



Drug-related crime and seizures of illicit drugs

During the last few years, many changes have occurred in drug related crimes. The most significant change in Estonia and elsewhere has been the movement of the illicit drug market from the street to the internet and the dark net. This situation has caused changes in both the illicit drug market as well in the countermeasures to deal with this problem. In order to acquire illicit drugs, one does not have to go out on the street or know the dealers personally, rather one can order them online and they are sent to the customer by the post service. According the data of the Tax and Customs Board, as well as the Police and Border Guard, the delivery of small quantities of illicit drugs into the country by parcel post is a growing trend.

The most popular narcotic continues to be cannabis. **Table 1** shows that the confiscation of cannabis products increased rapidly until 2015. In 2017, the quantity of confiscated cannabis products totalled 158 kg, which is much less than in 2016 (672.5 kg). According to the police, the decline in the amounts of cannabis products is related to reallocation of resources related to police work, whereby greater attention is being focused on the handlers of extremely dangerous fentanyl and less resources are being allocated to groups dealing with other substances.

The confiscation of fentanyl has been a police priority for years. Until 2017, up to 1kg of fentanyl was confiscated in Estonia, but in 2017, the confiscated amount increased dramatically to 10 kilograms. Considering the potency of fentanyl and analogous drugs, this is a considerable amount that poses a serious threat to the Estonian illicit drug market. Fentanyl is smuggled into Estonia in both solid and liquid form, through dealers as well as by the users themselves in small quantities.

In 2016, in addition to the fentanyl and 3-methyl-fentanyl available on the Estonian illicit drug market, new more potent forms of fentanyl appeared (*furanylfentanyl*, *acrylfentanyl* and *carfentanyl*), which quickly replaced the existing fentanyl on the market. Heroin is not available on Estonian drug market and there is not community of users.



If during the last few years, the quantities of confiscated cocaine have remained around 3 kg, in 2017 a total of 17 kg of cocaine was confiscated. Most of the confiscated substance was comprised of the highly refined cocaine that was found accidentally on the Lohusalu beach, and that reached Estonia via undetermined means. Considering the level of purity, the police believe that the cocaine packages that were found on the beach were not intended for street sale, but rather for further processing. Users cannot take such super-strength cocaine.

If the amounts of GHB/GBL confiscated in 2014 and 2016 were extraordinarily large, then the amounts declined drastically in 2017. The total amount confiscated in 2017 was 47 kg of GHB/GBL. Since 2013 GBL has been on list V of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances and their processing has been prohibited only when the purpose is to cause drug addiction in people (RT I, 05.03.2013, 1). Regardless of the change in the law, the import of GBL is still a problem in Estonia.

Table 1. Amounts of confiscated illicit narcotic substances 2011–2017 (kg)

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Cannabis resin (hashish)	45,6	4,7	109,2	273,1	811,9	548,2	80,1
Herbal cannabis	53,5	25,1	51,2	351,5	59,6	45,8	53,7
Cannabis plants	29,3	6,6	16,21	13,2	11,8	78,5	24,2
Heroin	0,1	0,0004	0,0007	0,0032	0,00086	0,00031	0,0083
Cocaine	0,8	3,4	1,79	2,78	3,51	3,42	17,1
Amphetamine	41,6	14,2	25,44	31,07	117,1	26,7	30,3
Methamphetamine	1,5	27,1	2,44	35,51	1,9	6,49	2,44
GHB/GBL	13,5	28,9	23,2	172,4	59,8	282,5	47,2
Fentanyl and its analogues	0,9	1,7	1,07	0,74	0,99	0,600	10,2

Source: Estonian Forensic Science Institute, 2018

During the last few years, the prices of illicit drugs have stabilised in Estonia as well as the rest of the world and remained at 2013–14 levels. Most transactions are for between 1 and 10 user doses. The average price for one gram of herbal cannabis is €20 and a gram of hashish is €15. It is important to note that the relative THC content of cannabis has increased, i.e. the substance is significantly stronger than before. The per gram price for amphetamine and methamphetamine is between €15 and €20. An Ecstasy tablet costs €6 on the street. On average, a dose of GHB/GBL (5 ml) costs €5. The price of cocaine ranges from €80 to €150 per gram depending on the purity of the substance and during the last few years the purity has increased. One dose of fentanyl (0.015–0.030 g) will cost the user €10 to €15. Long-term drug users usually need more than two fentanyl doses per day. During the temporary deficit of fentanyl in late 2017, the price of a dose rose to €20 to €25 for a short period, but when the market normalised the price drop to its previous level. The amount being bought

can also impact the difference in price. More than one dose at a time is starting to be common approach to fentanyl users, which had increased the price of the substance, since the amount is a supposed five-dose envelope is only enough for 3 to 4 doses.

The number of misdemeanours related to illicit drugs (NPALS § 151) has increased in 2015 and 2016, but remained at a similar level in 2017. This increase is not directly related to the increased police attention to users. Most of the people who are charged with misdemeanours related to illicit drugs have attracted the attention of the police due to the commission of some other crime. These are mainly criminal offenses against property and drunk driving offenses.

Through the years, the greatest number of offenses have been related to the illegal handling of narcotic substances (§ 184). The number of narcotics-related crimes was higher in 2017 than in 2016.

Table 2. Misdemeanours and crimes related to narcotics, 2015–2017

		2015	2016	2017
Act on Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances and Precursors thereof (NPALS)				
§ 15¹	Illegal handling of small quantities of narcotic drugs or psychotropic substances	3633	4372	4289
Penal Code				
§ 183	Illegal handling of small quantities of narcotic drugs or psychotropic substances	117	97	136
§ 184	Illegal handling of large quantities of narcotic drugs or psychotropic substances	1042	1023	1271
§ 185	Trafficking of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances to persons eighteen years and younger	72	101	54
§ 186	Inducing persons to engage in illegal use of narcotic drugs or psychotropic substances	1	1	0
§ 187	Inducing minors to illegally consume narcotic drugs or psychotropic substances or other narcotic substances	8	6	10
§ 188	Illegal cultivation of opium poppy, cannabis or coca shrubs	70	55	41
§ 189	Preparation for distribution of narcotic drugs or psychotropic substances	39	18	8
§ 190	Violation of requirements for handling narcotic drugs or psychotropic substances or precursors thereof or of requirements for related recording keeping or reporting	0	0	0
Total	§ 183–§ 190	1349	1301	1520

Source: Ministry of Justice 2018