Background

- 1st smartshop in Portugal: 2007
- 2013: 63 smartshops
- Social Alarm
- 2013: New law - prohibition to produce, sell and advertise

What are we missing on NPS phenomenon in Portugal?

Prevalence similar/lower than other illicit substances than cannabis
NDD – 18 years (2017) – LYP = 2%

Decree-Law No. 54/2013 of April 17th
Method: Trendspotter study (EMCDDA)- pilot (2017/2018)

Research topics

“NPS” concept: what substances are included in this category?

Which substances are used?

What are the main patterns of use?

What are the main user profiles?

What means of access are used?

What are the related perceptions and social representations?

What are the main harms?
Method: Trendspotter study (EMCDDA)- pilot (2017/2018)

Data triangulation

Literature & data review

Online survey
addiction professionals and NPS users

Facilitated expert group
(presentations; focus groups)

- National surveys
- Specific surveys
- Treatment Demand
- Seizures
- Early warning system
- Mortality
- Users online forums (∗)

Addiction professionals (N=58)
NPS Users (N=21)

Criteria for facilitated groups: knowledge on the NPS field

- Academic field: wastewater analysis, drug checking, quantitative/qualitative research with users
- Seizures: Police Scientific Lab
- Mortality: National Institute of Legal Medicine and Forensic Sciences
- Hospital Emergencies
- Indicated prevention with young people
- Treatment
- Harm reduction in recreational settings; with street problem drug users
- Specific groups: MSM (didn’t attend)
Results

What substances do you consider to be NPS?

NPS as a concept

Online survey (2017)
Results: what substances are being used?

- Plants
- Synthetic cannabinoids
- Synthetic Cathinones

Source: Seizures - Police Scientific Lab (2017)
### Results: what substances are being used?

#### Last 12M

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Substance</th>
<th>15-74</th>
<th>18</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cannabis</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
<td>25.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heroin</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cocaine</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Amphetamines</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ecstasy</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>LSD</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Halluc. Mushrooms</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NPS</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Synthetic cannabinoids    | 0.1%  | 1.6% |
| Synthetic cathinones       | 0.1%  | 1.3% |
| Plants                     | 0.1%  | 1.5% |

#### Last 12M

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Substance</th>
<th>2016/17</th>
<th>2017</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cannabis</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Plants</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Results: consumption patterns

- Infrequent consumption
- Used in leisure periods/recreational settings
- **Users of illicit substances**
  - Used when the preferred illicit substance is not available, *without further continuation in use*
  - Administration: synthetic cannabinoids are used mostly in herbal mixtures, which are smoked; synthetic cathinones are mainly in powder and sniffed
Results: User profiles

Typologies

- Partygoers
  - trance parties
  - dance music summer festivals

- Psychonauts

- Problematic drug users
  - older
  - more vulnerable

- Inmates?
- MSM?

Geographic distribution

- Higher in the Autonomous Regions of Azores and Madeira
  - More prevalent
  - Public visibility
  - Problematic
Results: Means of Access

• Most users declare that they obtain NPS products through friends and acquaintances

• Most users don’t use the Internet to acquire NPS, although this seems to be increasing

• Occasional shops in Lisbon continue to sell NSP in a clandestine way

• In recreational settings, NPS are sold as other drugs
Results: Perceptions, beliefs, motivations

- NPS is rarely the user’s first choice
  - except in the case of the psychonaut population

- Even among users, NPS are seen as
  - lower quality products
  - more harmful than «traditional» drugs
  - more dangerous to health, as chemicals and easily adulterated substances

- Hallucinogenic substances (such as salvia divinorum) receive the most favorable opinions
  - namely among psychonauts and more experienced NPS users

- Curiosity is the main reported motivation for NSP use

- Declining phenomenon, with Small social visibility, namely after smarthops closed in 2013
Results: main harms

• a relatively unanimous perception of the perils of NPS use. Relevant literature and data collected in this study tend to relate acute physical and psychiatric symptoms with NPS use in different settings, which require particular crisis intervention skills.

• Sporadic presence of NPS in post-mortem toxicological exams, 4 cases in 2016 (not necessarily the cause of death)
Conclusions

• Ambiguity of the term New Psychoactive Substances
• Synthetic cannabinoids and cathinones: most used
• Occasional use
• Recreational settings
• Some use among problematic drug users
• Intentional use: when the others are not available, to experiment (psychonauts)
• Unintentional use phenomena
• Access through friends, dealers (less through the internet, still some reference to physical shops)
Thank you for your attention!

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Novas Substâncias Psicoativas em Portugal
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