



Figyelünk rád! - We have your back!
2021-2-HU01-KA220-YOU-000050143

SUMMARY OF ROMANIA'S DRUG POLICY AND DETERMINING THE FUTURE VISION OF THE ASSOCIATION

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2023.



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1. Introduction

Diaspora Foundation participated in the international project of Erasmus+ "We have your back!" (2021-2-HU01-KA220-YOU-000050143). The project goals were to promote early drug prevention, to support young people and young people in the diaspora, to train youth workers, to establish contacts with other associations and NGOs as well as best practices to promote and share. During on the project work, partner organizations from five countries mapped local good practices and legal frameworks and national drug policy. The present study shows are the analysis of Romania's national drug policy.

Substance use has become an increasingly visible problem in our society, affecting us all to a greater or lesser extent: parents, friends, neighbors, teachers, doctors, social workers, psychologists, etc. Many times, we want to act somehow, to do more to protect those close to us from going down the path of consumption. Unfortunately, however, we do not always manage to be efficient in this endeavor.

The family has an essential role in the prevention of juvenile delinquency and drug use among teenagers, being the most able to "control" such negative phenomena.

Open communication with children and instilling the values that parents believe in and respect will make the youth, in turn, adopt and value them, the personal example of the parents being the first anti-drug lesson that a child receives. By making them aware of the causes, effects and social, medical and legal implications of drug use, it will make the young person informed and better prepared to resist this temptation. Establishing a relationship of trust based on affection between parents and children, supervising the adolescent and getting to know the environment he frequents, controlling the destination of "pocket" money, regular discussions with principals and teachers about the adolescent's school results, support in following their passions and showing consistency and interest in everything the child does, are just a few "weapons" that the family has at hand when it comes to the fight against drugs. There are situations when, due to the consumption of one or other of the parents (sometimes even grandparents), the child becomes a consumer himself, imitating the parental model. Regarding following a detoxification treatment, the involvement of the family is very important, even essential, it offers love and moral support, thus ensuring the success of the treatment. The community. Anyone who feels isolated tries to find a group to join. A special case is the minority groups who encounter great difficulties in integrating into society, sometimes ending up being socially marginalized, thus seeking escape in drugs. Urbanization and unemployment are other factors that contribute greatly to the increase in the number of drug users. Consumption is also influenced by their availability on the market. When their quantity increases, so does consumption. Illicit drug use (cocaine, opiates) is higher due to greater availability in certain areas. Many drug addicts have tried rehab to stop using drugs for good, but because they live in areas where drugs are readily available, they relapse. Gradually, these groups are marginalized and separated from society. Areas where drug use is high are characterized by a high

crime rate, unemployment, a school system with big problems. The state, through legislative measures and campaigns carried out at national level, carried out through the collaboration of its institutions, proves to be an effective ally in the fight against drugs.¹

Individuals and groups exist and develop in social contexts marked by societal values and structures. For example, changes in cultural norms, perceptions of certain behaviors, and changes in drug-related economic aspects have been shown to be associated with changes in drug use behaviors and the global prevalence of use of various psychoactive substances, including legal drugs. A very permissive legislation favorable to the economic interests that maintain various drug-related businesses, together with a high social tolerance of any substance are key contextual factors favoring the use and abuse of various psychoactive substances. In the case of legal drugs, for example, it is widely demonstrated that a number of measures such as restricting the number of points of sale and hours of sale, increasing prices (through legislation and taxes), legislation limiting the age of purchase and limiting public places of consumption have an important effect of limiting consumption. It is related to normative and legal aspects, but it can also be considered an independent factor. For example, the fact that a drug is legal or not determines greater or lesser availability and, consequently, the level of overall consumption. The degree of availability (number and accessibility of outlets, effectiveness of promotion and distribution mechanisms, etc.), for both legal and illegal drugs, is an independent risk factor, once other possible confounding factors such as purchasing power of individuals or other individual characteristics. The results of the studies show that certain indicators of social deprivation, such as poverty, crowding and poor living conditions, are associated with an increased risk of antisocial behavior. A simplistic reading of these results has led to the interpretation that poverty is a per se factor for drug use. Undoubtedly, this stereotype has not been confirmed by research focused on comparative studies between social classes. At the same time, various studies have shown that parents' higher education, a good job of theirs or material possibilities that allow greater personal expenses are associated with an increase in the consumption of alcohol, tobacco or marijuana among teenagers from such backgrounds. In this framework, social deprivation can be considered a risk factor for drug abuse, in the long term, in conditions of extreme poverty in which other types of personal and family problems are associated. When a population is faced with sudden cultural changes, there is a deterioration in the family's ability to transmit prosocial values to children and adolescents. This deterioration in the socialization function of the immediate social environment (family, neighborhood, social support networks) can lead to problems related to alcohol and other substance abuse.²

The national strategy in the field of drugs - the programmatic document that defines Romania's policy in the field of the fight against drug trafficking and illicit consumption for the period 2022-

¹ Asociația Catharsis (2019) Prevenirea consumului de droguri la adolescenți prin intervenții active în școală. Descarcă: 21.04.2023, https://hcoanda.ro/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Brosura_Prevenire_2019.pdf

² Asociația Salvați Copiii România. Educația pentru sănătate. Kit facilitate. Modul III – Modul destinat comportamentului de consum (alcool, fumat, drog) Descarcă: 21.04.2023, <https://www.salvaticopiii.ro/sci-ro/files/e0/e08e12c4-97ed-4bd5-a8fd-dff642eee72b.pdf>

2026 - includes the approach to the phenomenon of drugs and ensures the cooperation framework for social actors who have competences and responsibilities in the field.

The national drug strategy 2022-2026 and the related action plan³, for the period 2022-2026, were approved in a single public policy document by Government Decision no. 344 of March 16, 2022, published in the Official Gazette no. 334 of April 5, 2022, the approval by the Government of Romania conferring legitimacy on the response to the drug phenomenon, as well as a formal and binding character to the foreseen measures. As public policy documents, both the strategy and the action plan include the general concept and cooperation framework for social actors who have competences in the field, taking over the pattern of approach established by previous public policy documents, namely the balance between demand reduction and supply reduction of drugs. At the same time, it harmonizes two complementary theoretical perspectives in terms of how to approach the drug phenomenon, taking into account the main areas that it majorly affects – health and order/public safety.

In the process of elaborating the National Social Security System and the action plan for the period 2022-2026, provisions of the European strategy regarding the application of the perspective of gender equality and equity in health matters, the promotion of alternatives to coercive sanctions were taken over, by adapting them to the national specifics, encouraging the exchange of information and best practices between member states and developing the international representation component. In accordance with the European strategic document, innovation and the development of innovative partnerships are encouraged in the national strategy, including by attracting non-reimbursable European funds. The concept of coordination is detailed in the national strategy and in the action plan by ensuring synergy between drug policies and other health and security policies, an element that is also reflected in the distribution of institutions responsible for implementing the action plan. The general European concept was taken into account when establishing the global indicators for the implementation of the action plan, related to trends in problematic consumption, deaths as a result of drug consumption, evidence-based interventions on prevention, risk reduction and specialized assistance and the national early warning system on new psychoactive substances.

Also, in the national strategy, it is mentioned that the provisions fall under the objectives assumed by the common position of the UN system that supports the application of the international drug policy, as well as those assumed by the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development.

The national strategy in the field of drugs 2022-2026 is the result of a transparent process of consultation with public institutions and authorities at the central and local level, as well as with partners from the sphere of civil society (non-governmental organizations and cults).

The programmatic document integrates a triad of strategic action:

1. Reducing the demand for drugs,

³ Raport Național privind situația drogurilor în România 2022. Descarcă: 23.06.2023, http://ana.gov.ro/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/RN_2022.pdf

2. Reducing the supply of drugs and
3. Strengthening the operational response capacity - international cooperation, research, assessment, information and coordination.

The directions of strategic action are structured on 11 general objectives, each with several specific objectives, operationalized at the level of activities within the Action Plan for the implementation of the National Strategy in the field of drugs, applicable for the period 2022-2026. The directions of strategic action are structured in 11 general objectives, 30 specific objectives, operationalized at the level of 93 activities within the Action Plan. The action plan for the implementation of the Strategy includes the concrete activities and indicators related to each action undertaken by the responsible entities, 15 global indicators, as well as the central and local institutions and authorities responsible for carrying out each activity specific to the field of competence. The civil society ensures the complementarity of the implementation of the planned actions, in accordance with the statutory provisions. The central public structures that have responsibilities in the implementation of the strategy are: Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Family, Youth and Equal Opportunities, Ministry of Labor and Social Solidarity, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Research, Innovation and Digitization, Directorate of Investigation of Organized Crime and Terrorism, the Romanian Intelligence Service, the Foreign Intelligence Service, the Romanian Customs Authority, the National Agency for the Administration of Impounded Assets, the National Agency for Fiscal Administration, the National Authority for Communications Administration and Regulation, the National Council for Combating Discrimination, local public administration authorities. Of these, 14 structures have responsibilities aimed at reducing demand, 9 in the field of reducing supply and 7 structures in other fields of activity (cooperation, research, training, ...).

2. Relevant general information, situation analysis

2.1. The current situation regarding the drug phenomenon in Romania

According to internal analyses, as well as specific documents developed at the European, regional and international level, Romania continues to be a component of the Balkan Route of illicit drug trafficking to and from Western Europe, with only a small part of the amount of drugs transited remaining on the national territory for internal consumption. At the same time, the Black Sea coast and the port of Constanța constitute the second entry point for cocaine in Europe. Also, although cannabis crops were identified on the national territory, as well as some clandestine laboratories, the small size of the production leads to the conclusion that Romania is not a major source of illegal drugs. Similar to previous years, a serious competitor to illicit drugs is represented by new

substances with psychoactive properties, both in terms of availability on the market and their prices.⁴

The synthetic situation of the trends recorded in the period 2013-2020 in the field of drug consumption and trafficking, based on the evolution of the monitoring indicators, reveals:

2.1.1. Drug use in the general population

According to the study, carried out in 2019 by the National Anti-Drug Agency, at the level of the general population, a lifetime prevalence of the consumption of any type of illicit drug of 10.7% is identified. The prevalence in the last year of this type of consumption is 6%, while for consumption in the last month, a prevalence of 3.9% is observed. Depending on the age group, the highest prevalences, regardless of the time period analyzed, are recorded in the 15-34 age groups, confirming the results of the other studies, according to which this is the age group with the highest risk of consumption: 16.9%, 10% and 6.6% respectively.⁵

Throughout the period of implementation of the National Anti-Drug Strategy 2013-2020, the conclusions of the three studies carried out in this period (2013, 2016, 2019) show an increase in the consumption of any illicit drug for all three mentioned types of consumption (for experimental consumption, from 6.6% in 2013 to 10.7% in 2019, for recent use, from 2.5%, to 6%, for current use, from 1.1%, to 3.9%). Compared to the growth rate recorded during the implementation period of the National Anti-Drug Strategy 2005-2012, the one identified in the reference period (2013-2020) was lower, (38.3%, compared to 78.8% for experimental use, 58.3% versus 84% for recent use and 71.8% versus 90.9% for current use).⁶

Annually, the National Anti-Drug Agency (ANA) prepares the National Report on the situation of drugs in Romania (with data from the previous year), a reference document for specialists and practitioners in the field of drugs, for decision-makers and for anyone interested in the latest trends recorded in the evolution of this phenomenon. The national report on the drug situation 2022, produced by the ANA specialists, includes the latest data and information related to drug consumption and trafficking in Romania, highlighting the evolution trends recorded by our country, both in the line of preventing drug use and that of combating drug trafficking, as well as the measures adopted by public institutions regarding the drug issue.

The main drugs consumed in Romania - 10.7% of those aged between 15-64 have consumed at least one type of illicit drug throughout their life (experimental consumption), while 6% of them have also consumed in last year (recent consumption). A slowdown in the growth rate of

⁴ Centrul Regional de Sănătate Publică Timișoara: Analiză de situație. Consumul de droguri în România. Descarcă: 23.02.2023 <http://www.dspvs.ro/dsp2/images/Analiza%20de%20situatie%20consumul%20de%20droguri.pdf>

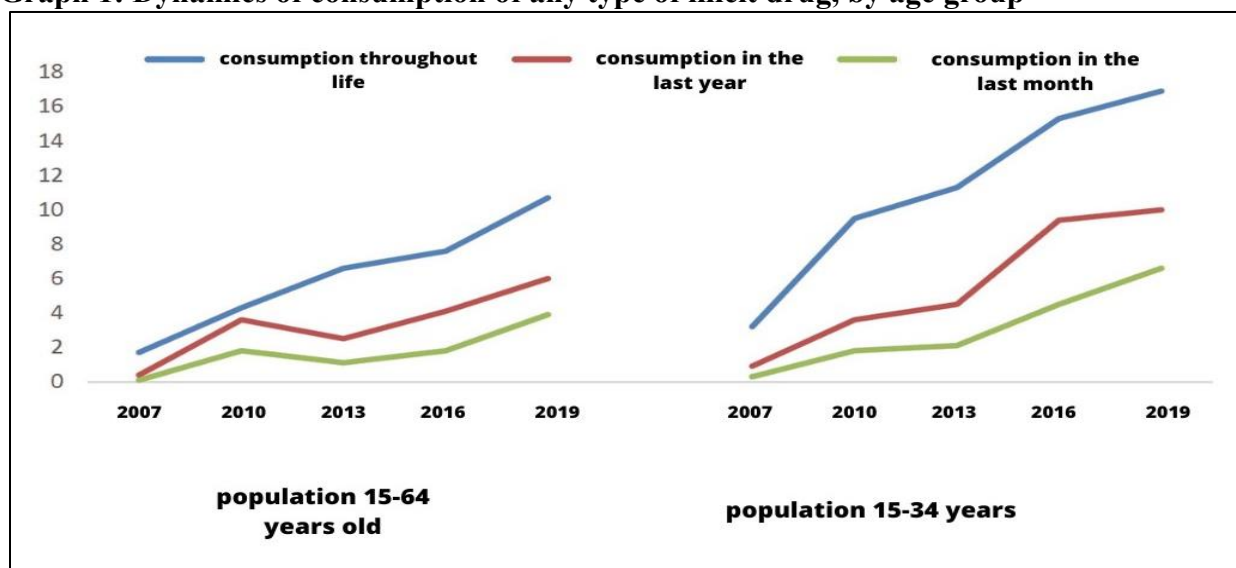
⁵ Raport Național privind situația drogurilor în România 2020. Descarcă: 21.04.2023, http://ana.gov.ro/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/RN_2020_final.pdf

⁶ Strategia națională în domeniul drogurilor 2022 – 2026. Descarcă: 06.02.2023, <http://ana.gov.ro/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Monitorul-Oficial-Partea-I-Strategie-2022-2026.pdf>

consumption is noted for most illicit drugs, with the exception of the consumption of new psychoactive substances (NPS). The highest consumption rates are observed among the young population (15-34 years old) (Teodorescu, 2023).

Among the population aged between 15-34 years, the values recorded for the three types of consumption are higher than those observed among the general population, the consumption of any type of illicit drug throughout life being observed at 16.9% among them, consumption in the last year at 10% of them, and consumption in the last month at 6.6%. Compared to the previous study, also in the case of this population group, increases are observed for all three types of consumption, but the most important is in the case of consumption in the last month, whose growth rate is 1.4 times.⁷

Graph 1: Dynamics of consumption of any type of illicit drug, by age group



Source: National Antidrug Agency

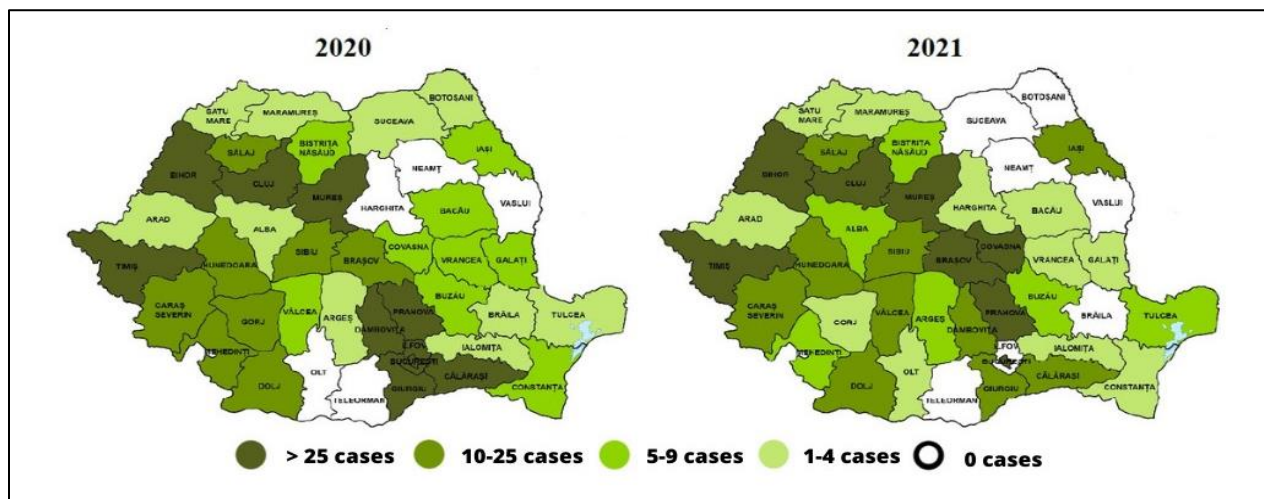
The increase can be explained by the fact that new psychoactive substances have become a more persistent problem, every year, over 50 new substances being detected for the first time in Europe⁸, but also by the fact that the evolution of cannabis consumption, which, although it records the lowest prevalence of consumption in Europe, continues its upward trend. Thus, the new psychoactive substances are on the first place in the "hierarchy" of the most consumed illicit drugs in Romania. The largest increase is in the current use of any illicit drug in the general population, which means an increase in the number of addicted users and, by implication, an increased need for support services.

⁷ Raport Național privind situația drogurilor în România 2022. Descarcă: 23.06.2023, http://ana.gov.ro/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/RN_2022.pdf

⁸ European Drug Report 2020. Descarcă: 23.02.2023, https://www.emcdda.europa.eu/publications/edr/trends-developments/2020_en

Cannabis continues to be one of the most consumed drugs in Romania, both by the general population (2nd place in the ranking of the most consumed illicit drugs in Romania, after the new psychoactive substances), and by the school population. In the general population, it is estimated that 6.1% of people aged 15-64 have used cannabis in their lifetime, 3.5% have used it in the last year, while 1.8% have used it in the last month. Among cannabis users, the lowest stated age of onset was 14 years, and the average age of onset was 19.4 years. More than two-thirds of the respondents (68.6%) started this type of consumption at the age of adolescence (under 19 years), while 22.8% of those questioned declared that they started using cannabis at a young age, 20- 24 years. In terms of trends in cannabis use in the general population compared to the previous study, it is among the drugs for which there were increases in use for all three reference intervals, with the highest rate of increase for in the last month (1.2 times). However, the rate of growth is the lowest observed in the last decade for this type of consumption. In 2021, out of the total number of medical emergencies due to drug use, 608 cases mentioned the use of cannabis (single use or in combination). In all the cases registered in the specialized units at national level, cannabis was mentioned in 34.9% of the cases (single consumption or in combination). These cases were reported in 34 territorial units from the 41 counties and the municipality of Bucharest. The cases remain concentrated in 8 territorial units (Bihor, Braşov, Bucharest Municipality, Cluj, Covasna, Mureş, Prahova, Timiş), where 63.0% of the total number of cases are registered.⁹

Map 1: Geographical distribution of emergency cases caused by cannabis use (single or in combination), comparative analysis 2020 – 2021



Source: National Antidrug Agency

Stimulants such as cocaine, amphetamines and ecstasy are available on the drug market in Romania. In terms of perceived availability, stimulants are considered difficult to procure, both in

⁹ Raport Național privind situația drogurilor în România 2022. Descarcă: 23.06.2023, http://ana.gov.ro/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/RN_2022.pdf

the opinion of the general population and the school population. In the case of ecstasy consumption, 1% of the general population aged between 15 and 64 have consumed this type of drug at least once in their life, while 0.5% of respondents mentioned such consumption in the last year, and 0.4% in the last month. The lowest age of onset, declared by those who claimed to have consumed ecstasy during their lifetime, was 13 years, and the highest, 28 years. The results of the study carried out in 2019 indicate an increase in the level of ecstasy consumption in the general population, after, when applying the previous study (2016), decreases had been observed, up to the values recorded in 2007. Cocaine/crack consumption registers the third level of consumption in the "ranking" of illicit drugs. Thus, 1.6% of the general population aged between 15 and 64, included in the sample, consumed cocaine/crack at least once in their life, 0.5% of respondents consumed cocaine/crack in the last year, and 0.4% also consumed in the last month. The lowest age of onset, declared by those who experienced cocaine/crack use, was 15 years, and the highest, 33 years. 52.6% of the respondents started using cocaine/crack between the ages of 15 and 19. The trend analysis indicates an increase in the level of cocaine/crack consumption in the general population up to 4 times (for consumption in the last month), recording its highest values for the entire monitoring period (2003-2019). 5.7% of admissions to treatment as a result of drug use in 2021 were for stimulant use (2.7% for cocaine, 1.1% ecstasy, 0.7% amphetamines, 0.9 methamphetamines and 0, 4% synthetic cathinones). As in previous years, the majority of people admitted to treatment for stimulant use are new to the treatment system (69 of the 84 cocaine cases or 73 of the 94 non-cocaine stimulant cases). In 2021, with the exception of amphetamines/methamphetamines, a decrease in the number of cases admitted for treatment is observed, the main cause being the restrictive measures determined by the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic. For amphetamines/methamphetamines, For all substances analyzed (cocaine, ecstasy, amphetamines/methamphetamines), trends are determined by newly admitted cases in the treatment system.¹⁰

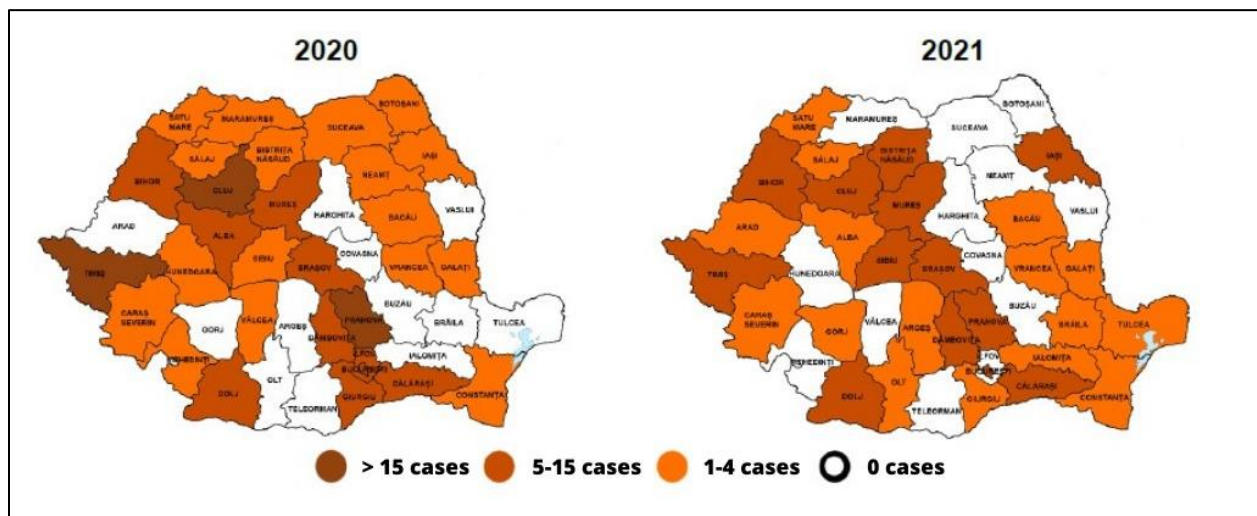
The synthesis of data provided by the Department for Monitoring and Evaluation of HIV/AIDS Infection in Romania – the National Institute of Infectious Diseases reveals that 559 new HIV/AIDS cases were detected, of which 50 represent people who inject drugs. 2,328 people who inject drugs accessed the risk reduction services offered within the syringe exchange programs, down from the previous year (by 34.3%). In methadone substitution treatment, 1769 opiate users were registered. In the drug market, the highest total amount of drugs seized was recorded, with the highest amount of heroin seized, as well as the second highest number of seizures made. Cannabis and cocaine have an increasing availability on the illicit drug market, with seizure values reaching the highest value for cocaine and the second highest value for cannabis on record to date. 74.38% of the total amount of drugs from significant seizures was destined for the illicit market in Romania, an aspect that is an indication of the existence of its dynamics at the national level. Regarding drug crime, the parameters for evaluating drug crime at the national level registered increases compared to the values of the previous year, maintaining the increasing trend of the number of people sent to court for committing drug crimes and the number of people condemned.

¹⁰ Raport Național privind situația drogurilor în România 2022. Descarcă: 23.06.2023, http://ana.gov.ro/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/RN_2022.pdf

3,083 prisoners declared themselves drug users upon entering detention, their share in the incarcerated population being 7.5%, a decrease of approximately 2.5 percent compared to the previous year. The age category most affected by drug use is that of prisoners aged between 22-30 years (42%). The drug consumed, mainly before entering detention, is, as in previous years, heroin, followed by other drugs and cannabis (Teodorescu, 2023).

In 226 of the total cases of medical emergencies due to drug use recorded in 2021, the use of stimulants (single or combined use) was mentioned, in all the cases registered in the specialized units, at the national level, the percentage of people who called on the services as a result of the consumption of stimulants being 12.9%. The category of stimulants included cocaine, amphetamine, methamphetamine and ecstasy. As for the geographical distribution, the cases remain concentrated in 3 territorial units (Cluj, Prahova, Timiș), where almost half (42.9%) of the total number of cases are registered, according to the data reported in the emergency medical units, the problem due consumption of stimulants being mentioned in the same geographical areas as in the previous year. In 13 territorial units (Botoșani, Buzău, Covasna, Hunedoara, Harghita, Ilfov, Mehedinți, Maramureș, Neamț, Teleorman, Suceava, Vaslui, Vâlcea) no medical emergencies due to the consumption of stimulants were reported.¹¹

Map 2: Geographical distribution of emergency cases caused by the consumption of stimulants (single or in combination), comparative analysis 2020 – 2021



Source: National Antidrug Agency

Out of the total number of emergency cases registered for the consumption of stimulants, single use was reported in 27.4%. In terms of multiple drug use, the substances reported to be mainly

¹¹ Raport Național privind situația drogurilor în România 2022. Descarcă: 23.06.2023, http://ana.gov.ro/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/RN_2022.pdf

administered in combination with stimulants were cannabis, drugs, opiates, new psychoactive substances and alcohol.¹²

2.1.2. Drug use among 16-year-old students

Research on youth health risk behaviors has long been at the center of scientific research. Smoking, drinking, and drug use are rampant among teenagers, and these risky behaviors appear at an early age.

The causes include a number of factors such as the social environment, negative life experiences, the influence of the environment, superficial relationships with friends and parents. Alcohol consumption and tobacco use are the most common risk behaviors among young people that appear around the age of 14-15 (Ember, 2018).

The perception of drug use is a critical factor in assessing and understanding the effects of smoking, alcohol and illicit drug use. Drug use is a complex process that, if we want to understand, simply knowing the types of drugs is not enough. Community aspects play an important role in alcohol consumption. The environment where teenagers meet and frequently consume alcoholic beverages, parties with friends play an important role in youth drinking. Unfortunately, even sport does not protect young people from acquiring unhealthy habits related to alcohol consumption, but it has a dissuasive effect on smoking and delays the onset of its consumption. Among young people with a lifestyle that includes a regularly practiced sports activity or among performance athletes, there are the fewest smokers. However, it has been observed that among young people who give up sports, the number of smokers increases, so the protective effect of sport is observed only during the period when the young person practices a sport (Bollók, 2014).

Alcohol and tobacco use are much more common worldwide and, in most regions, than illicit drug use. However, smoking and drinking alcohol can contribute to illicit drug use. Alcohol, tobacco and illicit drug use contribute considerably to the global burden of disease and mortality (Peacock et al, 2018).

In the period 2013-2020, the national component of the European study ESPAD (study carried out internationally every 4 years, starting in 1995) was implemented twice in Romania, respectively in 2015 and 2019.

At the national level, among 16-year-old students, the lifetime use of any illicit drug, according to the international methodology of the ESPAD 2019 study¹³, is 9.5%, while the use of any illicit drug in the last year was declared by 9% of students. Although, compared to the previous study in

¹² Raport Național privind situația drogurilor în România 2022. Descarcă: 23.06.2023, http://ana.gov.ro/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/RN_2022.pdf

¹³ European Drug Report 2020. Descarcă: 23.02.2023, https://www.emcdda.europa.eu/publications/edr/trends-developments/2020_en

2015, there is a 12% decrease in the proportion of those who declare the use of any drug throughout their life, the very close values of the two types of use indicate an increased rate of those who, after a experimental drug use, choose to continue this type of behavior.

Among 16-year-old students, the most consumed illicit drug is cannabis, followed by new psychoactive substances (8.7% of 16-year-olds have consumed cannabis throughout their life, 7.2% have consumed it in the last year, and 3.3% of them also consumed in the last month). In the list of drugs preferred by teenagers, new psychoactive substances are in second place, after cannabis, with 3.2% of the 16-year-old students included in the sample declaring lifetime use of such substances and 2.2% mentioning that they used in last year.

At the end of the implementation period of the National Anti-Drug Strategy 2013-2020, among 16-year-old teenagers, for most of the illicit drugs analyzed, the level of consumption is maintained and even decreased. The exception is cannabis use, which continues to increase for all reference periods (lifetime, last year, last month). Compared to the growth rate recorded during the implementation period of the National Anti-Drug Strategy 2005-2012, the one identified in the reference period (2013-2020) was much lower (233% compared to -5% in the case of the consumption of any illicit drug by throughout life).¹⁴

According to a 2020 study surveying the drug use habits of students in Hungary and Romania: Among students who have tried drugs, 82.6% smoke in some form, namely¹⁵: 31.9% smoke occasionally, 23.2% smoke a few cigarettes/day and 27.5% smoke a maximum of one pack of cigarettes/day. At the same time, 98.5% of young people who have used drugs have already consumed alcohol: 4.3% of them tried only once, 78.3% consume alcoholic beverages occasionally, and 15.9% consume alcohol weekly. The results show that the proportion of people who tried drugs increased with age. 19.1% of 15-year-olds have already used some type of drug, but among 18-year-olds the proportion who have tried drugs rose to 44.8%. Among the students surveyed, 34.5% have already tried drugs, and 9% of them are currently using different drugs. To solve problems, 20% of students turn to cigarettes, smoking more when problems or troubles arise. 80.5% of students listen to music, thus trying to find a solution to problems. Among the students, 33.5% choose sports to reduce stress. Of the students surveyed, 32% can discuss problems with their parents, and 49% of students discuss problems with friends. The results regarding smoking, alcohol or drug consumption show that among the students surveyed, 57% consider it acceptable to smoke occasionally, and 50.5% consider it acceptable to consume 1-2 alcoholic drinks/week, 38.5% of the students also accept trying marijuana. However, the regular use of marijuana and the consumption of other illicit drugs is strongly rejected by most students. Significant differences can be observed between Romanian and Hungarian students, as Hungarian students accept more legal and illegal drug use than Romanian students. Young people report that after drinking alcoholic beverages they can relax, are happier and more fun, feel braver and more relaxed, and feel that they can forget their problems in this way. However, excessive drinking in adolescence requires

¹⁴ Strategia națională în domeniul drogurilor 2022 – 2026. Descarcă: 06.02.2023, <http://ana.gov.ro/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Monitorul-Oficial-Partea-I-Strategie-2022-2026.pdf>

¹⁵ Fundația Diaspora (2020) Obiceiurile privind consumul de droguri ale elevilor din Ungaria și România

special attention, as it can increase the likelihood of alcohol or drug addiction. Smoking, drinking and drug use are prevalent among adolescents, and these health risk behaviors occur at an increasingly early age, and the proportion of those who try drugs increases with age.

In addition to the dangers of illegal drugs, we must also draw students' attention to the harmful health effects of legal drugs.

2.1.3. Admission to treatment

Knowing the number and characteristics of people who have benefited from drug addiction treatment provides particularly useful information about the situation and trends in drug use and provides predictive models, necessary both in the planning of assistance services and in the development of intervention measures. For this purpose, at the European level, the indicator "Admission to treatment as a result of drug use" was developed, which ensures the collection of relevant data regarding the beneficiaries of the integrated assistance system specific to drug addiction.

According to its duties, the National Anti-Drug Agency ensures the monitoring of this collection tool, by implementing Protocol 3.0 on the collection and transmission of data related to admission to treatment as a result of drug use, developed by the EMCDDA. Data collection is standardized, through a data sheet. When analyzing the cases registered in a calendar year, the first episode of treatment in the reference year is retained for each unique case. During the implementation period of the SNA 2013-2020¹⁶, 231,774 beneficiaries were registered in the database related to the "Admission to treatment as a result of drug use" indicator. The upward trend in the demand for treatment for drug problems, which started in 2014, reached a maximum in 2019, both for the total number of requests (42835) and for the number of beneficiaries admitted for the first time to drug addiction treatment drugs (31026). Moreover, the evolution of the total number of admissions is in direct correlation with that of the number of new admissions for treatment.

Regarding requests for treatment as a result of drug use, similar to the previous year, when a significant decrease in the number of drug users requesting assistance was observed, this downward trend is reinforced, registering 3,097 drug users who requested assistance, which means 10% less than the previous year, mainly for the use of cannabis, opioids and new psychoactive substances. As in previous years, requests for assistance for problems caused by cannabis use account for over 50% of treatment requests. In terms of drug-related deaths, there were 30 drug-related deaths, of which 25 were overdose deaths. The number of drug-related deaths continues to decline. The average age of death still remains above 30 years. Regarding medical emergencies caused by drug use, 1,742 cases of medical emergencies were registered, in which the use of at least one illicit drug was reported (single use or in combination). Cannabis and new psychoactive

¹⁶ Raport Național privind situația drogurilor în România 2020. Descarcă: 21.04.2023, http://ana.gov.ro/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/RN_2020_final.pdf

substances are reported, in similar percentages (27.5% for cannabis and 26.8% for NSP), in more than half of the emergency cases for which the exclusive use of illicit drugs was reported (Teodorescu, 2023).

The trends recorded during the implementation period of the National Anti-Drug Strategy 2013-2020¹⁷ were influenced by the effects determined by the implementation of legislative changes, by the availability of places for opioid substitution treatment, as well as by the maintenance of interest in the consumption of new psychoactive substances. The biggest impact on the evolution of the indicator was determined, starting in 2014, by the application of the provisions of Law no. 143/2000 on the prevention and combating of illicit drug trafficking and consumption, republished, with subsequent amendments and additions, in the context of the entry into force of the new Penal Code. Law enforcement institutions being the main source of reference for drug users admitted to treatment, the effects of the legislative measure were reflected both in the dynamics of admissions to treatment as a result of drug use, and in the general "picture" of drugs for which specialized assistance was requested. Thus, the fact that among the people referred by the courts/prosecutors to the Anti-Drug Prevention, Evaluation and Counseling Centers to carry out the evaluation for the purpose of inclusion in the integrated assistance circuit, cannabis users predominate, determined important "mutations" in the configuration of drugs for which integrated assistance is requested as a result of drug use. These were reflected, in particular, in the ambulatory assistance system and for the category of patients admitted for the first time for treatment.

Depending on the type of drug that caused the medical problem, approximately the same distribution of requests for assistance was maintained, mainly disputed between the three types of substances that dominate the picture of assistance for drug addiction in Romania (cannabis, opioids and new psychoactive substances), in in 2019, there was a consolidation of the position held by cannabis, which ends up totaling over 50% of treatment requests.

The number of beneficiaries receiving opioid substitution treatment reached a maximum in 2019 (1905 cases⁷). After the significant increase, registered in 2014 (by 52.9%) and explained by the return of heroin users to the old consumption pattern, after experimenting with new psychoactive substances, the demand for opioid substitution treatment showed relatively low dynamics in the chain, but which outlines an upward trend for the last implementation period of the SNA 2013-2020¹⁸. Analyzing this evolution in parallel with that of the demand for treatment for opioid consumption and noting that almost two-thirds of the people in opioid substitution treatment have benefited from such treatments in the past, the increase can be explained by the maintenance of users in this type of treatment for very long periods of time. This is a success, if we consider the conclusions of the EMCDDA Technical Report, according to which short-term opioid substitution treatment will provide a smaller protective effect than long-term treatment.

¹⁷ Strategia Națională Antidrog 2013 – 2020. Descarcă: 22.06.2023, <https://www.mai.gov.ro/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Anexa-1-Strategia-nationala-antidrog-2013-2020.pdf>

¹⁸ Strategia Națională Antidrog 2013 – 2020. Descarcă: 22.06.2023, <https://www.mai.gov.ro/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Anexa-1-Strategia-nationala-antidrog-2013-2020.pdf>

Comparing the evolution of the "Admission to treatment as a result of drug use" indicator, during the implementation periods of the two public policy documents, the growth rate of the number of beneficiaries who requested assistance for problems due to drug use was 31.3 % (144189 beneficiaries registered in the period 2005-2012, respectively 2317710 beneficiaries registered in the period 2013-2020) for the total number of cases and 53.5% for the number of new cases (785211 beneficiaries admitted for the first time for treatment in the period 2005-2012, respectively 1515812 in the period 2013-2020). Also, depending on the drug consumed, if in the period 2005-2012 the case file was dominated by opioids (with a weight of 57.4% of the total admissions to treatment), during the implementation period of the SNA 2013-2020, the requests addressed to the services of treatment have diversified, being distributed between cannabis, new psychoactive substances and opioids, the latter registering a weight of 32.5%.¹⁹

2.1.4. Infectious diseases associated with drug use

The low level of availability of substitution treatment for opiate addiction and the decrease in the number of sterile equipment distributed through syringe exchange programs, as well as the trends recorded in the pattern of drug consumption, identified in the last period of implementation of the National Anti-Drug Strategy 2005-2012, contributed to increase the rate of HIV transmission. The outbreak of HIV infection among people who inject drugs in Romania, notified at the European level by the National Anti-Drug Agency at the end of 2011, based on the data provided by the Department for Monitoring and Evaluation of HIV/AIDS within the National Commission for the Fight against AIDS, reached a maximum in 2013 (318 cases). The measures taken by the state authorities together with relevant non-governmental organizations led, starting in 2014, to the continuous decrease in HIV/AIDS notifications registered among people who inject drugs, reaching, in 2019, approximately a quarter of the peak value of incidence recorded in 2013 (87 cases).²⁰

Similar trends were also observed in the case of the prevalence of HIV infection, respectively with hepatitis B and C viruses, recorded among people who inject drugs and who requested specialized treatment services (self-declared serological status at admission). The peaks of the prevalence of HIV infection (49.2%), respectively with the hepatitis B virus (27.7%) were recorded in 2013, and that of the prevalence of the hepatitis C virus (74.2%) in 2012. In during the 2013-2020 SNA application period, the three prevalences registered decreases, the lowest values being observed at the end of the first interval of its implementation, respectively 2013-2016 (4.4% for hepatitis B virus, 34.3% for hepatitis virus C and 11.6% for HIV). Regarding the syringe exchange programs addressed to people who inject drugs, the decrease in the number of beneficiaries (from 5,148 in 2013 to 2,944 in 2018) is noticeable, in line with the decrease in the number of syringes distributed

¹⁹ Strategia națională în domeniul drogurilor 2022 – 2026. Descarcă: 06.02.2023, <http://ana.gov.ro/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Monitorul-Oficial-Partea-I-Strategie-2022-2026.pdf>

²⁰ Raport Național privind situația drogurilor în România 2020. Descarcă: 21.04.2023, http://ana.gov.ro/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/RN_2020_final.pdf

(from 2,052,770 syringes in 2013, to 1181768 syringes in 2019, the lowest value being registered in 2018, when 896397 syringes were distributed). This decrease is a consequence of the limited availability of these types of risk reduction programs.²¹

Systematic monitoring, using scientifically validated tools, of the dynamics of HIV and viral hepatitis infection of the sub-population of injecting drug users, the category most exposed to contracting such diseases, is one of the important directions of action, provided for in the national programmatic documents regarding public policies in the field of drugs. The data sources used to evaluate the situation of infectious diseases under supervision, in 2021²², according to the methodological provisions of the key epidemiological indicator "Infectious diseases associated with drug use", were:

- a. the database regarding the indicator "Admission to treatment as a result of drug use" -TDI (uses self-declared information by beneficiaries about their own serological status, as well as data on tests and their results, performed during treatment)
- b. routine monitoring of syringe exchange programs (database created by the National Antidrug Agency since 2012)
- c. the notifications, communicated by the competent institutions of the Ministry of Health, respectively the Department for Monitoring and Evaluation of HIV/AIDS Infection in Romania – the National Institute of Infectious Diseases

2.1.5. Deaths associated with drug use

In the reference period of the National Anti-Drug Strategy 2013-2020, there is an increase in the number of people who died, directly or indirectly, as a result of drug use, from 30 cases in 2013 to 58 cases in 2019. This the last figure has an impact on the increase in the average number of cases registered during the 2005-2013 SNA implementation period, compared to that registered during the 2013-2020 SNA implementation period, from 25.5 to 31.1. The increase is determined by the evolution of methadone poisoning in cases of deaths associated with drug consumption, their number doubling from one period to another. The average age of death also increased, from 25.8 in the 2005-2012 period to 32.4 in the 2013-2020 SNA application period.²³

²¹ Strategia națională în domeniul drogurilor 2022 – 2026. Descarcă: 06.02.2023, <http://ana.gov.ro/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Monitorul-Oficial-Partea-I-Strategie-2022-2026.pdf>

²² Raport Național privind situația drogurilor în România 2022. Descarcă: 23.06.2023, http://ana.gov.ro/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/RN_2022.pdf

²³ Strategia națională în domeniul drogurilor 2022 – 2026. Descarcă: 06.02.2023, <http://ana.gov.ro/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Monitorul-Oficial-Partea-I-Strategie-2022-2026.pdf>

2.1.6. Estimating opiate use in the general population

In the period 2013-2020, the estimation of the problematic consumption of opiates at the national level was carried out. In 2017, there was a rate of problematic opioid users per 1000 inhabitants in Romania of 1.6 (95% CI: 0.8 – 2.9). The majority of problematic opioid users present in the three bases analyzed is represented by men (81%), young people, aged between 25-34 years (47.1%), heroin being the main drug of consumption (95.6%).²⁴

The consumption of opiates, mainly heroin by injection, continues to be observed, especially among consumers in Bucharest. According to the data provided by the studies carried out by the National Anti-Drug Agency, at the level of the general population, the evolution of opiate consumption throughout life (at least once in a lifetime) indicates a relative stagnation of this type of consumption in the period 2003-2013, followed by its successive increases, by 75% in 2016, compared to 2013, respectively by 29% in 2019, compared to 2016. At the level of the general population, a lifetime heroin consumption of 0.9% is recorded, while what, consumption in the last year is 0.3%. The lowest age of onset declared was 15 years, and the average age of onset is 23.2 years. Almost half of the respondents (51%) started this type of consumption at a very young age (under 19 years old), while 47.3% of those surveyed stated that they started using heroin between the ages of 20-24.²⁵

2.1.7. Drug use in prison

During the implementation of the SNA 2013-2020, the share of persons deprived of their liberty in detention facilities who declared drug use at the time of submission to the penitentiary increased from 5.5% at the end of 2013 to 12.8% at the end of the year 2019. For the entire analyzed period, heroin, cannabis and new psychoactive substances represent the main drugs declared as consumed, upon submission to the penitentiary. People deprived of their liberty who consume drugs can benefit from the same type of services available in the community, the assistance services being provided both by the specialized staff of the National Penitentiary Administration and by the specialists of the Anti-Drug Prevention, Evaluation and Counseling Centers of National Anti-Drug Agency. According to the data resulting from the routine monitoring of the indicator Admission to treatment as a result of drug use, 1611 drug users in prison received assistance services during the implementation period of the 2013-2020 SNA, the annual average of the number of beneficiaries being 230, while, during the implementation period of the SNA 2005-2012, 307 drug-using inmates requested such services, during this time period the annual average of their number was 61. Regarding the type of drug consumed, for the analyzed period (SNA 2013-2020), the same

²⁴ Raport Național privind situația drogurilor în România 2019. Descarcă: 08.05.2023, http://ana.gov.ro/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/RN_2019_28.11.pdf

²⁵ Raport Național privind situația drogurilor în România 2022. Descarcă: 23.06.2023, http://ana.gov.ro/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/RN_2022.pdf

trends as in the community were identified and, in correlation with the drug consumption self-declared when submitting to the penitentiary, the request for treatment was mainly determined by the consumption of opiates, which was followed by of cannabis use and of new psychoactive substances. Taking into account the development of the opioid substitution treatment service, the number of beneficiaries of the methadone abstinence maintenance program, granted in a custodial regime, increased 5 times during the implementation period of the SNA 2013-2020, respectively from 16 beneficiaries, in 2013, to 140 beneficiaries in 2019, the annual average of the number of beneficiaries being 54. Comparatively, during the implementation period of SNA 2005-2012, the largest number of beneficiaries of this type of service was registered in 2009, respectively 27, and the annual average of the number of beneficiaries was 14.8.²⁶

At the end of 2021, the number of people in detention for crimes under Law no. 143/2000, registered an increase of 5.8% compared to 2020. Thus, on December 31, 2021, in the detention units of the National Penitentiary Administration, there were 876 persons definitively convicted of drug offenses, compared to 828 persons registered in 2020. In the reference year, 284 persons serving sentences for crimes committed under Law no. 143/2000, compared to the previous year when 313 people were released on parole. Also, 45 persons definitively convicted for committing crimes provided for in Law no. 143/2000 in 2021, compared to 30 persons released on time in 2020. The number of persons definitively convicted, in detention on December 31, 2021, for the commission of crimes provided for by Law no. 194/2011 on combating operations with products likely to have psychoactive effects, other than those provided for by the normative acts in force (NSP), registered a decrease, from 80 people in 2020, to 76 in the reference year. During the reference year, 42 persons serving sentences for crimes under Law no. 194/2011 (compared to 38 persons in 2020) and 20 persons definitively convicted for committing crimes provided for by the same law were set free, on time (compared to 23 in 2020).²⁷

2.1.8. The drug market

In recent years, globalization has led to the development of criminal groups responsible for the expansion of the phenomenon of drug trafficking at the European level and has also created numerous opportunities on our national territory for the intensification of illicit drug trading activities and, implicitly, for the development of strong cross-border criminal links. Thus, the illicit drug market in Romania experienced a continuous dynamic, with an increase in the availability of most types of drugs, materialized both by the significant increase in the total amount of confiscated drugs (especially cocaine and cannabis), and the total number of catches made. The decrease in the price of cocaine, both the wholesale price and the retail price, simultaneously with the increase in purity, are aspects that constitute indications of an increasing availability of this drug on the

²⁶ Strategia națională în domeniul drogurilor 2022 – 2026. Descarcă: 06.02.2023, <http://ana.gov.ro/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Monitorul-Oficial-Partea-I-Strategie-2022-2026.pdf>

²⁷ Raport Național privind situația drogurilor în România 2022. Descarcă: 23.06.2023, http://ana.gov.ro/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/RN_2022.pdf

illicit drug market in Romania, with 2019 registering a significant increase in both the total quantity confiscated (1,615.69 kg compared to 34.61 kg in 2018), as well as the number of catches (534 catches compared to 361 in 2018). At the same time, cannabis remains the most seized drug at national level, with an alarming increase in its availability on the drug market in Romania, reflected both in the consecutive, significant increase, starting from 2016, in the number of seizures made, as well as in the increase the number of illicit cultures identified, with the highest values recorded in 2018 (137 cultures), respectively 2019 and 2016 (with 83 cultures each) aspects that highlight a concern and increased interest on the part of organized crime groups for the development of activities organized illegal activities regarding the cultivation and trafficking of this drug.²⁸

In 2019, the increase in the number of drug seizures, as well as the quantities seized, outlines an illicit market in continuous dynamic, characterized by a high availability for almost all types of drugs, especially for cannabis resin, cocaine and amphetamine, these drugs registering significant increases compared to 2018 in both the number of catches and the quantities seized. Significant increases were also recorded for the number of seizures of MDMA (over 21%), and in terms of seized quantities, increases were recorded for opium, heroin (over 29 times) and cannabis (over 4.5 times).²⁹

The analysis of the last 4 years maintains the fluctuating trend of the evolution of the amount seized per type of drug, with 2019 registering significant increases, with maximum values for all types of drugs, except for the amount of cannabis resin whose maximum value was recorded in 2016. The same fluctuating evolution is also maintained in the case of the analysis on the category of high-risk and high-risk drugs, with the mention that 2016 records the largest amount of seized cocaine (2,321.35 kg). And 2019 sees an increase in the amount of high-risk drugs seized (kg), with the second highest absolute value reached (1,786.07 kg). Regarding the weight of the two categories of drugs in the total amount seized (kg/pc), it reaches the highest percentage values in 2019 (kg – 50.02%, pc – 91.64%), after the maximum values reached in 2016 (kg – 47.10%, cp – 89.66%), this aspect being due to the quantities of heroin (138.39 kg), cocaine (1,615.69 kg) and MDMA (47,283 cp) seized in year 2019. Regarding the total quantities of drugs seized, in the form of tablets, the last 4 years show a fluctuating evolution, with the maximum percentage reached in 2018 for high-risk drugs and in 2019 for high-risk drugs, the trend being one also increasing for the year 2020. An increasing trend is also recorded for the number of seizures by drug type, with significant annual increases for cannabis and cocaine. Regarding the total value recorded in the reference period, the most seizures were recorded for cannabis grass and plant fragments (12,708), synthetic drugs (2,755), heroin (1,109) and cannabis resin (900). Analysis of the number of seizures in relation to the quantities seized by drug type continues to highlight cannabis as the predominant drug, both in total number of seizures and total quantity seized, with the exception of 2016 and 2019, which record the largest quantities of cocaine seized, with a continuously increasing trend of the availability of this type of drug on the domestic illicit market. Regarding

²⁸ Strategia națională în domeniul drogurilor 2022 – 2026. Descarcă: 06.02.2023, <http://ana.gov.ro/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Monitorul-Oficial-Partea-I-Strategie-2022-2026.pdf>

²⁹ Raport Național privind situația drogurilor în România 2020. Descarcă: 21.04.2023, http://ana.gov.ro/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/RN_2020_final.pdf

the significant seizures of drugs made in the last four years, their number registers a consecutive annual increase, with a maximum value reached in 2019 (259 seizures – 3.81% of the total seizures). In relation to the quantities (kg) confiscated, it is worth noting that, in the same period of analysis, they represented over 96% of the total quantity seized, except for 2018 when the percentage of 87.5% was recorded. And the significant seizures of drugs in the form of tablets represent over 63% of the total amount seized, with fluctuating evolution and peaks reached in 2018 (95.46%) and 2017 (81.74%). There is also an annual increase in the number of significant seizures that had Romania as the destination country of trafficked drugs, with over 50% of the number of significant seizures made, with 2017 recording the highest percentage values in terms of destination of drugs to Romania from the total of significant seizures made, both in terms of the number of seizures (72%), and in terms of the amount seized (kg – 84.88%). Regarding the significant quantities of confiscated tablets that had Romania as their destination country, they reach maximum percentage values in 2016 and 2019, with 93.43% and 70.82% of the total amount related to the significant seizures of confiscated tablets.³⁰

Compared to the statistical data on the quantities seized and the number of seizures made by type of drug, illicit drug trafficking at the national level in 2021 is marked by the effects of the lifting of the measures imposed by the authorities in 2020, following the same characteristics of the previous years, which are outlined in continue to be a national space intended for both the transit and the illicit distribution of drugs. Thus, the small quantities of drugs trafficked at the street level, intended for own consumption (small street traffic), remain the main characteristic of the dynamics of illicit traffic, with increases in the number of seizures for all trafficked drugs, except for those made for MDMA, cannabis resin and cactus (mescaline), which records declines. 74.86% of the total number of seizures represent seizures of less than 5 g (0.06% of the total amount), 250 tablets (20.08% of the total amount) or 5 ml (0.06% of the total amount). (0.13% of the total amount of drugs seized). The statistical data of the last years outline an increasing trend in the number of seizures and the quantities of confiscated drugs destined for Romania, with a significant increase in the availability of cocaine and heroin on the illicit drug market. Cannabis continues to be the most seized drug at the national level and is registering a significant increase in the amount of seized plant masses and plant fragments with THC, after the year 2020 saw the largest amount of seized cannabis resin (1,385,084 g). At the same time, there is a decrease in the total number of illicit crops, with values below those recorded in previous years, an aspect which, correlated with the percentage value of the amount of confiscated cannabis that came from Romania (only 36.15% of the amount of cannabis confiscated), highlights the existence on the domestic market of cannabis originating from international traffic, with the most seizures and confiscated quantities highlighting Spain as the country of origin (source/departure).³¹

³⁰ Strategia națională în domeniul drogurilor 2022 – 2026. Descarcă: 06.02.2023, <http://ana.gov.ro/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Monitorul-Oficial-Partea-I-Strategie-2022-2026.pdf>

³¹ Raport Național privind situația drogurilor în România 2022. Descarcă: 23.06.2023, http://ana.gov.ro/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/RN_2022.pdf

All these aspects outline the image of a national territory that still remains a transit point for drug trafficking, as evidenced by the large quantities of drugs seized on the national territory, destined for countries both in the European space and in other areas, but being, at the same time, it is also a country of destination for most types of drugs. Romania, through the port of Constanța, remains an alternative route used by organized criminal networks for the introduction of cocaine into Europe, as well as a drug trading area, but street traffic is characterized by small quantities intended for self-consumption (small street traffic). In this context, the investigative measures carried out by the competent structures were focused on monitoring and documenting the activities of cross-border organized crime networks, which, in connection with domestic ones, created high-risk drug trafficking channels (cocaine, heroin, synthetic drugs, NSP), intended for the national and international consumer market. The results of the activities to reduce the supply of drugs obtained in the last 7 years highlighted an oscillating evolution of the values recorded for the indicators "identified criminal groups", "persons involved in these groups" and "persons convicted by the courts for committing crimes under the legal regime of drugs", an aspect that results from the dynamic and asymmetric nature of the phenomenon of drug trafficking that evolves and adapts rapidly to social, economic, legislative and even institutional changes.³²

2.2. Priorities, policies and legal framework³³

The new sustainable development model, established in the 2021-2024 Governance Program, published in the Official Gazette of Romania no. 1284 of December 23, 2020, establishes the vision and general objectives for each ministry, thus constituting the general framework for sectoral policies and interventions. By implementing the strategic objectives established by the Government of Romania through the Governance Program, Romania will benefit from a system capable of providing safety to the individual and the community, to impose order and respect for the law. Through the Implementation Plan of the MAI's commitments from the Government Program for the period 2020-2024, the desire to create a system of public order and safety adapted to future security challenges aims at the adoption of a new National Strategy that confers precise mechanisms and responsibilities and whose implementation to contribute to ensuring a high degree of safety for individuals and communities, including by strengthening crime prevention mechanisms. The established priorities will be correlated with national and international ones related to the prevention and combating of serious, organized and cross-border crime. The objectives and priorities of the ministries established in the Government Program provide the broad framework necessary for the definition of sectoral policies whose correlation and intersection, in the context of this strategy, are necessary to promote health, social stability and security, as well

³² Strategia națională în domeniul drogurilor 2022 – 2026. Descarcă: 06.02.2023, <http://ana.gov.ro/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Monitorul-Oficial-Partea-I-Strategie-2022-2026.pdf>

³³ Strategia națională în domeniul drogurilor 2022 – 2026. Descarcă: 06.02.2023, <http://ana.gov.ro/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Monitorul-Oficial-Partea-I-Strategie-2022-2026.pdf>

as to increase the degree of awareness, in accordance with assumed objectives and at the European level.

The previous process, which had as its objective the harmonization of national legislation with that of the European Union and the adaptation of the structures and mechanisms of the national public administration in accordance with the European ones, continued in recent years especially with regard to the consolidation of the legal framework, currently having national regulations in accordance with European and international standards. Relevant are the amendments brought to the Decision - Framework 2004/757/JAI of the Council of 25 October 2004 establishing the minimum provisions regarding the constitutive elements of the crimes and applicable sanctions in the field of illicit drug trafficking and subsequent European legislative measures, implemented or in the process of being implemented by Romania through amendments to national legislation, imposed by the adoption of Directive (EU) 2017/2103 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 November 2017 amending Framework Decision 2004/757/JAI of the Council to include new psychoactive substances in the definition of the term " drug" and repealing Council Decision 2005/387/JAI.

Romania gradually adopted, together with other states and especially the Member States of the European Union, a set of legislative measures aimed at the construction and continuous strengthening of the national legal and institutional framework, in the context of the efficiency of international cooperation and for the purpose of preventing and combating drug trafficking and consumption drugs currently having national regulations in line with European and international standards.

The vision of the national drug strategy aims to correspond to the political framework and priorities of the EU drug policy in the period 2021-2025.

2.2.1. Principles - The strategic conception in the field of drugs for the period 2022-2026

The strategic conception in the field of drugs for the period 2022-2026 is governed by the following principles³⁴, the observance of which is essential and mandatory:

1. The principle of respect for fundamental human rights and freedoms – the activities carried out by state institutions, non-governmental organizations and other structures of civil society to achieve the objectives of this strategy are carried out in compliance with the provisions of international conventions and treaties regarding fundamental human rights and freedoms.
2. The principle of coordination and cooperation - institutions and organizations will cooperate in order to ensure a coherent, integrated and coordinated approach to the drug problem.

³⁴ Strategia națională în domeniul drogurilor 2022 – 2026. Descarcă: 06.02.2023, <http://ana.gov.ro/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Monitorul-Oficial-Partea-I-Strategie-2022-2026.pdf>

3. The principle of complementarity, transparency and social dialogue – implies the transparency of the decision-making process and the consultation of civil society, as well as its involvement in the implementation of strategic objectives.
4. The principle of legality - the activities to achieve the strategic objectives are carried out based on the legal provisions.
5. The principle of promoting partnership – creating partnerships aimed at achieving strategic objectives.
6. The principle of social responsibility – the responsibility for the response to the drug phenomenon belongs to the social entities involved within the limits of their attributions and sphere of action;
7. The principle of subsidiarity - consists in ensuring decision-making and implementation of actions at the level closest to the citizen and which has the necessary resources.
8. The principle of balance - the proportional approach to interventions in the field of drug demand and supply reduction.
9. The principle of equal treatment in the provision of public services – represents the elimination of any discrimination against beneficiaries of public services based, as the case may be, on criteria of ethnic or racial origin, religion, age, gender, sexual orientation, disability, as well as ensuring the application of certain rules, identical requirements and criteria for all authorities and bodies providing public services.

2.3. Action plans

2.3.1. Reducing drug demand³⁵

Drug demand reduction consists of a range of complementary actions, including prevention (contextual, universal, selective and indicated), detection and early intervention, counselling, treatment, rehabilitation, social reintegration and recovery. These interventions contribute to increasing the degree of resilience of citizens, communities and Romanian society as a whole, to the impact and negative consequences of the drug phenomenon.

The term resilience is understood here in a double key: as the inherent ability of individuals to withstand and react articulately and coherently to disruptive events or crises, as well as their ability to quickly return to a state of functional normality.

³⁵ Strategia națională în domeniul drogurilor 2022 – 2026. Descarcă: 06.02.2023, <http://ana.gov.ro/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Monitorul-Oficial-Partea-I-Strategie-2022-2026.pdf>

In the area of drug demand reduction, specific measures and interventions will be focused on the healthy and safe development of children and young people (among the populations most intensely affected by the drug phenomenon) and on the reduction of illicit drug use, in complementarity with sustainable measures of development of vulnerable communities. Priority will also be given to assistance measures for certain vulnerable groups – women drug users, people with a long history of drug use, communities with a high rate of HIV infection, hepatitis, TB and immigrants from countries with a high rate of infection HIV, marginalized or socially excluded drug users, ethnic groups, commercial sex users, men who have sex with men, child users. Drug demand reduction interventions aim to prevent use, delay the age of onset of use, reduce problem drug use, treat drug addiction, contribute to recovery and social reintegration through an integrated, multidisciplinary and evidence-based approach scientific and by promoting and ensuring coherence between health, social and justice policies. Drug use can generate health problems and harmful social effects on users and their families, but also on the community as a whole. Therefore, this strategic direction of action configures measures and policies that prevent or reduce possible health risks and negative consequences for users, society and prisons.

Compared to the general population, in the prison environment there is an increased likelihood for drug use and also for the practice of risky forms of use, such as injecting. The difficulties of coping with incarceration, the availability of drugs and especially the increase in the presence of new psychoactive substances exacerbate the problems inherent in drug use, but incarceration can also provide opportunities for treatment and rehabilitation.

Priority area: Prevention

- General objective 1: *Consolidation of the national prevention system that includes all prevention programs, projects and interventions (contextual, universal, selective and indicated) addressed to the general population, schools and vulnerable groups, based on scientific records.*

Specific objectives:

1.1. Development of contextual and universal prevention interventions and strategies for the general population.

1.2. Developing interventions and strategies to delay the age of onset of drug use among at-risk age groups and vulnerable groups.

1.3. Facilitating access to early intervention measures for categories of people at the beginning of use, in order to avoid the transformation of experimental/occasional drug use into regular use.

1.4. Strengthening the partnership with civil society.

Priority area: Integrated support

Priority area: Reducing the risks associated with drug use

- General objective 2: *Development, based on scientific evidence, of services and interventions within the national system of medical, psychological and social assistance aimed at reducing the negative effects associated with drug use.*

Specific objectives:

- 2.1. Improving the access of injecting drug users to prevention, counseling, treatment, testing and vaccination services for HIV, HVB, HVC, TB and other related diseases.
- 2.2. Preventing drug overdoses and deaths.
- 2.3. Strengthening the partnership with civil society.

Priority area: Specialized assistance

- General objective 3: *Consolidation and development, based on scientific evidence, of specialized medical, psychological and social reintegration interventions and services.*

Specific objectives:

- 3.1. Facilitating the access of people who use drugs to integrated medical, psychological and social assistance services, in accordance with their needs and particularities.
- 3.2. Building resilience and reducing stigma for people who use drugs.
- 3.3. Facilitating the access of women and vulnerable groups (homeless people, drug users with mental comorbidities, people with a history of long-term use or polyuse) to integrated assistance services, depending on their particularities.
- 3.4. The application of treatment measures alternative to coercive sanctions in accordance with the principles of therapeutic justice for people who use drugs.

- General objective 4: *Develop an integrated approach to drug use in prison systems.*

Specific objectives:

- 4.1. Ensuring the continuity of assistance services for people who consume drugs and who are serving a custodial sentence, both during detention and pre-trial detention, as well as after release, with the ultimate goal of social reintegration.
- 4.2. Preventing drug use and associated risks and consequences in custodial systems.
- 4.3. Prevention of overdoses among people who use drugs or are in substitution treatment, both during detention and preventive detention, detention, and after release.

2.3.2. Reducing the supply of drugs³⁶

The measures and interventions proposed under this strategic line of action will contribute to disrupting the traditional and online markets for illicit drugs, dismantling organized criminal groups involved in drug trafficking and production, ensuring compliance with the law, reducing violence associated with illicit drug markets and intensifying trade of operational data and information between responsible stakeholders. Regarding drug precursors, the established coordination mechanism aims to ensure the application of the European legislative system, the compatibility of the national normative and technical systems with the requirements established unitarily at the European level to ensure the response to the issue of their diversion from licit circuits.

- General objective 5: *Consolidation of interventions to counter organized crime groups that operate in Romania or groups of Romanian origins that target EU member states. that are involved in drug trafficking and have links to other threats to national security.*

Specific objectives:

5.1. The destruction of organized crime groups active on the territory of Romania, especially those with a transnational component and which can:

- encourage collaboration between different organized crime groups;
- commit acts of corruption;
- represented a threat to national security.

5.2. Intensification of the application of mechanisms for identification and sequestration of assets and values resulting from the commission of crimes under the drugs and precursors regime.

- General objective 6: *Strengthening the detection capacity of large amounts of drugs, precursors and pre-precursors trafficked on the territory of Romania.*

Specific objectives:

6.1. Intensification of the use of effective technologies in the identification and investigation of organized crime groups involved in drug trafficking in and through Romania, as well as in EU countries. or non-EU, using established commercial traffic routes (legal channels).

6.2. Increasing the detection capacity of large quantities of drugs at the level of law enforcement structures with direct attributions in combating drug trafficking.

³⁶ Strategia națională în domeniul drogurilor 2022 – 2026. Descarcă: 06.02.2023, <http://ana.gov.ro/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Monitorul-Oficial-Partea-I-Strategie-2022-2026.pdf>

- General objective 7: *Strengthening the control mechanism of the licit circuit of precursors and drugs with narcotic content and combating their diversion, as well as preventing and combating the production of drugs and the illicit cultivation of plants with narcotic content.*

Specific objectives:

7.1. Preventing and combating the diversion and trafficking of drug precursors and pre-precursors and identifying clandestine drug laboratories.

7.2. Development of mechanisms for monitoring and controlling the legal circuit of drugs with psychotropic and narcotic content.

7.3. Increasing the capacity to prevent and combat the illicit cultivation of cannabis in Romania.

- General objective 8: *Intensify effective monitoring of legal digital and logistical channels used for medium and low volume drug distribution and increase seizures of illicit substances through these channels, in close cooperation with the private sector.*

Specific objectives:

8.1. Increasing the capacity to identify drug markets in the virtual environment and drug suppliers on the Romanian market.

8.2. Intensification and diversification of methods of detection of drugs and drug precursors subject to trafficking through the use of postal and courier services.

2.3.3. Strengthening operational response capacity - International cooperation, research, assessment, information and coordination³⁷

- General objective 9: *International cooperation – Consolidation of Romania's commitment, assumed through the international documents and through the bilateral or multilateral ones to which our country is a party and the position of an active partner in the global effort to reduce the demand and supply of drugs as well as diversion and precursor traffic.*

Considering the global character of the drug phenomenon, it is necessary to interconnect the internal and external dimensions of Romania's drug policy, which implies the integration of the national strategy and its objectives within Romania's general foreign policy, as part of a comprehensive approach that uses the full range of available diplomatic, political and financial policies and instruments in a coherent and coordinated manner.

International cooperation, as provided in the strategy, contributes to accelerating the implementation of the commitments assumed by Romania, in the field of drugs, at the international

³⁷ Strategia națională în domeniul drogurilor 2022 – 2026. Descarcă: 06.02.2023, <http://ana.gov.ro/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Monitorul-Oficial-Partea-I-Strategie-2022-2026.pdf>

level, respecting the principles of shared responsibility, multilateralism, promoting a development-oriented approach, respecting human rights and dignity human rights, the rule of law and compliance with the provisions of international drug conventions.

Within this component, Romania aims to contribute to the adoption of common EU positions and to the creation of synergies, aimed at defining the international and multilateral agenda regarding drug policy.

Also, our country will continue to actively engage and contribute to dialogues with countries or regions outside the EU, aimed at facilitating the exchange of information on relevant strategies, goals and initiatives.

During the reference period, Romania will continue taking steps to provide technical assistance, within the framework of the implementation of cooperation programs with countries or regions outside the EU and with other partners or the implementation of institutional twinning programs in the field of drugs, financed at the level of the Commission European. Thus, beyond the perspectives of some institutional twinning projects in which the National Anti-Drug Agency can get involved in the future, the new multiannual financial framework of the EU, as well as the incentive package financed from the EU budget. within the Next Generation EU policy, the EU could offer Romania the opportunity to create new links and develop initiatives in the field of drugs.

In the context of international cooperation activities, Romania will consider protecting and promoting compliance with international human rights standards and obligations within global drug policies.

In addition to the specific objectives established in this strategy, the international cooperation component will also take into account the observance of the objectives and directions of action established at governmental level within the framework of cooperation with external partners in the field of international relations and European affairs.

At the EU regional level, we continue to ensure an active role in the decision-making process, for the fulfillment of the objectives arising from the status of a member state, contributing to the European dialogue in the field, within the following European forums and structures: The Horizontal Working Group on Drugs (HDG) of the Council of the European Union, the Dublin Group, as well as the activities carried out at the level of the European Observatory for Drugs and Drug Addictions (EMCDDA). At the same time, the steps for Romania's participation in the activities of the Pompidou Group of the Council of Europe will be continued.

Strategic cooperation with international organizations, in particular with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the main entity within the UN system responsible for addressing and combating the global drug problem, is vital.

At the same time, Romania's participation in UN policy-making processes is equally important, within the scope of the activities of the United Nations Commission on Narcotic Drugs (NCD), the main body responsible for drug control and the definition/revision of global policies in the

matter, as well as within the activities of other UN forums, focused on issues related to health, respect for human rights and sustainable development.

The UN represents the international forum within which the drug conventions to which Romania is a party were negotiated and adopted, namely, the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs of 1961, as amended by the 1972 protocol, the 1971 United Nations Convention on Psychotropic Substances and the 1988 Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances, which is the cornerstone of the international drug control system. The most representative institutions in the UN structure involved in combating illicit trafficking and preventing drug consumption are: the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) and the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB).

Specific objectives:

9.1. Ensuring an active presence within the European coordination and cooperation mechanisms in the field of drugs, both on the component of drug supply reduction and drug demand reduction, as well as in the field of coordination, international cooperation, research, monitoring and evaluation, in order to fulfill the obligations arising from Romania's capacity as a member state and involvement in the decision-making process at the EU level.

9.2. Consolidation and development of Romania's role within the international forums involved in defining world drug policy, in order to coordinate global actions and efforts to prevent consumption and combat illicit drug trafficking, as well as the development of cooperation and continued involvement in projects/initiatives common in the field of drugs, carried out in a bilateral or multilateral framework.

- General objective 10: *Research, evaluation, information – Development and consolidation of an integrated and flexible data collection system on the drug phenomenon, in order to use the latest information in the decision-making process and to formulate and apply responses in the field of public health and citizen security.*

Independent, science-based information is the essential resource in understanding drug problems and developing appropriate responses. Data underpins decisions by providing a framework for an integrated approach, from adapting legislation, action plans to identifying best practices and new areas of research. In order to maximize the benefits of the scientific evidence, greater attention is needed in understanding the link between drug policy objectives and the factors involved in drug use.

Although Romania already has a number of data sources, through which valid information is obtained, an integrated and flexible system is needed, which can adapt to the dynamic and changing reality of the drug market and the consumption of psychoactive substances and the emergence to new dependencies determined by factors such as new technologies.

Specific objectives:

10.1. Develop and implement epidemiological surveillance tools to obtain and analyze the latest data on patterns and trends in drug use.

10.2. Promoting ANA's role as a center of excellence in providing data and information related to drugs and precursors in Romania.

10.3. Development of the early warning system (EWS).

- General objective 11: *Coordination - Ensuring a unitary framework of action in the field of drugs and precursors, monitoring the implementation of national policies in the field of drugs, efficient use of resources and maximizing the results of interventions.*

The efficiency of applying coherent policies to respond to the drug phenomenon and tracking the trends of this phenomenon can only be ensured through the real collaboration of all the social actors involved.

Coordination is the basic principle of the effectiveness of the national strategy in the field of drugs, it involves the synchronization of all activities towards a common strategic objective, assumed by all governmental and non-governmental structures involved, the approach being inter-governmental, inter-institutional and inter-sectoral, between local, regional, national and international levels. Coordination is carried out horizontally, between different ministries and administrations at the national level, and vertically, from the governmental level to the regional and local levels.

The established coordination mechanisms will intensify the cooperation between the drug supply and demand reduction sectors, will ensure the complementarity of efforts made in partnership by public authorities and civil society, will facilitate the rational and efficient use of all existing resources, will ensure the avoidance of contradictions, overlaps or unintended consequences of specific interventions.

The coordination of the optimal implementation of the strategy and the action plan is ensured by the National Anti-Drug Agency, a specialized institution within the Ministry of Internal Affairs, authorized by law to coordinate the response to the drug phenomenon at the national level.

In order to support the participatory decision-making process, the Consultative Council will be established, an inter-disciplinary body formed by designated representatives of public institutions and civil society responsible for the implementation of the national strategy in the field of drugs at an inter-sectoral level.

Specific objectives:

11.1. Optimizing the coordination platform and inter-sectoral cooperation in the field of drugs, decision support in ensuring the role of the National Anti-Drug Agency as the main coordinating body regarding the national drug policy.

11.2. Developing and strengthening the response capacity of national structures specialized in drug demand and supply reduction.

2.4. Criticism related to drug policy

Achieving long-term goals requires a balanced, comprehensive, integrated approach and based on the spirit of cooperation between institutions and organizations active in the segments of drug demand and supply reduction.

The institutional response to the dynamic phenomenon of drugs cannot be limited to a single institution or organization, but must be the result of constant and effective inter-institutional cooperation.

The coordination mechanism continues to represent the central element in ensuring the synergy, coherence and unity of the response to the drug phenomenon, starting from the premises of ensuring an efficient exchange of information and data, respectively the efficient use of resources.

In this context, the degree of fulfillment of the strategic objectives was influenced by³⁸:

1. The previous planning framework, which was informed by data and analysis scientific, assumed a certain constancy both in the evolution of the specific factors related to the phenomenon and in terms of the contextual factors of the external environment (financial, administrative organizational), an aspect that did not prove to be fully founded/realistic.
2. A series of unpredictable events (the HIV outbreak among injecting drug users and the COVID-19 pandemic) caused significant changes in the approach and implementation of some of the planned interventions and had an impact on the initial allocation strategy and the availability of resources human, financial and logistical necessary.
3. The restrictive legislative framework has determined that the application of the provided financing mechanisms is deficient.

The current strategic planning framework takes into account the fact that there are a number of economic vulnerabilities³⁹ identified at the national level - lack of specialized human resources, deprofessionalization, underfunding and persistent dysfunctions in the organization of public service systems (health, education, social assistance), accentuated by the COVID 19 pandemic, with an impact on the effectiveness and sustainability of measures to protect citizens and vulnerable communities, as well as specialized services for the prevention and assistance of drug users.

³⁸ Strategia națională în domeniul drogurilor 2022 – 2026. Descarcă: 06.02.2023, <http://ana.gov.ro/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Monitorul-Oficial-Partea-I-Strategie-2022-2026.pdf>

³⁹ Strategia Națională de Apărare a Țării pentru perioadă 2020-2024. Descarcă: 23.06.2023 https://www.presidency.ro/files/userfiles/Documente/Strategia_Nationala_de_Aparare_a_Tarii_2020_2024.pdf

The systemic vulnerabilities reported are also amplified by the persistence of individual, family and social risk factors⁴⁰ in drug use, which have an impact both on the personal response capacity and on the public authorities with responsibilities in the implementation of policies in the field. Vulnerabilities in the legislative and organizational framework (in particular with regard to the drug data collection system, the integrated assistance system for drug users, the financing and coordination mechanism, the monitoring system for drug precursor operations) continue to impact on the analyzed phenomenon.

The analysis of the external environment reveals a series of threats and trends of the drug phenomenon at the global, European and regional⁴¹ level that can influence in the medium term the evolution of the drug problem in Romania.

The phenomenon is accentuated under the conditions of the existence of growing global threats and trailing vulnerabilities, which shape an unpredictable environment that affects national response capacities.

Additional comments:

Unfortunately, the Romanian state only offers treatment and counseling only for those who are already in the system, but after that the addicts are practically left alone. The treatment is unfortunately available in few places in the country.

Until now, in Romania there is no integrated state center where addicts can benefit from professional care.

There is no national strategy for training professionals who help people with addiction.

The national strategy follows the expectations of the EU strategy, but in many cases awareness and prevention campaigns are exhausted by distributing leaflets at festivals.

2.5. Good practices

2.5.1. National and regional outlook

As with any other disease, to eliminate addictions, prevention of their development is as important, in the long term, as therapeutic treatments. In this sense, at the request of educational institutions, churches or other organizations, some institutions organize seminars, workshops and camps with a preventive purpose for children.

⁴⁰ Studiul în școli privind consumul de alcool, tutun și droguri ilicite în România - ESPAD 2019. Descarcă: 23.06.2023 http://ana.gov.ro/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/ESPAD-2019_3.pdf

⁴¹ EU Drug Markets Report 2019. Descarcă: 23.06.2023 https://www.emcdda.europa.eu/publications/joint-publications/eu-drug-markets-report-2019_en

There are also therapy options. The goal of therapy is to provide long-term help to addicts and their families. The basic tools in this regard are short and long-term therapeutic programs. Therapy can be supplemented by attending a local support group and attending personal counseling.

The long-term support of the participants in the therapeutic programs is carried out within the post-therapeutic assistance programs.

The main purpose of the national conference, which is organized several times a year, of the post-therapeutic summer camp and strengthening the state of abstinence. However, they are also a good opportunity to involve people who are looking for help.

The school has the merit of organizing prevention campaigns and making the best information about drug use available to young people. In this sense, teachers go to courses aimed at informing about the specifics of drugs and the implications they can have on both health and the psyche and social relationships, but also what are the signs by which those who take drugs can be recognized. Very effective are the actions to which former consumers are invited.

Anyone who feels isolated tries to find a group to join. A special case is the minority groups who encounter great difficulties in integrating into society, sometimes ending up being socially marginalized, thus seeking escape in drugs. Urbanization and unemployment are other factors that contribute greatly to the increase in the number of drug users.

Consumption is also influenced by their availability on the market. When their quantity increases, so does consumption. Illicit drug use (cocaine, opiates) is higher due to greater availability in certain areas. Many drug addicts have tried rehab to stop using drugs for good, but because they live in areas where drugs are readily available, they relapse. Gradually, these groups are marginalized and separated from society. Areas where drug use is high are characterized by a high crime rate, unemployment, a school system with big problems.

The state, through legislative measures and campaigns carried out at national level, carried out through the collaboration of its institutions, proves to be an effective ally in the fight against drugs.

2.5.2. National drug prevention organizations

Primary prevention programs are concentrated in two major areas: the school and the community.

Substance use has become an increasingly visible problem in our society, affecting us all to a greater or lesser extent: parents, friends, neighbors, teachers, doctors, social workers, psychologists, etc.

The Catharsis Association was created with the aim of developing, promoting and providing, domestically and internationally online and offline social and educational services. The theme of one of these courses: Preventing drug consumption in adolescents through active interventions in school - This course aims to meet teachers who are concerned about being effective in working with their students regarding the drug problem, putting in it the experience of over 12 Authors'

years in the field of addictions: from substance use prevention concepts to effective tools and techniques to guide students to make good life decisions.

Unhealthy diet, lack of physical exercise, the abundance of offers for consumption of substances (alcohol, drugs, ethnobotanicals) correlated with parental neglect or child abuse in the family and at school, school programs that do not develop children's emotional self-regulation skills, social relations, of conflict management, coping with stress and problem solving, the pressure in adolescent groups to assume risky behaviors (premature onset of sexual life, alcohol/drug use, smoking, school dropout) generates multiple risks for generations of children and adolescents, who do not have fair chances for health, protection and an adequate quality of life. In the absence of reliable sources of information, these topics are still taboo, young people prefer to discuss them secretly instead of addressing their parents, teachers, doctors, because they fear that they will not find the necessary openness. Therefore, the risk of obtaining wrong or incomplete information is high, and the consequences can be, in some cases, dramatic.

The Ministry of Education and Research developed the "Education for health in the Romanian school" Program, aimed at the harmonious development of children and adolescents, their well-being and a quality of life, but in practice it is not accessible to students, reaching only about 6 % of students. Health education is not part of the compulsory curriculum, having only the status of an optional subject, and most of the time it is not found in the offer of educational institutions. According to the estimates of the Ministry of Education, this subject reaches only 6% of all students in Romania, and the materials that facilitate the teaching of this subject (the school curriculum, didactic guides and textbooks) were developed in the mid-2000s and need updating.

Since 1998, Save the Children Romania has been carrying out the Health Education program, in partnership with the Ministry of Education, ensuring the training of volunteers, teaching and medical staff who run information sessions for children and implementing the optional course "Health Education", informing children and young people and the development of educational materials. The purpose of the program is to support the development of a school culture of promoting the child's health, physical and emotional, as well as protecting it against any violent behavior, by translating the values of education and protection into specific contents, skills and activities, intended for children from all schooling cycles, implemented by volunteers, peer educators, teachers, nurses and school doctors. Save the Children has been promoting children's rights for 27 years, in accordance with the provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. More than 1,500,000 children were included in educational, protection and medico-social assistance programs, to stimulate their participation in actions to promote and recognize their rights. Save the Children is a member of Save the Children International, the world's largest independent organization promoting children's rights, with 30 members and running programs in more than 120 countries.

The purpose of the Adolescent Association is to support the integration into society of adolescents in general and of those with special needs in particular, through educational activities in HIV issues and medical, psychological and social assistance; combating sexually transmitted diseases; counseling to prevent drug use. Providing free and anonymous services: help line, anti-drug information and counseling, psychological assistance, social assistance, educational programs in schools, prevention in risk groups, syringe exchange, preservative distribution.

The “Mesagerii Sănătății” Association has 18 years of experience in training practical communication skills for health and the environment in children aged 8-16, which was carried out together with the "Child to Child" Trust of the Institute of Education Sciences from the University of London. “Mesagerii Sănătății” represents an innovative approach to health (seen as physical, mental, social and environmental well-being) and education. The “Mesagerii Sănătății” Association's main goal is to train and help children in making decisions and taking measures to improve the health of the community. Children are seen as important members of society and are trained as health educators of other children and families. of the community. The association places great emphasis on primary prevention, information-sensitization-awareness.

The International Federation of Educational Communities Section Romania - FICE Romania is a non-governmental, non-profit organization of professionals in education and social protection, which works for the rights of children, especially those who grow up outside the family, away from their parents, in difficult social conditions. The organization was founded in 1990, completing 33 years of activity in 2023. FICE Romania places great emphasis on prevention activities, education in schools.

The World Association Against Drugs and Other Addictions (Alcohol, Tobacco, Degrading Vices) A.M.A., was founded on August 21, 2009. It is a non-governmental, apolitical and non-profit organization headquartered in Bucharest, led by specialists with a vast experience in the field of fighting crime, including trafficking and illicit drug consumption, who put all their skill and availability in the service of recovering people addicted to alcohol, tobacco, AIDS, etc., from Romania and beyond. Over the years, many personalities from the cultural-artistic life but also from other fields of activity have joined this organization, effectively contributing to the fulfillment of the association's objectives. The funds of the A.M.A. Association they come from contributions, donations and sponsorships and from an organizational point of view, it has territorial structures in the country (and in most counties of Romania) and representatives abroad (Albania, Arab countries, France, Germany, England, Italy, etc.). In carrying out its activities, the Association has collaboration partnerships with state institutions and authorities, but also with national and international NGOs involved in the fight against drugs and crime, such as the Romanian Police, the National Anti-Drug Agency of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the National Corps of To the police, I.P.A. (International Police Association), N.I.D.A. (National Institute on Drug Abuse). Among the many activities organized by the A.M.A. Association or in which he participated with an important contribution, we mention: Anti-Drug Campaigns - A dream moment - A destroyed

life and Choose life; Project RO-0034 (in partnership with the National Antidrug Agency) consisting in the creation of three therapeutic communities in three penitentiaries in Romania; organize shows, raffles, other events, edit specific publications; supports training courses in the field of anti-drugs, combating organized crime, human rights; supports public authorities in anti-drug, anti-alcohol, anti-tobacco, anti-AIDS programs and actions, respect for human rights and the activities of the zonal Anti-Drug Prevention, Evaluation and Counseling Centers and provides interested partners with useful information, competent people and successful strategies necessary to achieve common objectives; has regular meetings with civil society represented by non-governmental organizations engaged in the fight against drugs and other forms of organized crime; collects funds and, as far as possible, sponsors humanitarian, social and civic actions within the scope of concern.

ALIAT is an association in the field of mental health, founded in 1993, and is one of the first organizations active in the field of addictions in Romania. ALIAT's main concern over the years was to develop primary, secondary and tertiary prevention programs, as well as treatment programs for people addicted to alcohol, drugs and other types of drugs, to help them become aware that they have these problems, to seek specialized help and learn to integrate socially again. ALIAT is one of the first professional organizations active in the field of addictions in Romania, it has helped tens of thousands of people affected by alcohol or drug addiction through its projects. Since 2019, the ALIAT Association for Mental Health (AASM) has taken over and brought together the initiatives and projects dedicated exclusively to promoting and supporting the mental health of Romanians, keeping the area of expertise in addictions accumulated since 1993 by the Alliance for the Fight against Alcoholism and Drug Addictions (ALIAT). Through the Alcohelp program carried out since 2009, in more than 10 hospitals in the country with ALCOINFO stands for early detection and short intervention. The introduction of the short version of the AUDIT test (Alcohol Use Disorder Identification Test) into the basic package, through which family doctors have the opportunity to assess patients' risk of developing alcohol addiction and the approach to harmful alcohol consumption as a strategic direction within the Strategy National Health, as well as the introduction of ALCOINFO centers in the National Health Program together with the National Institute of Public Health motivates us even more to be active and reliable partners of experts and decision-makers in the Romanian health system.

The decision, motivation and active participation of the dependent person are mandatory for recovery and the realization of the change process. The professional community of the Bonus Pastor Foundation facilitates this change through therapeutic programs and an appropriate spiritual environment. The purpose of the Bonus Pastor Foundation is to provide help to people addicted to alcohol, drugs, gambling and other vices, respectively their family members. The prevention and treatment of addictions is carried out with the help of Christian spirituality, using specific psychological tools, within five categories of programs (prevention, therapy, post-therapeutic assistance, professional training, spiritual accompaniment). The programs are primarily conducted

in Hungarian, but it has a close collaboration with the various member organizations of ROSAAC (Coalition against Substance Abuse and Addictions in Romania), thus being able to offer information to Romanian speakers as well.

2.5.3. Regional drug prevention program

The Regional Anti-Drug Prevention, Evaluation and Counseling Center Timișoara offers medical, psychological and social evaluation services for tobacco, alcohol and drug users as well as case management services according to the "Standards of the national system of medical, psychological and social assistance for drug users". Free of charge and confidentiality are ensured for all services offered within the Center. Beneficiaries of prevention activities: pupils, students, parents, professionals, members of the local community. Beneficiaries of integrated support activities: people consuming tobacco, alcohol and drugs. Entry conditions: Provision of medical, psychological and social assistance services at the request of the consumer or the legal representative, in the case of minors or persons with limited exercise capacity, but also at the disposal of the prosecutor or, as the case may be, another judicial body. Signing by the consumer of the agreement to be included in the program. Prevention services: Projects, campaigns, population information activities; Promotion of volunteering in prevention activities; Organization of courses, conferences, training sessions; Collaboration with local public and non-governmental institutions and authorities. Integrated support services: Assessment services (medical, psychological and social); Case management services (identifying the needs of the beneficiaries, the services that can be offered).

The Anti-Drug Prevention, Evaluation and Counseling Center of Arad County has 3 specialist positions in its organizational chart - doctor, social worker, education specialist and is part of the Timis Regional Service (along with CPECA Caras-Severin, CPECA Mehedinti and CPECA Timis), component structure of the National Antidrug Agency.

2.5.4. Anti-drug centers from Timișoara

- **Association "Armonia"**
Timișoara, B-dul Iuliu Maniu no. 38
Contact person: Tiberiu Ormos
Tel.: 0256/218.091
e-mail: armonia@xnet.ro
Services: exchange of syringes, information, hotline (non-stop)
Working hours: monday-friday - 14:00-16:00

- **Anti-Drug Prevention and Counseling Center Timiș**
Timișoara, Piața Libertății no. 1
Contact persons: Ava Diaconu și Livius Basca
Tel.: 934; 0256/432.351
Services: legal, social, psychological counseling, hotline
Working hours: monday-friday - 09:00-14:00
- **Social-cultural association "Timișiensis XXI"**
Timișoara, Str. Areis no. 19, 1st floor
Contact persons: Tiberiu Felber și Dan Soltinschi
Tel.: 0256/487.580
e-mail: timisiensis@xnet.ro
Services: outreach, syringe exchange
Working hours: monday-friday - 18:00-21:30
- **"Eduard Pamfil" Psychiatry Clinic (Clinical Hospital no. 1)**
Timișoara, Str. I. Văcărescu no. 21
Tel.: 0256/193.859
Services: detoxification
Working hours: non-stop

2.5.5. Good practices in treatment, care and rehabilitation

The goal of therapy is to provide long-term help to addicts and their families. The basic instruments of the Bonus Pastor Foundation in this regard are the short and long-term therapeutic programs. Therapy can be supplemented by attending a local support group and attending personal counseling. The Bonus Pastor Foundation organizes 4-day therapeutic programs starting in 2021. The program, through group sessions, facilitates self-knowledge and confronting addiction. The workshops provide information about addiction and co-dependency, as well as help in defining the diagnosis and preparing a treatment plan. Bible lectures provide the opportunity to form and/or deepen the relationship with God. The life testimony of recovered addicts is a source of inspiration and motivation for recovering participants. The Bonus Pastor Foundation has been organizing short-term therapeutic programs for addicts and their family members, for women and men alike, since 1996. The program is also recommended for those seeking help as a family member for their partner's addiction problem. The short-term therapeutic programs organized three times a year offer a good opportunity for familiarization with the essence of addiction, identification of associated problems and myths, respectively for increasing motivation and availability for change.

The main goal of the support groups that operate in more than 10 Transylvanian localities is to strengthen the state of abstinence for those who have already participated in a therapeutic program. However, they are also a good opportunity to involve people who are looking for help. Currently

there are support groups in 11 cities in Transylvania, but other groups can be established upon request.

The long-term therapy carried out at the Therapy Center in Ozd, opened in 2005, is based on the Portage therapy model, of Canadian origin, which provides for the development of a therapeutic community aimed at facilitating the individual healing of addicted people. In the family atmosphere of the Center in Ozd, two important principles are implemented: self-help and positive feedback from the group. All elements of the program are therapeutic in nature, be they group sessions, individual counseling or pastoral counseling, work or recreational activities. The goal of the therapy is the development of positive personality, the spirit of initiative, the ability to communicate and make decisions, the assumption of responsibility, absolutely necessary for a life free of substances. The purpose of the program: achieving abstinence, strengthening positive personality (acquiring and practicing effective behavior patterns, new values, life habits). Admission conditions are voluntary commitment and motivation. Admission is based on a prior interview. A certificate of known chronic diseases, discharge report (if there have been treatments of this kind), the results of examinations for detection of hepatitis, TB and stool analysis are requested.

2.5.6. Research in the field of drugs in Romania

In Romania, research in the field of drugs is mainly carried out by public institutions and authorities, but also by non-governmental organizations, the results being disseminated through specialized websites and magazines. Both public institutions and authorities, as well as non-governmental organizations, can benefit from external funds, from donors such as: the European Commission, the World Bank, the Global Fund to Fight HIV, Tuberculosis and Malaria, the Open Society Institute, UNICEF, UNODC. The most important part of research in the field of drugs is carried out by the National Antidrug Agency. In this context, one of the objectives of the National Anti-Drug Strategy for the period 2022-2026 is the development and consolidation of an integrated and flexible data collection system regarding the drug phenomenon, in order to use the latest information in the decision-making process and to formulate and apply the answers from the field of public health and citizen security. The objective is implemented through activities provided for in the Action Plan for the implementation of the National Strategy in the field of drugs 2022-2026, approved by Government Decision no. 344 of March 16, 2022, together with the National Anti-Drug Strategy for the period 2022-2026, by conducting specific studies among different categories of the population (GPS, ESPAD, young population, vulnerable groups) and also through local and regional studies. They are mainly carried out based on the methodologies developed by the National Anti-Drug Agency and approved by the Ethics Commission of the Scientific Council within the National Anti-Drug Agency. The National Antidrug Agency uses its website and reports, as well as scientific journals, as the main channels for disseminating the results of drug studies. The national strategy in the field of drugs 2022-2026 provides for a direction of action, entitled "Research, evaluation, information", having as specific objectives⁴²:

⁴² Raport Național privind situația drogurilor în România 2022. Descarcă: 23.06.2023, http://ana.gov.ro/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/RN_2022.pdf

1. Develop and implement epidemiological surveillance tools to obtain and analyze the latest data on patterns and trends in drug use.
2. Promoting ANA's role as a center of excellence in providing data and information related to drugs and precursors in Romania.
3. Development of the early warning system (EWS).

At the same time, the Action Plan for the implementation of the National Strategy in the field of drugs in the period 2022-2026 includes the concrete activities and indicators related to each action undertaken by the responsible entities. Among the global indicators foreseen, there are results of studies and research in the field of drugs, expected to be carried out in the period 2022-2026.

The activity of the National Anti-Drug Agency in the field of research is supported by a Scientific Council (based on the model of the European Observatory on Drugs and Drug Addictions), which meets at least once a year. This body has an advisory role in the development, promotion and valorization of scientific activity in the field of drugs. The current Scientific Council of the National Anti-Drug Agency began its mandate in December 2022 and brings together outstanding personalities from the fields of medicine, toxicology, sociology, psychology, criminology, legal sciences.

The main institutions/organizations in Romania that carry out research in the field of drugs:

- National Anti-Drug Agency
- National Institute of Infectious Diseases - Prof. Dr. Matei Balș
- National Institute of Forensic Medicine "Mina Minovici" Bucharest
- Quality of Life Research Institute
- Institute of Sociology of the Romanian Academy
- Bucharest University of Medicine and Pharmacy
- Bucharest University
- National School of Public Health, Management and Improvement in the Health Sector Bucharest
- Romanian Angel Appeal
- Romanian Anti-AIDS Association
- Carousel Association
- Romanian Harm Reduction Network
- Association for the Defense of Human Rights in Romania - Helsinki Committee

The main institutions/organizations that fund drug research:

- The National Authority for Scientific Research finances research projects of government institutions within the excellence research programs.
- Non-governmental organizations benefit from external funds with the following financiers: the World Bank, the Global Fund to Fight HIV, Tuberculosis and Malaria, the Soros Foundation, UNICEF, UNODC
- The European Union offers grants for projects aimed at transnational studies in the field of drug policy. Local, regional and national public authorities, NGOs, associations, educational institutions, universities, research centers and trade unions are eligible.

- The National Antidrug Agency implemented several projects financed by PHARE funds (PHARE–EMCDDA "Participation of Romania and Bulgaria in EMCDDA activities"), UN funds and the Global Fund to Combat HIV, Tuberculosis and Malaria, but also with funding from the state budget, through the research excellence program.

3. Vision, goals, objectives

3.1. The vision of the national strategy in the field of drugs 2022-2026

The vision of the national strategy in the field of drugs 2022-2026 aims to establish an approach aimed at achieving sustainable results regarding the drug problem at the national level, bringing added value to the approach to the phenomenon in the European context, through the resilience and customized adjustment of support and guidance measures. In synergy with the provisions of the other national and European public policy documents, the National Drug Strategy 2022-2026 aims to contribute to limiting the impact and negative consequences of the drug phenomenon on public health and safety, simultaneously with the development of Romania's operational response capabilities, in the conditions of an external environment with unpredictable developments. The national strategy in the field of drugs 2022-2026 pursues the perspective of reducing the demand and supply of drugs, through the transversal themes: coordination, international cooperation and research, evaluation, information and aims to achieve 11 general objectives⁴³:

1. Consolidation of the national prevention system that includes all prevention programs, projects and interventions (contextual, universal, selective and indicated) addressed to the general population, schools and vulnerable groups, based on scientific evidence.
2. The development, based on scientific evidence, of services and interventions within the national system of medical, psychological and social assistance aimed at reducing the negative effects associated with drug use.
3. Consolidation and development, based on scientific evidence, of interventions and specialized medical, psychological and social reintegration services.
4. Development of an integrated approach to drug use in prison systems.
5. Consolidation of interventions to counter organized crime groups that operate in Romania or groups of Romanian origin that target EU member states. that are involved in drug trafficking and have links to other threats to national security.
6. Strengthening the capacity to detect large quantities of drugs, precursors and pre-precursors trafficked on the territory of Romania.

⁴³ Strategia națională în domeniul drogurilor 2022 – 2026. Descarcă: 06.02.2023, <http://ana.gov.ro/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Monitorul-Oficial-Partea-I-Strategie-2022-2026.pdf>

7. Strengthening the control mechanism of the licit circuit of precursors and drugs with narcotic content and combating their diversion, as well as preventing and combating the production of drugs and the illicit cultivation of plants with narcotic content.
8. Intensifying effective monitoring of legal digital and logistical channels used for medium and low volume drug distribution and increasing seizures of illicit substances through these channels, in close cooperation with the private sector.
9. Consolidation of Romania's commitment, assumed through the international and bilateral or multilateral documents to which our country is a party, and the position of an active partner in the global effort to reduce the demand and supply of drugs as well as the diversion and trafficking of precursors.
10. Development and consolidation of an integrated and flexible data collection system on the drug phenomenon, in order to use the latest information in the decision-making process and to formulate and apply responses in the field of public health and citizen security.
11. Ensuring a unitary concept of action in the field of drugs and precursors, monitoring the implementation of national policies in the field of drugs, efficient use of resources and maximizing the results of interventions.

The organizational framework necessary for the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the National Strategy involves intersectoral collaboration to implement, in an efficient way, the directions of action, the general objectives and the specific objectives provided for in this strategy, facilitated by a dialogue framework conferred by the Advisory Council for the Application of the Anti-Drug Strategy, made up of decision-making representatives of the institutions involved. The Secretariat of the Council will be provided by the National Anti-Drug Agency.⁴⁴ The monitoring of the implementation of the strategy aims at the achievement of general and specific objectives in the context of the proposed actions/activities, of the allocated human, material and financial resources, compliance with the plans over time. The National Anti-Drug Agency will draw up, at the deadlines established in the action plan, based on the information communicated by each institution that carries out activities to reduce the demand and supply of drugs, monitoring reports that they present for approval to the Advisory Council for the Application of the Anti-Drug Strategy.

The evaluation allows the assessment of the extent to which the Strategy has achieved its proposed objectives, and the results, measured quantitatively and qualitatively, are the planned ones, in terms of efficiency, effectiveness and impact.

3.1.1. Expected results of the national action plan

The action plan related to the strategy details and concretely establishes the measures, interventions and expected results in the field of reducing drug demand and supply, coordination,

⁴⁴ Strategia națională în domeniul drogurilor 2022 – 2026. Descarcă: 06.02.2023, <http://ana.gov.ro/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Monitorul-Oficial-Partea-I-Strategie-2022-2026.pdf>

international cooperation and monitoring aiming to contribute to limiting the impact and negative consequences of the drug phenomenon on public health and safety by⁴⁵:

1. Integrated drug demand reduction system, comprehensive, based on scientific evidence and relevant practices in the field, which includes prevention measures, reduction of risks and consequences associated with drug use, treatment and social reintegration.
2. The integrated mechanism for preventing and countering criminality in the drug and precursor regime, which would strengthen the national framework of security and public safety of citizens.
3. The coherent approach of the national policy, in accordance with the EU policy and with the global response in the field of drugs, correlated with the affirmation of Romania's active role within the specialized international and European forums.
4. The integrated and flexible data collection system on the drug phenomenon, to support the decision-making process, the formulation and application of responses in the field of public health and citizen security.
5. The optimized inter-sector coordination mechanism capable of ensuring the implementation of drug policies at the local and national level.

3.2. Future goals of our organization

Our organization will continue to implement projects and programs aimed at young people and adolescents. The goals of the organization are the realization of humanitarian and other socially useful goals related to prevention and education. Both the theoretical and practical parts of the project and the local workshops have confirmed to us that building a safety net in our region is particularly important.

The future goals of our organization include:

- strengthening the capacity of the organization to be able to continuously carry out preventive programs;
- organizing workshop and interactive group activity for youth about drug addiction;
- increasing public awareness and knowledge about the negative effects of drug use and the associated risks;
- developing and implementing prevention programs, especially targeting youth, to prevent the initiation of drug use and the formation of drug-related habits;

⁴⁵ Strategia națională în domeniul drogurilor 2022 – 2026. Descarcă: 06.02.2023, <http://ana.gov.ro/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Monitorul-Oficial-Partea-I-Strategie-2022-2026.pdf>

- supporting parents and caregivers in understanding drug-related issues and how to guide their children toward healthy decision-making.
- collaboration with government agencies, schools, and other organizations to create a coordinated approach to drug prevention;
- we continue to organize trainings, cultural programs and camps for young people, which are good opportunities for young people to spend their free time usefully, respectively create an opportunity to draw the attention of young people to the harmful effects and negative consequences of drug.

Drugs represent a serious threat to Romanian society. In recent years, we have witnessed an alarming increase in the problems of drug use and trafficking in the country. Unfortunately, these problems have affected all aspects of our lives, from education to public health and safety.

The dangers of drugs represent a serious problem in Romanian society and require immediate attention. It is our responsibility to take action to prevent the spread of this crisis and protect future generations. In the future, we plan to exchange experiences with our international partners and implement further joint projects.

4. Conclusions

Drug consumption and trafficking is a dynamic phenomenon worldwide, being strongly influenced by a multitude of social and economic factors. The process of globalization, characterized by the free movement of people, goods and capital, the development of new information and communication technologies, but also the globalization of organized crime, has determined new challenges in the propagation and spread of this phenomenon. In this context, the measures taken by each country, but also by the relevant international bodies, did not stop the expansion of the drug phenomenon or its isolation at the level of a geographical region or a state. A complex phenomenon, characterized by permanent mutations, drug consumption and trafficking has seen new forms of manifestation in Romania as well, requiring increasingly varied approaches. The orientation of the response policy to the drug phenomenon was influenced over time by its trends, by the conclusions of the studies, by the results from the practice of specialists, as well as by civil society, a fact that imposed the need for a quick and efficient institutional reaction. These elements contributed both to the development of the first two national strategies in the field, which covered the periods 2003-2004 and 2005-2012, as well as to the development and implementation of related action plans. Although Romania continues to be below European averages, the data of the latest studies carried out by the National Anti-Drug Agency indicate a lifetime prevalence of 4.3% for any type of drug in the general population, while among the student population 16 years, this type of prevalence is at 10%, which reveals significant increases in drug use, at the level of the entire population, especially among the young.

The national reports on the evolution of the drug phenomenon in our country highlight Romania's status, after the opening of the borders, as an active segment of the "Balkan Route" for the trafficking of narcotic drugs and drug precursors, and at the same time foreshadow new trends in

the change of trafficking routes through the Region Black Sea, as well as the development of the national drug market, all types of drugs, including synthetic ones, being identified on the national territory.

Currently, trafficking methods change and adapt rapidly, thus testing the responsiveness of judicial drug control systems. The drug market's flexibility and rapid adaptation to socio-economic and cultural mechanisms and processes, which permanently change society, creating pressures and, implicitly, new needs for security and public order, can be noted. In this sense, the emergence and consumption of new substances with psychoactive properties represent a new challenge, and at the same time, a real threat to national, as well as European and international anti-drug control mechanisms.

All the projects and interventions of the National Anti-Drug Agency, in the segment of drug demand reduction, aimed at strengthening the integrated national system of prevention and assistance. Prevention programs, projects and activities were implemented in the school, family and community, measures were taken to identify, attract and motivate drug users, in order to provide specialized assistance services aimed at social integration. Thus, at the national level, anti-drug specialists have carried out 20,000 activities to prevent drug use in the school, family and community environments, as well as targeted information, education and awareness activities regarding the risks associated with the consumption of psychoactive substances, of which they have benefited over 700,000 people: preschoolers, pupils, students, teachers, parents, foster carers, institutionalized children, social assistance specialists, medical staff, users and former users of alcohol and drugs, local communities, in general. At the regional level, regardless of the type of drug consumed, the highest prevalence of drug use is recorded in the Bucharest/Ilfov region. Adolescence is the period with the greatest vulnerability to the initiation of drug use, the lowest age of onset being declared for the consumption of new psychoactive substances (13 years).

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