD marketed online comprised mainly cathinones and cannabinoids, while synthetic opioids appeared for the first time in 2015. The level of use of these substances in the Czech Republic has so far been relatively low. Higher levels of experience with them have been shown among problem drug users and dance partygoers.

Surveys of the offer of NSD on the internet are a useful component of the monitoring of the supply of NSD on the drug market. However, the information these provide and its usability for the systems of warning against new drugs and their control will be limited unless such surveys include

mystery shopping and subsequent chemical analysis of samples of NSD.

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