

# Exchange of Information as a Form of International Cooperation in Combating Drug Trafficking

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# Exchange of Information as a Form of International Cooperation in Combating Drug Trafficking

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## Abstract

The global proliferation of drug trafficking represents a significant challenge to public health, safety, and national security. International cooperation is imperative to combat this transnational threat effectively. This study examines the role of information exchange as a cornerstone of collaborative efforts among nations in the fight against drug trafficking. Drawing on an extensive review of international agreements, legal frameworks, and operational practices, this article studies the mechanisms facilitating the sharing of intelligence, data, and expertise among law enforcement agencies, intergovernmental organizations, and other stakeholders. The analysis reveals that successful information exchange relies on the establishment of trust, the development of standardized protocols, and the harmonization of legal frameworks across jurisdictions. Additionally, the study underscores the critical role of technology in enhancing the speed and accuracy of information dissemination, enabling real-time coordination among international partners. The article highlights the importance of capacity-building initiatives to strengthen the capabilities of less resource-endowed nations to participate effectively in information exchange networks. In conclusion, this article demonstrates that information exchange serves in international efforts to combat drug trafficking. By leveraging technological advancements, fostering trust, and harmonizing legal frameworks, nations can enhance their collective capacity to disrupt and dismantle transnational drug networks. The findings of this study offer valuable insights for policymakers, law enforcement agencies, and practitioners engaged in formulating and implementing strategies to address this pervasive global challenge.

**Keywords:** organized crime, drug trafficking, smuggling, cooperation, Ukraine, Interpol, Europol, DEA, UNODC, EMCDDA

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# Intercambio de información como forma de cooperación internacional en la lucha contra el narcotráfico

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## Resumen

La proliferación mundial del narcotráfico representa un desafío importante para la salud pública y la seguridad nacional. Por esta razón, la cooperación internacional es un elemento fundamental para combatir con eficacia esta amenaza transnacional. En este estudio se examina el papel del intercambio de información como piedra angular de los esfuerzos colaborativos entre naciones en la lucha contra el narcotráfico. Con base en una extensa revisión de acuerdos internacionales, marcos legales y prácticas operativas, este artículo estudia los mecanismos que facilitan el intercambio de inteligencia, datos y experiencia entre entidades policiales, organizaciones intergubernamentales y demás partes interesadas. El análisis revela que un intercambio de información exitoso depende de la generación de confianza, el desarrollo de protocolos estandarizados y la armonización de los marcos legales entre jurisdicciones. Además, se subraya el papel significativo de la tecnología en el mejoramiento de la velocidad y precisión de la difusión de información, permitiendo la coordinación en tiempo real entre socios internacionales. El artículo destaca la importancia de las iniciativas de desarrollo de capacidades destinadas a fortalecer a las naciones con menos recursos para que tengan una participación eficaz en las redes de intercambio de información. En conclusión, el intercambio de información es útil en los esfuerzos internacionales para combatir el narcotráfico. Al aprovechar los avances tecnológicos, fomentar la confianza y armonizar los marcos legales, las naciones pueden mejorar su capacidad colectiva para alterar y dismantelar las redes transnacionales del narcotráfico. Los hallazgos de este estudio brindan información valiosa para los formuladores de políticas, las entidades policiales y los profesionales involucrados en la formulación e implementación de estrategias para abordar este desafío global generalizado.

**Palabras clave:** crimen organizado, narcotráfico, contrabando, cooperación, Ucrania, Interpol, Europol, DEA, ONUDD, OEDT

## Introduction

Organized crime is a global problem that needs strong cooperation between countries, international organizations, and societies to fight and prevent its development. There are different types of organized crime, such as money laundering, human trafficking, and cybercrime, among others. Drug trafficking is one of the most dangerous, profitable, and widespread kinds of organized crime.

Drug trafficking is a relevant problem that harms states and societies, has a growing trend, and threatens national and international security. It is characterized by the cross-border nature, professionalism, high technical equipment of criminal groups, availability of their intelligence and counterintelligence, and mastery of the latest ways and methods of counteracting law enforcement and judicial authorities.<sup>1</sup> Drug trafficking cannot be effectively countered within one state and requires concerted efforts by all countries.

Due to the favorable geographical location and developed transport infrastructure and seaports, international criminal drug groups smuggled heroin from Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan to Western Europe through the territory of Ukraine, as well as cocaine from countries of Latin America through the seaports of Ukraine. Thus, sufficient attention should be paid to combating drug trafficking.

The issue of combatting drug trafficking has been researched in the recent years. Ukrainian and foreign scholars contributed considerably to expanding scientific knowledge of drug trafficking and its impact on developing international and national relations. The studies on legal and organizational measures in international cooperation on detecting, investigating, and preventing drug trafficking require special attention and further research.

The experience of international cooperation in countering cross-border threats, mainly fighting against international drug trafficking, is important because of its practical and scientific values. The success of operations to disrupt international smuggling channels, the effectiveness of documenting criminal activity, and the suppression of international drug groups often depend on the rapidity of information

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<sup>1</sup> Volodymyr Gennadiyovych Sevriuk and Serhiy Oleksiyovych Pavlenko, "Measures for counteracting transnational drug trafficking committed by representatives of certain ethnic groups," *Law Journal of the National Academy of Internal Affairs* 2, no. 10 (2015), <http://elar.naiu.kiev.ua/jspui/bitstream/123456789/1197/1/17.pdf>

exchange between law enforcement authorities in cases related to international drug trafficking.

The authors used a systematic approach and data analysis methods, examined existing literature on international drug trafficking, scientific works, and related legislation, and gathered secondary data. They also conducted an extensive review of data resources of the official websites of the International Criminal Police Organization (Interpol), the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation (Europol), the United Nations Office for Drugs Control and Crime Prevention (UNODC), Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), National Police of Ukraine, among others. The quantitative data and analysis of findings are provided in the article. Comparisons and conclusions were made and organized following the research tasks. Moreover, the article is based on the authors' own working experience in the units of the National Police of Ukraine.

## Drug Trafficking: General Definition and Legal Background

Drug-related problems occupy a special place in Ukraine and in the whole world. According to the “National Report on Drug and Alcohol Situation in Ukraine,” 2022, published in January 2023,<sup>2</sup> the number of drug-related criminal offenses in 2021 in Ukraine was 29,587, and top-5 seized substances were cannabis (herbal), heroin, amphetamines, cocaine, and poppy straw (Figure 1).

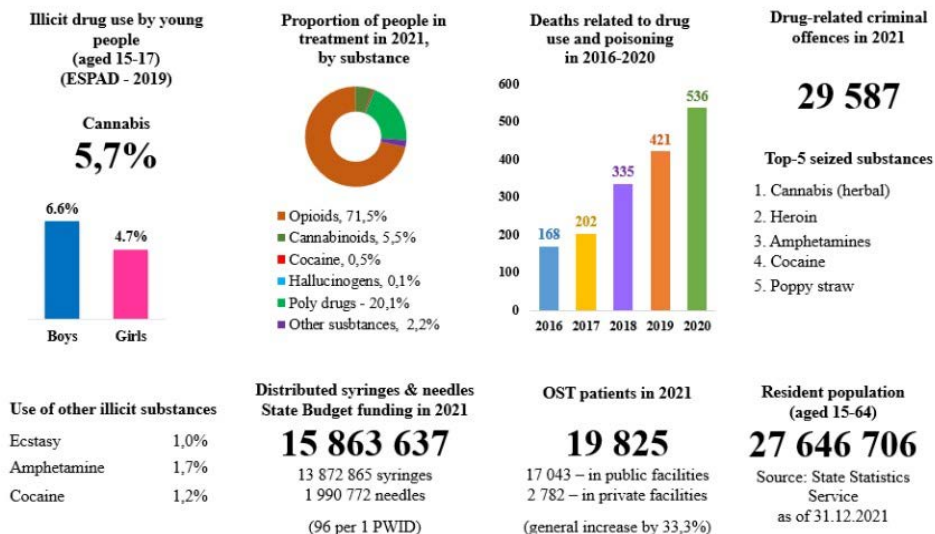
The mentioned statistics show the spread of drug-related crimes. In this case, the issue of drug trafficking is urgent. It requires focusing on combating and increasing the identification of channels of illicit trafficking, stopping the illegal manufacture and production of drugs, psychotropic substances, and precursors. Drug trafficking is considered to be the highest source of profits among the number of transnational criminal markets. Despite the vast criminal justice network aimed at decreasing drug trafficking, the challenge is growing.

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<sup>2</sup> Institute of Psychiatry, Forensic Psychiatric Examination and Drug Monitoring of the Ministry of Health of Ukraine, *National Report on Drug and Alcohol Situation in Ukraine, 2022 (based on data 2021)* (Kyiv: European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction, 2022), [https://www.emcdda.europa.eu/drugs-library/national-report-drug-and-alcohol-situation-ukraine-2022-based-data-2021\\_en](https://www.emcdda.europa.eu/drugs-library/national-report-drug-and-alcohol-situation-ukraine-2022-based-data-2021_en)

Figure 1. Overview of drug-related problems in Ukraine

### Outline of drug related problems in Ukraine



Source: Taken from Institute of Psychiatry (2022, 1).

It is necessary to examine the definition and nature of “drug trafficking.” Drug trafficking can be defined as “a global illicit trade involving the cultivation, manufacture, distribution, and sale of substances which are subject to drug prohibition laws.”<sup>3</sup> According to the Europol official website, “drug trafficking is big business that brings a fifth of all profits from organized crime. It ravishes communities, endangers businesses, strains government institutions, and drags down the wider economy”.<sup>4</sup> It “affects all parts of the world as either source, transit or destination regions.”<sup>5</sup>

Matthew S. Jenner indicates that “drug trafficking is the most crucial and most dangerous phase of the illicit drug market. Thousands of kilograms of illegal drugs cross international borders daily, leaving the hands of violent traffickers and entering the lives of drug dealers and addicts.”<sup>6</sup> Some scholars claim that “drug trafficking

<sup>3</sup> “Drug trafficking,” *United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime*, accessed September 2023, <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/drug-trafficking/index.html>

<sup>4</sup> “Drug trafficking,” *Europol*, accessed September 2023, <https://www.europol.europa.eu/crime-areas-and-statistics/crime-areas/drug-trafficking>.

<sup>5</sup> “Drug trafficking,” *Interpol*, accessed September 2023, <https://www.interpol.int/Crimes/Drug-trafficking>

<sup>6</sup> Matthew S. Jenner, “International Drug Trafficking: A Global Problem with a Domestic Solution,” *Indiana Journal of Global Legal Studies* 18, no. 2 (2011): 902, <https://www.repository.law.indiana.edu/ijgls/vol18/>

is a lucrative global phenomenon that is very difficult to stop over the years. Its financial flows have global dimensions linking regions and continents, destroying the lives of the consumers irrespective of their nationalities, sex, race, class, or status in society. Drug trafficking is a monstrous evil plaguing humanity for centuries with no end in sight to the malaise and menace caused by it.”<sup>7</sup>

According to Ukrainian legislation, “illicit trafficking in narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and precursors is the acts of cultivation of plants included in the list of narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and precursors, development, production, manufacture, storage, transportation, transfer, purchase, sale, importation to the territory of Ukraine, exportation from the territory of Ukraine, transit through the territory of Ukraine, usage, destruction of narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and precursors committed in violation of the legislation on narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances, and precursors.”<sup>8</sup>

From our point of view, drug trafficking is an actual, up-to-date international problem that needs a comprehensive solution based on fruitful cooperation between international and internal parties. There is a potent drug-related legal framework and a lot of international and national documents on issues related to drug control. The principal international conventions are the *Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, 1961*<sup>9</sup>; the *Convention on Psychotropic Substances, 1971*<sup>10</sup>; and the *United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances, 1988*.<sup>11</sup> These conventions reflect the international community’s attempts to develop cooperation and collaboration in the fight against drug trafficking and include the main objectives of all previous international conventions in this area, namely, limiting the usage of drugs exceptionally for medical and scientific purposes. Thus, the main goal of these international documents is to ensure access to narcotic and

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<sup>7</sup> Shaka Yesufu, “Illicit drug trafficking: a South African report on the extent of the global trading,” *Science Rise* 3, no. 80 (2022): 38, <https://journal.eu-jr.eu/sciencrise/article/view/2552/1974>

<sup>8</sup> “On Counteraction Measures against Illegal Circulation of Drugs, Psychotropic Substances and Precursors,” *Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine* (1995), <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/62/95-бп#Text>

<sup>9</sup> United Nations, *Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, 1961* (New York: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 1961), [https://www.unodc.org/pdf/convention\\_1961\\_en.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/pdf/convention_1961_en.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> United Nations, *Convention on Psychotropic Substances, 1971* (Vienna: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 1971), [https://www.unodc.org/pdf/convention\\_1971\\_en.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/pdf/convention_1971_en.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> United Nations, *United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances* (Vienna: United Nations, 1988), [https://treaties.un.org/doc/Treaties/1990/11/19901111%2008-29%20AM/Ch\\_VI\\_19p.pdf](https://treaties.un.org/doc/Treaties/1990/11/19901111%2008-29%20AM/Ch_VI_19p.pdf)

psychotropic substances for medical and research purposes and to combat their illicit trafficking.<sup>12</sup>

Ukraine has been the first post-Soviet Union country to join the United Nations Conventions against Illicit Traffic in Drugs and Psychotropic Substances. The main points of these Conventions were implemented in the Ukrainian legislation. The latter contains several normative and legal acts that regulate issues related to drugs, drug trafficking, among others, particularly the Criminal Code of Ukraine: Section XIII,<sup>13</sup> the Code of Ukraine on Administrative Offences,<sup>14</sup> the Criminal Procedure Code of Ukraine: Section XXI,<sup>15</sup> the law On Circulation of Drugs, Psychotropic Substances, Their Analogs and Precursors in Ukraine,<sup>16</sup> the law “On Counteraction Measures against Illegal Circulation of Drugs, Psychotropic Substances and Precursors,”<sup>17</sup> the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine No. 770 of May, 06, 2000 “On approval of the list of drugs, psychotropic substances, and precursors,”<sup>18</sup> the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine No. 589 of June, 03, 2009 “On Approval of the Procedure for Activities Related to the Circulation of Drugs, Psychotropic Substances and Precursors, and Control over their Circulation,”<sup>19</sup> the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine No. 689 of July, 10, 2019 “Issues of Monitoring Drug and Alcohol Situation in Ukraine,”<sup>20</sup> the Resolution of the Supreme Court of Ukraine No. 4 of April, 26, 2002 “On Judicial Practice for Offenses Related to Trafficking in Drugs, Psychotropic Substances, their Analogues and Precursors,”<sup>21</sup> and the Order of the Ministry of Health of Ukraine No. 188 of

<sup>12</sup> Tetiana S. Zhukova, “International Cooperation in the Field of Countering Illicit Drug Trafficking Among Young People in Ukraine and Italy,” *State and Law* 48: 566–572, <http://dspace.nbuv.gov.ua/bitstream/handle/123456789/34408/05-Zhukova.pdf?sequence=1>

<sup>13</sup> Criminal Code of Ukraine, *Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine* (2001), <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2341-14?lang=en#Text>

<sup>14</sup> Code of Ukraine on Administrative Offences, *Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine* (1984), <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/80731-10#Text>

<sup>15</sup> Criminal Procedure Code of Ukraine, *Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine* (1960), <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1001-05>

<sup>16</sup> “On Circulation of Drugs, Psychotropic Substances, Their Analogs and Precursors in Ukraine,” *Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine* (1995), <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/60/95-%D0%B2%D1%80#Text>

<sup>17</sup> “On Counteraction Measures.”

<sup>18</sup> “On Approval of the List of Drugs, Psychotropic Substances, and Precursors,” *Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine* No. 770 (2000), [https://ips.ligazakon.net/document/KP000770?ed=2014\\_12\\_26](https://ips.ligazakon.net/document/KP000770?ed=2014_12_26)

<sup>19</sup> “On Approval of the Procedure for Activities Related to the Circulation of Drugs, Psychotropic Substances and Precursors, and Control over their Circulation,” *Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine* No. 589 (2009), <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/589-2009-%D0%BF#Text>

<sup>20</sup> “Issues of Monitoring Drug and Alcohol Situation in Ukraine,” *Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine* No. 689 (2019), <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/689-2019-%D0%BF#Text>

<sup>21</sup> “On Judicial Practice for Offenses Related to Trafficking in Drugs, Psychotropic Substances, their Analogues and Precursors,” *Resolution of the Supreme Court of Ukraine* No. 4 (2002), <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/v0004700-02#Text>



August, 01, 2000 “On Approval of Tables of Small, Big and Especially Big Sizes of Drugs, Psychotropic Substances and Precursors in Illegal Circulation,”<sup>22</sup> among many others.

## The Issue of Drug Trafficking in Ukraine: Current Status and Data

In the context of globalization, the dynamics of relations between transnational organized criminal groups have taken a qualitative step.<sup>23</sup> Current trends in the development of organized crime in Ukraine differ depending on the geography of the criminal groups’ operations. We must consider that Ukraine has borders with Belarus, Hungary, Moldova, Poland, Romania, Russia, and Slovakia. Thus, in the regions located near the Western border (Lviv, Zakarpattia, Volyn), groups specializing in the smuggling and sale of poppy straw concentrate from Hungary and MDMA from the Kingdom of the Netherlands prevail. The south of Ukraine is dominated by groups specializing in the cultivation and sale of cannabis and its smuggling into European countries. Furthermore, the various groups specializing in the synthesis of amphetamine and its sale in Ukraine, as well as methamphetamine made from medicines containing pseudoephedrine (imported from European countries) for further sale in the European Union, operate throughout the country (as shown in Figure 2).

The main routes of drug trafficking are:

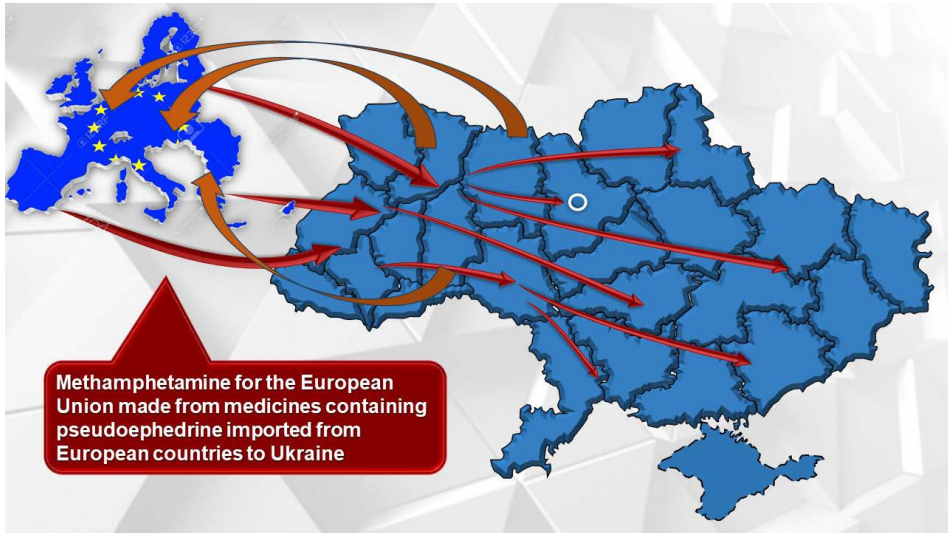
- Heroin: The traditional “heroin” route from Iran, Afghanistan via Turkey, countries of the Caucasus region, by sea or road to the countries of the Balkan Peninsula (via Romania, Moldova), and by road to Ukraine
- Psychotropic substances (“ecstasy,” MDMA, LSD), as well as combined (drug-containing) medicines (Acatar, Cirrus, Subutex): From the European Union (via Poland, Romania, Hungary, Moldova) in the form of food, volunteer assistance, using international postal services, by private transport (car) or operating regularly scheduled flights

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<sup>22</sup> “On Approval of Tables of Small, Big and Especially Big Sizes of Drugs, Psychotropic Substances and Precursors in Illegal Circulation,” *Order of the Ministry of Health of Ukraine* No. 188 (2000), <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/z0512-00#Text>

<sup>23</sup> Dario Enrique Cortés Castillo. “Organized transnational crime: Mexican Drug trafficking organizations in Colombia: Los carteles mexicanos en Colombia,” *Novum Jus* 14, no. 2 (2020), <https://novumjus.ucatolica.edu.co/article/view/3300/3426>

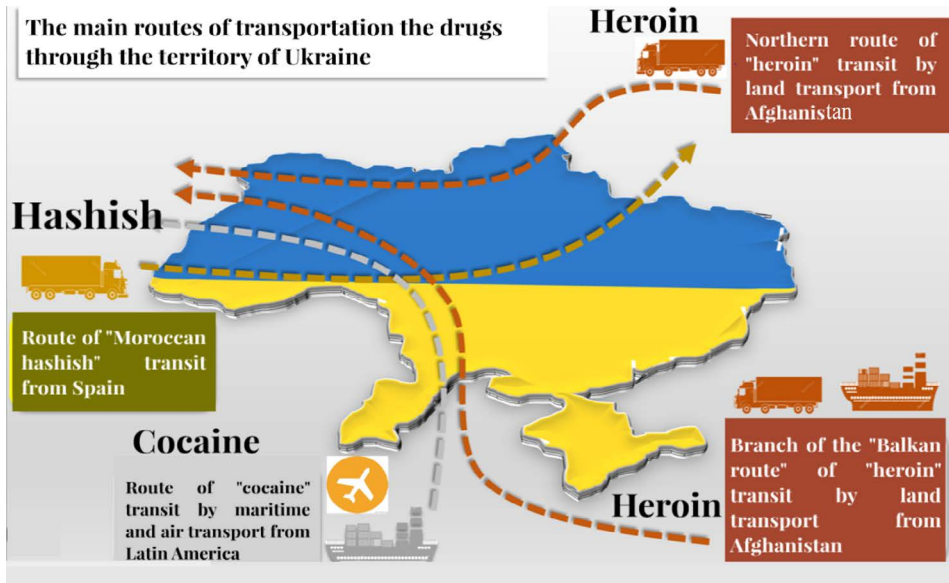
Figure 2. Methamphetamine smuggling



Source: Taken from the National Police of Ukraine website: <https://www.npu.gov.ua/>

The main routes of drug trafficking before the wartime in Ukraine are shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3. The main routes of transportation of drugs across Ukraine



Source: Taken from the National Police of Ukraine website: <https://www.npu.gov.ua/>

There are crucial examples of drug trafficking across Ukraine. In March 2019, thanks to the well-coordinated work of law enforcement bodies, 257 kg of cocaine supplied from Ecuador was seized. The estimated street value of the seized drugs is over 50 million USD. The seizure took place in Odesa seaport (Figure 4).<sup>24</sup>

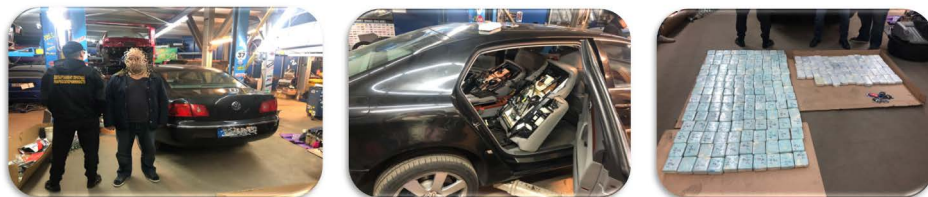
**Figure 4.** Combatting drug trafficking (Odesa Region, March 2019)



Source: Taken from "Record cocaine batch" (2019).

Moreover, in the same month (March 2019), police officers stopped the vehicle in Kyiv Region. The driver had dual citizenship of Romania and Moldova. In the car, there was a concealed compartment as a hide for 100 kg of heroin. Police officers received information that the driver was promised 50,000 USD as a reward for smuggling such a quantity from Ukraine to Germany (Figure 5).<sup>25</sup>

**Figure 5.** Prevention of heroin smuggling (Kyiv Region, March 2019)



Source: Taken from "Officers of the National Police" (2019).

By continuing the necessary investigation measures, the police officers revealed another 500 kg of heroin hidden in one of the warehouses in an industrial part of Kyiv. Three suspects (one citizen of Turkey and two Macedonian) were detected.

<sup>24</sup> "Record cocaine batch worth over USD 50 million seized in Odesa region," *National Police of Ukraine*, March 21, 2019, <https://www.npu.gov.ua/news/na-odeshchini-viluchili-rekordnu-partiyu-kokainu-vartisty-ponad-50-milyoniv-dolariv-ssha>

<sup>25</sup> "Officers of the National Police detained a foreigner with 100 kg of smuggled heroin in the Kyiv region," *National Police of Ukraine*, March 31, 2019, <https://www.npu.gov.ua/news/na-kiivshchini-operativnikinatspolitsii-zatrimali-inozemtsya-zi-100-kg-kontrabandnogo-geroinu-dodano-video>

As a result of practical police work, a total amount of 600 kg of heroin was seized, and four people were detained (Figure 6).<sup>26</sup>

**Figure 6.** Combatting drug trafficking (Kyiv, March 2019)



Source: Taken from “National Police exposed members” (2019).

In April 2019, Ukrainian police officers conducted the second part of the special takedown operation. As a result, 300 kg of heroin were seized, and five members of an international crime organization involved in smuggling heroin to Ukraine were arrested (Figure 7).<sup>27</sup>

**Figure 7.** Combatting drug trafficking (Kyiv, April 2019)



Source: Taken from “Police exposed transnational drug group” (2019).

<sup>26</sup> “National Police exposed members of international drug organization and seized half a ton of heroin,” *National Police of Ukraine*, March 31, 2019, <https://www.npu.gov.ua/news/natspolitsiya-vikrila-uchasnikiv-mizhnarodnoi-narkoorganizatsii-ta-viluchila-pivtonni-geroinu>

<sup>27</sup> “Police exposed transnational drug group and seized 300 kg of heroin,” *National Police of Ukraine*, March 31, 2019, <https://www.npu.gov.ua/news/politsiya-vikrila-transnatsionalne-narkoogrupuvannya-ta-viluchila-300-kilogramovu-partiyu-geroinu>

Before the beginning of Russia's armed aggression, there was a tendency to change the main drug transportation routes due to the intensification of Turkish freight traffic through Ukraine, Moldova, Russia, and Romania. Part of the drug routes from Iran and Turkey remains a strategic direction to Western Europe using road transport, as well as through the territory of Ukraine.

The spread of the COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in the introduction of restrictive measures on movement at the state level and the strengthening of public order measures by limiting contact between people. In turn, the developed transport network, robust port infrastructure, and large trade became factors that have contributed to the "freight" transportation of drugs between Asia and the European Union in transit through Ukraine.

In 2021, with the participation of the police, a number of international drug supply (smuggling) channels were stopped, including two large-scale heroin shipments (368 kg and 235 kg of heroin) that came from Iran through the Caucasus region to Russia and then by "freight" transportation under the guise of construction materials to Ukraine for further transit to the European Union.<sup>28</sup>

After February 2022, as a result of the armed aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine, the situation of drug trafficking, as well as the main routes of drug transportation, changed. The problem of martial law in the country affected the crime situation regarding drug trafficking in different regions of Ukraine. It was mainly caused by the closed borders with Russia and Belarus and the non-work of Ukraine's air, rail, and sea ports. The occupation and hostilities have led to a large-scale migration of the population both within Ukraine and abroad.

Moreover, the main risks that contribute to drug trafficking, such as the wide use of Internet platforms that operate both in the public domain online and via the Darknet, spread. Due to globalization and the development of new technologies, drug trafficking is influenced by access to the global Internet, which allows for

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<sup>28</sup> "National Police detained members of transnational drug gang and seized over 368 kg of heroin," *Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine*, July 23, 2021, <https://mvs.gov.ua/uk/press-center/news/nacpoliciya-zatrimala-cleniv-transnacionalnogo-narkougrupovannya-ta-vilucila-ponad-368-kg-geroyinu>; "National Police liquidated the large-scale channel of heroin transit to EU countries," *Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine*, June 22, 2021, <https://mvs.gov.ua/uk/press-center/news/nacpoliciya-likvidovala-masstabnii-kanal-tranzitu-geroyinu-do-krayin-jevrosoyuzu-igor-klimenko>

“contactless” drug sales. For illegal activities, criminals increasingly use shadow Internet resources, closed groups in mobile applications, and messengers.<sup>29</sup>

Recently, the practice of supplying drugs using postal delivery services has become widespread; thus, both the drugs themselves and the ingredients for their manufacture are received through the mail.

There are new shadowy schemes of interaction and drug trafficking, redistribution of the drug market, and formation of organized groups of drug traffickers. Drug users began to spend more money to obtain drugs as prices for both raw materials and additional costs associated with their transportation (supply) increased. The complicated social and economic situation in the country during the wartime period and the increase in unemployment add to the spread of drug trafficking networks. Drug traffickers began to use these circumstances to establish supply channels from the EU to Ukraine for synthetic (semi-synthetic) drugs and combined (drug-containing) medicines, the circulation of which is prohibited in Ukraine, unlike the EU.

Within the framework of criminal proceedings, police officers in the Lviv Region identified participants of the criminal group K. and S., who organized the supply of psychotropic substances as food from Amsterdam (Netherlands) to Lviv by using international bus transportation. The group used the Telegram channel to promote the sale of drugs through postal delivery services in Ukraine. In September 2022, after receiving the shipment, an authorized search of S.'s apartment was conducted, during which 12,970 ecstasy pills, MDMA psychotropic substances weighing 1,950 kilograms, ketamine weighing 580 grams, and 3,000 LSD marks were seized.<sup>30</sup>

There is another example: In July 2022, during a preventive inspection in Kyiv, the officers identified citizen R. and seized a mail item containing 267 pills of Acatar and Cirrus containing pseudoephedrine, which is used for making psychotropic substances (amphetamine, methamphetamine). An emergency search was made in the apartment, seizing another 960 pills of the above combined (drug-containing)

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<sup>29</sup> “Organized a ‘business’ with multimillion turnover: police stop activities of organized group of drug dealers,” *National Police of Ukraine*, September 18, 2023, <https://www.npu.gov.ua/news/orhanizuvaly-biznes-z-bahatomilionnym-oborotom-politseiski-prypynyly-diialnist-orhanizovanoi-hrupy-narkozbuvachiv>

<sup>30</sup> “Drug courier with goods worth UAH 1.5 million was detained in Lviv,” *Lviv Portal*, September 15, 2022, <https://portal.lviv.ua/news/2022/09/15/u-lvovi-zatrymaly-narkokur-iera-z-tovarov-na-1-5-mln-hrn>

medicines. It was established that these drugs were delivered as humanitarian aid from Poland by bus drivers who traveled from Poland to Ukraine.

Moreover, in addition to the EU countries, the supply of combined (drug-containing) medicines occurs across the border with the Republic of Moldova. For instance, in November 2022, Ukrainian officers blocked a channel for smuggling potent drugs from the Republic of Moldova. Kyiv citizens organized illegal businesses and regularly changed their place of residence in different regions of the country for conspiracy. The mentioned group, which consisted of four people for an extended period, used various Internet websites and postal services to organize the import into Ukraine and illegal sale in the country of drugs containing potent medicines related to sports pharmacology, namely anabolic steroids, the traffic of which is prohibited in Ukraine. During the searches, the appropriate authorities seized 3,381 pills, 1,570 ampoules, 1,718 vials, and 47 plates of potent drugs.<sup>31</sup>

There were also attempts to smuggle marijuana derivatives (cannabis, hashish) from Ukraine to the EU, as well as psychotropic substances (amphetamine, methamphetamine, a-PVP). For example, in October 2022, law enforcement agencies blocked a cannabis supply channel to Hungary. Two residents of the Berehove District organized a cannabis plantation in a hard-to-reach part of the forest near the Tysa River. They equipped the land plot, which was about a hectare in size, with everything necessary to effectively cultivate “elite” cannabis varieties, the seeds of which they bought online. The only way to get to the described land was by special transport or boat. The defendants were detained by police officers when they were harvesting. The amount of the seized drugs could have reached about 18 million UAH in profit.<sup>32</sup>

There is also the fact that synthetic (semi-synthetic) drugs are trafficked through Ukraine to the countries of the Caucasus region in the opposite direction.

In July 2022, in the Odesa Region, the criminal activity of a drug trafficking group that distributed illegal substances through online stores selling amphetamine, methamphetamine, LSD, and ecstasy pills was stopped. During the authorized

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<sup>31</sup> “National Police blocked the smuggling channel of prohibited drugs,” *Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine*, November 11, 2022, <https://mvs.gov.ua/news/nacpoliciya-perekryla-kanal-kontrabandi-zaboronenix-likarskix-zasobiv>

<sup>32</sup> “The operatives detained two residents from Zakarpattiya,” *National Police of Ukraine*, October 18, 2022, <https://www.npu.gov.ua/news/operatyvnyky-zatrymaly-dvokh-meshkantsiv-zakarpattia-iaki-vyroshchuvaly-konopli-na-zamaskovanii-zemelni-dilianty-u-lisi>

searches, the police seized 14 kg of drugs and psychotropics with an estimated value of over 8 million UAH at black market prices. After detaining the group, the police analyzed the information from the seized computer equipment. They found that they were involved in a channel for the supply of drugs to the Republic of Kazakhstan. The criminals disguised the drugs as baby food and sent them via international postal services. This information was passed to the appropriate law enforcement bodies. As a result of the measures taken at the international mail control area, employees of Almaty law enforcement seized packages with prohibited substances in massive amounts.<sup>33</sup>

However, despite the destruction of the usual routes of drug trafficking to Ukraine, international criminal groups continue using the current situation to their advantage and establishing new shadow drug trafficking schemes across the western border of the country.

In September 2022, police officers stopped the criminal activity of a group of Ukrainians and foreigners who illegally moved a large amount of heroin from Iran through the seaport Constanta (Romania) and the international river checkpoint Orlivka-Isaccea to the Ukrainian territory. As a result of a special controlled delivery operation, Ukrainian officers seized a hazardous narcotic drug, heroin (weighing 186 kg), which was hidden in dried fruit containers.<sup>34</sup>

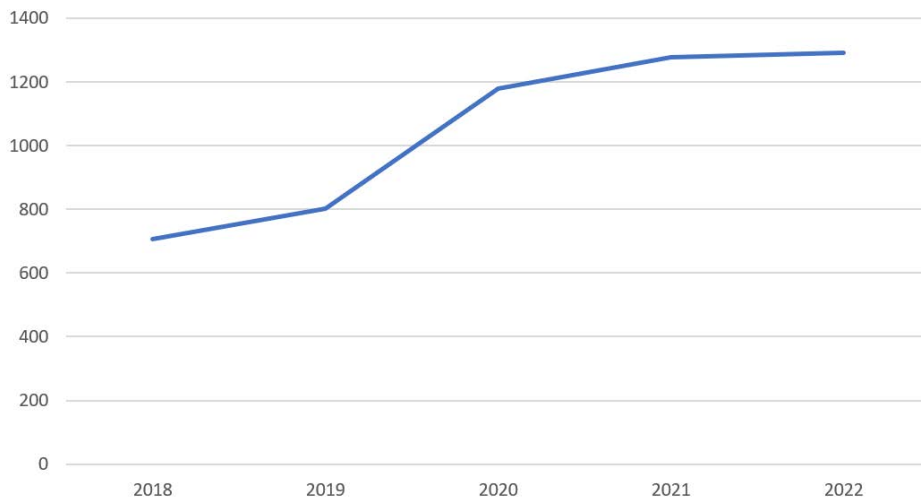
Due to the above examples, it is necessary to note that in 2022, police officers took measures to implement operational information and stop drug smuggling (transportation) within the state. Still, based on the analysis results of the trafficking of drugs, psychotropic substances, and precursors, we consider that nowadays, the threat level should be regarded as high and requires preventive and counteractive measures (Figure 8).

<sup>33</sup> "Police officers seized drugs and psychotropics worth over UAH 25 million," *Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine*, July 08, 2022. <https://mvs.gov.ua/news/vilucili-narkotiki-ta-psixotropi-na-ponad-25-milioniv-griven-policeiski-vikrili-narkougrupovannya-z-mizregionalnimi-zvyazkami>; "Custom officers from Odesa helped colleagues from Kazakhstan to combat drug trafficking," *Odesa customs office*, accessed September 2023, [https://www.facebook.com/ODcustomsUA/posts/1455029544973568/?paipv=0&eav=AfZ1kz31dzHBSaE9AQajOYsBdibv2UnBKadGaha6ED2CwXnTL5LXsXs47SlKkv7W7rE&\\_rdt#=\\_](https://www.facebook.com/ODcustomsUA/posts/1455029544973568/?paipv=0&eav=AfZ1kz31dzHBSaE9AQajOYsBdibv2UnBKadGaha6ED2CwXnTL5LXsXs47SlKkv7W7rE&_rdt#=_)

<sup>34</sup> "Special operation of Ukrainian and foreign law enforcement officers - cross-border drug trafficking channel was blocked," *The Office of the Prosecutor General*, October 13, 2023, <https://www.gp.gov.ua/ua/posts/specoperaciya-ukrayinskix-ta-inozemnix-pravooxoronciv-perekrito-transkordonnii-kanal-transportuvannya-narkotikiv>



**Figure 8.** The number of investigated crimes in the field of trafficking of drugs, psychotropic substances, their analogues or precursors committed by organized groups and criminal organizations



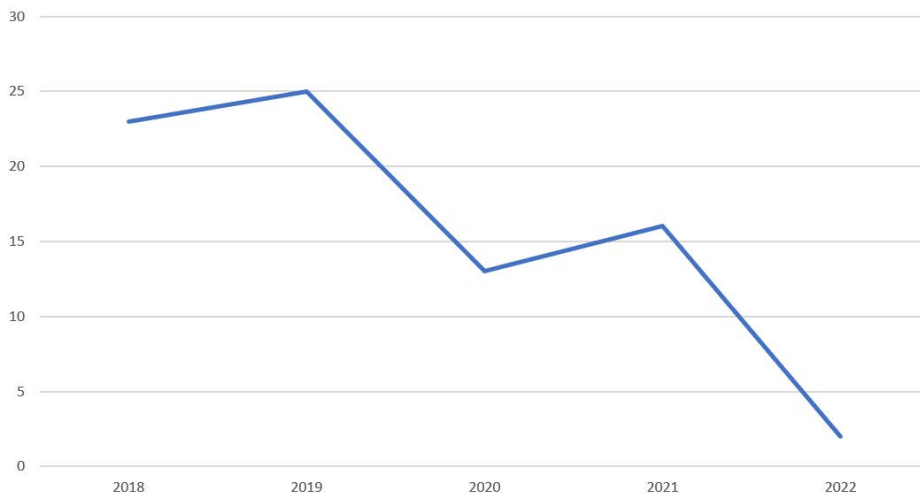
**Source:** Made by the authors based on data from the official website of the Office of the Prosecutor General (<https://gp.gov.ua/ua/posts/statistika>)

The diagram shows that the number of investigated crimes related to the trafficking of drugs, psychotropic substances, and their analogs or precursors, which were committed by organized groups and criminal organizations, has increased over the last five years (Figure 9).<sup>35</sup>

Even though the number of investigated crimes associated with the trafficking of drugs, psychotropic substances, and their analogs or precursors that organized groups and criminal organizations commit has increased, the number of cases of smuggling of drugs, psychotropic substances, their analogs or precursors, or counterfeit medicines by organized groups and criminal organizations has decreased dramatically (Figure 10).

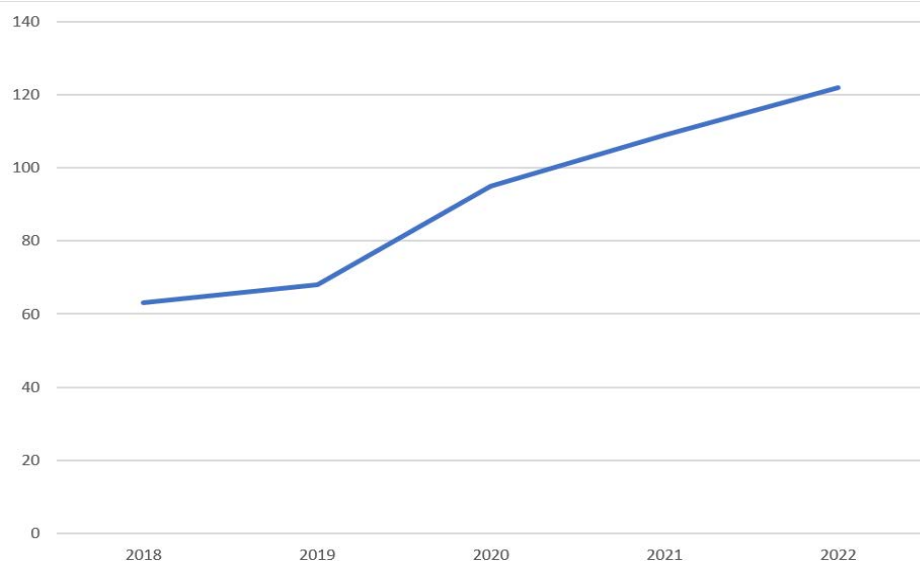
<sup>35</sup> Statistics of the Office of the Prosecutor General. <https://gp.gov.ua/ua/posts/statistika>

**Figure 9.** The number of investigated crimes on smuggling of drugs, psychotropic substances, their analogues or precursors, or counterfeit medicines committed by organized groups and criminal organizations



**Source:** Made by the authors based on data from the official website of the Office of the Prosecutor General (<https://gp.gov.ua/ua/posts/statistika>)

**Figure 10.** The number of organized groups and criminal organizations related to drug trafficking identified by the National Police of Ukraine



**Source:** Made by the authors based on data from the official website of the National Police of Ukraine (<https://www.npu.gov.ua/>).

At the same time, the diagram shows the increase in organized groups and criminal organizations involved in drug trafficking detected by the National Police of Ukraine. This fact may indicate that the activities of organized groups are overwhelmingly focused on the domestic drug market.

## Cooperation with International Organizations to Combat Drug Trafficking in Ukraine

According to the data provided in the Unified State Register of International Organizations, on January 01, 2022, Ukraine is a member of 81 international organizations.<sup>36</sup> Besides, Ukraine strongly partners with many international and regional organizations and foreign countries based on signed memorandums, declarations, and protocols on cooperation in different areas.

Ukraine cooperates with international organizations and law enforcement bodies of foreign countries to prevent and combat organized crime, including drug trafficking. This cooperation is realized in cooperation agreements concluded between Ukrainian authorities and partners or based on mutuality.

As it is known, one of the leading roles in worldwide cooperation in combating organized crime, including drug trafficking, is the *Interpol*. *Interpol* “provides operational support, analysis, and training to help law enforcement authorities tackle widescale drug trafficking. Since the kinds of drugs trafficked and the routes used are constantly evolving, countries must work together in a united and coordinated way.”<sup>37</sup>

*Interpol* supports law enforcement agencies at national, regional, and international levels to counter the illicit production, trafficking, and abuse of drugs as follows:

- cross-border operations against drug trafficking and support to ongoing/current investigations;
- criminal analysis of intelligence on drug trafficking routes, modus operandi, and the criminal networks involved; and

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<sup>36</sup> “Participation in international organizations,” *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine*, February 17, 2022, <https://mfa.gov.ua/mizhnarodni-vidnosini/uchast-u-mizhnarodnih-organizacijah>

<sup>37</sup> “Our role in fighting drug trafficking,” *Interpol*, accessed October 01, 2023, <https://www.interpol.int/Crimes/Drug-trafficking/Our-role-in-fighting-drug-trafficking>

- complex worldwide police training to better fight drug trafficking.

Interpol coordinates drug trafficking operations covering different parts of the world and assists with drug operations and investigations led by international or national bodies. The main aim is to break the movement of specific products along routes affecting target regions or global illicit drug flows. Interpol also organizes operational working meetings to exchange information between law enforcement authorities.

According to the Interpol drug strategy, the critical part is ensuring that police worldwide have the knowledge and skills to prevent, investigate, and combat drug trafficking. “The Interpol’s first Global Conference on Illicit Drugs took place in Spain in April 2018, bringing together representatives from more than one hundred countries. The mentioned event gave participants the chance to review recent developments, and implications of convergences between drug trafficking and other criminal crimes such as money laundering, cybercrime and weapons trafficking.”<sup>38</sup>

Ukraine became a full member of Interpol on November 04, 1992, due to the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine No. 555 “On the Accession of Ukraine to Interpol.”<sup>39</sup>

Each member of Interpol has a National Central Bureau, which is responsible for the connection between national law enforcement agencies and other states and the General Secretariat of Interpol via secure global police communications. The tasks and functions of the National Central Bureau in Ukraine are assigned to the Department of International Police Cooperation of the National Police of Ukraine.

The exchange of information plays a sufficient role in combating drug trafficking. Ukrainian law enforcement bodies have lasting cooperation with Interpol. Several successful cooperation cases have been based on the information exchange in recent years. For example, in 2020, the National Police of Ukraine and foreign law enforcement bodies of European countries, through the exchange of information via Interpol channels, identified the ship that arrived from the Republic of Ecuador at the Odesa seaport. During the inspection of the vessel, a container refrigerator

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<sup>38</sup> “Our role in fighting drug trafficking.”

<sup>39</sup> “On the Accession of Ukraine to Interpol,” *Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine* No. 555 (1992), <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/555-92-%D0%BF?lang=en#Text>

containing bananas and 46 rectangular briquettes with cocaine was found.<sup>40</sup> Cooperation in such a massive organization as Interpol is efficient and vital for all members and often delivers positive results.

We also need to pay attention to Ukraine's cooperation on the regional level. An important place in combating organized crime is cooperation between Ukraine and the **Europol**. "Europol's mission is to support its Member States in preventing and combating all forms of serious international and organized crime, cybercrime and terrorism. Europol also works with many non-EU partner states and international organizations."<sup>41</sup> Thus, Ukraine, as a non-EU country, cooperates effectively with Europol.

High-scale criminal and terrorist networks represent an impressive threat to the internal security of the European Union and the safety and livelihood of its societies. The most significant security threats come from such crimes as international drug trafficking, money laundering, terrorism, organized fraud, counterfeiting of euros, and human trafficking.<sup>42</sup>

To deal with current challenges and all types of organized crime, as well as drug trafficking, Europol works closely with its partner organizations, such as the Interpol and the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA). Such cooperation includes:

- analyzing the drug trafficking characteristics and the business models underlying it;
- collaborating with national governments and other state bodies and international organizations;
- gathering and exchanging information to give strategic responses and overcome recent challenges;
- identifying new opportunities and decisions to fight this scourge.

Europol helps drug raids by offering criminal intelligence analysis and operational support to law enforcement agencies, for example, through Analysis Project (AP) Cola, Europol's specialists dedicated to combating drug trafficking. Regardless

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<sup>40</sup> "Border guards exposed international cocaine smuggling channel to the EU in the Odesa region," *Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine*, December 19, 2020, [https://mvs.gov.ua/press-center/news/Na\\_Odeshchini\\_prikordonniki\\_vikrili\\_mizhnarodniy\\_kanal\\_kontrabandi\\_kokainu\\_do\\_S\\_37346](https://mvs.gov.ua/press-center/news/Na_Odeshchini_prikordonniki_vikrili_mizhnarodniy_kanal_kontrabandi_kokainu_do_S_37346)

<sup>41</sup> "About Europol," *Europol*. August 11, 2023. <https://www.europol.europa.eu/about-europol>

<sup>42</sup> "About Europol."

of the type of drug, the main goal of the activities of Europol and its partners, in addition to arresting drug traffickers and cutting off supplies, is to undermine the dual motives (profit and power).<sup>43</sup>

Aware of the burning issues caused by international organized crime, such as terrorism, human trafficking, illegal immigrant smuggling, drug trafficking, and other kinds of serious crime, Ukraine began official cooperation with Europol.

In 2009, the Agreement between Ukraine and the European Police Office on Strategic Co-operation was concluded. The mentioned Agreement aimed to strengthen the cooperation of the European Union member states, via the European Police Office, and Ukraine in preventing, detecting, suppressing, and investigating severe types of international crime, primarily through exchanging strategic and technical information.

Under Article 2 of the this Agreement, “strategic information includes: enforcement measures that may be useful in suppressing offences and, in particular, special resources of offences’ counteraction; new methods used in committing offences; tendencies and improvements of the methods used in committing offences; observations and lessons learned from the successful implementation of new enforcement tools and methods; routes and changes in routes used by smugglers or people who are involved in illicit trafficking offences covered by this Agreement; preventive strategies and techniques for determining the law enforcement priorities; threat assessments and reports of crime situation.” Strategic information is not only limited by the mentioned points. According to the subsequent provisions of the same article, “technical information contains the instruments of improving the administrative and enforcement structures; forensic police methods and investigative procedures; methods of training officials concerned; analytical methods of criminal intelligence; identification of law enforcement expertise, etc.”<sup>44</sup>

This Agreement was the official, legal step in cooperation between law enforcement agencies of Ukraine and Europol. It gave new opportunities and perspectives for Ukrainian police officers to collaborate with foreign colleagues by exchanging strategic and technical information.

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<sup>43</sup> “Drug trafficking,” *Europol*.

<sup>44</sup> “Agreement between Ukraine and the European Police Office on Strategic Co-operation,” conclusion date: December 4, 2009, *Europol*, <https://www.europol.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/ukraine.pdf>

However, due to modern challenges and the growing level of organized crime, there is a need to deepen the legal framework for cooperation. Thus, the Agreement on Operational and Strategic Cooperation between Ukraine and Europol was signed in 2016. The previous Agreement on Strategic Cooperation of 2009 was terminated. The goal of the new Agreement was to develop cooperative relations between Europol and Ukraine to assist the European Union member states and Ukraine in preventing and combating different types of organized crime, mainly through the information exchange between Europol and Ukraine. Such cooperation may include not only the information exchange, according to the tasks of Europol, but also the exchange of professional knowledge, situation reports, results of strategic analysis, information on criminal investigation procedures and crime preventive techniques, attending training activities as well as providing advice and help in separate criminal investigations.

Due to the Agreement, the national contact point of Europol in Ukraine, which acts as liaison between Europol and other competent bodies of Ukraine, is the Europol Cooperation Unit of the National Police of Ukraine. Nowadays, the national contact point of Europol in Ukraine is the Department of International Police Cooperation of the National Police of Ukraine, which also fulfills the National Central Bureau of Interpol duties, as mentioned earlier in the article.

The competent authorities in Ukraine, described in the Agreement, are responsible under national law for preventing and combating criminal offenses, among them: “the National Police of Ukraine; the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine; the Administration of the State Border Guard Service of Ukraine; the Main Department of Combating Organized Crime and Corruption of the Security Service of Ukraine; the State Fiscal Service of Ukraine; the State Service for Financial Monitoring of Ukraine; the National Anti-Corruption Bureau of Ukraine; the General Prosecutor’s Office of Ukraine.”<sup>45</sup>

The secure and fast transmission of sensitive and restricted data, which facilitates and relies on the information exchange, is vital in Europol. There is a special platform, Secure Information Exchange Network Application (SIENA), that meets the communication needs of European Union law enforcement agencies, provides the fast and convenient exchange of operational and strategic crime-related information

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<sup>45</sup> “Agreement on Operational and Strategic Cooperation between Ukraine and the European Police Office,” conclusion date: December 14, 2016, *Europol*, [https://www.europol.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/agreement\\_on\\_operational\\_and\\_strategic\\_cooperation\\_ukraine.pdf](https://www.europol.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/agreement_on_operational_and_strategic_cooperation_ukraine.pdf)

among Europol's liaison officers, analysts, and experts; Member States; and Third Parties with which Europol has cooperation agreements/working arrangements."<sup>46</sup>

One of the successful examples of cooperation between Ukraine and Europol due to the information exchange (SIENA) was the detention of members of a drug syndicate who were transporting 25 kilograms of heroin in a car. Thanks to the National Police of Ukraine resources and due to the information exchange, the police stopped an elite crossover belonging to the drug dealers on the outskirts of Kyiv. The inspection of the car lasted several hours. Police officers found several professionally equipped caches containing 45 packages of heroin inside the vehicle. These packages were treated with various spices, making it difficult for sniffer dogs to detect the drugs. The total weight of the seized drug is 25 kg, and their total cost on the black market is over 50 million UAH.<sup>47</sup>

The following important player in combating drug trafficking is the *DEA*. The DEA has 93 Foreign Offices in 69 countries, including Ukraine. According to the information from the official website, "the DEA's mission is to enforce the controlled substances laws and regulations of the United States and bring to the criminal and civil justice system of the United States, or any other competent jurisdiction, those organizations and principal members of organizations, involved in the cultivation, production, or distribution of controlled substances appearing in or destined for illicit traffic in the United States; and to recommend and support programs other than law enforcement that are intended to reduce the availability of illicit controlled substances on the national and international markets."<sup>48</sup> The DEA has experts in drug law enforcement: Special Agents, Diversion Investigators, Forensic Scientists, Intelligence Research Specialists, and highly-trained support staff.<sup>49</sup>

It is interesting to pay attention to the DEA Intelligence Program, which supports the initiation of new investigations of huge drug organizations, strengthens current and future prosecutions, collects information leading to seizures and arrests, and provides policymakers with information on drug trends to base programmatic

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<sup>46</sup> "Secure Information Exchange Network Application (SIENA)," *Europol*, June 10, 2022, <https://www.europol.europa.eu/operations-services-and-innovation/services-support/information-exchange/secure-information-exchange-network-application-siena>

<sup>47</sup> "Police officers found 25 kilograms of heroin in an elite car on the way out of Kyiv," *UNIAN*, June 18, 2019, <https://www.unian.ua/incidents/10589277-na-vijizdi-z-kiyeva-policeyski-viyavili-v-elinomu-pozashlyahoviku-25-kilogramiv-gerojinu-foto-video.html>

<sup>48</sup> "Our Mission," *United States Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA)*, accessed September 2023, <https://www.dea.gov/who-we-are/about>

<sup>49</sup> "Our Mission."



decisions. The DEA's intelligence mission-specific duties include "gathering and providing intelligence in support of the Administrator and other federal, state, local bodies; establishing and supporting strong working relationships with bodies which produce or use drug intelligence; improving the efficiency of reporting, analyzing, storing, retrieving, and sharing of such information; and, conducting a continuing review of the narcotics intelligence effort to identify and correct deficiencies."<sup>50</sup>

There are three broad categories within the DEA: tactical (assesses information that may lead to immediate enforcement action—arrests, seizures, and interdictions), investigative (provides analytical support to investigations and prosecutions to dismantle criminal organizations and obtain resources), and strategic (focuses on the relevant situation of drug trafficking from cultivation to distribution that can be used for management decision making, resource deployment, and plan policy).

The DEA has disrupted law trafficking organizations or put them entirely out of business. The DEA Intelligence Division also cooperates extensively with state and local law enforcement and will conduct "the intelligence training for state, local, federal, and foreign agencies."<sup>51</sup>

For the last few years, Ukraine has been implementing the US law enforcement agencies' experience in documenting international drug groups' criminal activities, as well as training police officers, professional operatives, and analysts working in the field of combating drug crime. Thus, Ukraine has tried to maintain and increase cooperation with the DEA.

On June 13, 2018, the National Police of Ukraine and the DEA signed a Memorandum of Cooperation to intensify the information exchange between Ukraine and the United States in combating transnational drug crime. It also provides a basis for "joint activities of the Department for Combating Drug Crimes of the National Police and the Drug Enforcement Administration of the US Department of Justice in preventing and detecting illicit financial flows related to drug trafficking."<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> "Law Enforcement," *United States Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA)*, accessed September 2023, <https://www.dea.gov/law-enforcement/intelligence>

<sup>51</sup> "Law Enforcement."

<sup>52</sup> "The National Police of Ukraine and the Drug Enforcement Administration of the US Department of Justice signed a Memorandum of Cooperation," *Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine*, June 13, 2018, [https://mvs.gov.ua/press-center/news/Nacpolicija\\_Ukraini\\_ta\\_Administraciya\\_po\\_borotbi\\_z\\_narkotikami\\_Minystu\\_SSHA\\_pidpisali\\_Memorandum\\_pro\\_spivpracyu\\_FOTO\\_VIDEO\\_14086](https://mvs.gov.ua/press-center/news/Nacpolicija_Ukraini_ta_Administraciya_po_borotbi_z_narkotikami_Minystu_SSHA_pidpisali_Memorandum_pro_spivpracyu_FOTO_VIDEO_14086)

The National Police of Ukraine has already had successful cases of cooperation with the DEA. For example, in 2019, police officers of Ukraine, with the support of the DEA, detained members of an international drug cartel and seized 400 kg of cocaine worth a total of almost 60 million USD. Police officers exposed and detained organizers and members of an international criminal group that smuggled cocaine into Ukraine. The traffickers then transported the drugs to European countries. While documenting the illegal activities of this group of people, their relations with international criminal organization members involved in the supply of cocaine around the world were established. In addition, a powerful channel for the supply of this drug from the Republic of Colombia to the territory of Ukraine was revealed. This case was an excellent example of fruitful cooperation. Further cooperation between the National Police of Ukraine and the DEA will be closer to stop criminal organizations' activities and exchange operational information.<sup>53</sup>

The activity of the UNODC takes a significant place in Ukraine. The mission of the UNODC is "to promote world peace and security, human rights and development by making the world safer from drugs, crime, corruption, and terrorism."<sup>54</sup> UNODC provides technical support, research, and normative assistance to the organization's members to help them make and implement complex, evidence-based decisions to the challenges they face at different levels.

UNODC collects, analyzes, and reports data on drug trafficking trends submitted through the member states' Annual Reports Questionnaires (ARQ). It also gathers and reports data on illicit production of controlled substances, including statistics on clandestine laboratories. Moreover, UNODC collects and reports data on critical individual drug seizures as reported by member states.

UNODC strongly cooperates with governments and other agencies of member states, academic and scientific institutions, NGOs, and other international and regional organizations to deepen its work impact.

The National Police of Ukraine and UNODC cooperate in the fight against organized criminal groups that operate in the sphere of drug and human trafficking. In

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<sup>53</sup> "Police officers detained members of an international drug cartel and seized 400 kg of cocaine," *National Police of Ukraine*, July 2, 2019, <https://www.npu.gov.ua/news/politseyski-zatrimali-uchasnikiv-mizhnarodnogo-narkokartelyu-ta-viluchili-400-kg-kokainu-sergiy-knyazev>

<sup>54</sup> United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), October 16, 2012, <https://vienna.mfa.gov.ua/ustanovi-oon-u-vidni/2722-unz-oon>

Ukraine, UNODC also assists law enforcement agencies in creating structures for processing and analyzing intelligence and organizing and providing training for their personnel.<sup>55</sup>

Furthermore, UNODC collaborates with higher education institutions with specific learning conditions set by the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine. For example, the National Academy of Internal Affairs has successfully cooperated with the UNODC Program Office in Ukraine. The training manual “Anti-Drug Prevention” and methodological recommendations “Prevention of Infection with Socially Dangerous Diseases in the Performance of Duties by Law Enforcement Officers” were prepared by the specialists of the National Academy of Internal Affairs with the assistance of the UNODC Programme Office in Ukraine.<sup>56</sup>

Kharkiv National University of Internal Affairs and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in Eastern Europe developed training and methodological materials for police officers.<sup>57</sup> The developed set of materials consists of: “6 training videos on personal safety of police officers in the process of interaction with representatives of high-risk groups for HIV infection and people who use drugs and psychoactive substances; recommendations on interaction with communities in informing representatives of high-risk groups about human immunodeficiency virus infection; e-learning course aimed at improving the effectiveness of prevention of the use of psychoactive and narcotic substances, reducing the number of crimes committed by drug users by creating mechanisms to inform them about targeted services.”<sup>58</sup> Furthermore, several training and workshops were conducted for cadets and police officers by the representatives of UNODC.

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<sup>55</sup> “National Police will cooperate with the UN in the fight against organized criminal groups in the field of drug and human trafficking,” *National Police of Ukraine*, March 20, 2018, <https://ch.npu.gov.ua/news/natspolitsiya-spivpratsyuvatime-z-oon-u-borotbi-z-ozg-u-sferi-narkozlochinnosti-i-torgivli-lyudmi>

<sup>56</sup> Oleksandr Striltsiv, “Cooperation with the UNODC Program Office in Ukraine,” *National Academy of Internal Affairs*, September 20, 2014, <https://www.naiu.kiev.ua/news/spivrobotnictvo-z-programnim-osisom-undocv-ukrayini.html>

<sup>57</sup> “Cooperation of KhNUIA with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime Regional Program Office for Eastern Europe countries,” Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine, *Educational and Scientific Portal*, accessed September 2023, <https://osvita.mvs.gov.ua/en/annonces/spivrobotnictvo-hnuvs-z-regional-nim-programnim-osisom-upravlinnya-oon-z-narkotikiv-ta-zlochinnosti-v-krayinah-shidnoyi-yevropi-1>

<sup>58</sup> “Cooperation with UNODC,” *Kharkiv National University of Internal Affairs*, accessed September 2023, [https://univd.edu.ua/en/dir/2939/cooperation\\_with\\_unodc](https://univd.edu.ua/en/dir/2939/cooperation_with_unodc)

The *EMCDDA* is one of the principal agencies on illicit drugs in the European Union. EMCDDA is working to protect European people from drug-related harms but does not make policies or recommendations.<sup>59</sup>

Ukraine cooperates with the EMCDDA and is a member of the EU-funded EU4Monitoring Drugs II (EU4MD) project, run by the EMCDDA, as part of its current commitment to improving collaboration with the European Neighbourhood Policy area countries.<sup>60</sup>

The legal basis of cooperation between Ukraine and the EMCDDA is the Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministry of Health of Ukraine and EMCDDA, signed in 2010. Its main goals were to initiate cooperation between the Ukrainian competent bodies and the EMCDDA in the field of collection, processing, and dissemination of drug information; to continue working on the development of joint methods of monitoring of illicit drug usage for harmonization of their results, and to elaborate and improve joint harmonized indicators of drug situation monitoring and evaluation systems. Due to the mentioned aims and objectives, within the framework of the Memorandum, the Parties established a regular information exchange concerning new kinds of drugs and psychotropic substances to appear in illegal circulation, the technologies of manufacture and usage, and mutual invitations to attend professional meetings. Moreover, the EMCDDA will promote training, exchange of experts, and research results on the issues of illicit drug trafficking, drug situation monitoring, and other mutual vital points.<sup>61</sup> One of the working relations is to develop and submit to the EMCDDA an annual report and analysis on the drug situation in Ukraine, as well as other necessary information. The Institute of Psychiatry, Forensic Psychiatric Examination, and Drug Monitoring of the Ministry of Health of Ukraine is an authorized agency for drug monitoring in Ukraine.<sup>62</sup>

The main objectives of drug monitoring in Ukraine are to identify negative tendencies for trafficking in drugs, psychotropic substances, precursors, alcohol, and other potentially dangerous substances; detect urgent threats to the national security

<sup>59</sup> "About the EMCDDA," *European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA)*, accessed September 13, 2023, [https://www.emcdda.europa.eu/about\\_enhttps://www.emcdda.europa.eu/index\\_en](https://www.emcdda.europa.eu/about_enhttps://www.emcdda.europa.eu/index_en)

<sup>60</sup> "Our partner in Ukraine," *European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA)*, accessed September 13, 2023, [https://www.emcdda.europa.eu/index\\_en](https://www.emcdda.europa.eu/index_en)

<sup>61</sup> "Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministry of Health of Ukraine and the European Monitoring Center for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA)," conclusion date: January 28, 2010, *Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine*, [https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/984\\_001-10#Text](https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/984_001-10#Text)

<sup>62</sup> "Drug Monitoring in Ukraine," *Institute of Forensic Psychiatry of the Ministry of Health of Ukraine*, accessed September 2023, <https://cmhmda.org.ua/en/homepage/news/drug-monitoring-center-institute/>

from illegal trafficking in psychoactive substances; determine the factors that cause those threats; and prepare suggestions on preventing the increased illicit trafficking.

Thus, on January 11, 2023, the National Report on Drug and Alcohol Situation in Ukraine, 2022, was published on the Institute's official website.<sup>63</sup> This Report is based on the results of the drug situation monitoring in Ukraine for the reporting period. During the reporting year, the Institute collected processed information and data from subjects of monitoring the drug and alcohol situation in Ukraine. The English version of the Report was submitted to the EMCDDA for consideration within the framework of cooperation and according to the Memorandum of Understanding.

In 2024, the EMCDDA will be "transformed into the European Union Drugs Agency (EUDA). The EUDA will be a new agency with an expanded mandate, well equipped to enhance the EU's readiness to fight illicit drugs."<sup>64</sup> From our point of view, the new agency will play a key role in the EU's response to health and security issues related to drug trafficking.

The list of international organizations with which Ukraine has cooperated in combating organized crime, especially drug trafficking, is not limited to the mentioned ones. With the support of international partners, the new model, particularly in combating drug trafficking and other types of organized crime, is currently being built. It is imperative to work closely; the wider the field of cooperation in the context of information exchange with international organizations, the more law enforcement agencies will have better results.

## Conclusions

Organized crime, including drug trafficking, is an urgent and universal problem that requires international, local, and national efforts to fight and prevent its spread. One law enforcement agency, one country, or one organization cannot combat drug trafficking alone.

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<sup>63</sup> Institute of Psychiatry.

<sup>64</sup> "New EMCDDA work programme prepares agency for significant changes ahead," *European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction*, February 24, 2023, [https://www.emcdda.europa.eu/news/2023/new-emcdda-work-programme-prepares-agency-significant-changes-ahead\\_en#:~:text=The%20EUDA%20will%20be%20a,guided%20our%20work%20since%202016](https://www.emcdda.europa.eu/news/2023/new-emcdda-work-programme-prepares-agency-significant-changes-ahead_en#:~:text=The%20EUDA%20will%20be%20a,guided%20our%20work%20since%202016)

Thus, for counteracting drug trafficking in Ukraine, it is necessary to deepen cooperation between Ukraine and foreign countries' international organizations; continue reforming law enforcement agencies by implementing the international legal standards and best practices; intensify the work on exchanging information, involving police officers in international teams and professional training; and promote the issue of combating drug trafficking in society by organizing informative events and meetings.

Promoting national, regional, and international cooperation to ensure effective and efficient services by eradicating drug trafficking and related crimes; coordinating attempts and efforts to decrease demand, supply and damage caused by drug trafficking; sharing best practices and experience; strengthening techniques and mechanisms; and providing relevant researches on monitoring and evaluation on drug situation, among other measures, will help to decrease the level of drug trafficking in the world.

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