Production of cocaine base and cocaine hydrochloride

Potassium permanganate is an essential chemical in the illicit manufacture of cocaine, and as such it is listed in Table I of the United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances, 1988 ([16]). It is also a chemical that is used extensively, and increasingly, by industry throughout the world (for instance in drinking water treatment): 26 countries reported exporting a total of 23 780 tonnes of potassium permanganate for licit purposes between November 2007 and October 2008 (INCB, 2009b). The trade in potassium permanganate is monitored by the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB) under 'Project Cohesion', an international initiative to prevent the diversion of chemicals essential to the manufacture of illicit drugs.

Potassium permanganate

Because most of the cocaine available in the world is manufactured in South America, this region is subject to special scrutiny by the INCB. South America (mainly Argentina, Brazil and Chile) was the destination of about 10 % of the licit shipments monitored by the INCB between 1998 and 2006. The majority of these shipments originated from outside South America, and intraregional licit trade in the chemical was limited. Some of the potassium permanganate imported legally into South America is likely to be diverted to manufacture cocaine. However, the extent of diversion is difficult to ascertain since national authorities rarely investigate and report the source of the illicit shipments of potassium permanganate they seize (INCB, 2008a).

In 2007, worldwide seizures of illicit potassium permanganate shipments reached a total of 153 tonnes, 52 tonnes more than the previous year. Colombia accounted for 94 % of these seizures (144 tonnes), the Netherlands for 3 % (5 tonnes), and Peru for 1 % (1.5 tonnes). Another source for the potassium permanganate used in cocaine laboratories is the illicit manufacture of the chemical

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([16]) The corresponding EU legislation is set out in Council Regulation (EEC) No 3677/90 (as later amended), which governs trade between the EU and third countries.

in Colombia. In 2007, the Colombian authorities destroyed four facilities (and 15 in 2006) from which they seized a total of 45 tonnes of potassium permanganate (INCB, 2009b). The INCB (2009b) notes that while quantities seized increased in South America in 2007, fewer cases of attempted diversion of permanganate potassium were reported in the rest of the world, suggesting that traffickers have found new ways to circumvent controls. In 2007, attempted shipments of potassium permanganate to Côte d'Ivoire, Nigeria and Morocco were suspended, while the Democratic Republic of Congo reported the attempted diversion of 500 kilograms (INCB, 2008a). The INCB has warned that Africa may be used as a transit territory by South American illicit potassium permanganate importers, especially in view of the recent increase of cocaine seizures in that region (INCB, 2008a). However, it is also likely that Africa, especially West Africa, is used to carry out the final stages of the cocaine manufacturing process (UNODC, 2009d), i.e. transformation of base into cocaine HCl.

Cocaine laboratories

The vast majority of the laboratories manufacturing HCl from coca paste or cocaine base dismantled worldwide in 2007 were located in Colombia (285 labs), with Peru (16 labs) and Bolivia (seven labs) far behind (UNODC, 2009a). Colombia is also the world's largest confiscator of cocaine (HCl and base), with 195 tonnes seized in 2007 (UNODC, 2009b).

It should also be noted that unknown, but probably lower, amounts of cocaine HCl are refined elsewhere in Latin America since coca leaves, coca paste and cocaine base (the two intermediary products) may all be exported to neighbouring countries for further processing into cocaine HCl. Laboratories for processing cocaine were found in countries such as Argentina (nine labs found in 2006), Chile (five in 2007), Venezuela (18 in 2005) and Ecuador (one in 2007) (UNODC, 2009b). Some cocaine HCl is also likely to be refined in Brazil, Panama and Paraguay.

Cocaine labs have also been dismantled outside of South America in recent years: in 2007, three labs in the United States and one lab in Mexico (UNODC, 2009a, 2009b); in 2006, one in South Africa, and four in the United States (UNODC, 2008c); in 2004, five labs were found in Australia and one in Hong Kong (UNODC, 2007b) ([17]).

There are also laboratories that are processing cocaine base into HCl in Europe, but the scope of cocaine base exports to Europe is difficult to ascertain given current reporting practices, which, outside Latin America, rarely differentiate between seizures of cocaine base and seizures of HCl.

Among the cocaine laboratories seized in Europe, Spain reported the dismantling of 10 cocaine labs in 2006, a figure on a par with the previous year (11), but a significant increase from the four labs seized in 2001. There were indications that Spain dismantled at least seven labs in 2007 and a further five in 2008 ([18]). Outside of the Iberian Peninsula, one lab was discovered in France in

([17]) According to the UNODC (2008c, 2009b), problems of reliability may affect the data concerning cocaine-product laboratories reported by UN Member States.

([18]) Spain's Cuerpo Nacional de Policía (http://www.policia.es/index.htm) and Guardia Civil (http://www.guardiacivil.org/index.jsp).

Data and sources

The collection of systematic and routine information, which would give a clear picture of the supply of cocaine from the Americas to European markets, is both methodologically and practically challenging. Consequently, any analysis in this area must be made with caution.

Illicit cultivation of coca leaf — and therefore production of cocaine HCl — is extremely difficult to estimate, and only two public sources of data are available on the matter: the Crop Monitoring Programme of United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) [1]; and the annual production surveys carried out by the United States Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and published by the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) and the National Drug Intelligence Center (NDIC) [2].

The coca cultivation and cocaine production estimates are based on sampling on the ground and aerial and satellite surveys. They also involve working out yields of coca fields and extraction rates of cocaine alkaloid from harvested leaves. These estimates are affected by different problems including cloud cover, changes in cultivation and detection techniques (ONDCP, 2007; Bussink, 2008) and variations in the alkaloid content of the coca leaves and extracting methods (UNODC, 2009a; Terán, 2008). The results of the surveys must therefore be considered as approximations, and require careful interpretation. Large differences between some UN and US estimates (see sections 'Estimating coca cultivation' and 'Estimating cocaine production') also point to a need for caution.

Drug seizures are another data source that may be taken as an indirect indicator of the supply, trafficking routes and availability of drugs. Nonetheless, these may be influenced by variations in law enforcement resources, priorities and strategies. Data on price and purity may also be used to understand the dynamics of cocaine supply in Europe, and potentially reflect prevailing conditions in production areas and along the trafficking routes. However, issues of data availability, reliability and comparability limit the potential use of these data. Lastly, law enforcement intelligence, where available, may be used to complete the picture.

The information presented in this document is based on EMCDDA, Europol and UNODC information systems and analyses, complemented by ONDCP and NDIC reports. As far as essential chemicals are concerned, information is based on the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB) analysis drawn from international initiatives set up to prevent the diversion of chemicals used in the manufacture of illicit drugs. Data on cocaine seizures, prices at street level and purity are collected by the EMCDDA, and provide routine information on the European situation, together with the national reports of the EMCDDA Reitox network of national focal points. Finally, information and analysis from a number of relevant qualitative studies have also been used.

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[1] Online at http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/crop-monitoring/index.html; see also the chapter on methodology in the Colombia coca cultivation survey for 2008 (UNODC, 2009c).

[2] ONDCP: http://www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov/; NDIC: http://www.usdoj.gov/ndic/.

Main trafficking routes to Europe

The UN estimates that, in 2007, the European share of the global cocaine seizures (in volume) declined to 11 %, its lowest level since 2004 (UNODC, 2009a). In 2007, the total quantity of cocaine seized in Europe dropped to 77 tonnes (120 tonnes in 2006). This variable should be interpreted with caution since it is influenced by a range of factors, including national law enforcement policies, resources and priorities. Together with the reported decline in global cocaine production mentioned above it might indicate that cocaine availability in Europe has decreased. Yet the fact that the number of cocaine seizures in Europe has increased for the fifth consecutive year in 2007 and that cocaine consumption remained high and was not diminishing while price trends continued to decline would seem to point in the opposite direction.

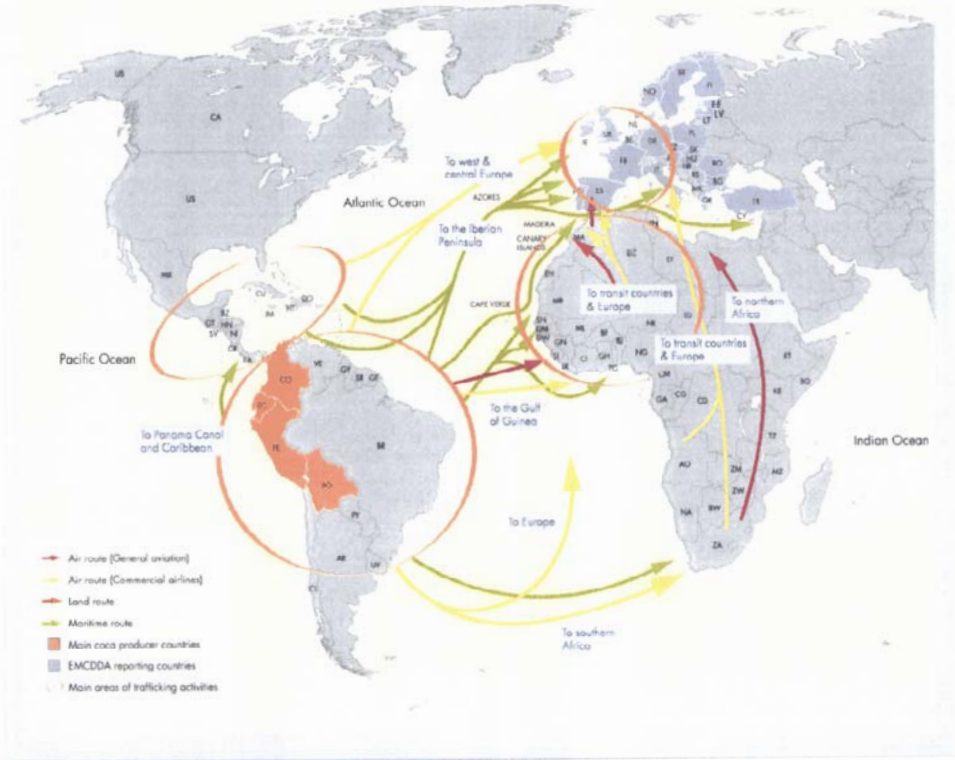
Cocaine is transported from South America to the European Union across the Atlantic Ocean by air or maritime routes. Multi-tonne maritime shipments are made from Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Suriname and Venezuela to the coastal areas of Spain and Portugal. At the same time, cocaine is also shipped to the major container ports of Belgium, Germany, France, Italy, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom (Project Cola) ([19]). Although maritime shipments pose the greatest problem because large quantities can be transported at any one time, and detection is difficult, use of individual couriers and of air freight also play an important role.

Three main sea routes to Europe have been identified: the Northern route, leading from the Caribbean via the Azores to Portugal and Spain; the Central route from South America via Cape Verde or Madeira and the Canary Islands to Europe; and, more recently, the African route from South America to West Africa and from there mainly to Spain and Portugal (Figure 2) (Project Cola).

The Northern route departs from South America and reaches Europe via the Caribbean. The INCB (2008b) has estimated that 40 % of the cocaine entering Europe passes through the Caribbean, where some of the cocaine destined for the North American market also transits. In a first stage, the drug can be flown or shipped directly to Caribbean islands but also transported overland to the Caribbean coast of South America, for instance through countries like Venezuela (UNODC, 2008a). From the islands, transhipment and onward transportation to Europe are organised. Maritime transportation is frequently used, especially pleasure boats, cargo freighters and container ships. Aircraft are also used for dropping cocaine bundles in international waters to await pick-up vessels. Air couriers (sometimes colloquially referred to as 'mules') are another transportation technique, with cocaine being smuggled through European airports on commercial flights.

([19]) Project Cola and its Analysis Work File (AWF Cola) offer support to the competent authorities in Member States to prevent/combat specific forms of criminality within Europol's mandate. For more detail, see page 33.

Figure 2. **Main cocaine trafficking flows from Central and South America and Africa to Europe**



Notes: Trafficking flows represented on the map are an attempt to synthesise the analysis of a variety of international and national organisations (Reitox national focal points, Europol, INCB, UNODC, WCO). Such analyses are based on information related to drug seizures along the trafficking routes, but also on other intelligence information from other sources, such as law enforcement agencies in transit and destination countries, and anecdotal reports. The main trafficking routes represented on the map should be considered as indicative rather than accurate descriptions of the main flows, based on the knowledge that there may often be deviations to other countries along the routes, and that there are a multitude of secondary sub-regional routes that are not represented on the map. Such 'stopovers' may change very rapidly depending on constraints (e.g. law enforcement control points) and facilitating factors (e.g. commercial routes, corruption).

The large volume trafficked through the Caribbean can be explained by the region's geographical position, its historic and present-day links with Europe and by the fact that languages are shared with destination countries. For example, the Netherlands Antilles are the origin of supplies to the Netherlands; Jamaica is used as a platform to the United Kingdom; while Martinique and Guadeloupe play an important role in the transhipment of cocaine to France. The Azores is also exploited to tranship cocaine from the Caribbean to the Iberian Peninsula.

The Central route runs from South America, for instance Brazil (UNODC, 2009a), to the Iberian Peninsula with possible transit in Cape Verde, the Azores, Madeira or the Canary Islands. Trafficking is frequently carried out by sea, with larger cargo ships loading the cocaine in South America, often supplied by so-called 'go-fast boats'. The drug is then transhipped to locations such as Cape Verde or the Canary Islands and carried to the Iberian Peninsula in smaller crafts, especially fishing vessels, and speedboats (Zaitch, 2002). Air couriers have also been used on the Central route, notably using Madrid's Barajas airport.

Large go-fast boat seized on a Spanish beach (2009).

The West African route, notably the countries along the Gulf of Guinea and off the coast of Cape Verde, has been used for some time as a transhipment and storage region for cocaine from South America destined for the European Union. Benin, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Nigeria, Sierra Leone and, more recently, Mauritania and Togo are reported to be seriously affected by the trafficking of cocaine (UNODC, 2007a; JIATFS, 2007b).

UNODC reports for 2007, depending on the source, 6.4 tonnes of cocaine seized in West Africa (UNODC, 2009e) or 5.5 tonnes seized in Africa (UNODC, 2009a). The latter figure amounted to more than a seven-fold increase since 1998. The quantity of cocaine seized in Africa (0.8 % of the global total in 2007) remains, however, modest in comparison to the likely cocaine flows affecting the continent.

Go-fast boat smuggling drugs in the Alboran Sea (2006).

Cocaine is also transported by air from West African countries to European airports, by small aircrafts, by couriers or by air-freight (JTIAFS, 2007a). Couriers from Africa are sent on commercial flights, as 'body-packers' or 'swallowers', frequently applying the 'shotgun approach' — i.e. relying on the limited capacity of law enforcement to check a large number of passengers, several couriers are placed on each flight. EU Member States have also reported an increase in the arrest of cocaine couriers from West Africa who have transited through North African countries such as Algeria, Libya or Morocco, in order to disguise their point of origin (Project Cola). Contacts have also been made with Moroccan criminal groups in order to traffic cocaine via existing cannabis smuggling routes (Project Cola) and polydrug consignments (with cannabis resin) have been reported (Europol, 2007a).

Semi-submersible vessel seized off the Galician coast (2006).

Europol reports that in recent years Colombian groups, as well as groups from Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Peru and Venezuela, have all been involved in cocaine trafficking towards West Africa. These groups have established air and sea supply routes, storage facilities and a variety of lawful businesses to cover their illicit activities and justify their presence. They have closely cooperated with West African criminal groups and fully exploited the unstable social, political and economic situation in the region. Their illegal activities are furthermore facilitated by porous and uncontrolled borders between states, poor governmental control over large tracts of territory, high levels of corruption, legal difficulties and problems linked to national and international law enforcement cooperation.

Cocaine trafficking between West Africa and Europe is also facilitated by regular maritime trade and regular flight connections, as well as by historical ties (e.g. Ghana and Nigeria with the United Kingdom; Côte d'Ivoire with France; and Cape Verde with Portugal), which may translate today in the presence of West African drug distribution networks in Europe.

There are indications that the use of the 'West African' route may be declining, at least for the time being. In 2008 the UN reported a 'substantive decline' in seizures of cocaine transiting Africa (8 %), as well as a sharp decrease in the number of detected African cocaine couriers arrested at European airports (UNODC, 2009e). Based on an analysis of European seizures of known origin, the UNODC estimated that 6.8 % of the cocaine seized in Europe had been smuggled through West Africa, down from 28 % in 2007, but still above the 2.7 % estimated in 2005 (UNODC, 2009a). While additional data are needed to confirm a real decline of cocaine flows through West Africa, initiatives such as MAOC-N (see below) have probably had an impact on cocaine trafficking in the region and dissuaded some organised crime groups (OCGs) from using it as a transit point en route to Europe, or led them to change trafficking methods and routes.

Another factor for changes in the West African route could be the recent political instability, particularly in those states where South American OCGs became established. Continual shifts of power could have made operating there more difficult, at least for some time. This would be ironic, since the political instability of these countries was probably one of the factors that had attracted the OCGs to the region in the first place.

Importation to Europe and distribution

Cocaine importation and distribution in Europe ([20]) is mainly concentrated in western European countries. The Iberian Peninsula is considered the main entry point for cocaine into Europe. In 2007 the Spanish authorities seized almost 38 tonnes of cocaine, much of it at sea, representing about 50 % of the estimated total quantity intercepted in Europe. In Portugal, the amount of cocaine seized has increased rapidly since 2005, with a peak in 2006 at 34 tonnes accounting for 28 % of the European total, whereas in 2007 a total of 7.3 tonnes were seized. This development in Portugal since 2005 points to the use of the Iberian Peninsula by cocaine traffickers as a gateway to the European market. It may also point to a diversification in the unloading points throughout the Iberian Peninsula, in response to the likely intensification in the controls of the traditional cocaine maritime route to the Spanish north-western coast in Galicia (Figure 3).

Cocaine 'secondary extraction' laboratories in Europe

While the laboratories seized in South America manufacture cocaine base or HCl from coca leaves or coca paste, it is likely that the majority of the cocaine laboratories seized in Europe are of a different type, that is, 'secondary extraction' labs. These are used to remove the cocaine from other materials in which it has been incorporated — and therefore concealed — before importation.

Cocaine brick with embossed lyre logo.

Cocaine base and more frequently HCl may be incorporated into a range of materials including beeswax, fertiliser, various types of plastic, clothing, herbs, liquids, guano, upholstery, etc. The incorporation process may be fairly simple, for instance by soaking pieces of clothing in a mixture of cocaine and water. But it may also be more complex and require a chemical process, for example in order to incorporate cocaine HCl within plastic. In this case, a reverse chemical process will be required to extract the cocaine from the plastic. After secondary extraction, the cocaine can then be adulterated with different cutting agents (see box on adulterants) and pressed into the form of traditional cocaine bricks embossed with logos, probably to convince buyers that they are purchasing original high purity cocaine.

([20]) In its 2008 *World Drug Report*, the UNODC suggests, quoting different law enforcement agencies including Europol, a figure of 250 tonnes of cocaine entering Europe every year, with a rising trend (UNODC, 2008a). However, the report does not specify how this figure was calculated.

Cocaine press seized in Oosterhout, the Netherlands (2007).

Recent reports from Member States have revealed that more than 38 cocaine 'secondary extraction' laboratories of all sizes were seized in the European Union during 2008 (Europol, 2009). For example, a mid-scale 'secondary extraction' laboratory removing cocaine from cacao powder and liquor was seized in the Dutch city of Roosendaal in December 2008. In September 2007, Dutch Authorities dismantled two illicit cocaine 'secondary extraction' laboratories in Oosterhout and Steenbergen, seizing a total of 8 tonnes of polypropylene (a plastic), samples of which were tested and found to contain cocaine. According to documentation recovered at the scene, more than 50 tonnes of polypropylene had been imported from Colombia since the beginning of 2007, although it is not known if cocaine was present in all of it (Europol, 2009).

There is also information that criminal organisations use EU neighbouring countries, such as Albania and Moldova, to set up such laboratories (Project Cola)

Cocaine adulterants

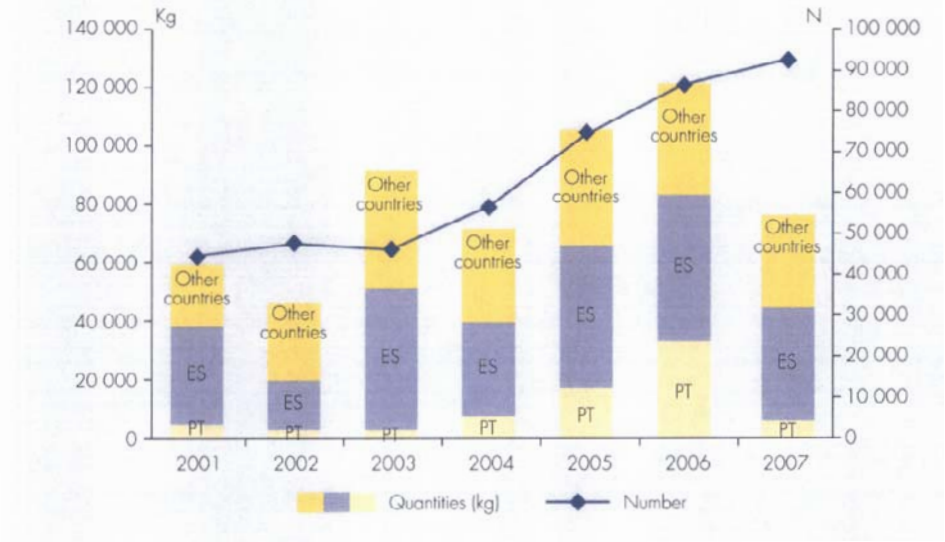
When sold in Europe, cocaine is almost always adulterated. Common adulterants or cutting agents include the local anaesthetics lignocaine (lidocaine) and benzocaine; painkillers such as phenacetin (a carcinogenic substance) and paracetamol; and other agents such as hydroxyzine, boric acid, glucose, manitol, lactose and caffeine.

A relatively recent trend is the use of Levamisole (leva (l)-Tetramisole), a veterinary anti-parasitic agent used in the past in human medicine as an immunostimulant. When used over a longer period of time and in higher doses, Levamisole may cause a number of adverse effects, of which agranulocytosis (') is the most alarming.

Levamisole has been reported as a cocaine adulterant in the United States and in Europe at least since 2004. In 2009, over 70 % of cocaine seizures that were analysed in the United States contained this substance (SAMHSA, 2009). In Europe, recent information from the EMCDDA–Europol Early Warning System indicates an increase both in the percentage of the cocaine samples adulterated with Levamisole and in the concentration of the substance in the samples. Thus, several countries reported Levamisole in about one third (Belgium, Spain, France and Sweden) and one half (Ireland, the Netherlands and the UK) of the cocaine seizures analysed. Levamisole is widely used in South America, and it is likely that the adulteration of cocaine takes place not only at the point of import in Europe, but also immediately after production or just before export.

(') Agranulocytosis is a haematological condition that involves severe leukopenia (decrease in the number of white blood cells) that can lead to rapidly developing life-threatening infections.

Figure 3. **Number of cocaine seizures and quantities seized (kg) in the EU, Croatia, Turkey and Norway, respective shares of Spain (ES) and Portugal (PT) 2001 to 2007, as reported to the EMCDDA**



Notes: The total amount of cocaine seized is based on data from all EMCDDA reporting countries (27 EU Member States, Croatia, Turkey and Norway), whereas 5 EU Member States (Italy, Cyprus, The Netherlands, Poland and Romania) were not included in the total number of cocaine seizures due to unavailability of data. For countries included in the totals per year, missing data have been extrapolated from adjacent years. (PT=Portugal, ES=Spain).

Cocaine also enters Europe via other countries, in particular Belgium, France, Italy, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom, each of which seizes several tonnes of cocaine every year. Other countries are also used to import cocaine into Europe, as flights from the main trafficking routes are increasingly subjected to enhanced controls. One example is the '100 % control policy' implemented between 2002 and 2008 at Schiphol airport (Amsterdam) in the Netherlands — that is, the control of all passengers on direct flights from risk countries for cocaine importation in South America and the Caribbean (Aruba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Netherlands Antilles, Peru and Suriname). This initiative, together with preventive measures (controls, radar, body scans) in departing countries, seems to have achieved some results, as both the quantities of cocaine seized and the couriers arrested decreased over the period. Displacement of trafficking to other airports in neighbouring European countries would, however, need to be investigated.

Trying to link cocaine supply with demand

Cocaine seizures reflect the supply side of the drug market. Even if the focus and intensity of police work influence the number of seizures, this figure can be seen as a proxy to indicate the supply situation of a country. Given the illegal status of cocaine no perfect statistics on its supply exist. In order to take into account the different sizes of the EU Member States, the number of seizures is calculated per 100 000 inhabitants (age 15 to 64 years), resulting in an overall number of 24 seizures per 100 000 population.

In terms of demand for cocaine, there is a lack of reliable data on the total amounts consumed. The prevalence of cocaine use is therefore used as a proxy to describe the country situation. Cocaine use during the last 12 months as assessed by population surveys provides us with this information.

Supply as measured by the number of seizures is above EU average in Belgium, Denmark, Ireland, Spain and the UK. In four of these countries the prevalence of cocaine use is also above EU average. This suggests that there are several links between supply and use. Only one other country, Italy, shows prevalence rates above average but a relatively low number of seizures. Due to a lack of more recent prevalence data no conclusions may be drawn on Belgium.

Table 1. **EU Member States where prevalence of cocaine use is above the EU average**

Country	Year of survey	Last year prevalence	Seizures/100 000 inhabitants
Belgium	1994	0.2	52
Denmark	2008	1.4	34
Ireland	2006–07	1.7	59
Spain	2007–08	3.1	149
Italy	2007	2.2	18
United Kingdom	2006	2.7	51
EU and Norway		1.2	24

Note: The Netherlands, Malta and Poland do not report number of seizures and therefore were not included here.

With regard to cocaine importation and distribution, Europol (2007b) has identified two main criminal hubs ([21]) in Europe: the 'South-west hub' with criminal groups located in the Iberian Peninsula, which then use France as an important transit country; and the 'North-west hub', with

([21]) Europol defines a criminal hub as 'an entity that is generated by a combination of factors such as proximity to major destination markets, geographic location, infrastructures, criminal group types and migration processes concerning key criminals or organised crime groups in general. A criminal hub receives flows from a number of sources and spreads their effects in the EU so forging criminal markets and creating opportunities for the growth of criminal groups that are able to profit from these dynamics. These hubs can be seen as 'routers' attracting and re-directing external flows, such as cocaine from South America, coming to the EU directly or through West Africa' (Europol, 2007b).

criminal groups located in and around the Netherlands and Belgium. The latter exploit the 'major transport infrastructures, generating huge volumes of commercial traffic with connections to worldwide markets', (Europol 2007b) that are present in the region. This was corroborated by an ethnographic study of Colombian 'cocaine entrepreneurs' based in the Netherlands, which concluded that cocaine importers view the region's transport infrastructure as a key asset for their activities (Zaitch, 2005). According to Europol, the 'North-west hub' acts as a redistribution centre to other European countries, mainly in western Europe (Denmark, Germany, Austria, Finland, Sweden, United Kingdom), for both the cocaine entering via the Iberian Peninsula and that being unloaded in major sea ports in the region itself (Europol, 2007a). Europol reports a recent increase in the number of couriers recruited by organised crime groups in the North-west region to distribute cocaine to other European markets. Most noticeable are West African organised crime groups, who recruit African and European nationals as 'mules' who travel overland (car, coach, train) with relatively small quantities of cocaine (1 or 2 kg). The drugs are concealed inside the body, wrapped around the body, in luggage or in the vehicle used for transport.

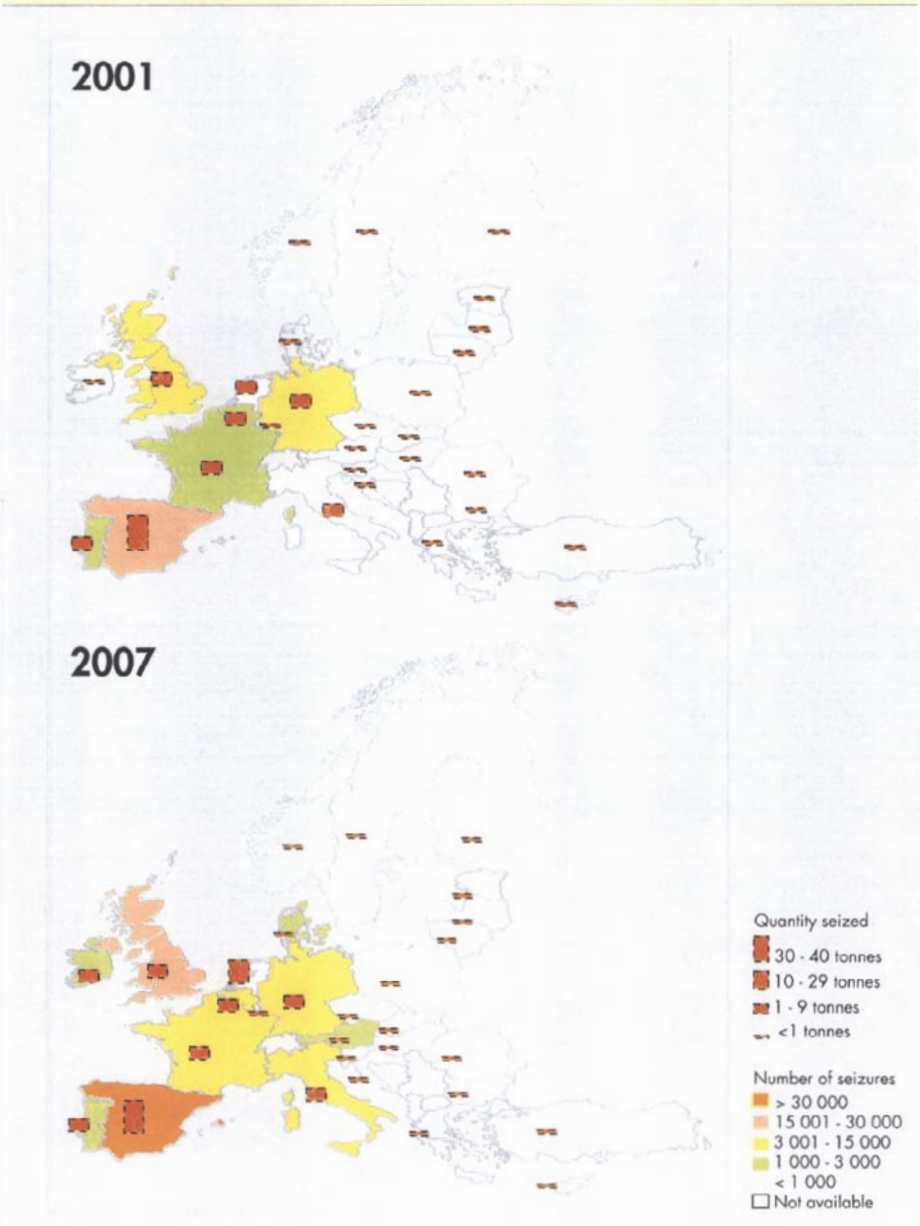
While the majority of shipments of cocaine from South America continue to be directed to Western Europe (Figure 4), substantial seizures of cocaine, usually concealed in containers, has occurred in recent years in important ports in the Balkans (Project Cola, UNODC 2009a). For instance, in January 2009 authorities in Constanta, Romania, seized 1.2 tonnes of cocaine concealed in a consignment of wood. The subsequent investigation led to the discovery of a further 3.8 tonnes of cocaine at the original point of loading, in the port of Paranagua, Brazil. In July 2009, law enforcement in Varna, Bulgaria, seized 1 020 bottles containing a mixture of cocaine and wine shipped from Santa Cruz, Bolivia. The total weight of the cocaine was estimated at 100 kg. In August 2009, at Piraeus, Greece, almost 450 kilos of cocaine concealed in a shipment of scrap metal were confiscated.

An increasing number of nationals of Balkan countries have also become involved in cocaine trafficking in recent years, according to Europol. In addition, Albania has been used as a storage country for cocaine, alongside its traditional role in the Balkan Route for heroin trafficking (Europol, 2007a). This, together with an increase in the involvement of organised criminal groups from that region, may indicate that the already-established trafficking infrastructure developed in the region, especially for cigarettes and heroin, is now being used for the shipment of increasingly large amounts of cocaine.

This suggests a diversification of trafficking routes and points towards an eastward expansion of cocaine trafficking in Europe, which may eventually contribute to the diffusion of cocaine use into countries that are comparatively unaffected at present.

Trade liberalisation in the Balkan area, the region's proximity to the European Union, as well as the presence of pre-established transnational criminal networks are likely to be important explanations for the transit of cocaine through the region. Criminal groups present in the region have control over long-established trafficking networks of the Balkan Route that have traditionally facilitated the movement not only of heroin but also cannabis, contraband cigarettes and human beings, as well as illegal immigration.

Figure 4. **Evolution of the number of seizures and quantity of cocaine seized in Europe, 2001 and 2007**



Source: Reitox national focal points, *EMCDDA Statistical bulletin 2009*, seizures data (SZR).
Tables: SZR-9 - http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/stats09/szrtab9 and SZR-10
http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/stats09/szrtab10

Supply reduction initiatives at EU level

The European Union (EU) and the Member States are engaged in a range of initiatives to address cocaine trafficking and the changing dynamics of the cocaine market. Some of these initiatives have been developed at the political and diplomatic level, while others are focused on operations 'in the field'.

At political level, the EU has implemented a set of initiatives directly aimed at tackling cocaine production and trafficking from Latin America and the Caribbean into Europe. The EU drug strategy (2005–12) ([22]) and EU drugs action plan 2009–12 set specific objectives for the Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) region.

In December 2007, the EU Council adopted conclusions welcoming continued cooperation with Latin America and the Caribbean in tackling trafficking along the cocaine routes (Council of the European Union, 2007). In this respect, the Council expressed support among others for alternative development, demand reduction efforts and supply reduction, including sharing best practices achieved in the EU–LAC Intelligence Sharing Working Group, which concluded its activities in 2009.

The EU–LAC Coordination and Cooperation Mechanism on Drugs was launched in 1995. This mechanism is the key forum for inter-regional cooperation on drug-related problems, especially cocaine. It operates in the form of an annual plenary meeting and several technical meetings throughout the year. The XIth high-level meeting took place in Quito in May 2009. It resulted in the 'Quito Declaration' ([23]), which reaffirms the political will to strengthen bi-regional EU-LAC cooperation against drugs.

In recognition of the responsibility of the EU and the Andean Community (CAN) to work together to deal with the challenges posed by illicit drugs, a unique EU-CAN (Andean Community) High Level Specialised Dialogue on Drugs — the only such dialogue at sub-regional level — has been underway since 1995, with annual meetings at senior official level. The EU has also signed agreements with each of the four CAN member states (Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru) on precursors and chemical substances frequently used in the illicit manufacture of narcotic drugs (known as 'precursor agreements'). High-level experts from the EU and CAN meet regularly to coordinate and exchange information on implementing these agreements.

The European Union (European Commission and EU Member States) is a major donor for operational projects to prevent drug production and trafficking in Latin America. At the end of December 2009, European funding to anti-drug projects in the region totalled about EUR 360 million. The focus for EU international efforts is support for alternative development initiatives. For instance, in Colombia, three 'Peace Laboratories' to promote alternative development and peaceful conflict resolution were financed, with total funding of about EUR 68 million. Building on this work, a regional development programme for peace and security with funding of EUR 26 million started in 2009.

([22]) Online at http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/index.cfm?nNodeID=6790.

([23]) Online at http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/09/st10/st10758.en09.pdf

In April 2007, the European Commission signed the regional strategy for cooperation with the Andean Community, allocating EUR 50 million for the period 2007–13. One of the three priority areas for cooperation is to support the Andean countries in the CAN in the fight against illicit drugs. A first intervention in this field was approved within the 2008 Annual Action Programme, namely PRADI-CAN (Progama Antidrogas ilícitas en la Comunidad Andina). One of its main objectives is to establish a network between national observatories on drug trafficking. PRADI-CAN will also reinforce and develop further the control of essential chemical precursors in the CAN countries. The EU is contributing EUR 3.25 million out of the programme's total budget of just over EUR 4 million.

In 2009, the European Commission launched the bi-regional project COPOLAD (Latin America and EU Cooperation in Antidrug Policies) with an EC contribution of EUR 6 million. The project aims to facilitate cooperation between national agencies responsible for drug policy in Latin America and the EU.

With respect to cocaine trafficking routes through West Africa, many initiatives are underway at European level. The European Commission is funding a number of bilateral projects in West Africa under its European Development Fund (EDF) that aim to combat organised crime, including drug trafficking. At the regional level, the Commission initiated a three-year project in 2006 on 'Law Enforcement and Intelligence Cooperation Against Cocaine Trafficking from Latin America to West Africa' (CO-LA-CAO), and a major capacity-building project in West Africa is planned to complement this project in 2009–10. Moreover, under the EDF the EU, with an overall budget of EUR 15 million, is ready to assist West African law enforcement agencies in the implementation of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Action Plan on Drugs.

Among the initiatives taken by the European Union, the Council, through the horizontal working party on drugs (HDG), has placed West Africa high on its agenda and has presented a resolution on strengthening international support to West Africa to the 2008 UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs. An important step forward in the operational effort to curb cocaine trafficking through West Africa was taken when in September 2007, seven EU Member States ([24]) signed a formal Treaty to set up the Maritime Analysis and Operations Centre–Narcotics (MAOC-N) in Lisbon, Portugal. MAOC-N is a regional initiative supported by EC funding. It is designed to coordinate the interdiction of illicit drugs trafficked by air and maritime conveyances in the Atlantic region in order to prevent drugs from reaching European markets, to deny traffickers the revenue from the delivery of the drugs, and in general to provide long-term deterrence of illicit drug smuggling. During its first two years of existence MAOC-N, on behalf of its partners, coordinated the seizure or led to the jettisoning of a total of about 45 tonnes of cocaine. European countries are currently considering other similar initiatives. For example, in September 2008 France launched another anti-drug coordination centre focused specifically on maritime drug trafficking in the Mediterranean — aiming mainly to combat cannabis resin (hashish) and cocaine trafficking. The Centre de Coordination pour la Lutte Anti Drogue en Méditerranée (CeCLAD-M) of the French National Police

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([24]) The co-founders of this project are Ireland, Spain, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal and the United Kingdom, but it is open to other Member States. On 1 January 2008 the European Commission, Europol and Greece gained the status of observers, as did the US Joint Inter Agency Task Force–South (JIATF-S, based in Key West, Florida), Canada, Cape Verde.