

# NPS in Portugal: Trendspotter study



**LISBON  
ADDICTIONS  
2019**

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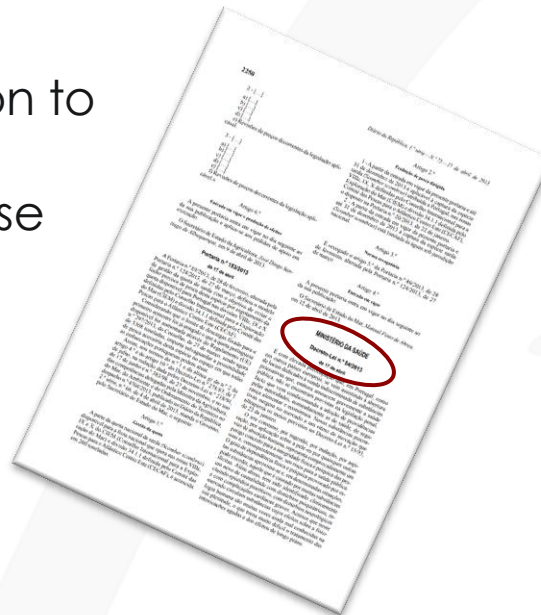
**SICAD** Serviço de Intervenção nos Comportamentos Aditivos e nas Dependências

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# 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 (x)**

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



## Criteria for facilitated groups: knowledge on the NPS field

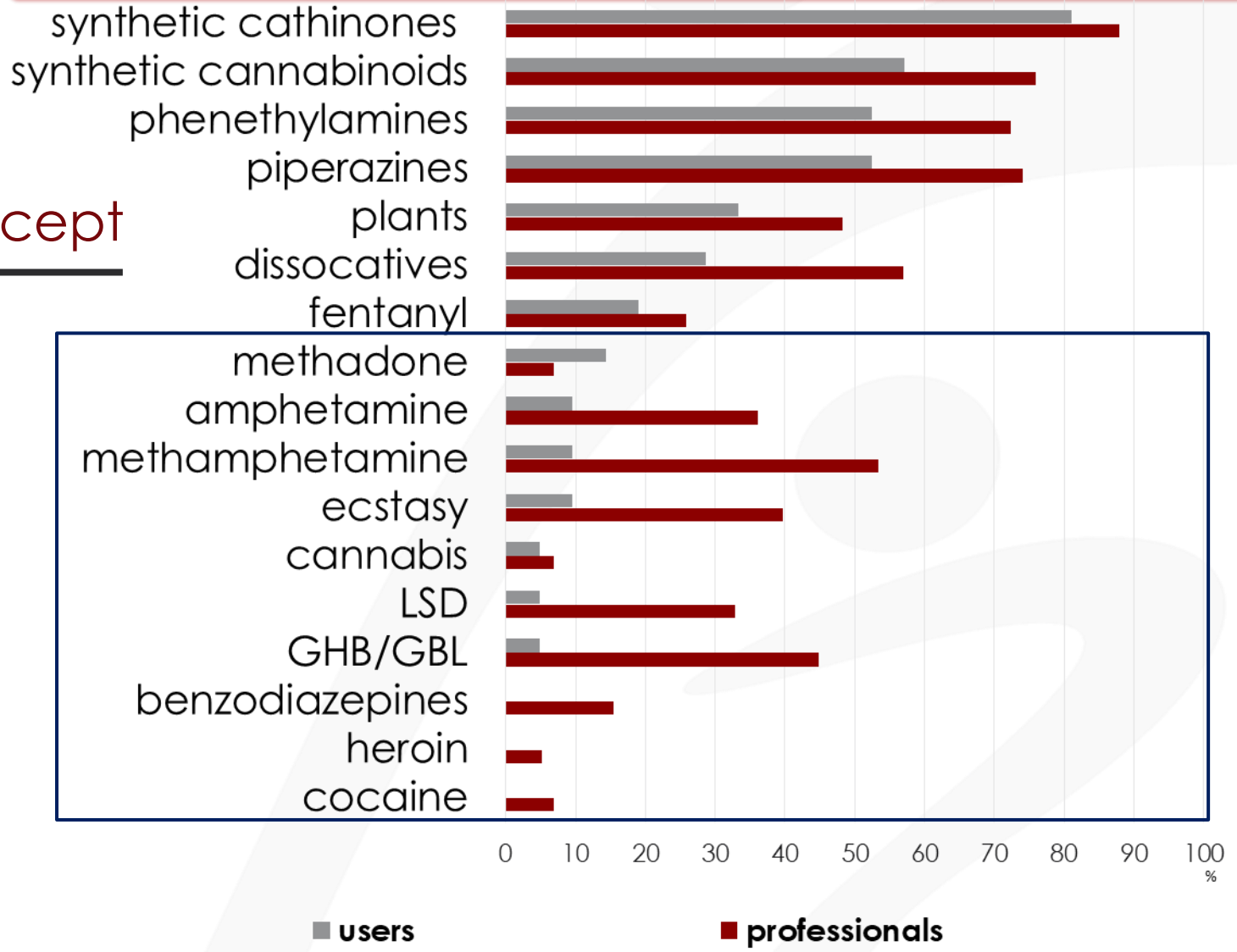
- **Academic field:** wastewater analysis, drug checking, quantitative/qualitative research with users
- **Seizures:** Police Scientific Lab
- **Mortality:** National Institute of Legal Medicine and Forensic Sciences
- **Hospital Emergencies**
- **Indicated prevention** with young people
- **Treatment**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

# Results

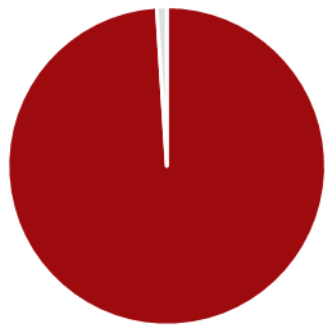
«What substances do you consider to be NPS?»

## NPS as a concept

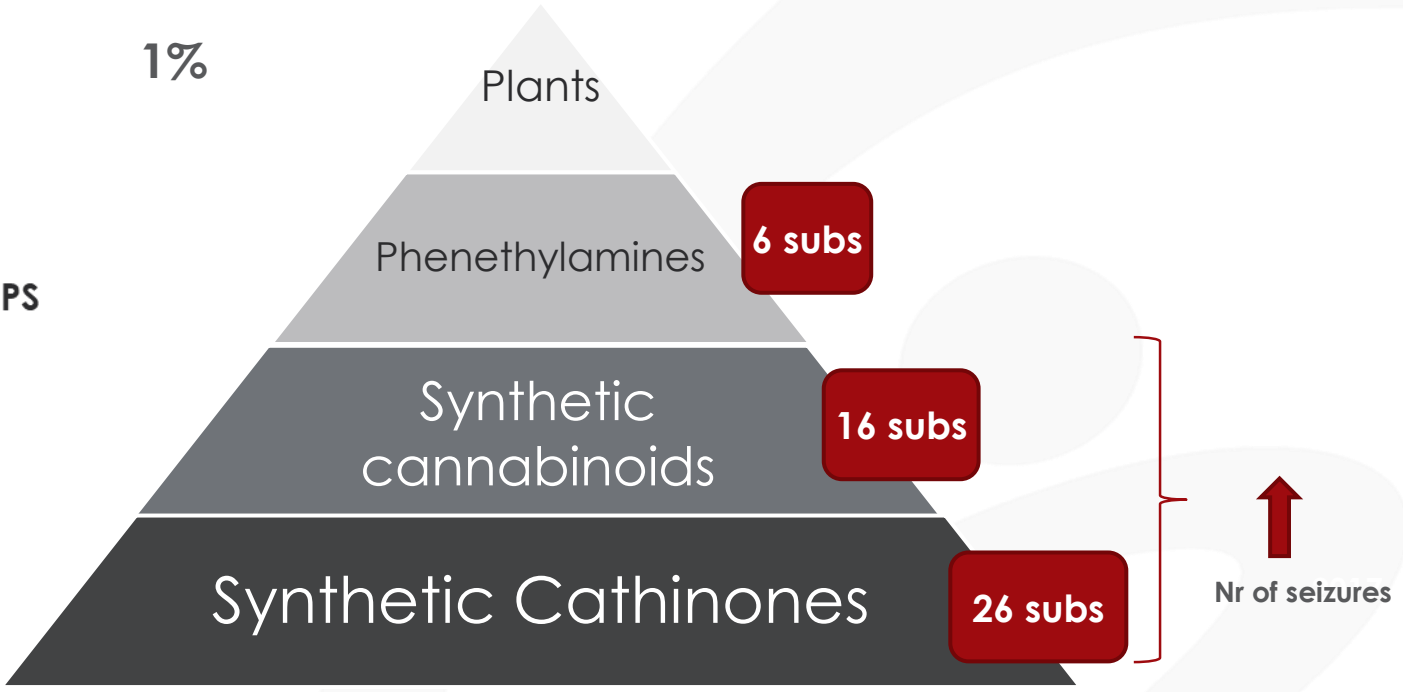
Online survey (2017)



# Results: what substances are being used?



■ Illicit substances ■ NPS



Source: Seizures-Police Scientific Lab (2017)

# Results: what substances are being used?

Last 12M

15-74

18

Cannabis

4,5%

25,3%

Cannabis

Heroin

0,1%

1,4%

Heroin

Cocaine

0,2%

3,0%

Cocaine

Amphetamines

0,0%

4,6%

Amphetamines

Ecstasy

0,1%

Ecstasy

LSD

0,0%

2,8%

LSD

Halluci. Mushrooms

0,0%

Halluci. Mushrooms

NPS

0,2%

2,1%

NPS

Synthetic cannabinoids

0,1%

1,6%

Synthetic cannabinoids

Synthetic cathinones

0,1%

1,3%

Synthetic cathinones

Plants

0,1%

1,5%

Plants

2016/17

2017

Last 12M

2014

Sources:  
General Population Survey -  
Balsa, Vital e Urbano  
Survey National Defense Day -  
Carapinha e Calado



# 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

## Geographic distribution

- Higher in the Autonomous Regions of **Azores** and **Madeira**
  - More prevalent
  - Public visibility
  - Problematic

## Typologies

- **Partygoers**
  - trance parties
  - dance music summer festivals
- **Psychonauts**
- **Problematic drug users**
  - older
  - more vulnerable
- Inmates?
- MSM?

# 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

Metodologia Trendspotter | Relatório Final

2018

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