



# New psychoactive substances and drug policy challenges

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*CADAP Regional Conference on new psychoactive substances*

6-7 February 2019, Evropa Hotel, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan



# New psychoactive substances (NPS)





# What is the situation of NPS in Europe?

- NPS are proliferating at an unprecedented rate
- Pose a significant risk to public health
- Challenge to international drug control system and to national systems
- Limited information available



# Policy challenges of new psychoactive substances (NPS)





# The Internet transforms drug markets

- Digital technologies: revolutionised ways of communication and social interaction
- Growth of online commerce platforms with global reach
- Selling and buying conventional and new drugs of any kind globally, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week without any face-to-face meeting
- High availability & easy accessibility
- More information available to users & exchange of information





## Surface Web

<10% of Internet

– Indexed Internet

## Deep Web

>90% of Internet

– Unindexed Internet

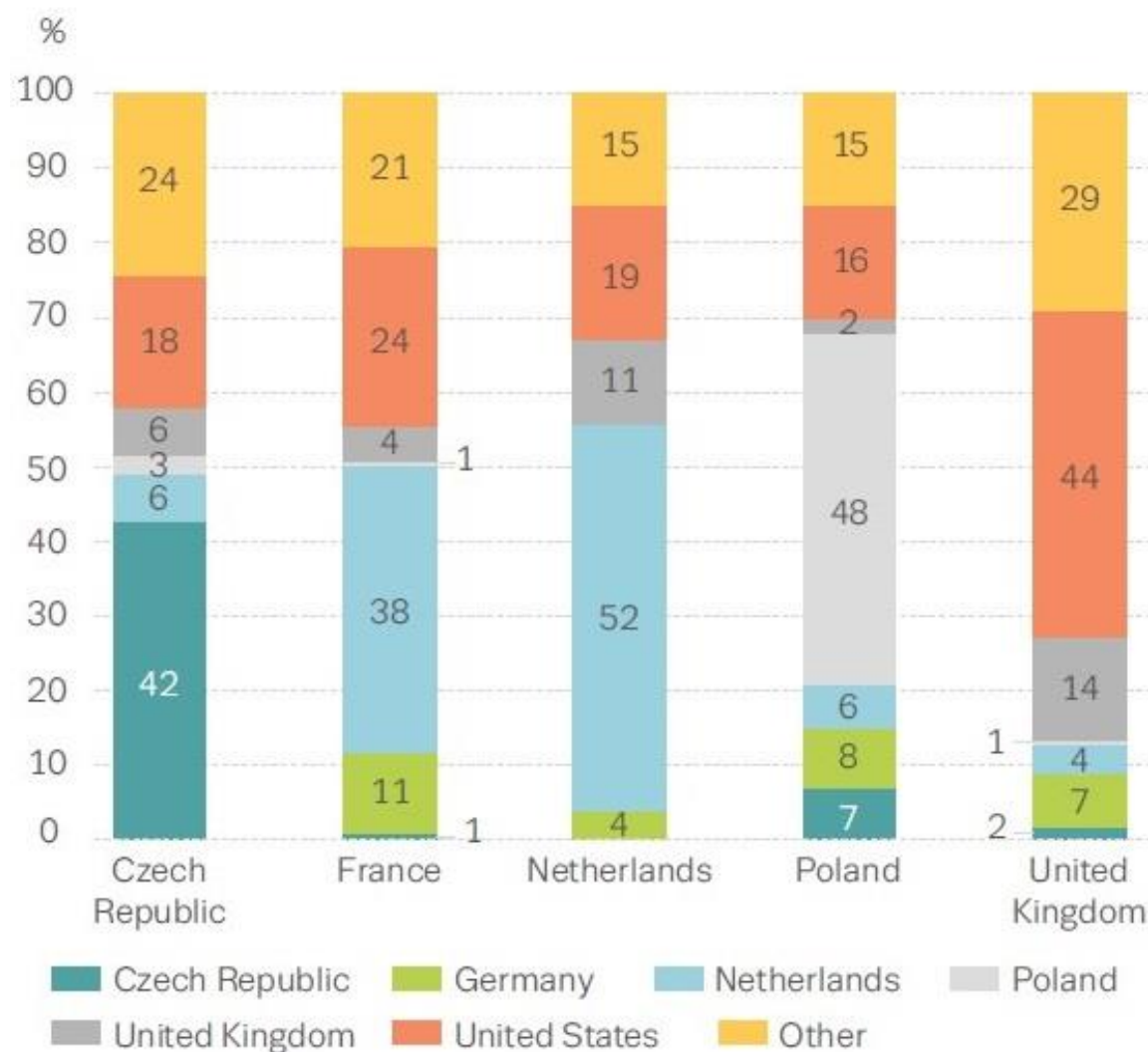


## Dark Web (Darknet)

- Subset of Deep Web
- Hidden Services



# Distribution of NPS on the surface web

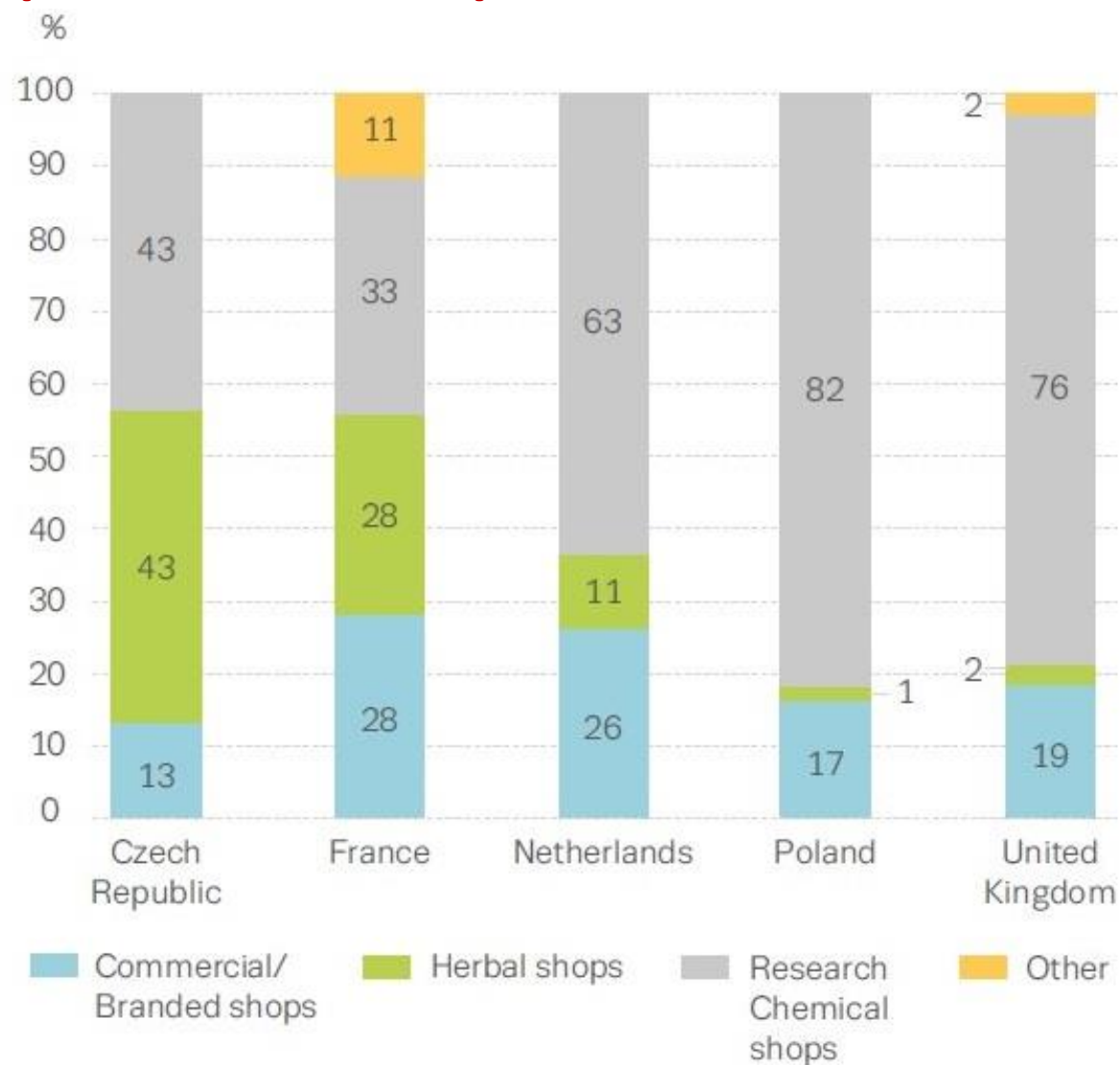


- 584 online shops between November 2013 and May 2014

(Martinez et al., 2016)



# Types of shops on the surface web



(Martinez et al., 2016)





## Surface Web

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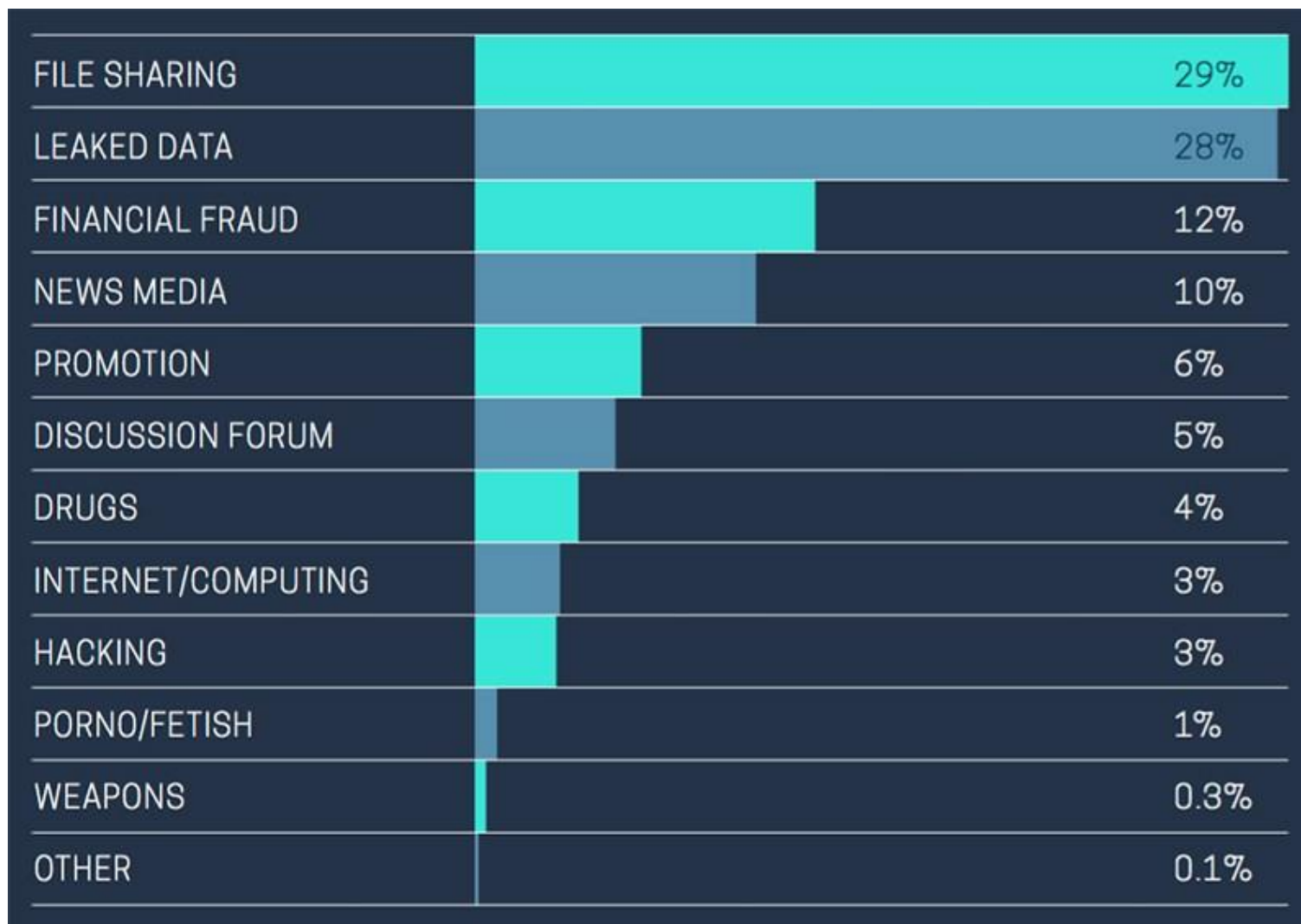


## Dark Web (Darknet)

- Subset of Deep Web
- Hidden Services




# Classification of darknet services



(Intelliag, 2016)



# The beginning...Silk Road



## Silk Road

anonymous market

messages 0 | orders 0 | account \$0.00

Search

Go

Shop by Category

Drugs 8,670

- Cannabis 2,066
- Dissociatives 165
- Ecstasy 660
- Opioids 591
- Other 455
- Precursors 50
- Prescription 2,146
- Psychedelics 981
- Stimulants 1,102

Apparel 264

Art 127

Biotic materials 1

Books 861

Collectibles 5

Computer equipment 32


Custom Orders 68

Digital goods 509


Drug paraphernalia 305

Electronics 77


Erotica 540




1g MDMA 82%+ High Quality -Made in Germany-  
\$1.30




50 gr. Crystal MDMA Rocks  
\$23.33



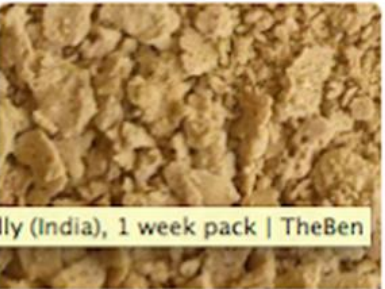
Valium 10mg/ Diazepam (100 Pills)  
\$2.32




3g XxX AAA QUALITY WEED,AMAZING  
\$0.98




Kamagra jelly (India), 1 week pack  
\$0.98



Honeycomb Wax (85+% THC) Fully Purged  
\$1.45

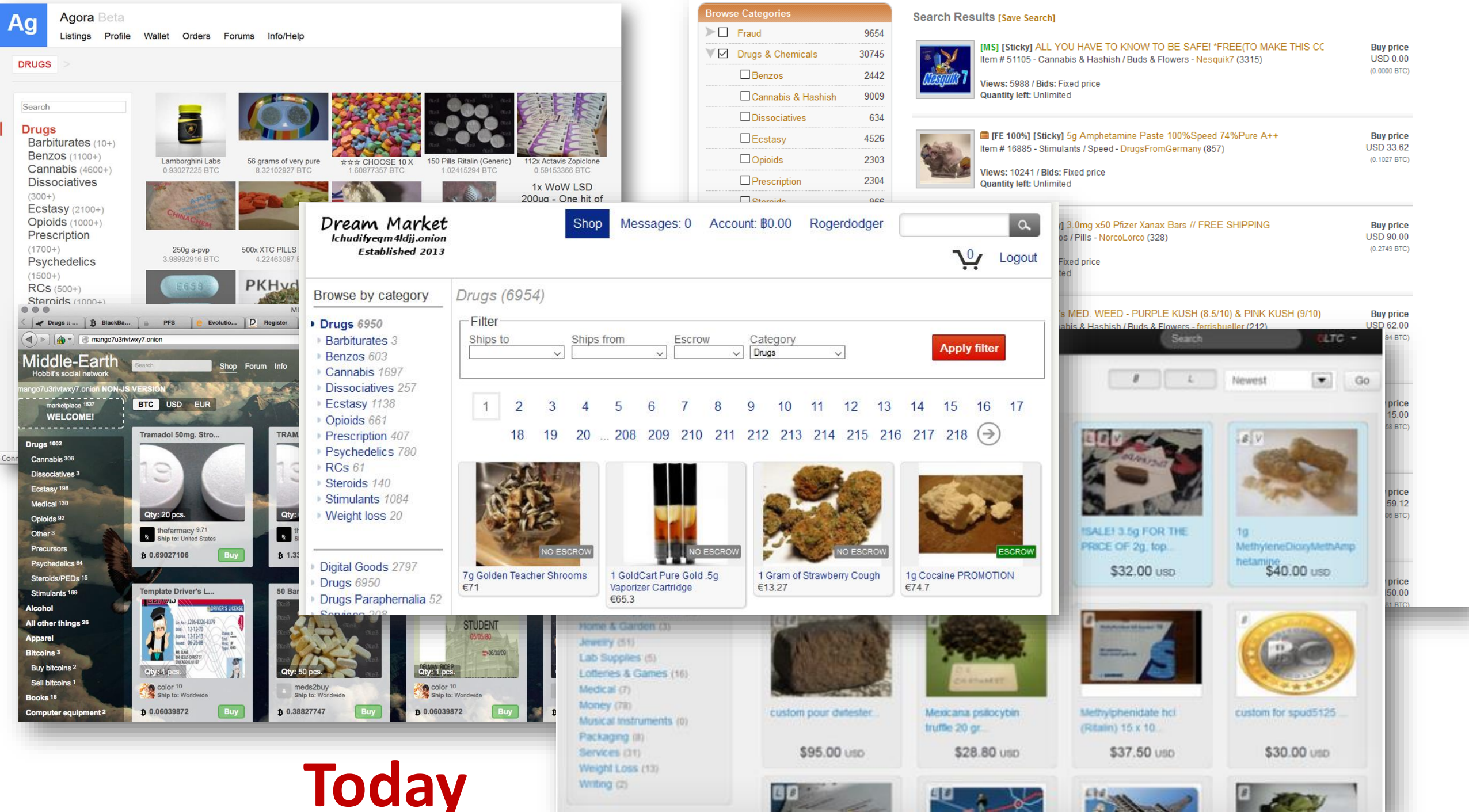


1 gram \* Moroccan Hash \* DUTCH QUALITY  
\$0.27



Citalopram 10x 20mg tablets  
\$0.10

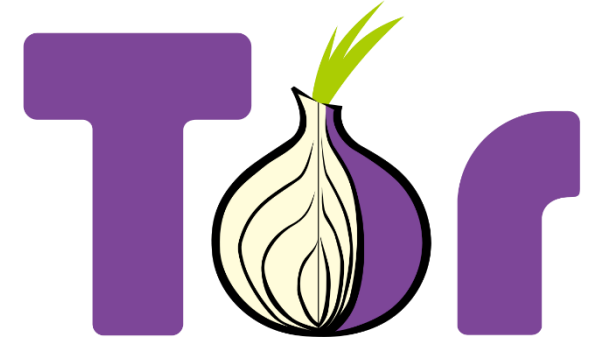






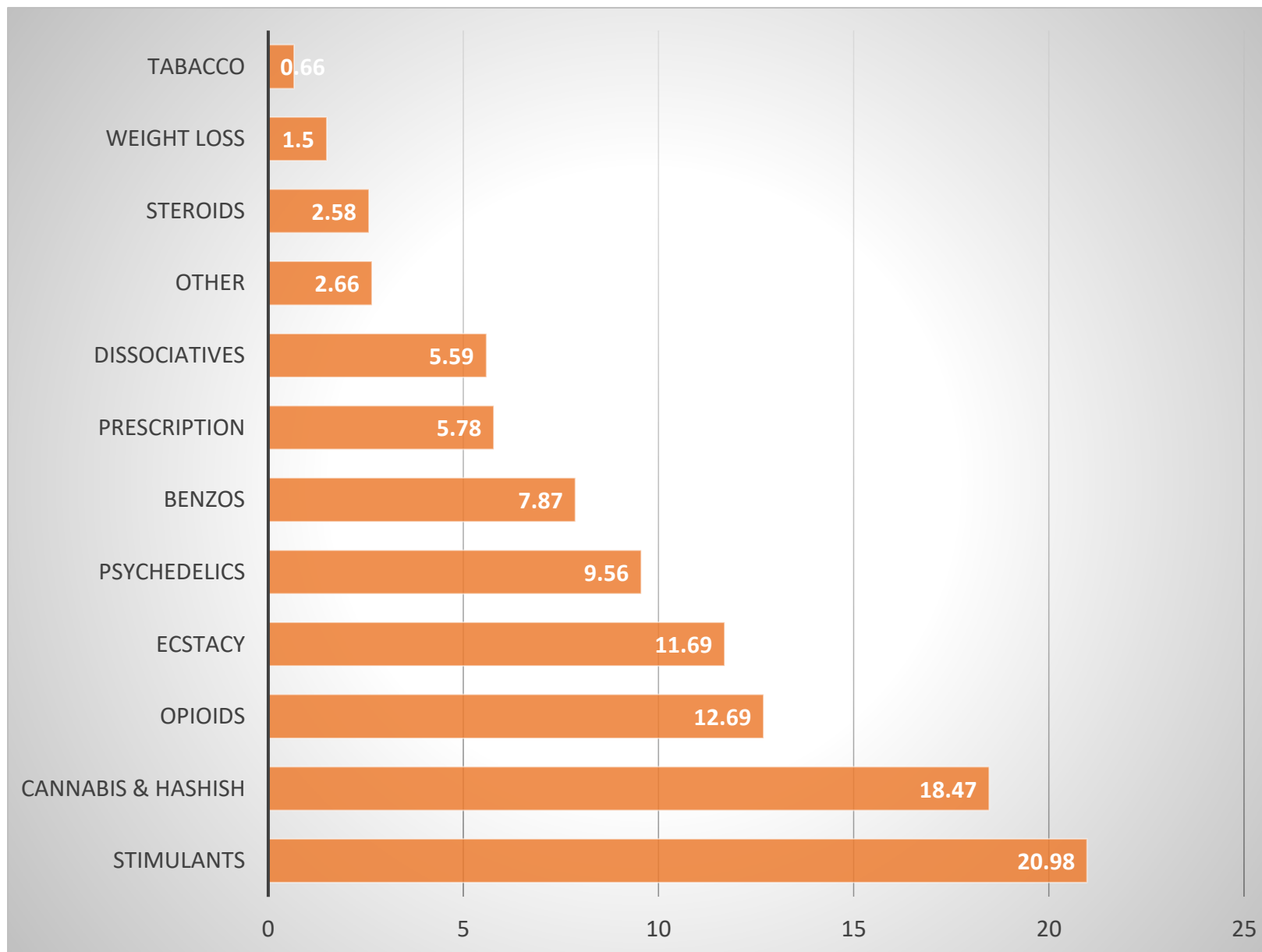
# What are cryptomarkets?

- Digital platforms
- Anonymizing software (e.g., TOR)
- Cryptocurrencies (e.g., Bitcoin)
- Delivery via postal services





# Most popular drugs on cryptomarket AlphaBay

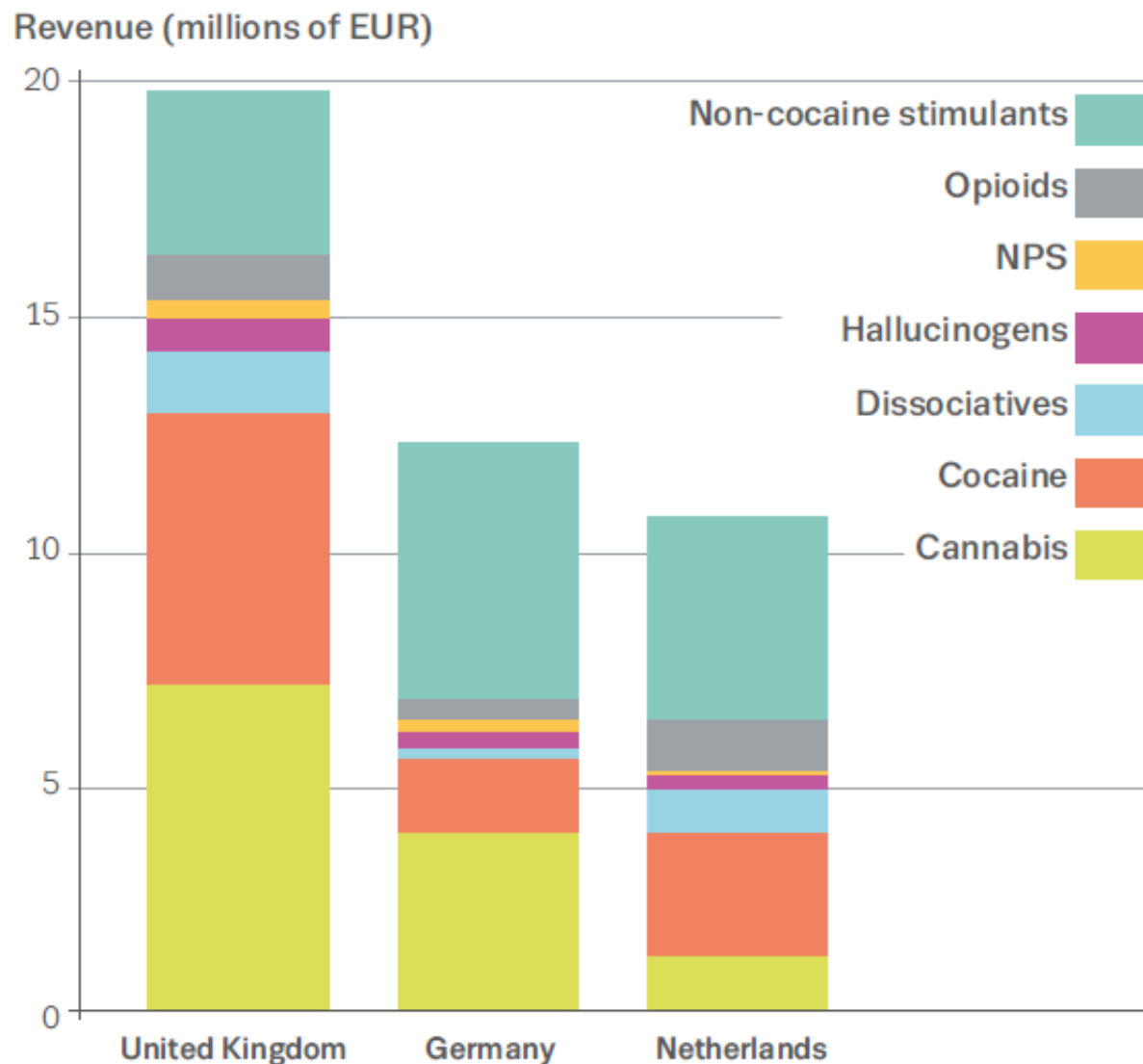


(Tzanetakis 2018)





# Distribution of NPS on darknet drug markets



- NPS accounts for a small proportion of all drug trade on cryptomarkets.

(EMCDDA & EUROPOL, 2017)



# What drives demand for NPS?

- Availability and legality, non-availability of traditional drugs
- Curiosity and sensation seeking, pleasure, self-exploration, coping, spiritual attainment
- Cognitive enhancement and habit (Soussan & Kjellgren, 2016; Van Hout & Hearne, 2015)
- Shift in motivations: ease of online access, perceived value for money and poor quality of available traditional illicit drugs (Global Drug Survey, 2016)
- Changing legislation → online markets for NPS → visibility and accessibility changed → NPS as a more diverse phenomenon (Trautmann, 2016)



# Related health risks for consumers?

- General trend towards highly potent substances
  - Risk of severe poisoning to users
  - Easily to conceal and smuggle → Cross-border threat to health
  - Synthetic opioids (esp. fentanils) and synthetic cannabinoids
- Fentanyl family
  - Sold as heroin, other illicit opioids, falsified medicines
- Synthetic cannabinoids
  - Popular among vulnerable groups: homeless and prisoners
  - Increase in the number of deaths



# Diversification of new substances and speed

- When one new psychoactive substance is identified and controlled → generic scheduling or individual listing of NPS?
- A replacement is already available → circumventing national legislation
- Alternative chemical structure → similar psychoactive effects
- Alternative manufacturing methods and precursors to circumvent controls
- Flexibility of producers to legislation
- Interest in NPS declines after scheduling (Ledberg, 2015)



# Links between NPS and traditional drug markets

- Comparative advantage of NPS in terms of low prices and quasi legal status
- Decreased availability and quality of traditional illicit drugs may drive demand for NPS
- Some NPS establish a market in their own right
- Some NPS mimic the psychoactive effects of traditional illicit drugs
- Once all substances are controlled and hold the same criminal sanctions → users may return to traditional controlled drug (EMCDDA & Europol, 2016)

(UNODC, 2017)



# Supply sided measures: legal control

- New laws prohibit unauthorised distribution of psychoactive substances
- Austria, Ireland, Romania, Portugal, Sweden & United Kingdom
- Trends in Europe: criminalisation of supply, no criminal sanctions for possession and personal use of NPS (EMCDDA, 2016)
- Controlling NPS leads to larger proportions of adulterations (van der Gouwe, 2017)





# Supply sided measures: criminalisation

- Adverse consequences of creating an illegal market (Reuter & Pardo, 2016)
- Displacement from surface web to cryptomarkets and discreet presence on surface web (Wadsworth, 2016)
- Development of newer, more dangerous substances that circumvent newly designed prohibitions (Van Amsterdam et al., 2013)
- Criminalisation does deter some dealers/producers
- Prohibition leaves more risk-seeking and probably more violent group of entrepreneurs in the market (Reuter & Pardo, 2016)



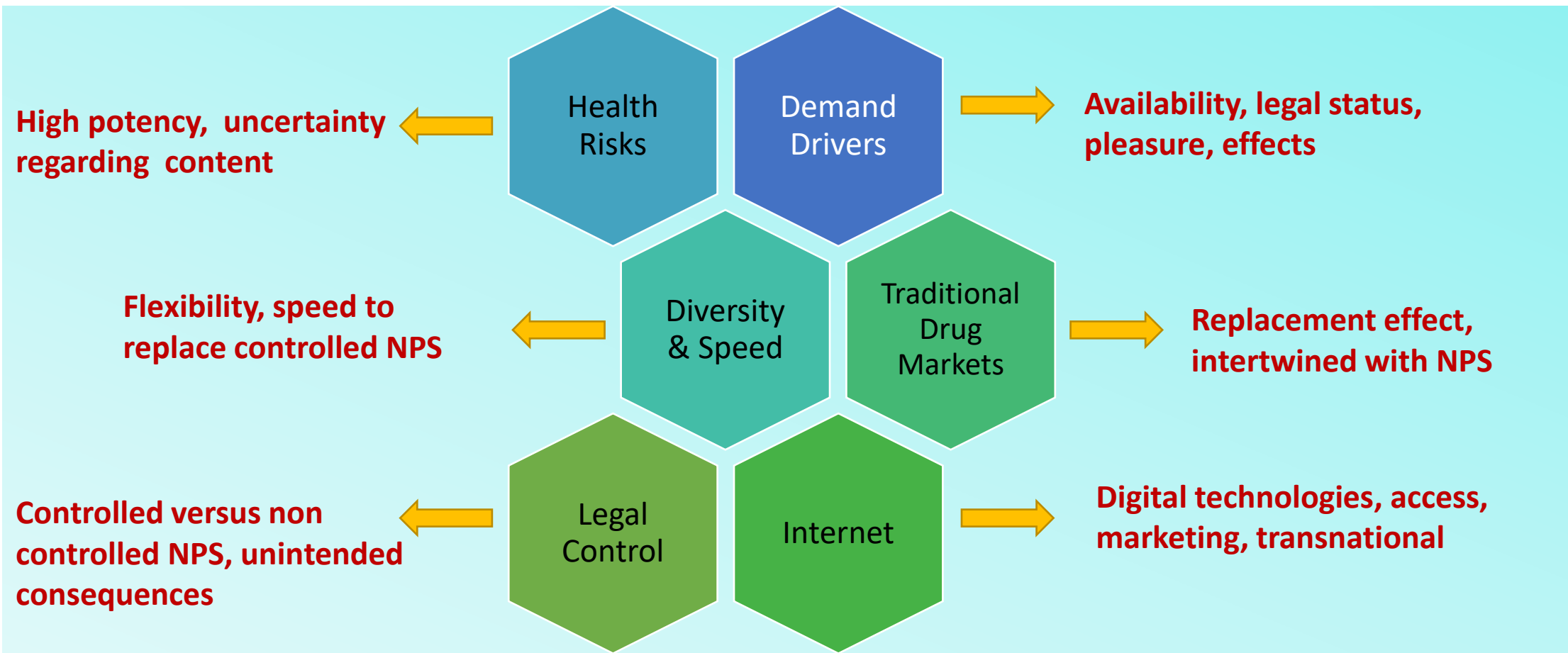
# Supply sided measures: regulation



- Alternative regulation for low-risk NPS
- Allow restricted sale of regulated substances
- Restrictions on minimum age, points of sale, advertisement
- Criminal sanctions for non approved sale of NPS
- Producers required to producers clinically test the harm of their substance and to list all ingredients
- Balance demand for access to NPS and risk of likely harm to individuals & society



# Conclusion: Policy challenges of NPS





**Marije Wouters & Jane Fountain (Eds.)**



rausch

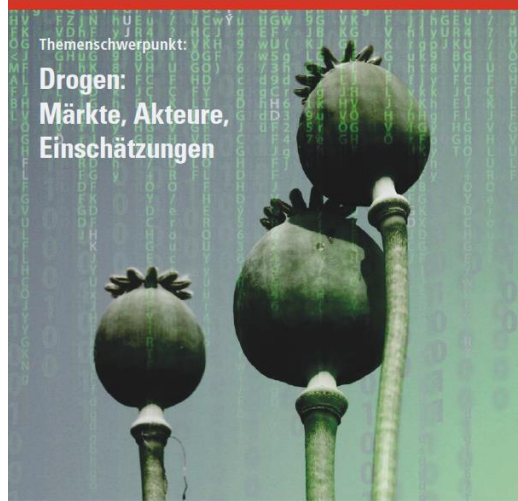
Wiener Zeitschrift für Suchttherapie

ISSN 2190-443X

6. Jahrgang  
Heft 4-2017

Themenswerpunkt:

**Drogen:**  
**Märkte, Akteure,**  
**Einschätzungen**



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## Drogen, Darknet und Organisierte Kriminalität

## Herausforderungen für Politik, Justiz und Drogenhilfe



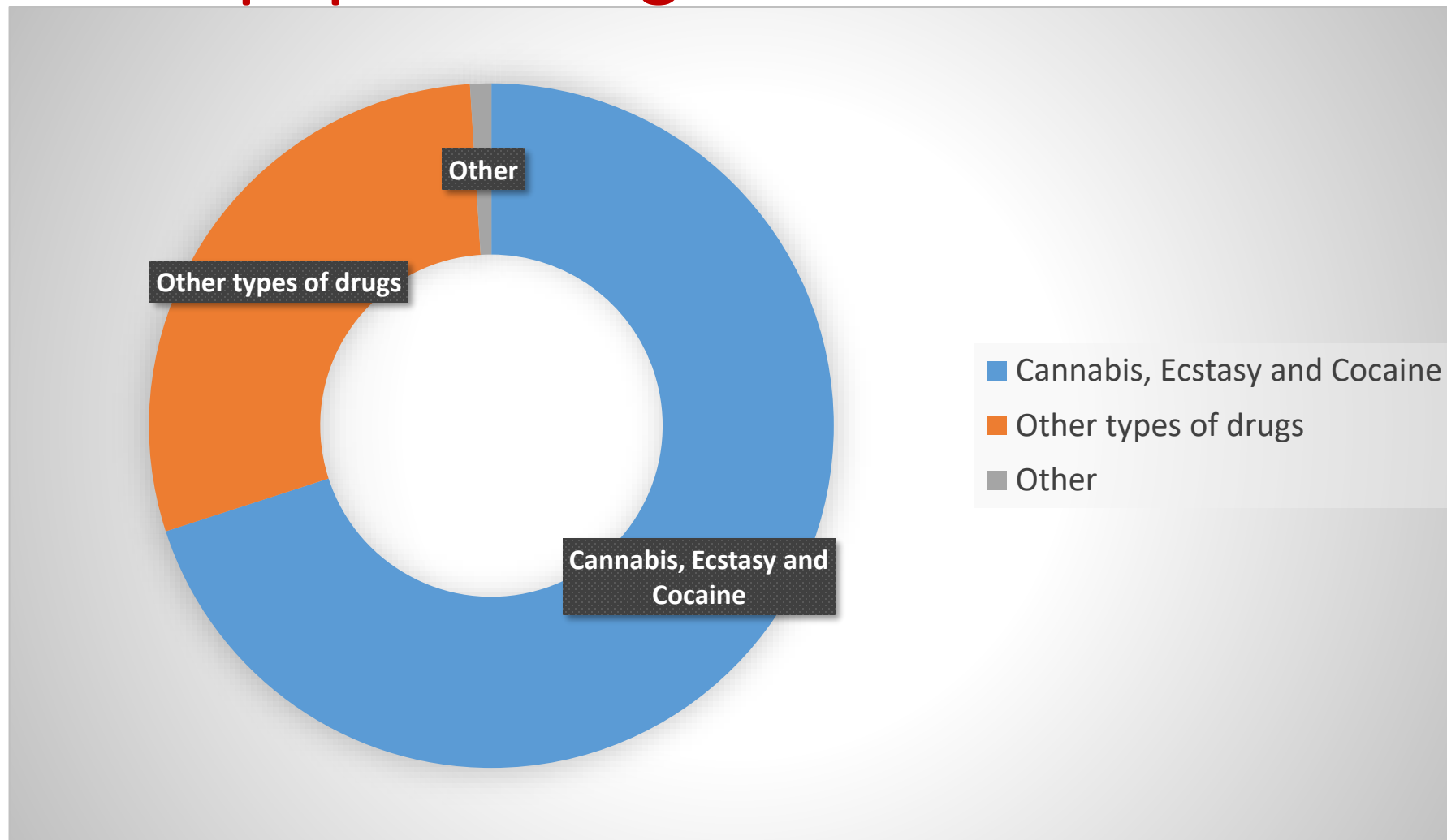
Volume 51 March 2018 ISSN 0955-1

THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF

# DRUG POLICY



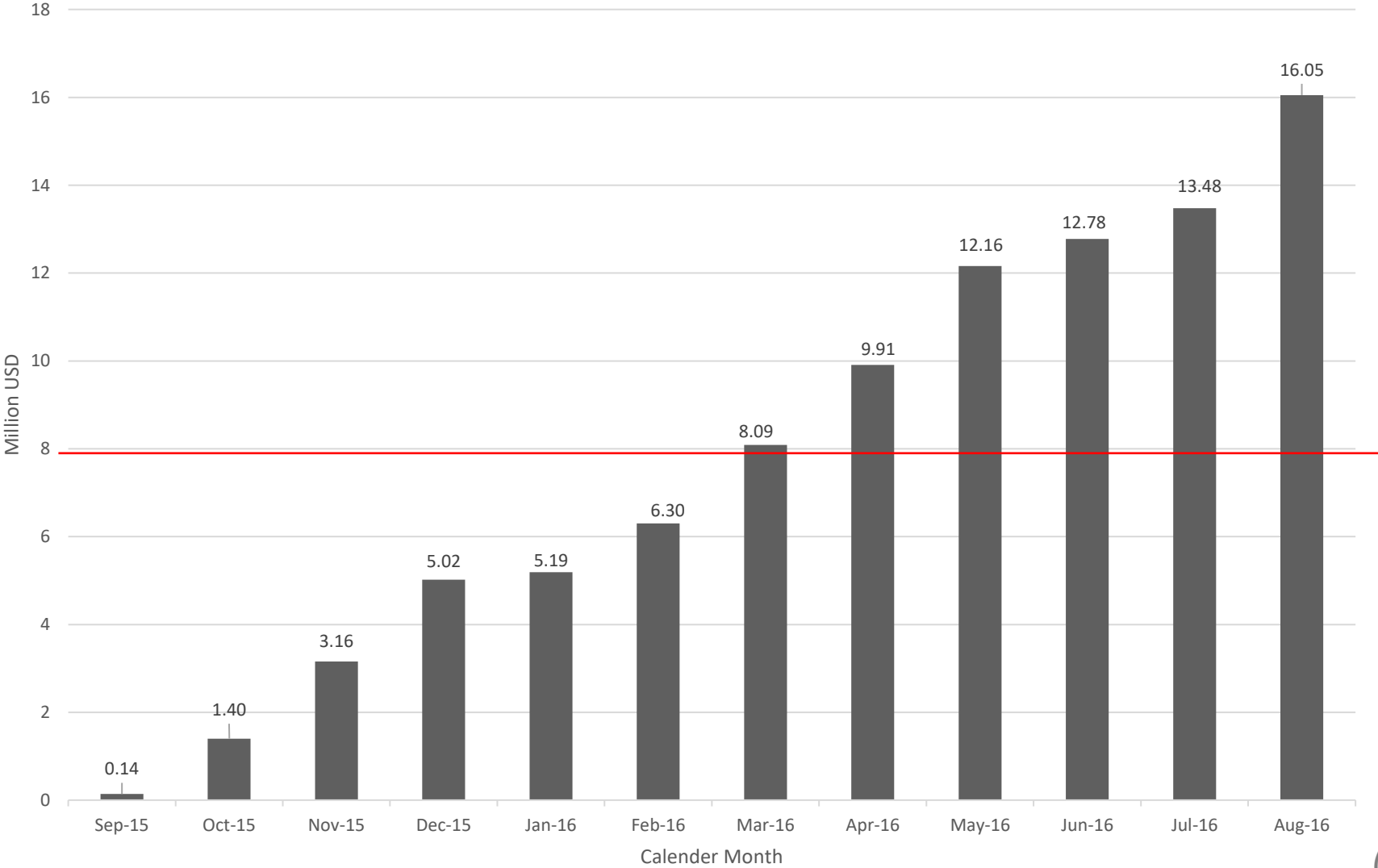
# Most popular drugs on darknet markets



(Soska & Christin 2015; Barratt et al. 2016; Van Buskirk et al. 2016; Tzanetakis 2018)



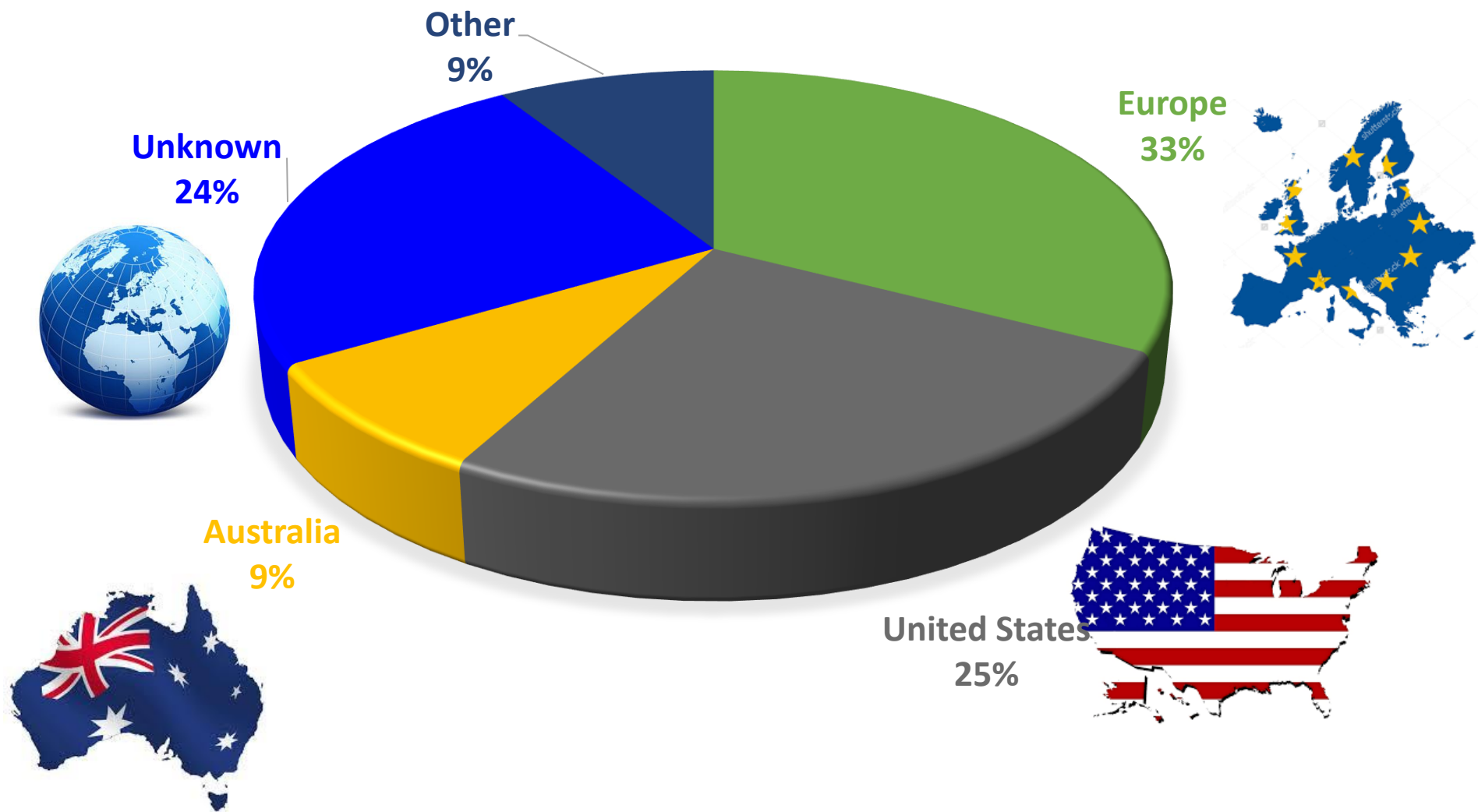
# Development of revenues





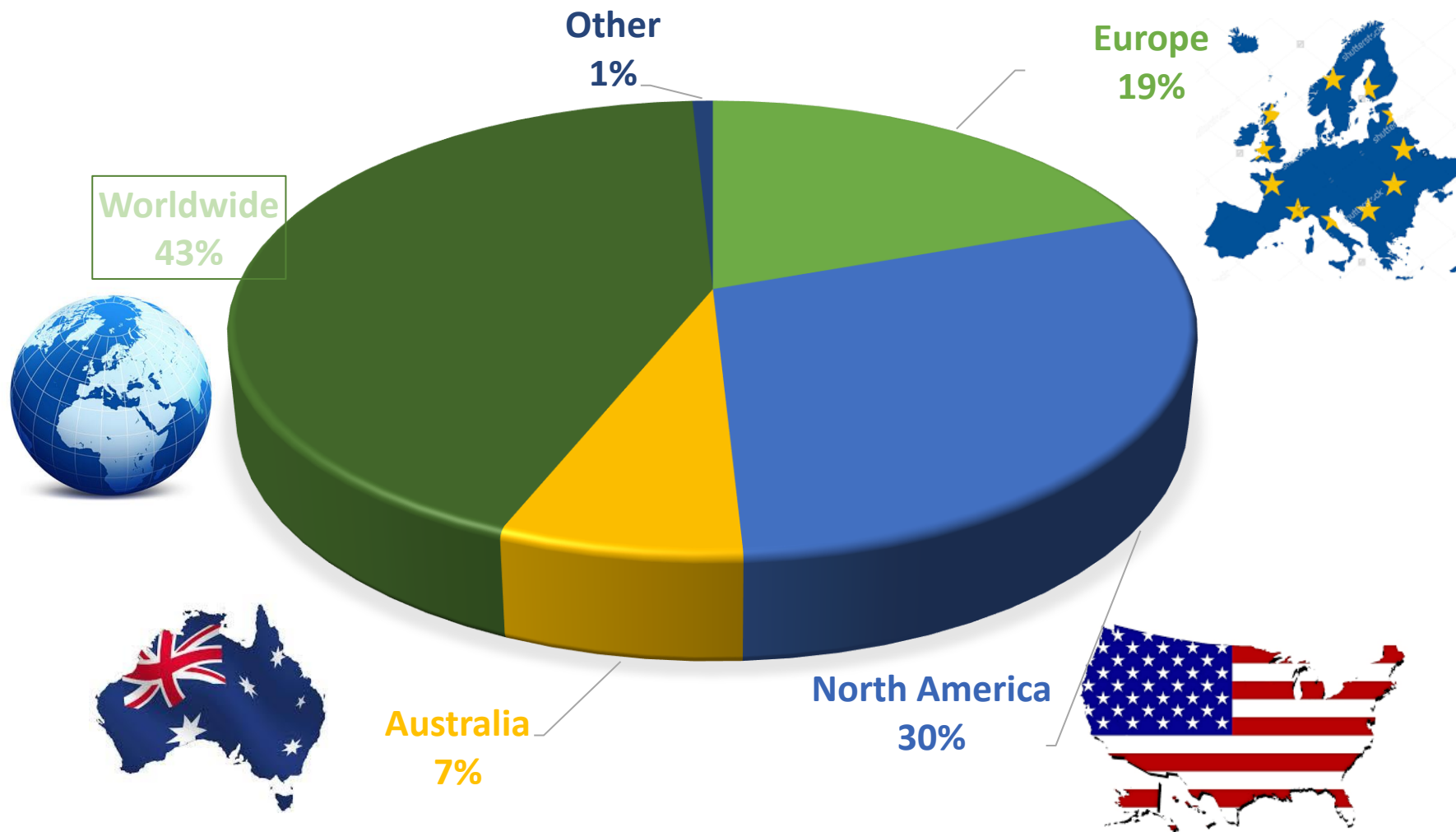


# Countries of origin of sellers





# Destination countries





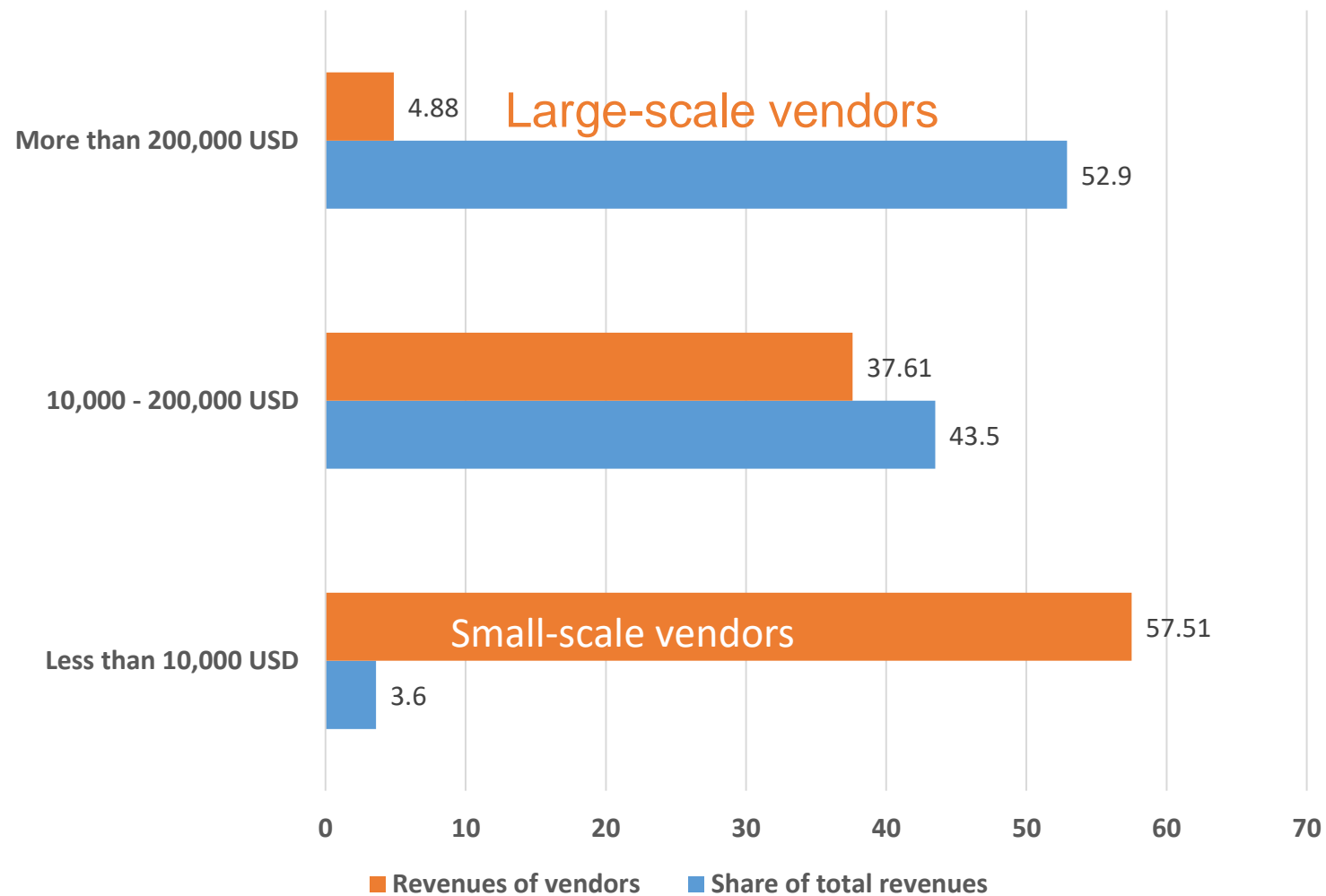
# Countries of origin of sellers

Countries	Share in percentage
1. United States	25.30
2. United Kingdom	9.26
3. Australia	8.47
4. Netherlands	8.37
5. Germany	7.17
6. Canada	4.38
7. France	2.29
8. Spain	1.69
9. China	1.69
10. New Zealand	0.70

(Tzanetakis 2018)



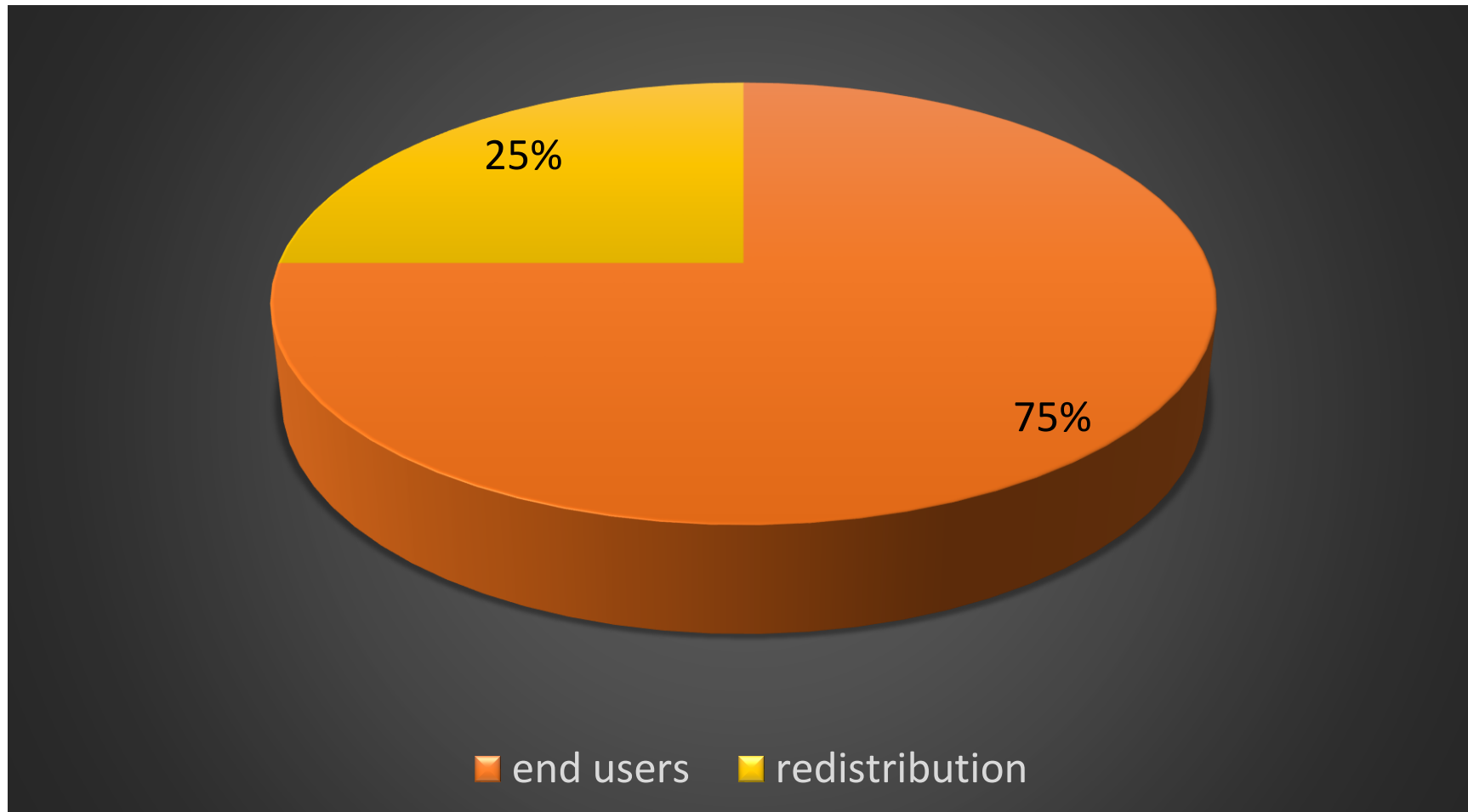
# Distribution of revenues



(Tzanetakis 2018)



# Retail or redistribution?



(Aldridge & Décary-Hétu 2016; Demant et al. 2016; Tzanetakis 2018)