



Country report on New Psychoactive Substances in Germany

2017

Daniela Müller
Gerrit Kamphausen
Bernd Werse



Centre for Drug Research
Goethe University Frankfurt

This research project
is funded by the





Müller, D., Kamphausen, G. & Werse, B. (2017) *Country report on New Psychoactive Substances in Germany*. NPS-transnational Project (HOME/2014/JDRU/AG/DRUG/7077).

The information in this report reflects the situation in mid-2016.

Acknowledgements

This report has been compiled as part of a European research project entitled **New Psychoactive Substances: transnational project on different user groups, user characteristics, extent and patterns of use, market dynamics, and best practices in prevention**. The NPS-transnational Project is funded by the Home programme of the European Commission (HOME/2014/JDRU/AG/DRUG/7077).

This document has been prepared for the European Commission however it reflects the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

Members of the NPS-transnational Project include: Annemieke Benschop¹, Michal Bujalski², Katarzyna Dabrowska², Zsolt Demetrovics³, Dirk Egger⁴, Katalin Felinczi³, Susana Henriques⁵, Zsuzsa Kalo³, Gerrit Kamphausen⁴, Dirk J. Korff¹, Ton Nabben¹, Joana Paula Silva⁵, Marie Claire Van Hout⁶, Bernd Werse⁴, John Wells⁶, Lukasz Wieczorek² & Marije Wouters¹.

¹ Bongers Institute of Criminology, University of Amsterdam, THE NETHERLANDS

² IPIN, Warsaw, POLAND

³ Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest, HUNGARY

⁴ Centre for Drug Research, Goethe University Frankfurt, GERMANY

⁵ CIES-IUL University Institute of Lisbon, PORTUGAL

⁶ Waterford Institute of Technology, IRELAND

Contents

1	Introduction.....	4
2	NPS definition and current research.....	4
3	Drug policy frameworks.....	4
	3.1 Legislative framework & implementation.....	5
4	NPS drug market description	6
5	NPS demand side description.....	9
	5.1 Prevalence rates.....	9
	5.2 Motivation for NPS use	10
	5.3 Groups of NPS users	10
	5.4 Regional focus of NPS use in Germany.....	11
6	Prevention activities.....	11
	6.1 BASIS e.V. / Website: https://legal-high-inhaltsstoffe.de	12
	6.2 ALICE – The Drug and Culture Project	12
	6.3 Mindzone.....	12
	6.4 DrugScouts	13
	6.5 Partypack.de.....	13
7	Discussion and conclusions	14
8	References.....	15

1 Introduction

Germany was one of the first European countries to get extensive media coverage on the NPS phenomenon, when “Spice” was widely discussed in mid- to end-2008, at a time when it was not yet clear which substances were responsible for the effects of the products: Virtually all of German mainstream media reported on the new drug, referring to it as “bio drug” or “fashion drug”. After German labs discovered the active compounds in these “herbal blends” in December 2008 (Steup 2008; Auwärter et al. 2009), the government reacted with a quick ban on these substances, which marked the end of the media hype. However, NPS kept being an issue for the media as well as the scientific community, particularly since there was evidence that a certain part of young Germans experimented with such substances. Currently, NPS use does not appear to play a significant role in most of the German regions, with the exception of Southern Germany, particularly Bavaria.

2 NPS definition and current research

The definition of NPS used by the German Ministry of Health is based on the definition used by the EMCDDA: “A new psychoactive substance is defined as ‘a new narcotic or psychotropic drug, in pure form or in preparation, that is not controlled by the United Nations drug conventions, but which may pose a public health threat comparable to that posed by substances listed in these conventions’ (EMCDDA, 2016: online).

To date, there is relatively few current research on the issue in Germany. Apart from the social scientific research conducted by the CDR (see chapter 5), mainly toxicological analyses have been conducted and continue to be performed (see chapter 4). Currently, the University Medical Centre in Freiburg along with the Federal Criminal Police Office participate in the EU project “Spice-Profiling”, aiming at the analyses of different compounds in ‘Spice products’ and other NPS. Other ongoing research includes the annual surveys (representative school surveys and key person surveys in nightlife settings) from the Frankfurt local drug monitoring system MoSyD (Werse et al., 2015; see chapter 5). Furthermore, the IFT (Institute for Therapy Research; Institut für Therapieforschung, München) has extended its monitoring system on the misuse of pharmaceutical drugs to NPS use (“Phar-Mon NPS”).¹ It includes a network of scientists and practitioners who report notable NPS-related cases.

3 Drug policy frameworks

The Federal Government follows an integrative approach regarding the national drug and addiction strategy and addresses legal and illegal addictive substances as well as phenomena like pathological gambling. The basis for the national drug and addiction policy is based on four pillars with the intention of a balance between demand and supply reduction measures:

1. Prevention
2. Counselling and treatment, cessation assistance
3. Measures for harm reduction

¹ <https://legal-high-inhaltsstoffe.de/en/pharmon-nps.html>

4. Repression

(see Pfeiffer-Gerschel et al., 2015a: 5f)

Since 2012, the current National Strategy “...directs its attention in particular to new challenges in drug and addiction policy which arise from, amongst other things, demographic change, societal changes, old and new addiction forms and addictive substances (e.g. the emergence of ‘new psychoactive substances’ (NPS), dealing with increasing consumption of methamphetamine (crystal meth), pathological gambling and so-called online/media addiction) as well as the resulting consumption trends. Now, more than in the past, the focus is not only on dependence but also on risky use behaviour, which is harmful to health and limits personal development even if it does not necessarily lead to an addiction.” (Pfeiffer-Gerschel et al., 2015a: 5)

It has to be noted that prevention activities regarding supply reduction are generally restricted to measures of repression. Furthermore, a significant part of demand reduction activities also refers to the prohibition of certain drugs, including a considerable number of NPS that were listed in the narcotics law during the last few years (see 3.1). In this sense, a significant part of the prevention of drug-related problems relies on the assumption that criminal penalties should discourage the use of illicit substances.

3.1 Legislative framework & implementation

Lawmakers have their own advisory board (“Sachverständigenausschuss”) for the assessment of substances that might qualify for a ban. Substances have to be seized in Germany in considerable amounts, there must be evidence that these substances were used as a psychoactive drug, and at the same time, they must be known to have the potential to cause harm. According to this basis, the board recommends the listing of substances to legislators. Detailed risk assessments for certain substances are rare. There are three lists of classified substances in the German narcotics law (BtMG): One (list III) defines all medicines that can be prescribed by doctors, the two others define all substances that may not be prescribed, making them “illegal” for most (list II), if not all purposes (list I). In some cases, e.g. if there is little evidence about the use as a psychoactive drug or about potential harms, the board decides to put substances on a watch list. Usually, legislators follow the recommendations and list the drugs. The legislators usually publicise this process afterwards, but it remains unclear how the advisory board first chooses substances. As it seems, in many cases risk assessments of the EMCDDA and the WHO are taken for granted.

Drug *use* is generally not criminalised in Germany, but the *possession* of even small amounts is subject to criminal law. According to a clause in the BtMG, the state attorneys usually dismiss the charge if the case refers to a small amount of illicit drugs for personal use. E.g., every federal state (*Bundesland*) has set particular thresholds for a “small amount” of cannabis, mostly 6 grams. However, by far not all cases in which a small amount were found are dismissed, e.g. if it is assumed that the drugs should be handed over to others.

Overall, this procedure seems to be highly bureaucratic and suited for the purpose of criminalising drug users in general. There is no legal approach other than those mentioned. If a substance is listed, it is subject to criminalisation. Consequentially, the legal approach can be regarded as traditionally prohibitionist. It should be noted that it is specifically this legal and procedural framework that is put to the test by the appearance of NPS. New substances can be developed and marketed much faster than the advisory board can react. However, since NPS are considered a public health problem in general, a lot of them have been recommended for listing on one of the two lists that are reserved for “illegal” drugs in the

BtMG. Since 2009, there have been repeated amendments of the BtMG that banned (single) NPS. Each one of these amendments included a higher number of newly listed NPS than the prior amendment, so that to date, more than 100 different NPS have been banned ever since.

NPS that are not subject to the narcotics law remain legal, including sale. Since 2010, there were attempts to ban the sales of NPS by laws that regulate the market for pharmaceuticals (Medicinal Products Act, “*Arzneimittelgesetz*”, AMG) without criminalising the users. The idea arose from an unclear paragraph in the AMG, which mentions “functional medical drugs”, substances that have some kind of effect on the human body. Law enforcement authorities marked all NPS products as “functional medical drugs”, so that their sale could be banned by the AMG (see Musshoff et al. 2013). The European Court of Justice stopped this kind of prohibitive regulation in July 2014 because banning substances that are not clearly medicines is out of scope of the AMG as well as in contradiction to European laws (see Pollähne, 2014). As a consequence of this decision an alleged ‘criminal liability gap’ occurs for those NPS which are not covered by the BtMG. For this purpose, the Federal Ministry of Health recently presented a draft bill for a new law on the fight and dissemination of new psychoactive substances (so called “*Neue-psychoaktive-Stoffe-Gesetz – NpSG*”). Similar to Austria, no single substances, but entire substance groups would be included in the new law. Objective of the draft bill is the penal prohibition of the production, distribution and trade of NPS to better protect the health of the population as well as of an individual. The draft bill contains only two, however very broad groups of substances: phenethylamines (cathinones, amphetamines etc.), and ‘cannabimimetics’ (different substances of a group usually referred to as ‘synthetic cannabinoids’; see Referentenentwurf des Bundesministeriums für Gesundheit, 2015).

4 NPS drug market description

The expansion of the phenomenon of dealing drugs over the internet is one of the major concerns by law enforcement authorities in Germany: “The rapid expansion of this phenomenon is observed with growing concern by law enforcement authorities, since a completely new, largely uncontrolled drug distribution market seems to be developing here” (Pfeiffer-Gerschel, 2014c: 17).

In the course of the EC-funded projects “Spice and synthetic cannabinoids” and “Spice II plus”, monitoring on online shops was conducted, showing that continuously, there were more than 20 German language NPS online shops available, mostly selling ‘herbal blends’. Many shops were online just for some months and then disappeared again, while others entered the market. However, there are also a few websites selling NPS products for several years.

Results from two online surveys (Werse & Morgenstern, 2011, 2012a, 2015) directed to NPS-experienced persons showed that in 2011, most of the users of synthetic cannabis products, bath salts and other misleadingly declared products bought them in head shops, while online shops were the second most important source. In 2013/14, this changed significantly: the proportion of those who buy from online shops was almost three times as high as the one for head shops. There is evidence that these shops lost their interest in selling NPS due to the de-facto ban on NPS selling around 2010 (see 3.), although, according to the data cited above, some shops must have continued under-the-counter sales. After that ban was rejected by the European Court of Justice and the German Federal Court of Justice in 2014 (Pollähne, 2014), obviously most of the shops did not start to sell NPS again, mainly because they were afraid that the products they sell will become illegal soon (these findings come from some ad-hoc interviews with Bavar-

ian drug service and law enforcement professionals² and one unstructured explorative interview with a head shop vendor). Research chemicals are usually bought from online shops (mostly English-speaking ones), with a small proportion who claimed to having purchased them directly from the producer. Additionally, there were significant proportions of respondents who got their NPS products from friends. However, it is not clear how many of them actually bought the NPS or rather received it as a gift or shared the drugs with fellow users. Since most of the other respondents claimed that they buy NPS from the internet, most of the substances purchased from friends might also have its origin on the internet. Regarding this sample of mainly recreational users, almost no respondent reported that NPS were ordered in bulk with the intention to distribute them on the street- or house-dealer level.

Sometimes NPS are sold as ecstasy, so if a buyer wants to purchase MDMA on the black market, s/he might get mislabelled NPS. For example, mephedrone, methylone, 4-fluoroamphetamine and 2C-B were found in MDMA / pill samples that were object to drug-testing for harm-reduction purposes (Note: such tests are done in neighbouring countries such as the Netherlands, Austria, and Switzerland – there is evidence that at least to some degree, the same pills are sold on the German market; see Eve & Rave, 2015).

To assess the market for NPS products in Germany, toxicologists from the University Medical Centre in Freiburg test samples of ‘legal high’ products as well as ‘research chemicals’ on a frequent basis. Since 2010, they have tested more than 1000 samples, detecting hundreds of different NPS, predominantly from German language online shops (see Auwärter et al., 2015). Due to the appearance of such huge amounts of NPS in the last years, we list only the most important substances here, grouped by chemical classification. Synthetic cannabinoids were found in 908 samples, seven of which were found in more than 50 samples (table 1).

Table 1: Synthetic Cannabinoids (found in more than 50 of 908 samples):

Name	No. of samples containing this NPS	No. of samples containing traces of this NPS
AM-2201	102	12
JWH-201	100	12
5F-PB 22	86	2
AB-FUBINACA	77	4
JWH-018	71	7
JWH-122	59	3
5F-APINACA (5F-AKB 48)	51	24

The appearance of products that do not only contain one synthetic cannabinoid, but also traces of a second synthetic cannabinoid, gives rise to concerns that producers do not “keep their kitchen clean”. Over-

² These telephone interviews were conducted in early 2015 for an up-date of the Bavarian situation, after there was evidence that Bavaria might be the center of NPS use in Germany (Werse & Kamphausen, 2015).

all, the researchers found more than 50 other synthetic cannabinoids. Of these, JWH-073 (47 samples) and JWH-203 (48 samples) come close to the threshold of 50 samples.

There is a clear tendency that at a certain point in time, the analysed products mainly contain synthetic cannabinoids that are not yet controlled in Germany. E.g., while in 2010, the most frequently detected cannabinoids were AM-694, JWH-210, and JWH-250, samples from 2015 mostly contained 5F-PB-22, AB-FUBINACA and AB-CHMINACA. However, repeatedly, the toxicologists detect substances that have long been outlawed, like JWH-018 (see table 1).

159 samples (“bath salts”, “party pills” or similar misleadingly declared products) contained NPS other than synthetic cannabinoids. Within this group, local anaesthetics (Lidocaine and Benzocaine) are the most frequent ones (table 2).

Table 2: Other substances detected in legal high products

Name	Group	No. of samples containing this NPS
Lidocaine	<i>local anaesthetics</i>	19
Pentylone (bk-MBDP)	Cathinones	7
Ethylphenidate	Listed as “Others” in UN-classifications	6
Benzocaine	<i>local anaesthetics</i>	5
Benzylpiperazine	Piperazines	5
PV9	Cathinones	5
5-EAPB	Phenethylamines (Amphetamines)	5

NPS of the 2C-x group sum up to the amount of 5 samples. Samples containing NPS of the so called “N-Bomb” group (Phenethylamines like 25 C-NBOMe or 25 I-NBOMe) sum up to 7 samples. *Caffeine* was found in 37 samples (23.3%). In most of these cases, caffeine was the only active ingredient, while in some cases it was mixed with NPS. Due to the relative tolerability of caffeine, these findings can ease concerns about the (potential) harms of those samples that do not contain other substances, on the other hand it seems that commercial fraud is a substantial part of the trade (these buyers surely did not want to buy caffeine – they could have a coffee instead). A similar conclusion can be drawn from the prevalence of local anaesthetics that usually should not have any psychoactive properties. It can be assumed that producers add these substances to give the products some ‘cocaine feeling’.

To sum up, most of the NPS products used in Germany come from online shops, either bought directly, or provided by friends. At present, it is not clear whether there are still ‘offline’ shops which sell NPS in Germany, and to which extent they might do so. Analyses of ‘Legal High’ products show that the contents of ‘herbal blends’ mostly reflect the current state of the art regarding effective cannabinoids that are not yet listed, while ‘bath salts’ are often fake products or at least adulterated with non-effective substances.

5 NPS demand side description

It is difficult to estimate the extent of NPS use in Germany. A “quantitative relevance” (Werse, 2014) of NPS is questioned. Prevalence rates are considered low, while research methods show a lack of coherence. The overall availability of illegal drugs seems to affect the users’ decisions to buy or not to buy NPS; this seems to be true particularly in Bavaria, where the availability of traditional drugs is lower than average, and NPS consumption is higher (Werse, 2014).

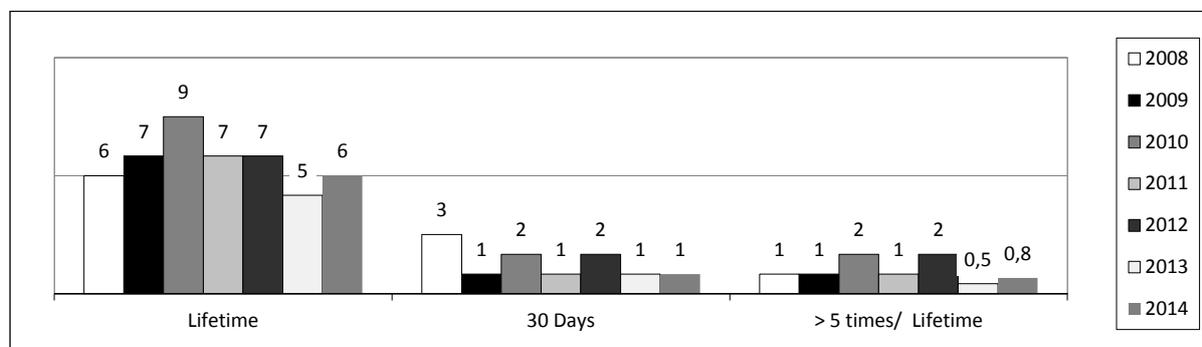
5.1 Prevalence rates

Two EU-wide surveys (Eurobarometer, 2014, The Gallup Organization, 2011) found low prevalence rates of NPS among young people. In both surveys (2011 and 2014), 4% of German respondents said that they have ever tried NPS, compared to 5% (2011) and 8% (2014) in European average. Of these four percent in 2014, no respondent had taken NPS within the last 30 days (Eurobarometer, 2014).

In the regular German representative survey for adult drug use (“epidemiological survey on addictions” – ESA), questions on NPS were included in the last two surveys, 2009 and 2012 (Pabst et al. 2013). 0.4% (2009) and 0.2% (2012) stated that they had used NPS in the last 12 months. However, these data might underestimate NPS use at least to some degree, since the respective questions did not include all kinds of NPS or popular labels for these drugs such as ‘herbal blends’ or ‘bath salts’.

Since 2008, a local annual representative survey among adolescents (15-18 years) in Frankfurt am Main (MoSyD³) measures the use of ‘herbal blends’. Figure 1 shows the development of use: In the last survey, 6% of the respondents had ever tried synthetic cannabis products, while one per cent and 0.8 percent, respectively, had used them either in the prior month or more than five times in their lifetime.

Figure 1: ‘Herbal blends’: Lifetime and 30-day prevalence among 15- to 18-year-old students in Frankfurt (%)



Although the lifetime prevalence has increased by one percentage point in 2014, the overall downward trend is statistically significant. 2 % of the respondents stated a lifetime use of ‘bath salts’ or research chemicals. Given the answers to the subsequent open question about the substance they had used (many respondents referred to other substances such as herbal blends or traditional illicit drugs), the ‘real’ proportion might be even lower. The current use of these substances (last 30 days) was stated by only one respondent (Werse et al., 2015).

³ MoSyD is a local monitoring system, carried out by the Centre for Drug Research (CDR), whose aim is to provide reliable and timely data on trends in legal and illicit drug use in Frankfurt am Main.

Another part of the MoSyD study is a ‘trend scout panel’, focused on nightlife settings.⁴ According to the estimates made by the trend scouts, there is no widespread use of NPS in these surroundings (Werse et al., 2015). Similar results are also available from the biennial MoSyD ‘open drug scene survey’.⁵

Werse and Morgenstern (2011; 2014) conducted two (non-representative) online surveys⁶ which addressed people with experience in NPS use. While in both surveys, ‘herbal blends’ were the NPS product category with the highest lifetime prevalence (86% and 82%, respectively), the figures revealed a decrease in the 30-days prevalence rates from 2011 to 2014 regarding ‘herbal blends’ (35% vs. 17%) as well as ‘bath salts’ or other legal high products without declaration of content (15% vs. 6%). Conversely, the prevalence rates of research chemicals including synthetic cannabinoids increased (Lifetime: 39% vs. 67%; 30 days: 19% vs. 25%). This seems to indicate a certain downward trend regarding the use of NPS without declaration of content and an increase in the use of pure substances. Overall, the proportions for current NPS use (last 30 days) and frequent patterns of use among this group of dedicated NPS-experienced persons decreased, indicating a declining interest in NPS use (Werse & Morgenstern, 2015).

5.2 Motivation for NPS use

The main motives of use in both non-representative online surveys (Werse & Morgenstern, 2011; 2015) were “getting high” and “curiosity”. ‘Herbal blends’/synthetic cannabinoids have been used more often because of their legal status, as this has been the case with research chemicals, which were mainly used by people with a desire for new experiences with “new drugs”. Legal motives included (in descending order) availability, non-detectability of the active compounds, and (temporary) non-availability of other illicit drugs. The role of the legal availability as a motive for NPS use has decreased since 2011 (64% vs. 46%), which fits into the decreasing significance of synthetic cannabis products (Werse & Morgenstern, 2015).

5.3 Groups of NPS users

Werse and Morgenstern refer to two major groups of NPS users with specific motivations that overlap to some extent:

1) „*Potheads 2.0*”: People who replace only a part of their (more or less) regular cannabis use by herbal incense and/or synthetic cannabinoids, depending on limited availability, value-for-money, legal status, fear of legal consequences (e.g. prosecution of ‘driving under the influence’). (Werse & Morgenstern, 2012a).

2) “*Specialist psychonauts*”: People with (more or less) extensive experiences in the use of various illegal substances who aim to enhance the spectrum of their drug experiences by using research chemicals. The legality of the substances plays only a minor role. Because members of this group mostly read up on NPS via the internet, such persons were elsewhere called ‘cyber psychonauts’ (O'Brien et al., 2015) and can also be assigned to the group of *Users in online communities*. (Werse & Morgenstern, 2012a)

⁴ Semi-structured qualitative interviews with 20 key persons informing about drug use in various recreational and party/dancing scenes (techno, electro, house/ other youth culture scenes e.g., hip hop, punk / gay party scene, left-wing, bodybuilding, head shop etc.).

⁵ Questionnaire-based face-to-face interviews with ca. 150 participants from the open-drug-scene.

⁶ The respondents of both surveys (2011: 860 / 2014: 771) were mainly current and regular users, with an overrepresentation of men (89%) and of respondents with a higher education level. The average age was 24,2 years (Werse & Morgenstern, 2015).

The other target groups of the NPS transnational project are *Users in nightlife* and *Socially marginalized users*:

3) *Users in night life*: It was striking that in response to the question of the last place of consumption, discos/clubs or parties were rarely named, even by regular users of research chemicals with 'party drug'-like properties. Overall it seems that NPS are not very prevalent in German party/club scenes, especially when a good supply of illegal 'party drugs' is guaranteed (Werse et al., 2015). Bavaria, especially Munich appears to be an exception, because NPSs seem to play a significant role in the party scene (Piontek & Hannemann, 2015).

4) *Socially marginalized users*: With the exception of Bavaria/Munich (see 5.4), NPS appear to play no significant role in problem drug users' scenes. Anecdotal reports exist about the consumption of synthetic cannabinoids in drug-free treatment facilities, to be able to intoxicate without worrying about a positive drug test (see Werse & Müller, 2010).

5.4 Regional focus of NPS use in Germany

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, one of the main results of the two online surveys (Werse & Morgenstern 2011, 2014) was the recognition of regional differences of NPS use in Germany: Respondents from Bavaria were not only massively overrepresented (by more than 100% in the 2014 survey compared to the overall population), but even more overrepresented regarding the use of synthetic cannabinoids and herbal incenses. "For Bavarian HI [Herbals Incenses] users, legal availability was a more important motive than for others, whereas non-detectability was slightly less essential compared to synthetic cannabis users from other parts of Germany" (Werse & Morgenstern, 2012a: 226). Bavaria is known for a very strict implementation of drug prohibition (Reuband, 2007). It seems reasonable that there might be some connection between those two factors, which was also confirmed by the ad-hoc telephone survey among Bavarian professionals (see footnote 2). Furthermore, NPS and especially 'bath salts' are apparently taken quite often in the scene of primarily intravenously administering problem drug users in Munich/Bavaria (Werse & Egger, 2016).

Given the low percentages for the current use of NPS, it can be assumed that the NPS phenomenon in Germany has peaked some years ago. The use of NPS seems to be focused on a small, probably mostly well-informed audience and on regions with more repressive drug policy approaches (Werse & Morgenstern, 2015).

6 Prevention activities

As mentioned, addiction prevention is one of the four pillars of the national drug and addiction policy in Germany with the aim of "...preventing or at least significantly reducing risky consumption, harmful use and substance dependence" (Pfeiffer-Gerschel, 2015a: 6). The prevention system is confronted with the complexity of NPS use, because the substances as well as the user groups are very heterogeneous and the rapid change of the substances requires an acceleration of the information flow. As mentioned in section 3, prevention activities regarding supply or demand reduction are mainly reduced to the attempt of criminalization. In this sense, "...monitoring and combating new psychoactive substances (NPS) is a significant matter for the police" (Pfeiffer-Gerschel, 2015c: 17) in Germany. In general, relatively few is known about possible harmful side effects of the use of NPS, but "...they are in the focus of attention of ongoing different research projects in Germany and Europe. Projects aim to systematically record harm-

ful effects and develop effective harm reduction measures for different NPS on that basis.” (Pfeiffer-Gerschel, 2015b: 7). The latter mainly refers to the EU projects “Spice and Synthetic Cannabinoids” and “Spice II plus” (see 6.1). Currently, prevention and harm reduction activities are basically related to safer use organizations, mainly from the field of party drugs prevention in the nightlife and information web-sites.

Treatment activities which especially address users of NPS are currently not known for Germany (see Rummel et al., 2015). However, anecdotal evidence and results from the ad-hoc expert survey (see footnote 2) suggest that there are some regions, particularly in Bavaria (see 5.4) with significant numbers of NPS-using persons seeking for treatment (particularly heavy synthetic cannabinoid users and PDUs who use amphetamine-like “bath salts”).

6.1 BASIS e.V. / Website: <https://legal-high-inhaltsstoffe.de>

BASIS e.V. is a Frankfurt-based charitable organization. Their activities include counselling, social work, youth and culture projects with the common objective of helping and assisting drug-using people and their families as well as preventive work with adolescents and young adults. BASIS e.V. developed the internet platform www.legal-high-inhaltsstoffe.de as a measure of prevention with a clear focus on harm reduction. It is the only prevention website in Germany which is focused on NPS. It started in 2012 with listings of particular NPS products and its (non-quantified) ingredients, according to lab tests. In 2013, the website became a part of the EU project Spice II+, which led to an extension of both the possibilities for NPS product testing and listing⁷ and the range of information and consulting services. These include knowledge on the topic (information on safer use, legal aspects, projects), the opportunity to interact online as well as with distributing flyers, useful internet links and media. The information is aiming at specific target groups with different pages for users, parents/relatives and professionals (experts like social workers, teachers or lawyers who want to get background information). An acceptance oriented approach is the basis of all ideas and services, aiming at the provision of objective and sound information. In order to meet the requirement of anonymity, an online consultation tool was created, which offers the possibility to ask web-based questions by using an SSL-encrypted connection.

6.2 ALICE – The Drug and Culture Project

ALICE (“the drug and culture project”) is another project from BASIS e.V. in Frankfurt. They are active in various youth cultures and offer information on drugs with a focus on objective clarification and the development of risk competence. ALICE is active at parties, clubs, festivals, conferences and workshops with an info-desk, where they offer the possibility of consulting and getting help regarding problems with psychoactive substances. They offer a wide range of information flyers on particular substances including NPS as well as (risky) patterns of use. Another part of the ALICE project is to carry out educational projects on the use of licit and illicit drugs in schools that include music and creative activity. The project is also represented with its own website on the internet (<http://www.alice-project.de>), where information on drugs and cultural topics can be retrieved. The service is also attainable via phone or e-mail.

6.3 Mindzone

Mindzone is an addiction prevention project in Bavaria, carried out by the local chapter of Caritas Bayern e.V. Similar to ALICE (6.2), it aims at young partygoers with the objective of minimizing risks in the use of

⁷ Responsible the laboratory analysis: Institute for Forensic Medicine, Forensic Toxicology, University Medical Center Freiburg, Prof. Volker Auwärter.

party drugs. The main purpose of Mindzone is education and the provision of detailed information about drugs, whereby, compared to legal-high-inhaltsstoffe.de and ALICE, their approach is somewhat more abstinence-oriented. Under the slogan “sauber drauf!”⁸, Mindzone is active directly in clubs or at festivals with an own information desk. They distribute youth-friendly information materials (such as flyers and booklets) about various psychoactive substances in the party scene, as well as current pill-warnings. They want to approach young users before they develop problematic patterns of drug use or a dependence. Mindzone aims to reduce potential health risks through the dissemination of objective information on the psychological and physical dangers of substance use as well as information about safer use and harm reduction practices. Regarding the occurrence of NPS, Mindzone reacted with launching an information campaign about new psychoactive substances (using the catchword “Versuchskaninchen”, which can be roughly translated as “guinea pig”). Apart from their presence in the nightlife, Mindzone is used as an “info pool” as they offer special lectures and training courses for professionals and multipliers. In addition, Mindzone maintains a website (www.mindzone.info) and different profiles in social media to communicate information geared to the target group. Furthermore, they offer an anonymous and confidential online consultation tool, which is a central part of the project work. This virtual consulting service addresses users as well as relatives and caregivers (Nunes et al., 2015).

6.4 DrugScouts

DrugScouts (<https://drugscouts.de>) is an information project on drugs focusing on selective and indicated prevention/harm reduction. The project is located in Leipzig and provides information on drugs, drug use and risk reduction to young drug users. They aim at motivating users to change risky patterns of use and support young people with a desire for abstinence. The offer is primarily aimed at users between 18 and 26 years and their families, but also at teachers and other interested parties. The project is present in clubs and at festivals with an own information desk (incl. first aid for substance-related emergencies). However, the main focus of the project is online activity: there is extensive information on various drugs, their effects and risks, including trip reports provided by users, as well as legal information. They also offer various forms of online counselling. Furthermore, they run a so-called “drug store” offering direct and telephone-based counselling and perform prevention events, discussion rounds and workshops. Besides providing information on NPS on the website, DrugScouts offers lectures about NPS for professionals from youth services, other social work agencies, schools and police.

6.5 Partypack.de

Partypack is an information and advisory platform (<http://www.partypack.de>) which is carried out by Drogenhilfe Köln gGmbH (the main drug service organization in Cologne). Similar to most of the services described above, the website informs about licit and illicit drugs, safer use, pill warnings and criminal policies and offers the opportunity of professional online counselling via a secure online data system or e-mail to people seeking for information and/or advice. The aim of the project is to clarify the effects and risks of using (il)legal drugs and to prevent misuse or dependence. The target group of the project are users of so-called party drugs and their families. Partypack.de provides information about risks, which are related to the use of NPS.

⁸ A pun that is hard to translate: “sauber” means “clean”, while “drauf” could either simply indicate a state of mind (such as “gut drauf” – in a good mood) or refer to being high on (particularly synthetic) drugs.

7 Discussion and conclusions

The results from Germany show that, at least in this country, NPS use is heavily linked to the (non-)availability of illicit drugs as well as to the level of repression in general. While NPS prevalence is generally relatively low and obviously declining in Germany, these substances seem to be a serious problem in Bavaria, a German region which is infamous for its repressive approach in drug policy. Regarding people who use drugs heavily, at least one urban scene exists, where NPS play a significant role: Munich, the Bavarian capital. When NPS use is mentioned among other groups of heavy users, it often refers to patients of conventional therapy measures who want to continue the use of cannabis-like substances without being detected in drug screenings. As a consequence, the NPS phenomenon seems to be largely a) a result of drug prohibition, with a positive correlation with the level of repression (note: positive correlation means that the outcome in the social world is negative), and b) a side effect of abstinence-oriented approaches in drug treatment.

8 References

Auwärter, V., Dresen, S., Weinmann, W., Müller, M., Pütz, M. & Ferreiros, N. (2009). 'Spice' and other herbal blends: harmless incense or cannabinoid designer drugs? *Journal of Mass Spectrometry*, 1 (Letters to the Editor, "Early View"). Retrieved from: <http://www3.interscience.wiley.com/cgi-bin/fulltext/121673438/PDFSTART>

Auwärter, V., Angerer, V. & Franz, F. (2015). *Analytik Räuchermischungen, Tabelle (spreadsheet, analytics herbal blends)*. Internal document, unreleased: Freiburg: University Medical Center.

Budde, A., Pfeiffer-Gerschel, T., Jakob, L., Dammer, E., Karachaliou, K. & Rummel, C. (2015). *2015 National report (2014 data) to the EMCDDA by the REITOX National Focal Point. Germany, Workbook Prevention*. Munich: Deutsche Beobachtungsstelle für Drogen und Drogensucht DBDD. Retrieved from: http://www.dbdd.de/images/dbdd_2015_eng/wb04_prevention_2015_germany_en.pdf

EMCDDA, (2016). *Action on new drugs*. Retrieved from: <http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/activities/action-on-new-drugs>

EVE&RAVE (2015): *Adulterations of ecstasy pills 2014*. Retrieved from: http://saferparty.ch/tl_files/images/download/file/aktuelles%202015/XTC_Streckmittel_2014.pdf

Musshoff, F., Madea, B. & Kernbach-Wighton, G. (2013). Driving under the influence of synthetic cannabinoids („Spice“): a case series. *International Journal of Legal Medicine*, 128, 59–64.

Nunes, S., Kuban, J. & Grimm, D. (2015). Gute Praxis: Suchtprävention und Gesundheitsförderung in der Partyszene. In: akzept e.V. (eds.): *2. Alternativer Drogen- und Suchtbericht 2015*. Lengerich: Pabst Science Publisher, pp. 71-77.

O'Brien, K., Chatwin, C., Jenkins, C. & Measham, F. (2015). New psychoactive substances and British drug policy: A view from the cyber-psychonauts. In: *Drugs: Education, Prevention and Policy*, 22(3), 217-223.

Pabst, A., Kraus, L., Gomes de Matos, E. & Piontek, D. (2013). Substanzkonsum und substanzbezogene Störungen in Deutschland im Jahr 2012. In: *Sucht*, 59(6), 321–331.

Pfeiffer-Gerschel, T., Jakob, L., Dammer, E., Karachaliou, K., Budde, A. & Rummel, C. (2015a). *2015 National report (2014 data) to the EMCDDA by the REITOX National Focal Point. Germany, Workbook Drug Policy*. Munich: Deutsche Beobachtungsstelle für Drogen und Drogensucht DBDD. Retrieved from: http://www.dbdd.de/images/dbdd_2015_eng/wb01_policy_2015_germany_en.pdf

Pfeiffer-Gerschel, T., Jakob, L., Dammer, E., Karachaliou, K., Budde, A. & Rummel, C. (2015b). *2015 National report (2014 data) to the EMCDDA by the REITOX National Focal Point. Germany, Workbook Harms and Harm Reduction*. Munich: Deutsche Beobachtungsstelle für Drogen und Drogensucht DBDD. Retrieved from: http://www.dbdd.de/images/dbdd_2015_eng/wb07_harmsandharmreduction_2015_germany_en.pdf

Pfeiffer-Gerschel, T., Jakob, L., Dammer, E., Karachaliou, K., Budde, A. & Rummel, C. (2015c): *2015 National report (2014 data) to the EMCDDA by the REITOX National Focal Point. Germany, Workbook Drug Market and Crime*. Munich: Deutsche Beobachtungsstelle für Drogen und Drogensucht DBDD. Retrieved from: http://www.dbdd.de/images/dbdd_2015_eng/wb08_drugmarketandcrime_2015_germany_en.pdf

- Piontek, D. & Hannemann, T.-V. (2015). *Substanzkonsum in der jungen Ausgeh Szene*. Institut für Therapiefor schung. Retrieved from: http://ift.de/fileadmin/user_upload/Literatur/Berichte/2015-08-27_Bericht_Partyprojekte.pdf
- Pollähne, H. (2014). Cannabinoide Kräutermischungen vor dem EuGH: Legal Highs bleiben legal. *Legal Tribune Online*. Retrieved from: http://www.lto.de/persistent/a_id/12539/
- Reuband, K.H. (2007). Strafverfolgung als Mittel der Generalprävention? In: B. Dollinger, H. Schmidt-Semisch (eds.). *Sozialwissenschaftliche Suchtforschung*. Wiesbaden: VS, 131–168.
- Rummel, C., Pfeiffer-Gerschel, T., Jakob, L., Dammer, E., Karachaliou, K. & Budde, A. (2015). *2015 National report (2014 data) to the EMCDDA by the REITOX National Focal Point*. Germany, Workbook Treatment. Munich: Deutsche Beobachtungsstelle für Drogen und Drogensucht DBDD. Retrieved from: http://www.dbdd.de/images/dbdd_2015_eng/wb05_treatment_2015_germany_en.pdf
- Steup, C. (2008). *Untersuchung des Handelsproduktes „Spice“*. Frankfurt a.M.: THC PHARM GmbH. Retrieved from: <http://usualredant.de/drogen/download/analyse-thc-pharm-spice-jwh-018.pdf>
- The Gallup Organization, (2011). *Flash Eurobarometer 330 – Youth attitudes on drugs. Analytical Report*. (On Behalf of the European Commission). Budapest: The Gallup Organization.
- TNS political and societal, (2014). *Flash Eurobarometer 401 – Young People and Drugs*. Retrieved from: http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/flash/fl_401_en.pdf
- Werse, B. (2014). Zur Verbreitung von neuen psychoaktiven Substanzen (NPS). In: akzept e.V., Deutsche AIDS-Hilfe, JES Bundesverband (eds.). *Alternativer Sucht- und Drogenbericht 2014*, 22-26. Retrieved from: <http://alternativer-drogenbericht.de/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/Alternativer-Drogen-und-Suchtbericht-2014.pdf>
- Werse B. & Egger, G. (in press). Neue psychoaktive Substanzen: Konsummuster, Konsummotive, Nebenwirkungen und problematischer Konsum. In: Jungaberle, H. & von Heyden, M. (Hg.). *Handbuch psychoaktive Substanzen*. Heidelberg: Springer.
- Werse, B. & Kamphausen, G. (2015). *National NPS assessment: Germany. Report for the EC project “NPS in Europe” (JUST/2013/DPIP 4000004774)*, unreleased.
- Werse, B., Kamphausen, G., Egger, D. & Müller, D. (2015). *MoSyD Jahresbericht. Drogentrends in Frankfurt am Main 2014*. Frankfurt a.M.: Goethe-Universität, Centre for Drug Research.
- Werse, B. & Morgenstern C. (2011). *Abschlussbericht – Online-Befragung zum Thema „Legal Highs“*. Frankfurt am Main: Goethe-Universität, Centre for Drug Research.
- Werse, B. & Morgenstern, C. (2012a). How to handle legal highs? Findings from a German online survey and considerations on drug policy issues. *Drugs and Alcohol Today*, 12 (4), 222-231.
- Werse, B. & Morgenstern, C. (2012b). Legalisierung über das Internet – Legal Highs als Herausforderung für das System der Drogenprohibition. In: R. Gerlach, H. Stöver (eds.): *Entkriminalisierung von Drogenkonsumenten – Legalisierung von Drogen*. Frankfurt am Main: Fachhochschulverlag, 227-241.



Werse, B. & Morgenstern, C. (2015). Der Trend geht zur Reinsubstanz - Entwicklungen im Konsum von „Legal Highs“/neuen psychoaktiven Substanzen (NPS) auf Basis zweier Online-Befragungen. *Suchttherapie*, 16, 36-41.

Werse, B. & Müller, O. (2010). *Abschlussbericht - Spice, Smoke, Sence & Co. - Cannabinoidhaltige Räuchermischungen: Konsum und Konsummotivation vor dem Hintergrund sich wandelnder Gesetzgebung*. Frankfurt a.M.: Centre for Drug Research/ Goethe-Universität.